

The Purchase of the Past
The Elizabethan past and the uses of
history in eighteenth-century Britain

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Abstract

“The Purchase of the Past: The Elizabethan past and the uses of history in eighteenth-century Britain” examines the place of the late sixteenth-century Elizabethan and Shakespearean pasts in eighteenth-century popular culture and politics. Through an analysis of five moments, three times at which Elizabeth and the men of her era had particular purchase and twice when Shakespeare, as a historical person, was given particular cultural importance, “The Purchase of the Past” argues this period experienced a transformation in understandings of historical time and of history’s function in the present. These changes stemmed from the accumulation of a rationalized nationalist history, which popularized particular historical narratives, but, in so doing, marginalized alternative perspectives. These interpretations increasingly focused on the individual and on interior personal development, confining the Elizabethan past to an interesting cast of characters, limiting its ability to legitimize contemporary political issues and identities. Individuals participating in public discourses increasingly saw themselves as living in a modern moment whose origins lay in the age of Elizabeth. It was a modernity that celebrated a Protestant, commercial, imperial past, but was consequently deeply troubled about contemporary changes to the means of production and the emergence of new forms of social and political bonds. This understanding of the past meant that those who seriously harkened back to its ideas and priorities appeared to be illogical and out-of-step. This analysis of how one time period understood and used another in popular discourses and entertainments demonstrates how history has been an integral part of the modernizing, imperial, and nationalizing projects.

Acknowledgements

Like so many of the eighteenth-century individuals whose work I have used in this project, I love to weave a good yarn. So, let me tell you a story. Back in the cold and blustery fall of 2008, the teaching assistants and contract faculty of York University went on strike. The History Department was assigned to walk the picket line in front of an entrance to the campus which faced north, bearing the brunt of the cold, polar winds which came hurtling down, unimpeded, from the Arctic, on to Steeles Avenue. It was windy. It was cold. In this dark time, many of the History faculty members came to show their support. In particular, on one miserable day, as I was particularly resenting walking outside, given that I had clearly chosen a sedentary, in-door career path, I was joined by the late Professor Myra Rutherford. Professor Rutherford, who I had only met in passing at department events, came up beside me and, with the sunny disposition for which she was so well known, talked to me. She asked about my work. She told me about her own. We talked about families. We discussed people we knew in common. We chitchatted the afternoon away. She effortlessly combined her support for our cause with a personal kindness to me. Professor Rutherford frequently came to see us on the picket line, and subsequently always spent a few minutes seeing how I was doing, saying something friendly, and helping make a difficult situation a bit better. In the many years between that day in November 2008, and her passing this spring, she remained a concerned, caring, and lovely colleague. Her generosity, support, and friendship were indicative, primarily, of her own beautiful person but also of the similar encouragements I have received from so many individuals during my doctoral degree, particularly through York's History Department. I would like to acknowledge some of those who have generously assisted me over the years.

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I have been a member of several reading groups that have been willing to read my work, listen to my ideas, or share their own: the Women's and Gender Reading Group and the Southern Ontario Modern British Seminar. In particular, the (Ab)Uses of the Past, with their enthusiasm, intelligence, and collegiality, reassured me on a monthly basis that there was still so much to be interested in and inspired by.

Academic research can be a solitary and lonely endeavour but one enlightened by the many lovely people who share in a world in which the professional and personal are so messily combined. I was helped, encouraged, and entertained by many individuals with whom I shared classes, taught, and socialized. In particular, I would like to thank the brave Julia Fawcett and Kathryn Bausch who were willing to read my work and help me prepare for my defence. I also thank my co-British historians: Jodi Burkett, Jim Clifford, Christine Grandy, Morgan Huseby, Sara Muscat, Heather Maclean, and Ronnie Morris. And those who were always willing to share a beer and a kind word: Jennifer Ellison and Duncan Clark, Dan Horner and Cynthia Belaskie, Sean Kheraj, Andrea Gill, Mark Abraham, Ian Mosby and Laural Raine, Dan Bullard, Valerie Deacon, Jason Young, and Raphael Costa.

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While in the making, dissertations are murky and unknown quantities. Despite this uncertainty, I was lucky enough to have a family willing to help see me through it. My uncle Alan Stewart proofread the final product, from front to back, making him the only family member, thus far, to have read my dissertation. I thank him deeply for his help and expertise. Judy and Ernie McCullough, and Karen and Matt Williams and their children, welcomed me, and my obscure project, with grace and love, for which I thank them all. My own family, Luke and Robyn Slinger and their son, but particularly my parents, Peter Slinger and Rusty Stewart, supported me more than could ever be acknowledged. My parents gave me the chance to do something I loved, for so long, for which I will always be grateful.

Like the Elizabethan past in the eighteenth century, my own life has been redefined and reinvented numerous times over the course of this project. Of all my changes and transformations, none has been more rewarding, or more wonderful, than the arrival of my daughter, Reagan Slinger McCullough. And she, like this dissertation, would never have been possible without the love, intelligence, and kindness of my husband, Colin McCullough, for whom, in the end, it was all for.

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Introduction

Don Saltero's Coffeehouse

On the banks of the Thames in Chelsea, during the eighteenth century, sat a very curious coffeehouse. Don Saltero's had an unremarkable exterior. It was the last house on the end of a newly-built dark-brown-brick terrace, looking out over the river, and while renowned and popular, it did not excel in the usual staples of such establishments. The conversation was not on the cutting-edge of the commercial, political, or literary worlds. It had no regular patrons of any particular note. Its chocolate was reputed to be quite tasty, but the reading materials were neither particularly current, nor particularly numerous. Instead, James Salter - servant, dentist, barber, sometimes musician, and entrepreneur - sought to offer his customers, not just a beverage, but a memorable experience: Don Saltero's Museum of Rarities.

The uniqueness of Don Saltero's was immediately apparent on entering the door of number 18, Cheyne Walk. The place featured the large bar and broad tables common to coffeehouses in the early eighteenth century, but these were not what the eye would first take in. Instead, a customer was overwhelmed by a space chock-a-block with items of curiosity. There were almost twenty glass cases crammed into the room to display the old, the fascinating, and the exotic. Some held as many as sixty or seventy items. There was a canoe by one wall. A buffalo head was mounted on another. There were plates, medals, and birds on the wainscoting. The rail above the bar showcased eggs, Oliver Cromwell's sword, various pistols, and a clock on which the face moved instead of the

hands. The ceiling was hung with fishes and snakes and a Highlander's snuff box. There were prints on the stairs. There were beetles and scorpions preserved in jars of spirits by the chimney. There were even rarities in the "closet." To enter Don Saltero's was to walk into a life-sized cabinet of curiosities.¹

Salter's collection presented a broad swath of the strange and the fantastic. A large part of the collection reflected the interest in natural history of one of Salter's most important donors, his former employer and the begetter of the British Museum, Sir Hans Sloane: a glass bottle encrusted with coral, a curious small seahorse, the embryo of a whale, and many different kinds of reptiles. There were local rarities: pebbles from Scarborough, a piece of the Peak in Derbyshire, and a Staffordshire almanac. Other rarities were from further afield: a piece of mosaic work from Constantinople, the "tusk of a tyger," or a model of Mr. Pitt's diamond, the original of which had been sold to the French King for one hundred and twenty thousand pounds. There were religious items, Christian and otherwise, from biblical times and modern.

At Don Saltero's, the exotic encompassed the colonial, the imperial, but also the historical. There were many pieces of British history: Henry VIII's spur, Mary Queen of Scots's pincushion, and the coronation sword of an unspecified King James. Numerous items were purported to be those of Queen Elizabeth.² One of her prayer books was

¹ All quotes retain the original spelling, capitalization, and emphasis. Newspapers published less frequently than daily (bi- and tri-weeklies) have usually been referred to by the first day of the issue date range. Items mentioned at Don Saltero's are listed in: Don Saltero's Coffee-house, *A Catalogue of the Rarities to Be Seen at Don Saltero's Coffee-House in Chelsea*, (London: 1780).

² Richard Steele was very doubtful of the truth-claims of many of Salter's objects. "He [Salter] shews you a straw-hat, which I know to be made by Madge Peskad, within three miles of Bedford; and tells you it is Pontius Pilate's wife's chambermaid's sister's hat." Isaac Bickerstaff, *The Tatler*, (London: J. Parsons, 1794), no. 34, 208-209. Number 34, June 27, 1709.

displayed in a case along with “the head of a curlew,” “a Chinese candle,” and “effigies of an Egyptian mummy.” Her stirrup, according to the catalogue, was presented with “a shirt of mail [worn] by the knights of templar,” “a Chinese stocking,” and “the jaws of a shark.” Her work-basket and her chambermaid’s hat were on the wainscoting, between a “coat made of the bark of a tree” and “the target of Tee-Yee-Neen-Ho-Ga-Row Indian emperor of the Six Nations.”³

The number and density of Don Saltero’s collection encouraged the owners to provide patrons with guides to the exhibits. For the first thirty-odd years after the place’s opening in the late 1690s, Salter himself acted as docent. He performed his collection by walking and talking visitors through the importance and significance of his pieces. Advertisements for Don Saltero’s highlighted his skilful presentations. A notice from the “Chelsea Knackatory” in 1723 claimed that, despite all the “knick-knacks,” it was Salter who was “the rarest Sight of all.”⁴ His performances brought both the respect and ire of *The Tatler*. Richard Steele begrudgingly respected Salter’s breadth of knowledge, but primarily saw him as an untrustworthy showman, a weaver of tall tales.⁵ After Salter’s death in 1726, Don Saltero’s was owned and operated by his daughter, Mrs. Hall, and her husband. Under their directorship, catalogues of the rarities were regularly published, and filled in for Salter’s descriptions. For a shilling, visitors could own descriptions of each piece, frequently with a hint at what made it unique, and its location on the premises. Beyond the catalogues and the performances, the meanings of

³ Don Saltero's Coffee-house, *Don Saltero's*.

⁴ *Weekly Journal*, 23 June 1723. As cited in, J. Holden MacMichael, "Don Saltero's Tavern, Chelsea," *Notes and Queries* S. 10 - X, no. 241 (1908).

⁵ Bickerstaff, *The Tatler*, 207-209.

the otherwise unlabelled and uncategorized ephemera of Don Saltero's museum were open to visitors' own interpretations. The wide range of places and times, the mix of things made by man and by God, and the sheer quantity of items all encouraged customers to question, to wonder, and to make connections among items.

Don Saltero's coffeehouse remains a fascinating object of curiosity. Its beginnings as Hans Sloane's cast-offs and supernumerary pieces have inspired interest in its relationship to the spatial and intellectual classifications of the contemporary emerging museums.⁶ Its modes of commodified display, and its emphasis on apolitical entertainment, do not fit easily with the elite intellectual atmosphere generally associated with eighteenth-century coffeehouses.⁷ Its long life and lasting cultural relevance - it was still a fashionable destination in Fanny Burney's 1778 *Evelina* - make it a site of important historical inquiry into the development of the public sphere,

⁶ James Delbourgo, "Slavery in the Cabinet of Curiosities: Hans Sloane's Atlantic World," (2005); Bryant Lillywhite, *London Coffee Houses: A Reference Book of Coffee Houses of the Seventeenth, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1963); Angela Todd, "Your Humble Servant Shows Himself: Don Saltero and Public Coffeehouse Space," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 62, no. 2 (2005).

⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989); Craig Calhoun, "Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1992); Anna Clark, *Scandal: The Sexual Politics of the British Constitution* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004); Brian Cowan, "What Was Masculine About the Public Sphere? Gender and the Coffeehouse Milieu in Post-Restoration England," *History Workshop Journal*, no. 51 (2001); Brian Cowan, "Publicity and Privacy in the History of the British Coffeehouse," *History Compass* 5, no. 4 (2007); Markman Ellis, "Coffee-House Libraries in Mid-Eighteenth-Century London," *The Library* 10, no. 1 (2009); Bryant Lillywhite, *London Coffee Houses: A Reference Book of Coffee Houses of the Seventeenth, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1963); Steve Pincus, "'Coffee Politicians Does Create': Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture," *Journal of Modern History* 67, no. 4 (1995); Daniel Woolf, "News, History and the Construction of the Present in Early Modern England," in *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Brendan Dooley and Sabrina A. Baron (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).

entertainment, and business in this period.⁸ What particularly piqued my interest was the eclectic nature of the collection. The exotic was constructed not only through that which was geographically distant, from far-away places like China, Canada, Jamaica, and India, but that which was historically distant, the biblical, medieval, and early modern eras. In selling the strange and the fantastic, it mixed time and space. Everything was sold as part of the same experience, jumbled pell-mell together in cabinets, crowded on shelves, and mounted on the walls and ceiling. At Don Saltero's, along with other cultures, other religions, and the natural world, the past was curious.

Changing Historical Time

Don Saltero's, and its representation of the value of the past, raises two important issues about the conceptualizations of British history in the eighteenth century. The first is the tendency during this period to erase differences between time and space, in such a way that the two seemed to be almost indistinguishable. Their appeal was presented to their intended coffeehouse and reading publics in almost identical ways. The second is why, unlike the eclecticism of Don Saltero's collection, did certain evocations of the past have particular appeal at particular times? In contrast to this confusion of locations and periods, the moments in which a historical period found particular purchase in the present could elucidate the ways in which the past was constructed, used, and propagated.

This dissertation examines the place of the late sixteenth-century Elizabethan and Shakespearean pasts in eighteenth-century popular culture and politics. Over the

⁸ Richard Daniel Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978).

course of about half a century, there was a transformation in understandings of historical time and of history's function in the present. These changes stemmed from the accumulation of a rationalized, hegemonic, nationalist history, which popularized particular historical narratives, but, in so doing, marginalized alternative or contradictory perspectives. These interpretations increasingly focused on the individual and on interior personal development, confining the Elizabethan past to an interesting cast of characters. This emphasis on their personalities limited their ability to provide legitimacy to contemporary political issues or collective identities. Further, individuals participating in public discourses in the eighteenth century increasingly saw themselves as living in a modern moment, a modernity whose origins they found in the age of Elizabeth. It was a modernity that celebrated a Protestant, commercial, imperial past, but was consequently deeply troubled about contemporary changes to the means of production and the emergence of new forms of social and political bonds. The Elizabethan past was therefore viewed nostalgically, as a signifier for a set of lost values. This understanding of the past meant that those who seriously harkened back to its ideas and priorities appeared to be illogical and out-of-step with a progressive modernity.

At the beginning of the period under discussion, in the 1730s, Elizabethan examples were seen as essential ingredients to a successful political position. They were able to motivate individuals with a variety of social backgrounds and political goals, both those with and those without the franchise. Elizabeth, her ministers, the defeat of the Armada, and the courage, daring, and success of that era's sea-dogs were worthy of

emulation. After a tumultuous seventeenth century and the upheavals of the Glorious Revolution and the Hanoverian Succession, an association with Elizabeth's reign had legitimizing power. That power had social and political consequences for the government and the people of the 1730s.

Conversely, Shakespeare's association with the British past was being discovered in fits and starts. While there had been some discussion in the 1720s of raising a monument to him at Westminster Abbey, it failed to produce any commemorative display. Another attempt in the early 1730s was equally unsuccessful. By the time a monument in honour of his memory was unveiled in 1741 in the Abbey, Ben Jonson, John Milton, Samuel Butler, and William Congreve had already been commemorated there. Shakespeare was a popular author and playwright, but one of several, and by no means the clear choice as representative of the British nation.

By the 1780s, Elizabeth represented an ideal of a time gone-by, remembered longingly, perhaps, but one that could provide little immediate guidance. Her memory was more likely to be invoked as a guide for personal behaviour. While the construction of her period remained relevant in the bitter religious conflicts of the 1770s, issues of domestic and foreign policy, during the fear of a naval invasion by the French in August 1779, for example, no longer drew on her period for motivation, justification, or legitimization. In its growing significance as an English golden age, Elizabeth's reign was less likely to be translated into political or social demands.

Meanwhile, Shakespeare's reputation had seen meteoric growth, culminating in a Jubilee in his honour, in 1769, in his hometown of Stratford-upon-Avon. As the

preeminent creator of characters, he was now a signifier for the dominant form of British identity. And while, in the nineteenth century, the working classes would be able to appropriate the Bard and his works for their own ends, at the end of the eighteenth century, he was firmly entrenched as a jingoistic, popular, real John Bull of the past, whose meaning lay outside of any contemporary political strife. Shakespeare was thus made more culturally significant at the same time as his possible meanings were limited by a focus on the individual.

Over the course of the eighteenth century, understandings of historical time changed. These changes had important social, political, and intellectual effects. National fictions, according to Raphael Samuel, are not reflections but constituent parts of ideology; they are its “imaginative underpinnings.”⁹ A detailed analysis of how one particular time period was understood and mobilized in popular discourses and entertainments demonstrates how history has been an integral part of modernizing, imperial, and nationalizing projects.

The old and the new: information and tradition

Many eighteenth-century Britons participated in a national project that sought to accumulate ever more information about the world. This was both a cause and an effect of what Benedict Anderson described as a “fundamental change,” at that time, in “modes of apprehending the world.”¹⁰ Historians of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-

⁹ Raphael Samuel, "Introduction: The Figures of National Myth," in *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, ed. Raphael Samuel (London and New York: Routledge, 1989).

¹⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 22.

century British empire frequently note the importance of data collection to the “imperial project.”¹¹ This can be seen, for example, through the increased importance of “gentlemen scientists,” in voyages such as those of Captain James Cook,¹² and the growth of professional museums in the metropolitan centres to display the knowledge gained from afar.¹³ The assertion of dominance over a foreign other was made, in part, through a claim to “scientific” knowledge: better technology, better methods, and better forms of communication.

In his critique of the role of academic history in the colonizing project, Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that history “was absolutely central to the idea of ‘progress’ (or ‘development’) on which both colonialism was based and to which nationalism

¹¹ Tony Ballantyne, "Empire, Knowledge, and Culture: From Proto-Globalization to Modern Globalization," in *Globalization in World History*, ed. A. G. Hopkins (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002); Bernard S. Cohn, "Anthropology and History in the 1980s: Towards a Rapprochement," in *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Richard Drayton, "Knowledge and Empire," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, ed. P. J. Marshall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); John Gascoigne, "The Expanding Historiography of British Imperialism," *The Historical Journal* 49, no. 2 (2006); Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840: 'From an Antique Land'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Clare Midgley, "Gender and Imperialism: Mapping the Connections," in *Gender and Imperialism*, ed. Clare Midgley (Manchester and New York: St Martin's Press, 1998); Gyan Prakash, "Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32, no. 2 (1990); Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

¹² Ballantyne, "Empire, Knowledge, and Culture."; Drayton, "Knowledge and Empire."; David Turnbull, "Cook and Tupaia, a Tale of Cartographic Méconnaissance?," in *Science and Exploration in the Pacific: European Voyages of the Southern Oceans in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Margarete Lincoln (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 1998).

¹³ Tony Bennett, "Stored Virtue: Memory, the Body and the Evolutionary Museum," in *Memory Cultures: Memory, Subjectivity and Recognition*, ed. Susannah Radstone and Katharine Hodgkin (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2005); James Delbourgo, "Slavery in the Cabinet of Curiosities: Hans Sloane's Atlantic World," (2005); Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Sheila Watson, "'England Expects': Nelson as a Symbol of Local and National Identity within the Museum," *Museum and Society* 4, no. 3 (2006).

aspired.”¹⁴ Chakrabarty underscores the close ties between colonialism and the growth of nationalism. Just as the writers, politicians, scientists, explorers, traders, and cartographers of the eighteenth century were driven to know more about the world around them, to collect, measure, and use information about other people and places, so were they driven to do the same with the past. The impetus to learn about geographic space drove many in the eighteenth century to desire to learn, to amass, and to master knowledge about past times.¹⁵ In his study of the patterns of borrowing at the Bristol Library in the late 1770s and early 1780s, Paul Kaufmann found that the most widely read section was “History, Antiquities and Geography.”¹⁶ And within that section, historical titles were the most frequently borrowed. While much work has focused on the importance of the eighteenth century to ideas that fuelled the imperial project,¹⁷ this

¹⁴ Dipesh Chakrabarty, "History as Critique and Critique(S) of History," *Economic and Political Weekly* 26, no. 37 (1991): 2164.

¹⁵ Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004).

¹⁶ Paul Kaufman, *Borrowings from the Bristol Library, 1773-1784 : A Unique Record of Reading Vogues* (Charlottesville: Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, 1960), 124.

¹⁷ David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Joan Coutu, "Legitimizing the British Empire: The Monument to General Wolfe in Westminster Abbey," in *Conflicting Visions: War and Visual Culture in Britain and France C. 1700-1830*, ed. John Bonehill and Geoff Quilley (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005); Joan Coutu, *Persuasion and Propaganda: Monuments and the Eighteenth-Century British Empire* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006); Matthew Craske, "Making National Heroes? A Survey of the Social and Political Functions and Meaning of Major British Funeral Monuments to Naval and Military Figures, 1730-70," in *Conflicting Visions: War and Visual Culture in Britain and France, C. 1700-1830*, ed. John Bonehill and Geoff Quilley (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005); Gail Marshall, "Introduction," in *Victorian Shakespeare Volume 1: Theatre, Drama and Performance*, ed. Gail Marshall and Adrian Poole (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); E. A. Reitan, "Popular Cartography and British Imperialism: *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1739-1763," *Journal of Newspaper and periodical history* 2, no. 3 (1986); Lawrence Stone, "Introduction," in *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815*, ed. Lawrence Stone (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); Kathleen Wilson, "Empire of Virtue: The Imperial Project and Hanoverian Culture C. 1720-1785," in *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815*, ed. Lawrence Stone (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).

dissertation seeks to add to our understandings of the specific ways in which the past was also tamed. This domestication of space *and* time had important consequences for the lives and politics of peoples within and without the British Isles.

A close examination of some of the occasions on which late-sixteenth-century English history had particular value for eighteenth-century Britons demonstrates that over the century, history became more understandable and easier to encompass. As information was acquired about the past through intensified research, better categorization, and archival methods, a greater number of publications and changes to the publishing industry made those documents more accessible. The available information about British history grew and was widely used.¹⁸ Consequently, historical knowledge was rationalized. That is, it was increasingly associated with the intellect. It was believed to be best understood through the universalizations, theorizations, and categorizations associated with the gendered concept of reason.¹⁹ But what was gained in specificity was lost in the declining power of historical ideas to sway and convince. In

¹⁸ Peter Burke, *The Renaissance Sense of the Past* (London: Edward Arnold, 1969); Vivienne S. Dunstan, "Glimpses into a Town's Reading Habits in Enlightenment Scotland: Analysing the Borrowings of Gray Library, Haddington, 1732-1816," *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 26, no. 1+2 (2006); David Fairer, "Historical Criticism and the English Canon: A Spenserian Dispute in the 1750s," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 24 (2000); Michael Harris, *London Newspapers in the Age of Walpole* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1987); Robert Harris, *A Patriot Press: National Politics and the London Press in the 1740s* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); Mark Salber Phillips, *Society and Sentiment: Genres of Historical Writing in Britain, 1740-1820* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000); J. G. A. Pocock, "Burke and the Ancient Constitution: A Problem in the History of Ideas," in *Politics, Language, and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989); J. G. A. Pocock, "Time, Institutions and Action: An Essay on Traditions and Their Understanding," in *Politics, Language, and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989); Richard Terry, "The Eighteenth-Century Invention of English Literature: A Truism Revisited," *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 19 (1996).

¹⁹ Valerie M. Chase, Ralph Hertwig, and Gerd Gigerenzer, "Visions of Rationality," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 2, no. 6 (1998); Anne Ross-Smith and Martin Kornberger, "Gendered Rationality? A Genealogical Exploration of the Philosophical and Sociological Conceptions of Rationality, Masculinity and Organization," *Gender, Work & Organization* 11, no. 3 (2004); Alfred Shuetz, "The Problem of Rationality in the Social World," *Economica* New Series, 10, no. 38 (1943).

his examination of the concept of “curiosity” in eighteenth and early-nineteenth century travel writing, Nigel Leask demonstrates that, of the two possible contrasting understandings of the term, either a form of “legitimate knowledge” or a “vulgar” entertainment, the former was increasingly “exorcized” from the “curious,” and removed to the field of scientific study.²⁰ He sees romanticism as the guiding principle in a global exchange in which “the antique, the curious, and the picturesque were imported to the metropolis, as modernity, technology, rationalism, and ‘universalist’ aesthetics were exported to the periphery.”²¹ Leask’s emphasis on the transformation of information into a modern product for export is significant, but this dissertation argues that this importation and exportation of rationalized ideas of the antique was also carried out closer to home than he acknowledges.

In *Society and Sentiment*, Mark Phillips examines the historiography of the second half of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and argues that, across different genres of historical writing, an interest in the sentimental led to evocative histories that encouraged readers to associate with the experiences of the people in the past. Central to Phillips’s analysis is the concept of historical distance: “the sense of temporality constructed by every historical account as it positions its readers in relation to the past.”²² He documents how ideas about private emotional life were incorporated into social and economic experiences of sociability and commerce, thereby changing the narrative form of the historical record, both its genre and its historical distance. This

²⁰ Leask, *Curiosity*, 314.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 52-53.

²² Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, 26.

study adds to his work by examining how these changes modified the ways in which individuals called on history to support their arguments and justify their actions. As the eighteenth century progressed, those with access to political power and cultural influence were less and less inhibited by the constraints of the historical past. History, for them, was a means to access personal and emotional experiences, but its movement into the private sphere made it less relevant to the public one. As will be shown, as individuals felt a greater control over the boundaries of historical knowledge about the Elizabethan period, its ability to offer guidance and meaning in the present was diminished. The present and the future, the promise of improvements and change, became the more meaningful public rhetorical devices.

The hegemonic, nationalist histories, amassed and created in the eighteenth century, and through which other forms of history came to be judged, focused on the English past. Elizabeth was decidedly not Queen of Scotland, though she did rule Wales and Ireland. Her naval heroes roamed the seas, but in the name of their monarch and, at a stretch, England, but not Britain. Shakespeare never ventured much further afield than London and Warwickshire. Following the lead of David McCrone and Keith Robbins, this work recognises the importance of assigning a power dynamic to the relationship between England and Britain.²³ This means acknowledging the uneven economic, political, and demographic relationships among the “English” and the other nationalities that make up Great Britain. As Krishan Kumar, who argues that there was

²³ David McCrone, "National Identity," in *Social Divisions*, ed. Geoff Payne (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); Keith Robbins, *Great Britain: Identities, Institutions and the Idea of Britishness* (London and New York: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1998).

“Britishness” but not “Englishness” in the eighteenth-century, is forced to point out, even a well-established nineteenth-century historian like Sir John Seeley, in his *The Expansion of England* used “English” when he meant “British,” and “justified this practice on the grounds that ‘in these islands we feel ourselves for all purposes one nation.’”²⁴ The sources examined here, particularly the newspapers published in London, often use “English” and “British” interchangeably, though the concepts do have distinct meanings; a distinction most keenly felt, however, by those who were not English, yet still British. Seeley’s feeling that they were all “one [English] nation” was not a sentiment shared by many Welsh, Scots, and Irish in the eighteenth century or since. The differences between a specifically English past and a British one were further complicated by the interest of writers of the Scottish Enlightenment in the trends and developments in English history. As Colin Kidd argues, they found in English commercial growth and discourses around liberty richer grounds for exploration and more links to their own modern identity than they felt were offered by the available Scottish pasts.²⁵ The politics associated with being Scottish were particularly heated after the ascension of George III in 1760, with the creation of what Kidd calls the “London Scottish Mafia,” and the intense anti-Scottishness of John Wilkes and his cohort. In this climate, the importance of Englishness was given greater political strength. Britishness was therefore still profoundly English at the end of the century. The importance of Englishman William Shakespeare as a totem for the British nation is

²⁴ Krishan Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 187. Seeley’s quote is from *The Expansion of England* (London: Macmillan, 1883), 50.

²⁵ Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past : Scottish Whig Historians and the Creation of an Anglo-British Identity, 1689-C. 1830* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

evidence of the uneven power dynamics in the creation of a new nationalism, potentially British in name, but heavily English in practice.

The newspaper press helped to create these imagined communities but also to restructure the experiences of those who participated in them. Changing understandings of history are the products of alterations to an individual's experience of time. For Daniel Woolf, the advent of the popular press, particularly newspapers in the seventeenth century, led to a new experience of the present as a drawn out moment, shared with others through its dissemination in print. Events related after the fact, previously conceived of as occurring in the past, could now be reconfigured as an extended present by their discussion in the press. For the reading public, this change "considerably enhanced awareness of the moving current within which they swam."²⁶ Eric Hobsbawm posited that the "invention" of traditions is most likely "when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns from which 'old' traditions had been designed."²⁷ The period under examination, the 1730s to the 1780s, was such a moment. It has been described as the "foundation of the modern world,"²⁸ the source for many of the social, political, and economic ideas that modernity has prioritized. And while not all regions of the United Kingdom experienced these changes simultaneously, the areas that produced the most publications, and the most theatrical entertainments, were those that were undergoing the greatest change, changes that included new "modes of political communication," identified by Jeremy Black, but also

²⁶ Woolf, "News in Early Modern England," 108.

²⁷ Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 4.

²⁸ Coutu, *Persuasion*, 21.

new means of production, new relationships between labour and capital, increasing urbanization, government centralization, and new, faster forms of communication and transportation.²⁹ It was a world that was contracting, moving more quickly, and recognizably changing during the span of an average human life. By interpreting Queen Elizabeth's reign as the period that had first, or most prominently, valued Protestantism, commercial expansion, imperialism, and an aggressive foreign policy, a growing number of eighteenth-century Britons viewed her era as the beginning of the changes that appeared to be most significant to their own sense of modernity.

Paul Gilroy, in his now-classic *The Black Atlantic*, underscores the ways in which modernity is central to debates over identity. "Though largely ignored by recent debates over modernity and its discontents," he argues, "these ideas about nationality, ethnicity, authenticity, and cultural integrity are characteristically modern phenomena that have profound implications for cultural criticism and cultural history."³⁰ In this examination of the uses of the past, a feeling of modernity was significant to how history came to be understood. The anxieties and changes in modes of identification and historicization

²⁹ Maxine Berg and Pat Hudson, "Rehabilitating the Industrial Revolution," *Economic History Review* 45, no. 1 (1992); Jeremy Black, "The Press and Politics in the Eighteenth Century," *Media History* 8, no. 2 (2002): 178; John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988), 127; P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism : Innovation and Expansion, 1688-1914* (London, New York: Longman, 1993); G. W. Crompton, "Canals and the Industrial Revolution," *Journal of Transport History, series 3* 14, no. 2 (1993); Chris Davies, "Josiah Wedgwood and Canal Management," *Journal of Transport History Ser. 1*: 1, no. 1 (1980); Julian Hoppit, "Counting the Industrial Revolution," *Economic History Review, 2nd ser.* XLIII, no. 2 (1990); Eoin Magennis, "Coal, Corn and Canals: Parliament and the Dispersal of Public Moneys, 1695-1772," *Parliamentary History* 20, no. 1 (2001); Gerard Turnbull, "Canals, Coal and Regional Growth During the Industrial Revolution," *Economic History Review, New Series* 40, no. 4 (1987); Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660-1760* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988).

³⁰ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 2.

were indicative of an emerging sense of modernity. For Nicholas Dirks, history itself is a product of modernity. “History,” he argues, “has played a key role in the modern production of the nation-state and of the various constituent bases of nationality, at the same time that the nation has played a critical historical role in defining what a modern conception of history should be.”³¹ The experience of modernity and the modes in which to express change over time develop in tandem. This new modern history was increasingly secular, linear, and an appropriate subject for academic study.³² The example of Elizabethan and Shakespearian pasts demonstrates how modernity and history were mutually constructed and their combined complicity in the nation-state project.

As a result of its transformation of understandings of historical time, modernity can engender feelings of nostalgia. “Awareness of being imbedded in secular, serial time,” according to Benedict Anderson, “with all its implications of continuity, yet of ‘forgetting’ the experience of this continuity – product of the disruptions of the late eighteenth century - engenders the need for a narrative of ‘identity.’”³³ The uses of the late sixteenth-century in the eighteenth century highlight the problematic role of these “ruptures,” or in Fred Davis’s words, demonstrate how identities can be “badly bruised by the turmoil of the times.”³⁴ These cleavages often manifest themselves as a desire for a lost past. Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw have enumerated some of the

³¹ Nicholas B. Dirks, "History as a Sign of the Modern," *Public Culture* 2, no. 2 (1990): 25.

³² Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw, "The Dimensions of Nostalgia," in *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia*, ed. Christopher Shaw and Malcolm Chase (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1989), 3.

³³ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 205.

³⁴ Fred Davis, "Nostalgia, Identity and the Current Nostalgia Wave," *Journal of Popular Culture* 11, no. 2 (1977): 422.

prerequisites for a mood of nostalgia: a secular and linear sense of time, an apprehension of the failings of the present, and the availability of evidence of the past.³⁵ Each of these is visible in the eighteenth century and is particularly noticeable in the specific discourses around the sixteenth-century past. Emphasizing that nostalgia is not only experienced as reactionary conservatism, David Lowenthal argues that it seeks to return to a time when people “did not feel fragmented.”³⁶ Nostalgia does not look to return to a past, idealized or otherwise, but “to find the condition of *having been*, with a concomitant integration and completeness lacking in any present.”³⁷

These feelings of nostalgia motivated much of the use of the Elizabethan past by the end of the eighteenth century. Increasingly, the Elizabethan past was seen as time when life was less fragmented. In the 1720s and 1730s, Bolingbroke saw in the time of Elizabeth a society unchanged by the emergence of a palpably different economic order.³⁸ For many others, it had been a time of masculine action compared to what was seen as an effeminate present. It represented a strong, united, national Protestant religion, compared to a present in which the established Church was under attack both from new dissenting religious trends, such as Methodism, and by attempts to allow fuller Catholic participation in the state. But as the feeling of nostalgia became more common, so its power to influence political rhetoric diminished. Sentimental nostalgia had little place in an increasingly organized and rationalized story of national progress.

³⁵ Chase and Shaw, "The Dimensions of Nostalgia," 4.

³⁶ David Lowenthal, "Nostalgia Tells It Like It Wasn't," in *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia*, ed. Christopher Shaw and Malcolm Chase (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1989), 29.

³⁷ *Ibid.* Emphasis in the original.

³⁸ Isaac Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and His Circle: The Politics of Nostalgia in the Age of Walpole* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), 77.

The age of Elizabeth has been a continuing site of historical interest. Her representations over time have been most commonly examined through elite, literary discourses and, occasionally, but far less frequently, through their popular interpretations and appropriations. From this perspective, Elizabeth's eighteenth-century trajectory was from a strong, martial monarch to a feminized heroine of romantic novels and plays.³⁹ This field of study frequently highlights the importance of Elizabeth's femininity in creating a malleable and changeable identity that allowed her image to be reformulated with greater ease than a king's. The less frequent examinations of popular discourses have focused on Elizabeth as an icon for jingoist and patriotic celebrations of imperialism and Protestantism, with some discussion of the development of the figure of Good Queen Bess.⁴⁰ Michael Dobson and Nicola Watson have provided important research and analysis into both the elite and popular phenomena. They discuss, for example, the importance of food symbolism to the queen's memory, specifically her association with roast beef and ale, arguing that associations with food, like links to Shakespeare, were indicative of attempts to

³⁹ Michael Dobson and Nicola J. Watson, *England's Elizabeth: An Afterlife in Fame and Fantasy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Thomas S. Freeman and Susan Doran, "Introduction," in *The Myth of Elizabeth* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Clark Hulse, *Elizabeth I: Ruler and Legend* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003); Carole Levin and Jo Eldridge Carney, "Young Elizabeth in Peril: From Seventeenth-Century Drama to Modern Movies," in *Elizabeth I: Always Her Own Free Woman*, ed. Carole Levin, Jo Eldridge Carney, and Debra Barret-Graves (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

⁴⁰ Dobson and Watson, *England's Elizabeth*; Freeman and Doran, "Introduction."; Jack Lynch, *The Age of Elizabeth in the Age of Johnson* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Alexandra Walsham, "'A Very Deborah?' The Myth of Elizabeth I as Providential Monarch," in *The Myth of Elizabeth*, ed. Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); John Watkins, *Representing Elizabeth in Stuart England: Literature, History, Sovereignty* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

incorporate Elizabeth into a broader national identity.⁴¹ But by examining a broader range of types of writing, including the popular press and government debate, where history was used casually or parenthetically, this dissertation deepens the understanding of, not just how a figure such as Elizabeth has been used, but why such a figure was useful and how its usefulness was changed and reconstructed over time.

Some analyses, such as that of Dobson and Watson, have been able to tie the literary representations of the Queen to contemporary social and political developments. This has been done most successfully in the works that focus on a more limited span of time, a tactic that frequently yields different but useful emphases, for example, on the problematic legacy of Elizabeth as an authoritarian, undemocratic monarch, an important part of her reign's eighteenth-century memory. Christine Gerrard's examination of the image of Elizabeth in the Patriot Opposition of the 1730s, in *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole*, is an excellent examination of debates over the Patriot Opposition's use of the English past, particularly understandings of Spenser in the political arguments over war with Spain in the late 1730s.⁴² Her research into this period is commendable, and she captures both the importance that history had in this debate and the specific ways in which that past motivated contemporary debate. This dissertation adds to her analysis by looking at how many of the trends in the late 1730s she comments on evolved and changed over fifty years, and relating them to the social

⁴¹ Dobson and Watson, *England's Elizabeth*, 116-146.

⁴² Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1725-1742* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Nicholas Rogers, *Crowds, Culture, and Politics in Georgian Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 188.

experiences of those involved, paying attention to performances and enactments of past events in addition to their discussions in print.

Evocations of Elizabeth's era frequently recalled, not the queen herself, but the men who achieved fame during her reign, particularly the naval heroes Sir Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh. Included in the sixteen "Worthies" deserving of busts in Lord Cobham's Temple of British Worthies, built on his estate at Stowe in 1734, were Queen Elizabeth and Shakespeare, but also Drake and Raleigh.⁴³ Discussions of these icons of naval prowess have mainly focused on their use to support either a belligerent foreign policy ⁴⁴ or the prioritization of colonial conquests.⁴⁵ Their importance has been seen as a sign of wider support for these projects and helped construct the ways in which contemporary naval heroes, particularly Admiral Edward Vernon in the late 1730s and early 1740s, were understood.⁴⁶ This form of Elizabethan memory, related to that expressed at Stowe and in the celebrations of Elizabeth's accession in the first half of the century, became part of the vocabulary through which opposition to the government might be expressed.⁴⁷ Men like Drake and Raleigh were used to construct a past when the enemy had been known and Catholic, a time when the British had been successful in

⁴³ Coutu, *Persuasion*, 148-151; Brendan Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat: The Rise and Fall of the First British Empire, 1714-1783* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), 259.

⁴⁴ Armitage, *Origins*; Dobson and Watson, *England's Elizabeth*.

⁴⁵ Gerald Jordan and Nicholas Rogers, "Admirals as Heroes: Patriotism and Liberty in Hanoverian England," *Journal of British Studies* 28, no. 3 (1989); Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁴⁶ Jordan and Rogers, "Admirals."; Nicholas Rogers, *Whigs and Cities: Popular Politics in the Age of Walpole and Pitt* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); Kathleen Wilson, "Empire, Trade and Popular Politics in Mid-Hanoverian Britain: The Case of Admiral Vernon," *Past and Present*, no. 121 (1988).

⁴⁷ Gerrard, *Patriot Opposition*, 102.

gaining riches and lands, and when their navy had thrived on the bravery of individual efforts.

At the same time, the memory of William Shakespeare, the person, his works, and his characters, gained popularity across the political spectrum. This was the period which created many of the most recognizable elements of the Shakespeare industry: affordable editions of his work, critical literary analysis of his writings, discovery of forgotten and lost works, performance of his plays as a key ingredient to the British stage, his commemoration in statues and busts, and the enshrining of Stratford as the capital 'B' Birthplace and a site worthy of pilgrimage.⁴⁸ His characters and words became important idioms through which to express a wide range of political positions and ideas.⁴⁹ David Garrick, the eighteenth century's most prominent actor and theatre manager, was a key motivator in the development of a cult of Shakespeare.⁵⁰ As an

⁴⁸ Emmett L. Avery, "Cibber, King John, and the Students of the Law," *Modern Language Notes* 53, no. 4 (1938); Jean Benedetti, *David Garrick and the Birth of Modern Theatre* (London: Methuen, 2001); Michael Caines, *Shakespeare and the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Michael Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); Don-John Dugas, *Marketing the Bard: Shakespeare in Performance and Print, 1660-1740*. (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2006); Frank E. Halliday, *The Cult of Shakespeare* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., Ltd, 1957); Roger Pringle, "The Rise of Stratford as Shakespeare's Town," in *The History of an English Borough: Stratford-Upon-Avon*, ed. Robert Bearman (Stroud: Sutton Publishing and The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, 1997); Fiona Ritchie and Peter Sabor, eds., *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Peter Sabor and Paul Yachnin, eds., *Shakespeare and the Eighteenth Century* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008); Arthur H. Scouten, "The Increase in Popularity of Shakespeare's Plays in the Eighteenth Century: A Caveat for Interpretors of Stage History," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (1956); Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1990).

⁴⁹ Jonathan Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions: Politics, Theatre, Criticism 1730-1830* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

⁵⁰ Benedetti, *Garrick*; Charles Conaway, "'Thou'rt the Man": David Garrick, William Shakespeare, and the Masculinization of the Eighteenth-Century Stage," *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theatre Research* 19, no. 1 (2004); Tim Fulford, "Britannia's Heart of Oak: Thomson, Garrick and the Language of Eighteenth-Century Patriotism," in *James Thomson: Essays for the Tercentenary*, ed. Richard Terry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000); Alan Kendall, *David Garrick: A Biography by Alan*

actor, he created popular interpretations of Shakespeare's characters. As a manager, he was an active adapter of Shakespeare's plays, changing plot structures, character development, and text to meet the tastes of London audiences. In addition to Garrick's influence, multiple other factors, many predating the actor's premiere appearance on the London stage in 1741, the same year as the unveiling of Shakespeare's statue in Westminster's Abbey's Poets' Corner, were significant to Shakespeare's success, such as the interest in editing his work and the battles over ownership of his "copy."⁵¹

This dissertation hopes to add to this body of literature in several ways. His eighteenth-century reputation was central to the conception of history as a pleasant, unifying, and difference-erasing space, lying outside contemporary political disagreements. The significance of the literary and theatrical products related to Shakespeare in the eighteenth century has resulted in less interest in his constitutive role in the creation of the dominant national narratives. By looking at how Shakespeare was conceived and used as a representative of British history, in addition to his role as a literary giant, this work highlights how the nostalgia and nationalism of the period after the Seven Years' War allowed a greater segment of the population to celebrate him as a person and see in him a valid literary representative of the new Britishness.

Kendall (London: Harrap, 1985); George Winchester Jr. Stone and George M. Kahrl, *David Garrick: A Critical Biography* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979); Peter Thomson, "Celebrity and Rivalry: David [Garrick] and Goliath [Quin]," in *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000*, ed. Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
⁵¹ Avery, "Cibber."; Emmett L. Avery, "The Shakespeare Ladies Club," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (1956); Elizabeth Eger, "'Out Rushed a Female to Protect the Bard': The Bluestocking Defense of Shakespeare," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 65, no. 1/2 (2002); Ingrid Roscoe, "The Monument to the Memory of Shakespeare," *Church Monuments: Journal of the Church Monuments Society* IX (1994); Katherine West Scheil, "'Rouz'd by a Woman's Pen': The Shakespeare Ladies' Club and Reading Habits of Early Modern Women," *Critical Survey* 12, no. 2 (2000); Scouten, "Increase in Popularity."

Curiosity Cabinets

Like five of the glass cases at Don Saltero's, this dissertation presents five moments during in the eighteenth century, spanning approximately fifty years, to display how specific historical ideas were used in a variety of ways at those times. These include three times at which Elizabeth and the men of her era had particular purchase: the period up to and during war with Spain at the end of the 1730s, the middle years of the Seven Years' war, and the later years of the war with the American colonies in the late 1770s and early 1780s. As Shakespeare's popularity followed a different pattern, two moments when he was of particular relevance to public discourse have been examined. The first is the mid- to late 1730s, when there was interest in raising a monument to him in Westminster Abbey. The second is the Shakespeare Jubilee, held at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1769. The purpose of this method was to provide a detailed perspective on how their historical representations were marshalled, what they were believed to represent, and how these trends changed over time.

Each moment was examined through a close analysis of extant printed documents from each moment. These include pamphlets, books, newspapers, periodicals, plays, government and institutional records, and private correspondence. In an attempt to understand how history was used, the emphasis is not on self-identified works of history, but on a variety of modes and genres that sought to use history to inform, to persuade, or to divert. This strategy is different from the more common reliance on either published histories, for Elizabeth, or text analysis of plays, for Shakespeare. The sources examined include a wide variety of drama, prose, and verse -

any writing in which the author called on the memory of Elizabeth, Shakespeare or to a lesser degree, Raleigh, Drake, Cecil, and Dudley. This broad understanding of historical texts and historical authors, together with attention to wider political context within specific contained moments over a longer period of time, gives this project a unique analytical lens.

The newspaper press and the theatre have consequently been important sources for this study.⁵² The popular press grew exponentially in the middle decades of the century, continuing a trend begun in the seventeenth century and sped up by the lapse of the Printing Act in 1695.⁵³ According to Hannah Barker, in the early 1720s, there were approximately twelve newspapers published in London on an at least weekly basis and about twenty provincial papers.⁵⁴ At mid-century, there were forty provincial papers and six weeklies, six tri-weeklies, and six dailies from London. And by 1783, there were nine dailies and ten bi- or tri-weeklies published in the capital, and over seventy provincial papers by the end of the century.⁵⁵

Readership in the eighteenth century is notoriously hard to measure. This stems both from the lack of detailed records of publishers and the complicated ways in which

⁵² Kathleen Wilson, "Citizenship, Empire, and Modernity in the English Provinces, c. 1720-1790," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29 (1995): 72.

⁵³ Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics, and English Society* (Harlow, England: Pearson Education Limited, 2000); Thomas O'Malley, "Religion and the Newspaper Press, 1660-1685: A Study of the *London Gazette*," in *The Press in English Society from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Michael Harris and Alan J. Lee (1986); Joad Raymond, "The Newspaper, Public Opinion, and the Public Sphere in the Seventeenth Century," in *News, Newspapers, and Society in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Joad Raymond (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1999); Woolf, "News in Early Modern England."

⁵⁴ Barker, *Newspapers*, 29.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

printed media were read, performed, heard, and interpreted.⁵⁶ Tone Urstad estimates that certain pro-government pamphlets during Walpole's administration in the 1730s had a publication run of about 10,000 copies, a good sales figure for an average pamphlet at that time.⁵⁷ This number correlates well with the finding of E. A. Reitan, who figured the *Gentleman Magazine*, a popular monthly throughout the century, probably had its highest sales at 10,000 copies per month.⁵⁸ Outside of times of intense political debate, the circulation of weekly and tri-weekly papers might have been closer to 1,000 to 2,000 copies per issue.⁵⁹

The press was an important part of eighteenth-century politics, culture, and sociability. In addition to being a tool for identity formation, Michael Harris argues, the press created an interest in literacy and expanded the communication possibilities of various political groups.⁶⁰ Numerous authors have seen both the changing content and format of the press to be a significant element in politics within and without Westminster.⁶¹ The variety of print sources, their relative novelty, and the diverse ways

⁵⁶ Ibid., 47.

⁵⁷ Urstad, *Sir Robert Walpole's Poets: The Use of Literature as Pro-Government Propaganda, 1721-1742*, 50.

⁵⁸ Reitan, "Popular Cartography," 2.

⁵⁹ Harris, *London Newspapers*, 55-57.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 9.

⁶¹ Jeremy Black, "In Search of a Scandalous Pamphlet: Sir Robert Walpole and the Attempt to Suppress the Publication of Opposition Literature in the United Provinces," *Publishing History* 25(1989); Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1752-1742* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Harris, *London Newspapers in the Age of Walpole*; Robert Harris, *A Patriot Press: National Politics and the London Press in the 1740s* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); Alexander Pettit, *Illusory Consensus: Bolingbroke and the Polemical Response to Walpole, 1730-1737* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997).

and places individuals might encounter them meant that the press was an important aspect of social and intellectual life for a large portion of the British population.⁶²

Given the printed nature of most remaining evidence, a concerted attempt has been made to assess representations of historical figures outside the world of print. To that end, attention was given to references to locations, places, and things that relate to the historical memory of Elizabeth and Shakespeare in order to create a fuller picture of the environments in which history was invoked. Additionally, working from performance studies theory, descriptions of interactions, movement, dance, and bodies have been used to conceptualize the spaces in which theatre, celebrations, parades, and public encounters occurred. Thought has been given, for example, to the act of naming and the experience of walking through squares, streets, and businesses named for historical persons. In the eighteenth century there was an increasing market for objects that represented Shakespeare or Elizabeth, medallions and statuettes cast by Wedgwood, for example.⁶³ Things serve an important symbolic function, whether by creating notions of value through their exchange, as argued by Arjun Appadurai, or in creating class and local identities, as shown by Lorna Weatherill, in her study of

⁶² Jürgen Habermas, Sara Lennox, and Frank Lennox, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964)," *New German Critique*, no. 3 (1974); Pincus, "Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture."; Raymond, "Introduction."; Woolf, "News in Early Modern England."

⁶³ Aileen Dawson, *British Museum Masterpieces of Wedgwood*, second ed. (London: British Museum Press, 1995); Barabara Hodgdon, *The Shakespeare Trade: Performances and Appropriations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998); Eliza Meteyard, *The Life of Josiah Wedgwood from Private Correspondence and Family Papers*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (London: Cornmarket Press Limited, 1970).

seventeenth- and eighteenth-century domestic consumption patterns.⁶⁴ Material products could reflect political opinions, as in the late 1730s against Walpole, and culturally significant moments, like the Shakespeare Jubilee, both of which spawned an impressive range of mugs, ribbons, badges, and prints. City and court records also provide the occasional glimpse into the material world; on 15 April 1759, Joseph Adams was found guilty and fined 10 *d.* for stealing a 12-inch bust of Shakespeare, which had a market value of 12 shillings.⁶⁵ The description of the crime seems to indicate that Mr. Adams stole this bust from a cabinet full of other objects, and while we can only guess at what might have motivated his choice, it is interesting that his hand landed on Shakespeare.

The breadth and amount of research examined for this study has been made possible by technological innovations in the last few decades. Digitized, searchable databases that combine the holdings of numerous libraries and archives, such as the Eighteenth-Century Collection Online, the digitized Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Burney Collection Newspapers, and Literature Online were fundamental to this study. They allowed a long period of time to be examined, giving this work a deeper and broader reach than was previously available in a manageable time-frame.

⁶⁴ Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*.

⁶⁵ The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, Joseph Adams, Theft > grand larceny, 25th April 1759. Reference number t17590425-20.

Stepping back into Don Saltero's

If James Salter sought to make his mark on the crowded coffee-house business, he succeeded. For about a hundred years, customers could peruse his collection on the banks of the Thames. In the nineteenth century, the location and its museum were still remembered as a site of wonder and entertainment, as in Edward Bulwer-Lytton's 1829 novel, *Devereux*, and in other late-nineteenth-century publications on coffeehouses.⁶⁶ But while later authors and coffee-house *connoisseurs* might reminisce about its glories, by the end of the eighteenth century, it was no longer striking the right chord with contemporary habitués. While it is unclear to whom the coffee-house passed on Mrs. Hall's death in the 1760s, it remained the same coffee-house-cum-curiosity-museum until 1799. At that time, all Salter's rarities were sold at auction for a "paltry £50."⁶⁷ This collection of curiosities, piled on top of each other, had lost its value and its appeal. Further, the broader political and social space in which coffeehouses thrived had changed.⁶⁸ New ideas about public space and display emerged, and with them, different ideas about how individuals related to and used history.

Don Saltero's Elizabethan items demonstrate that an interest in the British past was increasingly part of a marketable industry of knowledge presentation that included publications, travelling libraries, art galleries, and museums.⁶⁹ But in its Don Saltero

⁶⁶ John Timb, *Anecdote Lives of Wits and Humorists* (London: R. Bentley, 1872).

⁶⁷ Altick, *Shows of London*. The premises remained a tavern until 1867 when it was remodelled and made into a private residence.

⁶⁸ Cowan, "Publicity and Privacy."

⁶⁹ Jonathan Barry, "The Press and the Politics of Culture in Bristol 1660-1775," in *Culture, Politics and Society in Britain, 1660-1800*, ed. Jeremy Black and Jeremy Gregory (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1991); Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995); Bennett, "Stored Virtue."; Philip Connell, "Death and the Author:

formulation it had a specific historical moment of relevance. Scholarship on coffeehouses has tended to focus on their roles in the development of a sphere of publicness, the gendered quality of that space, and the role of the press, commerce, consumption, and empire within it. What Don Saltero's coffeehouse exemplifies is a sense of history and historical knowledge that fundamentally intertwined with these developments. Looking at eighteenth-century uses of English history highlights two ways in which examining how history was used and understood adds to our understanding of the period: the rationalization of historical knowledge as a part of both nationalism and imperialism, and the growing sense of modernity that distanced the past from the present.

These developments are examined across five chapters. Chapter One examines the importance of Elizabethan historical personages in the discourse of the late 1730s and early 1740s around war with Spain over trading rights in the Caribbean. For the Tory Patriots and the amalgam of merchants, disaffected Whigs, and London citizens that supported them, the history of Elizabeth's era, particularly the naval defeat of Spain's Great Armada, had important weight in contemporary politics, diplomacy, and economics. It was a tool to challenge the newly-minted Hanoverian Dynasty.

Chapter Two looks at movements that sought to use Shakespeare during roughly the same period. While efforts to have a monument erected in his honour at

Westminster Abbey and the Meanings of the Literary Monument," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38, no. 4 (2005); Rosie Dias, "A World of Pictures': Pall Mall and the Topography of Display, 1780-00," in *Georgian Geographies: Essays on Space, Place and Landscape in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Miles Ogborn and Charles W. J. Withers (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004); Ellis, "Coffee-House Libraries."; Hodgdon, *Shakespeare Trade*; Kaufman, *Borrowings*; Leask, *Curiosity*.

Westminster Abbey began in 1736, it was not until 1741 that the statue in Poets' Corner was unveiled. Looking at the Licensing Act of 1737, the actions of the Ladies' Shakespear Club, and discussions of the importance of his history plays, Shakespeare is demonstrated to be a liminal national cultural figure, one that appealed primarily to those campaigning for Patriotic Toryism. Attitudes towards Shakespeare betrayed a deep insecurity with the role of the past in the contemporary life, a fear betrayed in discussions of the power of the dead over the living and the role of ghosts.

Using three different types of commemoration, Chapter Three demonstrates how, by the middle of the century, despite the continued existence of numerous meaningful, immediate uses of the Elizabethan memory, these were increasingly being overshadowed by the growing popularity of commercialized, rationalized, and self-consciously historical narratives. In debates about the Seven Years' War, her memory was still useful, if limited by its role as a delineator of the modern moment. In the celebrations of its foundations, the Westminster School sought to use new forms of communication to share its paternalist and Tory politics. And, while the Enlightened histories of David Hume and William Robertson tried to make evident the rational lessons inherent in the past, other forms of publication, specifically jest books, subverted and challenged the primacy of reasoned, narrative uses of the past. At the mid-point of the war, Elizabeth was simultaneously evidence of older forms of historical knowledge, manifested in pageants, effigies, and humour, and an important piece in the story of a rationalized and commercialized British past.

In Chapter Four, Shakespeare reaches his eighteenth-century apogee during David Garrick's Stratford Jubilee in 1769. The Jubilee emphasized the importance of newer constructions of history, as in Garrick's increasing desire to dramaturgically historicize his theatrical productions, and the role of Shakespeare as a purely cultural and historical construction, in contrast to any interest in his literary prowess. Subsequently, the three-day Jubilee festival was re-interpreted, rewritten, and staged. Garrick's version became the most successful play of the eighteenth century. Its success drew on a combination of shrewd showmanship and the incorporation of dominant ideas of nationalism.

Finally, Chapter Five concludes by looking at uses of Elizabeth's memory in debates about the war with the American Colonies and in two theatrical productions of that time, *The Prophecy* and Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The Critic*, both from 1779. It argues that, while the productions based on the memory of Elizabeth's reign were entertaining and popular, their value was understood to be on a personal level, dulling their political edge. The significance of the Elizabethan period lay in its position at the originating moment of the modern era. By the closing decades of the century, the differences between the past and present increasingly seemed more significant than any similarities.

The consequences of changing historical understandings during the Georgian period have not been sufficiently examined. Kathleen Wilson, however, notes that this was a "pivotal" moment in reconstructing history to support "existing constellations of

power or the demands for their radical reformation.”⁷⁰ Yet, neither how that reconstruction occurred, nor how it related to larger social and political trends, has been sufficiently studied. Few works look at how history is used casually, as a rhetorical device or as entertainment – those lesser, popular forms of history. This dissertation wants to provide new insights into the relationships among knowledge, history, nationalism, and modernity. Increasingly, over the course of the eighteenth century, the Elizabethan period was drained of its political power. In this transformation, those for whom it still represented examples of viable alternatives to the existing configurations of power and policy were ridiculed for holding on to irrational beliefs, and dismissed as purveyors of bad history. In a rapidly changing world, a world of growing cities, changing demographic patterns, and faster communication technology, elite culture made history knowable and unthreatening. This work hopes to provide insights into the ways in which historical understandings can be part of capitalist, hegemonic systems of power, and to thereby propose spaces in which that power can be contested.

⁷⁰ Wilson, *Sense*, 21.

Chapter One

Reviving the Armada

Politics, Queen Elizabeth, and the Battle over Ownership of the British Past, 1737-1742

George II and his prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole, declared war against Spain on 19 October 1739. It was a war that both the king and Walpole had spent years trying to avoid, yet the combined pressure of a strong parliamentary opposition at home and the diplomatic blunders of the South Sea Company abroad had contrived to make peace increasingly untenable. The groups in favour of the war demanded that Spain be brought to heel for their infringements on British trading rights in the Caribbean. For Walpole, these arguments demonstrated a failure to grasp the current situation, compounded by an even graver misunderstanding of the past. The purpose of this chapter is to examine how personages of the past, specifically Queen Elizabeth and the famous men of her era, were used in this debate and the ensuing war.

In the months preceding the declaration of war, the parliamentary opposition clamoured for the release of diplomatic documents relating to a peace treaty signed with Spain in January 1739. They believed that secret intra-governmental communications would prove that the agreement, known as the Convention of the Pardo, had been made on unfavourable terms for the British. Walpole refused, defending the government's prerogative to support the current European balance of power, in which antagonizing Spain, and thereby its ally, France, was not in Britain's best interest. The problem he

faced was that one of the most persuasive arguments against the government was related not to the current situation in Europe, nor to the Americas, but to the success of Queen Elizabeth against the Spanish one hundred and forty years earlier.

To counter these claims, Walpole explained to the House of Commons that Elizabeth's reign could be interpreted differently. Perhaps, it was not her sound judgment, nor her excellent advisors, nor her superior capacities as a ruler, nor a Protestant destiny that led to the defeat of the Spanish Armada. Perhaps, argued Walpole, it was only the chanciness of the weather that had created the victory. "Had not the Winds and Waves," he declared, "fought more effectually for her [...] than her Sailors and Soldiers, though it must be own'd, they were very brave Men, I am afraid the Character of her Reign would have suffered, and that not a little."¹ A government should not base its decisions, as she had, on the mischievous character of "fortune." "Any other Means than those of Negociation," according to Walpole, "depend[ed] upon a Thousand Accidents, and [were] liable to a Thousand Disappointments."² Elizabeth may have prevailed, but apart from the unreliability of British weather, the lessons of 1588 could not, according to Walpole, form the basis of sound international policy in 1739.

Many disagreed. Despite Walpole, a majority continued to feel that the past was pertinent to the issues of the late 1730s. The struggle with Spain over trading rights in the Caribbean led to a debate in the British Parliament, in the press, and, more broadly, in the public sphere about the value of historical examples. For the Tory Patriots and

¹ *The History and the Proceedings of the House of Commons*, vol. 1738-1739, (London: Richard Chandler, 1742), 351. Unless otherwise indicated, spelling, punctuation and capitalization are as in the original document.

² *Ibid.*

their ideological allies of the late 1730s, historical examples such as the defeat of Spain's Great Armada in the time of Queen Elizabeth I were important in contemporary politics, diplomacy, and economics. The amalgam of merchants, Tories, and disaffected 'Patriot' Whigs was able to argue persuasively that the Armada episode, the era in which it occurred, and the lessons they believed it taught about the nature of the British people, should have an important place in the developing British national identity. Their understanding of the past informed key aspects of an identity, which would become increasingly hegemonic and ideologically powerful over the rest of the century. This identity focused on a strong, active masculinity, with particular attention paid to honour and reputation, an aggressive foreign policy based on the importance of trade and the colonies, and the importance of the Protestant religion.

These debates underline the vibrant and malleable authority given to historical examples in the late 1730s. An examination of how the past was used before and during the war with Spain in a range of printed sources exposes the ways in which Elizabethan history could be understood and wielded that would no longer be available by the 1780s. In the 1730s it was accessible to numerous groups through a variety of sources. It represented multiple possible narratives, personages, and lessons. Successful discourses about the past had to draw from this wealth of conceptions of the past, not impose upon it. Contemporaries demonstrated an interest in the significance of the past to the present. Few denied the importance of historical examples as guides to possible present actions, though which past events in particular, and their meanings, were open to

interpretation. In the 1730s, the British past was felt to have concrete relevance to the political and public debates about British nationhood.

The value of Elizabethan history in the 1730s and early 1740s underscores several important issues. First, the Elizabethan age represented a lens through which to examine Britain's relationship with the other European powers. It suggested to the Patriots that Britain's destiny lay beyond the boundaries of the European continent. They wanted Britain's focus to be across the waters, on the world at large – at a potential empire. Second, the Elizabethan age encouraged examination of the importance of history and its relationship to the present. How much could be learned from it and how powerful a tool was it? Finally, history seemed to hold immense potential force that could convince those without the franchise. Those involved in the production of public discourse were excited by its power, but also concerned about the moral responsibility of using that force. The debate around the Elizabethan era provides important insights into the political significance of out-of-doors politics. When taken together, these issues demonstrate the degree to which history was not just one random tool in a toolbox of political arguments, but was a particularly vital and important part in the construction of political life at this time, for those in power and those outside of it.

The development and growth of the newspaper industry in Britain shaped how historical information was communicated and evaluated. In *London Newspapers in the Age of Walpole*, Michael Harris argues that the press became particularly influential during Walpole's tenure.³ Greater professional experience allowed papers to become

³ Harris, *London Newspapers*.

more commercially viable, thereby creating more occasion for writers to contemplate social and political change. Recognition of the ability of the press to represent and influence opinions was also growing and exploited more fully.⁴ Tone Urstad has shown that, despite opinions to the contrary, propaganda was very important to Walpole and his administration. They paid authors, publishers, and printers to produce and disseminate pro-government materials. They ensured circulation by buying their own works and sending them to the clergy, gentry, and elites outside the major urban centres. They also ensured their availability across the country by supplying copies free of charge to high traffic locations, such as public houses and inns.⁵ And while the influence of the print media on government policy was not generally significant until the last third of the century, in moments of crisis, like the debate about the war with Spain, the press did have some sway over political decision-makers.⁶

In the charged and political public sphere of the 1730s, the most prominent historical figure was Queen Elizabeth. She featured notably in the literature and poetry of the period. Christine Gerrard argues that “*the distinctive hallmark*” of the Patriot Opposition to Walpole was their use of “British myth and legend.”⁷ Focusing on the use of literary icons, particularly Edmund Spenser, she argues that images of the

⁴ Jeremy Black, "In Search of a Scandalous Pamphlet: Sir Robert Walpole and the Attempt to Suppress the Publication of Opposition Literature in the United Provinces," *Publishing History* 25 (1989); Gerrard, *Patriot Opposition*; Harris, *London Newspapers*; Harris, *Patriot Press*; Alexander Pettit, "Propaganda, Public Relations, and the "Remarks on the Craftsman's Vindication of His Two Honble Patrons, in His Paper of May 22, 1731", " *Huntington Library Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (1994); Alexander Pettit, *Illusory Consensus: Bolingbroke and the Polemical Response to Walpole, 1730-1737* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997); Tone Sundt Urstad, *Sir Robert Walpole's Poets: The Use of Literature as Pro-Government Propaganda, 1721-1742* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999).

⁵ Urstad, *Walpole's Poets*, 50.

⁶ Barker, *Newspapers*, 135-141.

⁷ Gerrard, *Patriot Opposition*, 99. Original emphasis.

Elizabethan past were crucial to the Patriot worldview at the time. While she sees a similar interest in other historical periods, like the Gothic, she argues that Elizabeth's period provided the most powerful trope through which the opposition could express its ideas about the nation. By examining the wider social and political worlds that found meaning in the uses of the Elizabethan past, this chapter expands upon these arguments, considering how those ideas and discourses affected the politics and ideas of those who wrote them, read them, listened to them, and cared about them.

History was important to the people of the 1730s, and the debate over the meaning of Elizabeth's legacy was felt to have real political significance. During this period, when the historical distance separating the sixteenth from the eighteenth centuries was smaller and less significant than it would be later, the Queen's memory was mobilized in several significant areas of debate. First, Elizabeth was used in arguments by the opposition that sought to focus the politics and the economics of the nation away from Europe and across the waters, later known as a blue-water policy. This tactic coincided with the concerns about the favouritism shown by the first and second Georges toward the affairs of their German provinces and the European continent. Second, Elizabeth represented an argument about the value of historical example and the role of the past in decisions about the future. Third, the more valuable the past was, the more important it was for each political party to control it. Discussions of the use of Elizabeth masked a larger debate over the role of the non-voting population, particularly the urban crowds, in the political fate of the nation. Finally, Elizabeth's memory in this period helped to create lasting national images. In the arguments over the war with

Spain, the British past was a pliant and relevant tool in deciding how the present should proceed.

War with Spain

By the late 1730s, the conflict with Spain had been brewing for years, if not decades, over trading and search-and-seizure rights in the colonies of the western hemisphere. The Spanish believed that the British South Sea Company was trading beyond the rights it had been awarded by an early-eighteenth-century contract, the *Asiento*. The Spanish also claimed that residents and traders in the British colonies of the Americas were trading with the Spanish colonies in violation of that agreement. The British, for their part, were upset that the Spanish, *via* their *guardacostas*, were using unduly brutal measures against individual ships' crews in an attempt to curb this illegal trade. They also rejected the rights of other nations to search British merchant ships, to detain them, or to seize their goods. Finally, the new British colony of Georgia was causing tension as its boundaries extended further and further south, too close to Florida for Spanish tastes. These complaints were significant, but they were too small in scale to incite an eighteenth-century war.

Rather, historians attribute the spark that started the war, after this long period of smouldering tensions, to various causes. Brendan Simms positions the conflict within the ebb and flow of European dynastic rivalries in the eighteenth century. He emphasizes changes in the alliance between the French and Spanish, thereby affecting

the entire European balance of power, as a cause of the outbreak of the war.⁸ Philip Woodfine focuses on the diplomatic motivations and the communication and decision-making processes among the political elite in the lead-up to the war. He sees the personal nature of the diplomatic process to have been significant in increasing tensions between the two nations.⁹ Ultimately, however, he sees the machinations and refusals of the South Sea Company to be most to blame for the outbreak of the war. The South Sea Company was a dominant agent in the negotiations between the British and Spanish, as a plaintiff, looking for money owed it by the Spanish Government, as a defendant for violating portions of the *Asiento*, and as the banker to both parties. Its priorities conflicted repeatedly with those of the British government and were the decisive factor in turning diplomatic differences into warfare.

Both Simms and Woodfine underplay the importance of domestic public pressure as a cause for the declaration of war. In their emphasis on the importance of external pressures, dynastic ones for Simms and diplomatic ones for Woodfine, they seek to diminish the role of popular support for the war with Spain that has been highlighted in many other narratives, including, for example, that of so early a commentator as Edmund Burke. Burke described the Anglo-Spanish War as the “fruit of popular desire.”¹⁰ Walpole, he believed, had been forced into the conflict by “inflamed” crowds that had been ignited by politicians, orators, and poets. Other, more recent, authors

⁸ Simms, *Three Victories*.

⁹ Philip Woodfine, “The Anglo-Spanish War of 1739,” in *The Origins of War in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jeremy Black (Edinburgh: J. Donald, 1987); Philip Woodfine, *Britannia's Glories: The Walpole Ministry and the 1739 War with Spain* (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 1998).

¹⁰ Edmund Burke, *Mr. Burke's Three Letters Addressed to a Member O the Present Parliament, on the Proposals for Peace with the Regicide Directory of France. 1796.*, vol. IV, (Boston: John West, 1807), 352.

might understand the role of wider public opinion differently, but they tend to agree with Burke about the importance of domestic politics in Walpole's decision to declare war.¹¹ Even for a historian like Simms, who wishes to see the internal situation as less significant than the dynastic political machinations, the popular support for the war is hard to ignore. Simms admits that the public pressure made this conflict "the first and last time in the eighteenth century [that] Britain [would enter] into a major war primarily for colonial and commercial reasons."¹² Within Britain, the widespread support for the war helped overcome the usual political reservations against a costly conflict.

For a long time, the war that resulted from these issues was known as the War of Jenkins's Ear, a name originally coined by a biographer of Walpole at the end of the eighteenth century, and which Philip Woodfine has shown to be a misnomer.¹³ During a debate about merchants' complaints regarding the Spanish in the House of Commons in 1738, Captain Robert Jenkins was supposed to have dramatically produced his ear, severed by a zealous *guardacosta* and stored in a bottle. Captain Jenkins did lose an ear, but much earlier in the decade, in 1731. He never produced it in the Parliament, nor did it in any way provoke the war that was retroactively named after it. The ear was, in fact, only one of many ears lost by British seamen to Spanish soldiers, along with a variety of

¹¹ Armitage, *Origins*, 182; Jordan and Rogers, "Admirals," 205; Wilson, "Admiral Vernon and Popular Politics," 96.

¹² Simms, *Three Victories*, 273.

¹³ Woodfine, "The Anglo-Spanish War of 1739," 193-195; Woodfine, *Britannia's Glories*, 1-2.

other body parts, during the skirmishes of the 1720s and 1730s. According to Woodfine, the causes of the war are found “not at all” in the loss of Captain Jenkins’s ear.¹⁴

Whatever its name, the conflict with Spain began with an unexpected bang, but was quickly reduced to a whimper. Shortly after war was declared, Vice-Admiral Edward Vernon, brought out of retirement, took the Spanish colonial town of Porto Bello, in what is now Panama, with only six ships. News of this victory took Britain by storm.¹⁵ As a modern-day Drake, Vernon quickly became a national hero, representing both British naval strength and the popular opposition to Walpole. But the auspicious beginning, and enthusiasm at home, did little to help the soldiers and sailors in the Caribbean. As time went by, the early victories could not be consolidated. A combination of lack of resources, disease, bickering among the naval and military leadership, and a strong Spanish resistance led to British defeats and, finally, a stalemate. According to Simms, by 1742, of the 10,000 men sent on this campaign, 7,000 had died of disease, mostly while still on board British ships.¹⁶ But despite these increasingly poor showings in the Americas, enthusiasm at home remained strong. In the election of 1741, Walpole’s majority was halved, and Vernon himself, now an icon of Tory Patriotism, was returned in three separate ridings. Though still in power, Walpole was no longer as convincingly in control as the “prime” minister and, after further losses in the elections of 1742, he resigned from government.

¹⁴ Woodfine, "The Anglo-Spanish War of 1739," 205.

¹⁵ See Jordan and Rogers, "Admirals."; Wilson, "Admiral Vernon and Popular Politics."

¹⁶ Simms, *Three Victories*, 284.

The interest in and agitation over the war, the successes and popularity of Vernon, and the unpopularity of Walpole changed British politics. In their examinations of the popular politics of this time, Nicholas Rogers and Kathleen Wilson have both demonstrated the diversity and extent of extra-parliamentary political activity, caused by a variety of ideological and contemporary issues.¹⁷ Rogers argues that crowd participation was a constitutive element of politics and society of the eighteenth century.¹⁸ In his discussion of the popularity of Admiral Vernon, Rogers argues that popular patriotism had a significant influence on parliamentary politics.¹⁹ For Wilson, the celebrations of Vernon demonstrated how London urban middling groups engaged in commercialized politics. From all the commemorative souvenirs produced during the war and relating to the successes of Vernon, she argues that they evinced widespread support for the imperial project.²⁰

The Anglo-Spanish War of 1739 was similar in many ways to other situations that escalated into armed warfare in eighteenth-century Europe. It was part of the larger dynastic politics of the century and a result of the need for resources to fight competing rival alliances. The causes of the war were woven into the local, national, and international power relationships of the period, aggravated by the complex personal networks of diplomacy. It was, however, also dissimilar from other conflicts. Its immediate causes lay outside of Europe, and it was fought entirely outside of it. In

¹⁷ Jordan and Rogers, "Admirals."; Nicholas Rogers, "Resistance to Oligarchy: The City Opposition to Walpole and His Successors, 1725-47," in *London in the Age of Reform*, ed. John Stevenson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977); Rogers, *Crowds*; Wilson, "Admiral Vernon and Popular Politics."; Wilson, *Sense*.

¹⁸ Rogers, *Crowds*, 17-18.

¹⁹ Jordan and Rogers, "Admirals," 222.

²⁰ Wilson, "Admiral Vernon and Popular Politics," 77.

Britain, at least, it caused a public response rarely seen, which still reverberated for Edmund Burke sixty years later; it was “the most popular and sought-after conflict in British history,” according to Simms.²¹ And in the popularity of this war, the role of British history was deemed particularly significant.

Representing Elizabeth

Throughout the debates regarding the war with Spain, Elizabethan Britain figured prominently. The opposition to Walpole, which favoured an aggressive stance against the Spanish “depredations,” frequently and effectively marshalled images of Elizabeth’s period to the aid of their cause. Their use of her era as a totem for the political ideas they espoused was so successful that Walpole, his Whig supporters, and the press at his disposal frequently found themselves needing to address and rebuff claims made on Elizabeth’s behalf. She was a central focus around which the issues raised by the debate about the war were discussed.

By the 1730s, there were numerous standard historical works from which educated, literate Britons might learn about the feats of the sixteenth century. Some of the better-known works included William Camden’s *Britannia* (1586), Richard Verstegen’s *Restitution of Decayed Intelligence* (1605), and M. de Rapin Thoyas’s *L’histoire d’Angleterre (The History of England)* (1724). But the most influential history of Elizabeth for the widest range of individuals in the eighteenth century was John

²¹ Simms, *Three Victories*, 275.

Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* (1563), better known as the *Book of Martyrs*.²² Foxe portrayed Elizabeth as the saviour of the Protestant religion, contrasting her actions with Mary I's attacks on Protestants from all walks of life. The ubiquity of this work, mandated in Anglican churches across the country, and its depiction of the young queen created a standard understanding of what she represented: hope for the greatness of the British nation under her reign and the importance of the Protestant religion to that identity.

Though there were affordable histories of the Elizabethan period available at this time, some as cheap as three pence, most people would have gleaned their knowledge of her era from sources other than the written word.²³ Queen Elizabeth featured in the lives of ordinary Britons in a variety of ways. Her ascension day, November 17th, was celebrated throughout this period. These celebrations were frequently festivals at which criticism of the current monarchy could be voiced.²⁴ They featured bell ringing, sermons on her era, school plays, and toasting.²⁵ They also involved a physical re-enactment and commemoration of the past through the retracing of her steps from the Tower to the King's Head Tavern in Fenchurch-street, which was said to be the first place she stopped

²² John Foxe, *The Book of Martyrs: Containing an Account of the Sufferings and Deaths of the Protestants in the Reign of Queen Mary the First* (London: John Hart and John Lewis, 1732).

²³ The cost of 3 d. can be compared with most political pamphlets which cost 1 s. See the advertisement for the cheap serial publication, "The History of the Life and Reign of the most Victorious Queen Elizabeth," *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, 17 July 1738.

²⁴ Rogers, *Crowds*, 23.

²⁵ "London, November 25.," *Common Sense or The Englishman's Journal*, 25 November 1738; "London, November 14.," *Read's Weekly Journal Or British Gazetteer*, 24 November 1739; "London.," *London Evening Post*, 17 November 1741; "London.," *Daily Gazetteer*, 18 November 1741; "London.," *Daily Gazetteer*, 18 November 1742; "London.," *Country Journal or The Craftsman*, 20 November 1742.

upon being freed.²⁶ Elizabeth also appeared as a permanent feature of the cultural landscape through the naming of objects and places after her. There was a well-advertised pub on Tavistock-Street, in Covent Garden, called the Queen Elizabeth Pub, and a Queen Elizabeth's walk in Newington, Middlesex.²⁷ Numerous ships were named after her. She was also a part of the oral culture of the period, featured, for example, in old songs such as "A joyful Song of the deserved Praises of good Queen Elizabeth" published in *A Collection of Old Ballads* in 1738, which told of her exploits at Tilbury and her victory over the Armada.²⁸ Finally, she was recalled as part of the legal system of Britain. Laws from her reign, relating to an assortment of issues such as poor relief, libel, and the fishery in the Thames, were frequently cited in debates over a range of social and legal issues.²⁹

Despite the wealth of ways through which individuals could connect with the historical memory of Elizabeth, during the late 1730s certain aspects of that memory were particularly potent. While commentators in the 1730s and 1740s rarely referred to a "golden era," and, as Jack Lynch points out, the term "Renaissance" was not used at all, Elizabeth's reign still represented a singularly great period in British history.³⁰ Its eminence came from a combination of her capacities as a ruler, including her support of the Protestant religion, her international successes, and her support of trade and

²⁶ "London," *Daily Gazetteer*, 15 November 1738.

²⁷ *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, 20 June 1738. "London," *Weekly Miscellany*, 4 November 1738.

²⁸ *A Collection of Old Ballads. Corrected from the Best and Most Ancient Copies Extant. With Introductions Historical and Critical. Illustrated with Copper Plates.*, 2nd ed., vol. 3 of 3, (London: J. Roberts, C. Corbet, and J. Wood, 1738).

²⁹ "The Case of Libels Farther Considered," *Country Journal or The Craftsman*, 22 April 1738. "Lambert, Mayor," *Daily Gazetteer*, 16 September 1741.

³⁰ Lynch, *Age of Elizabeth*, 1.

imperial expansion. These qualities were not uncontested, but they were so frequently cited by authors and politicians of all political persuasions that they can be seen to form the outlines of a collective memory from which she was invoked in debates about contemporary issues.

The strength of Elizabeth's leadership was perceived by both sides of the political divide to rest on a combination of her good management of Parliament, her intelligent choice of advisors, and her skill in negotiating the popular support of her subjects. In her, said an anonymous chronicler, "was center'd both the Politician and the Hero."³¹ In the first years of her reign, she was believed to have ably dealt with an intransigent opposition.³² Most authors saw a difference between this early period, when she used a strong hand to manage her parliament, and the latter part of her reign, when she was less likely to have used such authoritarian measures. Tory commentators tended to emphasize the lack of corruption in her reign. Whig authors and politicians, supporters of Walpole, tended to argue that the autocratic means that she had used legitimized the use of similarly anti-democratic actions in contemporary politics, particularly regarding the use of placemen in parliament.³³ Her leadership in times of war was seen very positively, though there were exceptions, such as Walpole's speech quoted above. If the quality of her leadership was widely agreed upon, what constituted the praise-worthy acts of her reign was more debatable. The majority of authors felt that she had acted

³¹ *The Life and Reign of That Excellent Princess Queen Elizabeth, from Her Birth to Her Death: With the Whole Proceedings of the Divorce of King Henry VIII from Queen Catherine*, (London: printed, sold by the booksellers in town and country, 1738), iv.

³² *Daily Gazetteer*, 18 February 1742.

³³ R. Freeman, "To a Freeholder in the Country," *Daily Gazetteer*, 6 February 1740. See also, John Selwyn, Junior, Esquire to Parliament, 1739. *The History and Proceedings of the House of Commons*, vol. 1739, (London: Richard Chandler, 1742), 207.

with “vigour” and fought bravely for the Protestant religion and the “honour” of the English nation.³⁴ Some, mostly supporters of Walpole, felt that she had acted with patience, making “her first business to restore the strength and spirits of the nation,” before engaging in war.³⁵ In both interpretations, however, aggressive or patient, her actions were interpreted as wise and successful.

Elizabeth was characterised as an excellent leader of men, able to gain and retain the support of the whole nation. Both parties believed that she had been able adeptly to handle politics within and outside of Parliament. It was felt that she knew the importance of popular support and strove not to lose the “affection of any part of her people.”³⁶ Her fiscal policies also endeared her to her subjects.³⁷ Even in her more heavy-handed policies, like the constraints she put on freedom of expression and on debate in the House of Commons, or her well-used prerogative powers, she was seen to have acted shrewdly and with the approval of the “common people” in mind.³⁸

She was frequently believed to have selected the best men to advise her in government. In her choice of ministers, Elizabeth had wisely excluded “no virtue,” admitted no vice.³⁹ Yet, while agreeing about this premise, Tories and Whigs differed in their interpretations of the meaning of it. In September and October 1737, the *Daily*

³⁴ *Country Journal or The Craftsman*, 29 October 1737.

³⁵ *Daily Gazetteer*, 18 February 1742.

³⁶ "Farther Considerations on the True Nature of Government," *Daily Gazetteer*, 1 January 1742.

³⁷ "To Caleb D'anvers, Esq.," *Country Journal or The Craftsman*, 27 October 1739.

³⁸ Freeman, "To a Freeholder in the Country," *Daily Gazetteer*, 6 February 1740. "Farther Considerations on the True Nature of Government," *Daily Gazetteer*, 1 January 1742.

³⁹ Britannicus, "To the Author of Old Common Sense," *Old Common Sense or The Englishman's Journal*, 11 March 1738. Robert (1703-1764) Dodsley, *The First Book of the Chronicle of the Kings of England, from William the Conqueror to the Reign of Queen Elizabeth. Written in the Manner of the Ancient Jewish Historians. By Nathan Ben Saddi, a Priest of the Jews.*, The third edition ed, (London: T. Cooper, 1741), 44-46.

Gazetteer, the major pro-government publication, published a long essay on the life and times of William Cecil, Lord Burleigh. The piece formed the major editorial content over five issues. In the last instalment, the author, R. C., explained that this lengthy article had been published to show the similarities between the life and career of Elizabeth's closest advisor and his modern-day equivalent. "Have we not seen," asked R. C., "Sir R[obert] W[alpole] rising exactly in the same way? [...] [d]ischarging those offices in a manner which even heightens their lustre?"⁴⁰ Ostensibly the purpose of these articles had been to demonstrate the "true sources of Queen Elizabeth's glory," that is, her excellent minister, but the actual aim was to praise and excuse Walpole through a parallel between him and Burleigh. The similarities between the two formed an extensive list. Points of comparison included rising to the heights of governmental power based on merit not birth, encountering resistance from a hard-headed aristocracy but eventually winning many over, "induring [*sic*] adversity with firmness," steering the country through difficult times, and gaining the trust of the monarch. The final essay replied to several of the major, contemporary complaints about Walpole, such as his accumulation of a huge personal fortune through his control of offices, by demonstrating that he was acting no differently than Burleigh had. Burleigh had also thought it appropriate for his station to demonstrate "a proper Degree of Magnificence in his Houshold [*sic*]." Such riches "were not in Queen Elizabeth's Days held to be ill Qualities."⁴¹ How "can we be profuse in our praises of Queen Elizabeth's

⁴⁰ R.C., *Daily Gazetteer*, 21 October 1737.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Administration,” R. C. asked, “and be silent under [this] Administration, from whence we derive many blessings which were not known under her's [*sic*]?”⁴²

Opposition writers were far from silent about the current administration. Some argued that Walpole's actions would not have gained him success during Elizabeth's reign. In the last of a list of questions in reply to R. C., the *Country Journal* asked if Elizabeth had ever “[given] her minister power to corrupt the fountain of all law and justice, by bribery without doors, and place and pensions within?”⁴³ Whatever Burleigh's faults, Walpole's policies were so odious that an excellent leader such as Elizabeth would never have permitted his crimes and offences.⁴⁴ Other authors sought to reply to the equation of Walpole with Burleigh by emphasizing the differences between the two periods. The problems faced during the current conflict with the Spanish were so much greater and so much more dangerous than the evil-doings of sixteenth-century Spain that no analogy could rightly be made.⁴⁵ Finally, mudslinging was always an option. The author of the *Country Journal's* retort to R. C. claimed the analogy was false as it was the product of a pen that had been paid to make the comparison. The paper reprinted a “Grand Remonstrance” it claimed to have been written by R. C. some time earlier. The “Remonstrance” was a virulent attack on Walpole's government and private property, advocating more political power for the people and a redistribution of wealth. For the *Country Journal*, this was proof that R. C.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ *Country Journal or The Craftsman*, 29 October 1737.

⁴⁴ Milton, “On Political Rewards and Punishments,” *Champion Or Evening Advertiser*, 25 February 1742.

⁴⁵ *Country Journal or The Craftsman*, 29 October 1737.

had given up his own beliefs for a government paycheque, invalidating any claims he made to impartiality on the topic.

One of Elizabeth's key attributes for eighteenth-century commentators was her instrumental role in the establishment of the Protestant religion. She was a "glorious" princess, a "beloved Protestant," who had saved Protestantism at home and helped the cause on the Continent.⁴⁶ In books about her life, the history of the monarchy, or the history of England, she was frequently featured as the protector of the Protestant faith.⁴⁷ At a time when political discourse found faction and division to be the root of many problems, authors praised her ability to tread a religious middle ground.⁴⁸ While some did criticise her intolerance of Puritanism, her tough attitude against Catholicism was roundly supported.⁴⁹

Regarding the particularly pertinent issue of trade in the New World, Elizabeth was held up as its progenitor, the patron saint of English imperialism. She was believed to have taken several measures to encourage commercial growth in her country. She was credited with having encouraged domestic production at the expense of foreign imports.⁵⁰ She was widely believed to have supported colonization in the new world,

⁴⁶ *The Certainty of Protestants a Safer Foundation Than the Pretended Infallibility of Papists.*, (Dublin: R. Reilly, 1738), 9.

⁴⁷ James Anderson, *The New Book of Constitutions of the Antient and Honourable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons. Containing Their History, Charges, Regulations, &C. ... For the Use of the Lodges*, (London: Brothers Cæsar Ward and Richard Chandler, 1738); *Life and Reign*.

⁴⁸ Dodsley, *Chronicle*, 45.

⁴⁹ Lucia Love Peace, "To Ralph Freeman, Esq.," *Daily Gazetteer*, 4 December 1738; Daniel Neal, *The History of the Puritans or Protestant Non-Conformists*, vol. 1 of 4, (London: Richard Hett, at the Bible and Crown in the Poultry, 1732).

⁵⁰ Samuel Webber, "To the Author of the Daily Post," *Daily Post*, 2 December 1742.

particularly the sugar and tobacco plantations in the Americas.⁵¹ Elizabeth had not only been in favour of trade and colonies, but more important for the merchants and their supporters, she had taken active measures to ensure British trade would flourish. She had done this by protecting British trade routes from the fleets of other European nations and by encouraging her subjects to act aggressively against other nations' trade.⁵² She ensured that the "seas [were] rendered safe to the industrious trader."⁵³ Her era had created a cast of seafaring, colonizing warrior-heroes. Sir Francis Drake had bravely fought foreigners on the seas.⁵⁴ Sir Walter Raleigh's successes and riches seemed to offer the merchants of the 1730s the possibility of repeating his triumphs by ensuring British domination at sea and by establishing potentially lucrative plantations.⁵⁵ In this debate on the value of trade and its role in domestic politics, it was a great boon for the opposition to be able to look back on this esteemed reign and find greater support of trade and colonies, according to them, than before or since.

In a lengthy exposition on the qualities of Elizabeth, the author of a pamphlet entitled *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Encrease [sic] and Miseries of the Poor of England* summarized the major ideas that Elizabeth represented. "What Nation hath ever enjoyed greater *Bliss*," the author asked, "than [England] did during the long Reign

⁵¹ David (d. 1760) Bindon, *A Letter from a Merchant Who Has Left Off Trade to a Member of Parliament.*, (London: R. Willock, 1738), 41.

⁵² Samuel Colliber, *A Critical History of the English Sea-Affairs: Wherein All the Remarkable Actions of the English Nation at Sea Are Described*, ... 2nd ed., (London 1739), 56.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Reasons for Giving Encouragements to the Sea-Faring People of Great-Britain*, (London: J. Millan, 1739), 22.

⁵⁵ Joshua Gee, *The Trade and Navigation of Great-Britain Considered: Shewing That the Surest Way for a Nation to Increase in Riches, Is to Prevent the Importation of Such Foreign Commodities as May Be Rais'd at Home*. ... (London: Sam. Buckley, 1729).

of *Queen Elizabeth*”?⁵⁶ Her success rested on her implementation of virtuous and orderly laws through which “great care” had been taken for the reformation of religion. She had supported trade, taken measures to further it, and looked to end corruption and poverty. She had encouraged men “of piety and learning” and promoted “*Virtue and Industry.*” All these measures had been taken, according to the author, to make her people happy. There were numerous authors who listed these qualities, one after another in this way, creating a shorthand for what Elizabeth represented for the English nation. And no one was a stronger supporter of this imagined Elizabeth than her loudest spokesperson in the 1730s, Henry St. John Viscount Bolingbroke.

During his long political career, Bolingbroke was the bane of Walpole’s government. After serving Queen Anne, Bolingbroke was driven out of the country upon the accession of the Hanoverians for fear of impeachment. In the 1720s he returned from exile, but Walpole, now firmly in power, dictated the terms and forbade him, on the basis of his Jacobite leanings, from holding any elected positions. Unable to participate in government, through the late 1720s and the 1730s Bolingbroke fuelled his anger and criticism into the creation of a powerful anti-government paper, *The Craftsman*.⁵⁷ *The Craftsman* became the leading opposition paper in the late 1720s and 1730s and in it Bolingbroke put forth his philosophy of government.⁵⁸ He sought a better form of government, with a better leader who would secure the nation’s liberties.

⁵⁶ By the author of *The Dissuasive from party and religious animosities, An Enquiry into the Causes of the Increase and Miseries of the Poor of England*, (London: A. Bettesworth and C. Hitch, 1738), 45-46.

⁵⁷ Bernard Cottret, ed. *Bolingbroke's Political Writings: The Conservative Enlightenment* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1997), 58.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 57.

Fortuitously, Britain had already experienced such a leader, the singularly best example of his arguments: Queen Elizabeth.

Bolingbroke understood the developments of English history as an eternal struggle between the “spirit of liberty” and the “spirit of faction.” This “Liberty” was rooted in Saxon laws, upheld by the Magna Carta, and provided commoners with a representative body to ensure their “immemorial popular freedoms.”⁵⁹ Though he pilfered the past— Greek, Roman, Russian, French – for examples of this tension between these two spirits Queen Elizabeth was most characteristic of the champions of liberty, while the early Stuart monarchs exemplified the idea of faction.⁶⁰ Elizabeth had demonstrated, for Bolingbroke, the key aspects of proper government: an administration whose authority rested on the popular support of the people and the active interest of the monarch in supporting liberty and trade within the nation. This conception of representation and freedom did not mean equality.⁶¹ Bolingbroke firmly believed in a divine hierarchy of being, much like the one of the Tudor Age. He believed that only a government properly managed by the aristocracy could fulfil the country’s destiny to be free, but felt that only “good” and “patriotic” monarchs had the divine right to rule.⁶²

⁵⁹ Isaac Kramnick, "Augustan Politics and English Historiography: The Debate on the English Past, 1730-35," *History and Theory* 6, no. 1 (1967). 39.

⁶⁰ Henry St. John Viscount Bolingbroke, *Letters, on the Spirit of Patriotism: On the Idea of a Patriot King: And on the State of Parties, at the Accession of King George the First*, (London: A. Millar, 1749), 181.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 212-213.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 87. Isaac Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and His Circle: The Politics of Nostalgia in the Age of Walpole* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968). 101.

In Bolingbroke's view, the opportunity to extend liberty after 1688, a possibility he saw as inherent in the promise of the Revolutionary Settlement, had been squandered by Walpole and undermined by new economic forces, specifically the powerful monied interest. The increasing participation of non-elite members in government had compromised the government's abilities and resulted in a reduction of liberty. The balance struck in the Tudor age, based on the firm hand of the monarch supported by the aristocracy, was threatened by a government that increasingly did not represent popular, national concerns and that placed financial interests over those of other segments of the population.⁶³ The country, under Walpole's influence, had been divided by fractious party politics. Bolingbroke and his circle believed that the country needed to heal these divisions and to come together as one patriotic party.⁶⁴ Such care for the nation's greater good should be "the principal view of every *Great Man*; which, as romantic as they many seem, were not altogether unfashionable topics in the good old days of Queen Elizabeth."⁶⁵

For a man so disenchanted with the path his country was treading, the past offered several examples of what Britain and its leaders should be. Bolingbroke made it his mission to present these alternate possibilities to the public. Elizabeth, who had had both "wisdom and success,"⁶⁶ demonstrated all the tenets that Bolingbroke held dear. He echoed the characteristics of the popular discourse surrounding her memory but with a clear anti-Hanoverian, anti-Walpole platform. She was an able and strong leader

⁶³ Ibid. 77.

⁶⁴ Rogers, *Whigs*. 397. Kramnick, *Bolingbroke*. 183.

⁶⁵ Caleb D'Anvers, *The Craftsman: being a critique on the times*, 2 January 1727, 75.

⁶⁶ Caleb D'Anvers, *The Craftsman: being a critique on the times*, 27 January 1728, 410.

of men who had been unwilling to allow discord to be planted among her people. Bolingbroke was particularly taken with the example she had made of the Earl of Essex, “her greatest favourite,” who “paid the price of attempting [to sow division] with his Head.”⁶⁷ She had found her kingdom “full of factions,” waxed Bolingbroke,

and factions of greater consequence and danger than these of our days, whom she would have dispersed with a puff of her breath. She could not re-unite them, it is true; the papist continued a papist, the puritan a puritan; one furious, the other sullen. But she united the great Body of the People in her and their *common Interest*, she inflamed them with *one national spirit*, and thus armed, she maintained tranquillity at home, and carried succour to her Friends and Terror to their enemies abroad.⁶⁸

She had been a great supporter of trade and empire; it was to her that the British people owed their “spirit of trade.”⁶⁹ Through support of this spirit, she had been able to balance the economic interests of her country, allowing its political institutions to flourish.⁷⁰ Personally, she demonstrated the characteristics that Bolingbroke found to be most lacking in Walpole and the Georges: courage, strength of will, and intelligence.

Despite its self-serving motives and vendettas, Bolingbroke’s paper, *The Craftsman*, became a powerful anti-governmental medium. It was partly its journalism

⁶⁷ Bolingbroke, *Letters*, 180.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 179-180. Original emphasis.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 188-189.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 184.

that had roused popular opinion so effectively against Walpole and his Excise Bill in 1733.⁷¹ Through that debate and his continued promotion of Elizabeth as a better example for government, he put in place a metaphor that would become more significant and more powerful as the 1730s progressed.

Bolingbroke made the historical discourse over the Elizabethan inheritance relevant to the specific problems that the Walpolean government had created. He brought it into popular political discussions, and pushed her memory as a site of opposition. In the late 1730s, Queen Elizabeth I became a central vehicle for discussions around the war with Spain and subsequently about its successes and failures. But her relevance to these debates ran much deeper than a coincidental similarity of foes. In the debates about the government, she was represented as a strong monarch, an able leader of men, aggressive in her protection of her country's trade, religion, and honour. Alexander Pettit rightly notes, in *Illusory Consensus*, that Bolingbroke's was not the only oppositional discourse available to those who took issue with Walpole over the war with Spain.⁷² The belief in a united opposition was in large part the creation of Bolingbroke himself. There were other ways to conceptualize the problems of the 1730s, other conceivable means with which to solve them. But the combination of Bolingbroke's decade-long campaign for Elizabeth, the rise of a conflict with her historical opponent, Spain, and the importance of the issues of religion, trade, and strong leadership, made Elizabeth the most powerful idiom for a wide range of political opinions with which to argue for a patriotic, British-centric policy at home and abroad.

⁷¹ Kramnick, *Bolingbroke*, 24.

⁷² Pettit, *Consensus*, 16.

Elizabeth's wider meanings: Britain, Europe and Empire

While praising Elizabeth's interests in commerce and empire, Bolingbroke's panegyric sought to emphasize that the British peoples were naturally inclined towards these occupations. They were, he said, an "amphibious" people.⁷³ While they "must occasionally come on shore," "the water is more properly [their] element."⁷⁴ Walpole and George II felt quite differently. For them, Britons were first and foremost part of a European, terrestrial world, in which the peripheries were exactly that, peripheral. The wealth, power, and danger presented to the British nation came from across the Channel, not across the ocean.

These positions represent a major political divide of the 1730s and 1740s. This dispute, which in the popular press made frequent recourse to Elizabethan historical examples, raised deeper questions about the constitutive characteristics of British identity. While focused on the rightful aims of British commerce and politics, the discourse about the proper role of Britain in the world proposed concepts that could and would be constructed as fundamental to the national persona of Britons: the importance of "liberty" and "honour."

A short pamphlet published in 1739, entitled *Reasons for giving encouragements to the sea-faring people of Great-Britain*, argued that England's naval exploits were central to understanding the nation's past. The anonymous author felt that demonstrating the importance of naval enterprise to British history, and the support it had received from Elizabeth, would help persuade Parliament to take aggressive action

⁷³ Bolingbroke, *Letters*, 195.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

against Spain.⁷⁵ Its two main contentions were that it was on the water, engaging in trade and settling new colonies, where the British gained the most “honour,” and that the best examples of naval exploits that had benefitted the country financially, and had given it a positive image at home and abroad, occurred during the reign of Elizabeth.⁷⁶ Similar arguments linking Elizabeth, commerce, naval exploration, and British “honour,” were frequently made.⁷⁷ More subtly, other propaganda supporting military action made their case by simply physically juxtaposing arguments for protecting Britain’s ships and trade with images of Elizabeth. In one case, Elizabeth’s speech at Tilbury was added as a postscript to a pamphlet supporting the merchants’ cause; in another, a fictional conversation between British monarchs, in which Elizabeth spoke most favourably for trade and “ships,” was added to a pamphlet on *The Merchant’s Complaint against Spain*.⁷⁸ Elizabeth was also held up as an example in debate in Parliament. William Pulteney, a leading Patriot Whig politician, argued that she had been willing to fight for her country in the face of a “haughty” enemy, “though we had no allies.”⁷⁹ He further argued that only by reviving the spirit of the adventurers of the sixteenth century would the nation overcome its current difficulties with Spain.

⁷⁵ *Sea-Faring People*, 14.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁷⁷ "To Caleb D'anvers, Esq," *Country Journal or The Craftsman*, 11 February 1738; "To Caleb D'anvers, Esq.," *Country Journal or The Craftsman*, 3 March 1739; Colliber, *A Critical History*.

⁷⁸ L. D., *Reasons for a War against Spain. In a Letter from a Merchant of London Trading to America, to a Member of the House of Commons. With a Plan of Operations.*, (London: J. Wilford, 1737); Benjamin Robins, *The Merchant's Complaint against Spain*, (London: W. Lloyd, 1738).

⁷⁹ *The History and Proceedings of the House of Commons, from the Death Queen Anne, to the Present Time. Containing the Most Remarkable Motions, Speeches, Resolves, Reports and Conferences...Collected from the Best Authorities*, vol. 11 of 12, (London: Richard Chandler, 1742), 64.

Elizabeth was central to programs favouring a foreign policy insulated from Europe and focused across the water, such as that proposed by the Patriots. This period of the eighteenth century has been seen by many historians as important in the development of an empire-based policy and the growth of popular support for the imperial project through many strata of society.⁸⁰ Even those opposed to such blue-water policies could not escape the idiom of Elizabeth. They did, however, attempt to change the claims made on her behalf by, for example, finding that she had not been as eager to engage in naval adventuring as popular narratives held, or by focusing on her attempts to avoid war and maintain a balance among other European powers.⁸¹

History seems to have been central to these questions for several reasons. This was a policy that clearly diverged from the intense dynastic and religious European wars of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in which Britain had been involved. Affirming the longevity of the ideas of exploration and trade beyond European shores lent credibility to those demands. It also grafted this newer idea onto a widely popular set of beliefs, those associated with Elizabeth, relating it to the goals of an empire-centred worldview. Further, this debate structured itself around two important gendered and racialized concepts for which Elizabeth's image was instrumental: "honour" and "liberty."

⁸⁰ Armitage, *Origins*, 198; Bob Harris, "'American Idols': Empire, War and the Middling Ranks in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Past & Present*, no. 150 (1996): 139; Robbins, *Great Britain*; Simms, *Three Victories*, 1; Wilson, "Empire of Virtue," 144.

⁸¹ "To the Daily Gazer," *Daily Gazetteer*, 28 February 1740; Alg. Sidney, "To the Daily Gazetteer," *Daily Gazetteer*, 27 November 1738.

The press, both for and opposed to the war with Spain, invoked the importance of “honour.” For many commentators, the taking of ships and merchandise was only the lesser crime of the Spanish; far worse, they had been guilty of insulting British seamen and “dishonoring” Britain.⁸² The “British flag” was felt to have been a frequent victim of Spanish affronts.⁸³ For those in favour of war, the appeasement of the government threatened British honour. The only solution, according to them, was swift, decisive, military action against the Spanish. Only if Spain believed Britain to be “resolutely determined to support [its] Honour, and protect [its] Trade, by the same glorious Means made use of by Queen Elizabeth and Cromwell,”⁸⁴ that is naval warfare, would it be willing to concede, and end the attacks on merchant seamen and ships. “Nothing can satisfy the Honour of the British Flag,” said Pulteney, “but the Inflicting of a condign Punishment upon these Captains that committed the Outrage, or upon the Spanish Governor that gave the Instructions.”⁸⁵ Returning the injury and re-establishing British superiority in the West Indies and on the seas were the best means of saving British honour.

In this debate, Queen Elizabeth was the foremost example of a monarch who had acted vigorously to protect the honour of her kingdom. It was widely believed that she had not allowed any tarnish to British honour either in regards to protecting religion or trade. In the *Country Journal or the Craftsman*’s rebuttal to the essays comparing Burleigh and Walpole, five of their thirteen questions asked specifically about British

⁸² D., *Reasons for a War*, 7.

⁸³ *Country Journal or The Craftsman*, 29 October 1737. [*Country Journal*, Oct. 29, 1737]

⁸⁴ Caleb D’Anvers, “From My Own Chambers.,” *Country Journal or The Craftsman*, 6 January 1739.

⁸⁵ William Pulteney to Parliament, *History and Proceedings*, 192.

honour and the means Elizabeth had taken to uphold it. “Were any of her Dominions attacked,” the *Country Journal* inquired, “in time of peace, without a proper resentment?”⁸⁶ “Was there ever any English Ship plunder'd,” they continued, “or any Englishman's ears cut off and sent to her, in derision without due vengeance taken?”⁸⁷ It was only an insult to her nation, the argument went, that could spur this occasionally indecisive monarch to summon the fleet. By fighting to protect British honour, Elizabeth had reaped financial rewards for her country and historical laurels for herself. The current government should do the same.

This was one of the most powerful uses of Elizabethan memory and one that seems to have garnered wide popular support. The *Daily Post* published two letters on behalf of sailors who were involved in the skirmishes with Spain: the first by George Cutlas, who introduced the second, a letter from his friend, Luke Jefferson, also a sailor, who was being held captive by the Spanish and asking for succour. The letters were published “without making the least Alteration in either the Orthography or Stile of them.”⁸⁸ For Cutlas, his friend’s safety would be secured only if the British would fight the Spanish. He believed that they “wud soon drub the Spaniards as well as ever Queen Elizabeth or Cromwell drubb'd them, and drive them from North to South, and from South to North again, and from Madrid to London.”⁸⁹ Regardless of how truthful a representation of the voices of two sailors these letters were, the tone and implication of the *Daily Post* were that a sailor with poor “orthography” and “stile” would know of

⁸⁶ *Country Journal or The Craftsman*, 29 October 1737.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Daily Post*, 15 March 1738.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Elizabeth's deeds, and use her examples to express his hopes for government action. The government press also noted that this was a particularly influential and popular argument. It was misleading, according to the *Daily Post*, but that paper begrudgingly admitted that it appeared to be "the sense of the people."⁹⁰

This question of honour was highly gendered. The solutions proposed to protect it were particularly masculinised – war, violence, aggression, and supremacy. A range of authors, including Catherine Hall, Philippa Levine, Anne McClintock, Kathleen Wilson, and Angela Woollacott have demonstrated the importance of the relationship between the drive for empire and aggressive masculinity.⁹¹ Though a woman, Elizabeth was frequently seen as demonstrating desirable masculine characteristics. Dealing with the relationship between what were deemed her feminine qualities - vanity, coquettishness, and indecisiveness - and her masculine traits – strong leadership, intelligence, and rational behaviour – appears to have been largely unproblematic for writers at this time. In part, this contradiction could be reconciled through the long-standing perception of a monarch's having two bodies; one was physical and personal, the other, metaphorical and political. This distinction created a space in which the feminine and masculine

⁹⁰ "To the Daily Gazetteer," *Daily Gazetteer*, 28 February 1740.

⁹¹ Though otherwise excellent, works such as Michèle Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in the Eighteenth Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), arguably place too much emphasis on elite concerns about "foppishness." There are many works that do highlight the aggression and violence inherent in more popular forms of masculinity, such as, Anna Clark, "The Chevalier D'eon and Wilkes: Masculinity and Politics in the Eighteenth Century," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32, no. 1 (1998). For other works on the role of military violence, empire, and masculinity, see Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Philippa Levine, *Gender and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995); Wilson, *Island Race*; Angela Woollacott, *Gender and Empire* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2006).

aspects of her persona could co-exist.⁹² Another trope was to emphasize the importance of her ministers to her successes and historical reputation in order to provide the possibility of a rational, masculine influence over her and her decisions.⁹³ Some authors emphasized the differences between the gendered standards of behaviour of their own era and those of the past, indicating that these changed over time. Women then might have been able to act in ways no longer deemed socially acceptable.⁹⁴ Generally, it was in the interest of rhetoric to emphasize the values that supported their arguments, those which highlighted a historical reading of her reign as one in which there was an aggressive protection of British values. Her popularity as a strong monarch, the representative of an age in which Britain had played an important role politically and culturally, was hard to debunk. Writers for both the governing Whigs and the opposition Patriots found it was a discourse that was difficult to avoid.

In this debate, participants tried to find expression for what they thought was the kind of masculinity that should be most properly associated with the British nation. It was also an argument over the importance of masculine behaviour in the relationship between nations, the relationship between political dominance and gender. In proposing Elizabeth as their icon, the Patriots pushed for an aggressive masculinity, willing to duel and fight for their honour. For them, negotiations and diplomacy would fail to support their gendered conceptions of nationhood and imperialism.

⁹² Carole Levin, *"The Heart and Stomach of a King:" Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994).

⁹³ Milton, "On Political Rewards and Punishments," *Champion Or Evening Advertiser*, 25 February 1742.

⁹⁴ Sophia, "To Henry Stonecastle, Esq; Author of the Universal Spectator," *Universal Spectator and Weekly Journal*, 30 October 1742.

The other key term surrounding the war with Spain was “liberty.” As a gendered concept, “liberty” represented in the “independence” associated with propertied adult manhood, and was used to argue for the right of British ships to ply the seas unhampered by Spanish searches and seizures.⁹⁵ But “liberty” was also a racialized term, used in the related but slightly different context of “un-free,” particularly in reference to the notion of slavery.⁹⁶ As Woodfine demonstrates, “liberty” and a fear of “chains” were an integral part of the debate about the Spanish depredations and the perceived appropriate response to them.⁹⁷ This discourse demonstrates a contemporary concern with enslavement, particularly with the tales of sailors taken prisoner by the Spanish and held in chains like “slaves.” This indicates the importance of the idea that white Britons were fundamentally different – read: superior – than those who were enslaved.⁹⁸ This was evidenced, for example, in the letters of the sailors George Cutlas and Luke Jefferson, in which they presented the concepts of Britons and slavery as antithetical. The concept of “liberty,” so dear to the post-Glorious Revolution century, was believed to have been largely achieved, but there were gendered and racialised limits to that success.⁹⁹ The fear expressed in the discourse around the war with Spain was that, as the *Country Journal* explained, any restraint on an individual or a nation’s liberties was

⁹⁵ Michèle Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in the Eighteenth Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996); David Kuchta, *The Three-Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity: England, 1550-1850* (Berkeley: University of California press, 2002); Wilson, "Empire of Virtue," 130.

⁹⁶ Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

⁹⁷ Woodfine, *Britannia's Glories*. See chapter 3.

⁹⁸ D'Anvers, "From My Own Chambers.," *Country Journal or The Craftsman*, 6 January 1739.

⁹⁹ R.C., *Daily Gazetteer*, 21 October 1737.

a surrender of all liberties; a person was either free or not free.¹⁰⁰ In this context, Elizabeth had shown care for English liberties through her protection of the Protestant religion, her encouragement of trade and commerce, and her perceived willingness to engage in aggressive action against threats to those priorities. Those who replicated her priorities in the present, Admiral Vernon chief among them, were driven by the same concern for liberty.¹⁰¹

These arguments over the rightful focus of British foreign policy, and the concern with the concepts of “liberty” and “honour” for which Elizabeth stood as representative, expressed a deep ambiguity about the current monarchy. Walpole and George II’s focus on European-centered policies was often perceived as dishonourable and detrimental to liberty. Within the uses of Elizabeth and her patriotic concern lay the implication that she was English in a way that the Hanoverians would never be. While much of the criticism focused specifically on Walpole and his governance, some concentrated on a discomfort, if not an outright unhappiness, with the new dynasty. Its priorities frequently appeared more Hanoverian than they were British.

Popular Jacobitism was often only not about the reinstatement of the Stuart line, but about a language and culture through which to voice discontent with the current monarch.¹⁰² The use of Elizabeth in the debates over the relationships among Britain, Europe and the imperial world highlights the importance of this popular disapproval of the Hanoverian monarchy. The Patriots’ grasp of English history was used to contrast

¹⁰⁰ "The Case of Libels Farther Considered," *Country Journal or The Craftsman*, 22 April 1738.

¹⁰¹ Lewis Jones, *Io! Triumphe! A Poem Upon Admiral Vernon*, (London: T. Taylor, 1741), 5.

¹⁰² Rogers, *Crowds*, chapter 1.

their Englishness with the foreignness of the King. Drawing on the battles and examples of a recent and clearly English history, they saw themselves as providing a lesson in British identity. The interest in the mutual “affection” between Elizabeth and her people, for example, suggested that the current monarchy could not rely on that same loyalty.¹⁰³ Such criticisms were frequently couched in vague references, or only subtly implied, to protect the author and the publication from accusations of libel or treason. Elizabeth provided a foil to the present monarch that could be both patriotic and disparaging.

The government did not stand idly by. It tried to assert its own claims to Englishness and the past. While out walking in London, one *Daily Gazetteer* correspondent, writing under the pseudonym of Whig hero Algernon Sidney, came across a young boy selling almanacs for the upcoming year, 1739. Once home, “Sidney” decided to write his own, satirical almanac which he believed could be used in the following or any other year for the activities of the Patriots, a “Patriot Almanack.”¹⁰⁴ November, being the month in which Queen Elizabeth was born, would “[furnish] a good Opportunity of proving, in a pretended character of that Princess, that as she was good, all who succeeded her are under a Necessity of being otherwise.”¹⁰⁵ Elizabeth’s accomplishments did not necessarily preclude later governments from also being successful. In the essay on Burleigh, the author argued that the actions of that minister, and by extension Walpole’s, had been done for the “love of the English Nation.”¹⁰⁶ Others emphasized that the benefits brought by the Hanoverian regime, such as stability

¹⁰³ *Daily Gazetteer*, 18 February 1742.

¹⁰⁴ Sidney, "To the Daily Gazetteer," *Daily Gazetteer*, 27 November 1738.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ "Memoirs of the Lord Burghley, &C. Continued," *Daily Gazetteer*, 10 October 1737.

and peace, could also be interpreted as honourable and beneficial to liberty.¹⁰⁷ But such claims were few and concentrated in the government press.

Elizabeth's memory was used as a key element in the debate about the potential of a "blue-water" policy. An emphasis on trade, aggression, and the colonies, all supported by historical examples from her reign, seemed to many in the Patriot party the best option. They were successfully able to construct this argument as one that upheld ideas fundamental to conceptualizations of Britishness: honour and liberty. Elizabeth, as representative of these ideas, provided a powerful tool with which to attack the power of Walpole and the reign of the Hanoverians. It proved to be a highly successful and popular ploy.

Elizabeth's wider meanings: The importance of the past in the present

One of the issues raised by the uses of Elizabeth as an historical example was the relationship between the present and the past. In the debate over the war at the end of the 1730s and in the early 1740s, ideas about "then" and "now" encouraged discussion of whether Britain was better or worse off than it had been in the late sixteenth century. There were numerous bases for comparison, but they included Britain's reputation abroad, the amount spent on the civil list, the independence of Parliament, religious freedoms, freedom of the press, the use of standing armies, the amount of trade, and the number of colonial holdings. On some occasions, the comparison was much more topical, relating to specific issues raised by the situation with Spain, particularly whether

¹⁰⁷ R. Freeman, *Daily Gazetteer*, 10 August 1738. R.C., *Daily Gazetteer*, 21 October 1737.

Britain had shown sufficient or excessive patience in dealing with the insults from Spain and whether that contrasted positively or negatively with what had been done in the sixteenth century.¹⁰⁸

In the writings of the Patriots, there was frequently an assumption that Elizabeth's time had been better than the current era. While they might concede that the country had more "riches and power" than during the reign of that Queen, they felt that the "honour" and "liberty" of Britain had been weakened by the lack of response to the recent Spanish "depredations."¹⁰⁹ Elizabeth had taken strong steps to protect both concepts, and her era had therefore seen an expansion of both riches and power. Increasing the wealth of the present would require a greater commitment to the priorities of the past. In part, such assumptions about the superiority of the past came from Bolingbroke and his representation of Elizabeth. History, according to Bolingbroke and his intellectual circle, was not progressive, but divided into good and bad periods. This belief was both clearly stated, and used in sarcastic replies to pro-government writers.¹¹⁰ The Patriots mocked characterization of Walpole as "not only the best M[inister] that ever was born; but that ever will be born."¹¹¹ The past for these authors was an important guide since the present, in many ways, was failing to live up to standards set by previous eras.

Though usually responding on the defensive to Patriot attacks, supporters of the government did confront the allegations of the superiority of the past. It was obvious to

¹⁰⁸ *Daily Gazetteer*, 12 January 1741.

¹⁰⁹ Bindon, *Letter from a Merchant*, 41.

¹¹⁰ *Country Journal or The Craftsman*, 29 October 1737.

¹¹¹ *Common Sense or The Englishman's Journal*, 28 April 1739.

them that the present was superior to what had come before. They drew attention to the “liberty” and the “freedom” that they believed Britons now enjoyed in greater quantities than before.¹¹² They demonstrated that Elizabeth had held standing armies, the anathema of the eighteenth century, and that the navy, their pride, was now much larger than it had been then. They pointed out the greater material wealth and comfort than in the past; the reign of the Georges had seen a “plenty of all things.”¹¹³ There may have been triumphs abroad in Elizabeth’s reign, but this reign had provided peace and the prosperity attendant to it.¹¹⁴ As for the “honour” of the nation, they argued that the treaties concluded by the administration were more “honourable” than any that had come before.¹¹⁵ This was an argument which, in part, they were forced to make in order to maintain the validity of the Hanoverian succession, because to praise the past might come too close to criticizing the current administration.

More broadly, this was a debate about the validity of the past to act as a guide to action in the present. For the opposition, the Elizabethan past was very recent. In this understanding of history, there were fundamental freedoms and habits that were prioritized in relation to the degree to which an era was perceived to have been good or bad. The time between eras was of less consequence than their quality. For the government’s supporters, history was progressive, moving forward through important marker points such as the Magna Carta and the Glorious Revolution. For them, it could provide examples of actions and personalities similar to those in the present but could

¹¹² P.R., "To the Daily Gazetteer," *Daily Gazetteer*, 16 February 1740.

¹¹³ R.C., *Daily Gazetteer*, 21 October 1737.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Walpole to Parliament. *History and Proceedings*, Vol. 1738-1739, 1351.

not be a guide, as the past was less “advanced.”¹¹⁶ Both of these conceptions of history were evidenced in the uses of Elizabeth. For the opposition, history was not metaphorical, but provided rules and examples that should be applied in the present, and could just as easily provide useful examples of what not to do. The government found this problematic. According to Walpole, “the Situation of Affairs betwixt Britain and Spain is entirely different from what it then was [...] the Success which one Ministry has met with from the Favour of Fortune, is no Reason why another Ministry should tread the same dangerous Paths, especially when they can compass the same Ends by the more safe and more certain Way of Negotiation.”¹¹⁷ For the opposition, this was precisely the reason for retracing those “dangerous” paths.

Within this debate on the distance of the past, authors demonstrated that they were actively engaged in considering the ways in which historical work should be done and presented to an audience. In the differences of interpretation about the events of the Elizabethan period, authors struggled with how to make the strongest case about history – what was the best evidence of actions and ideas in the past and how to best convey those ideas. In their writing, these writers also demonstrated critical thinking about the sources that had been used before and were willing to question a primary source’s ability to accurately convey what had occurred in the past.

This emphasis on proving an argument about the past was strongest in writers for the government. They were the ones who were more frequently swimming against the

¹¹⁶ According to Isaac Kramnick, these two theories developed out of what J. G. A. Pocock saw as the two dominant attitudes to history from the seventeenth century. Isaac Kramnick, “Augustan Politics and English Historiography: The Debate on the English Past, 1730-35,” *History and Theory* 6, no. 1 (1967).

¹¹⁷ *History and Proceedings*, 1738-1739, 1351.

tide of dominant historical understanding and trying to provide alternative readings of the past. In their writings in the press, in pamphlets on the war, and in the books on history published during this age of “factions,” one of the most important ways to justify the claims for the truth of a work was to strive for a “clear account,” “with all the impartiality becoming a man.”¹¹⁸ Providing such an account and “discover[ing] the fallacies the others are guilty of”¹¹⁹ could demonstrate an author’s loyalty to his nation. The desire for impartial accounts applied to both the writing of history in the present and the evidence used to write these accounts. Impartiality was achieved through a range of researching and writing techniques. As one author explained, his sources were most suitable for historical analysis because they, first, made full use of extant “Publick Acts and Records” and, second, were created by a foreigner and therefore were free from party bias.¹²⁰

These claims to authority were demonstrated in different ways. In some instances, the author would cite the source of his information through in-text citation or footnotes. This was the case most frequently when the author was referencing well-known historical works of the period.¹²¹ In other cases, they would reproduce primary documents, such as letters or government documents, on which they were basing their argument.¹²² Here, they would often include a discussion of how the source had been acquired. Writing style was also an important historical tool. When an argument was

¹¹⁸ Freeman, "To a Freeholder in the Country," *Daily Gazetteer*, 6 February 1740.

¹¹⁹ "To the Daily Gazetteer," *Daily Gazetteer*, 28 February 1740.

¹²⁰ Ibid. Similarly, see "Memoirs of the Lord Burghley, &C. Continued," *Daily Gazetteer*, 10 October 1737.

¹²¹ Theophilus Evans, "The Crown of England's Title to America," *Daily Post*, 6 March 1740.

¹²² P.R., "To the Daily Gazetteer," *Daily Gazetteer*, 16 February 1740.

presented with “no craft, no artifice,”¹²³ the truth about the past would be laid bare for the reader. A writer, past or present, who could present his ideas with “simplicity and unaffected stile, and without any studied eloquence,” would be able to “relate the naked truth.”¹²⁴ Through these various methods, authors demonstrated an interest in justifying the truth claims of their work through a responsibility for the way in which history was presented.

Beyond proving the veracity of their own arguments, writers also tried to judge the relative claims of primary sources. Through debates in the popular press, they questioned both the creation of documents and the biases inherent in that creation. For example, in discussing religious freedom in the time of Queen Elizabeth, one author wondered whether there might have been feelings and thoughts experienced by people at the time that the records did not show, based on how the author believed people in the present would react to similar religious restraints and upheavals.¹²⁵ In another case, a government supporter wondered whether the people of Elizabeth’s time would have supported her if she had chosen to go to war unprovoked, as the author felt the merchants were forcing the government to do. Both political groups felt that the other side was simply reading into history its desires for the present and that it had therefore missed the true meaning of past events. Historical truth was hard to find and difficult to present. Its meanings were complicated and liable to be misapplied.

¹²³ *Daily Gazetteer*, 14 April 1741.

¹²⁴ Evans, "The Crown of England's Title to America," *Daily Post*, 6 March 1740.

¹²⁵ Freeman, *Daily Gazetteer*, 10 August 1738.

Elizabeth's wider meanings: Educating the multitude

For writers who sided with the government, one of the opposition's most loathsome crimes was that they catered to the "multitude." An easily led, irrational, and dangerous mob was being whipped into a frenzy by those in favour of war with Spain and against Walpole's ministry. They were playing with fire, government supporters warned, and history could fan the flames.¹²⁶ The arguments and political activities around the war with Spain underscored the importance of extra-parliamentary politics and the power of popular support in eighteenth-century politics. The debate became particularly heated once the war had begun to sour and endorsement for figures such as Vernon took on an increasingly political, anti-Walpolean edge. While the government's press looked to paint this out-of-door support for the Patriots, and their use of Elizabethan historical examples, as unwise and potentially threatening, the Opposition sought to present itself as a conduit for the feelings of the "nation." In these debates about the role of the population at large in politics, history was crucially important. It was believed to hold particular sway over the nation at large and the opposition was overwhelmingly able to use Elizabethan history as part of its popular platform.

In the public debates over Elizabeth and the uses of history, one of the underlying discussions was about the rightful role of the crowd in politics. The success of the opposition Tories and Patriots in persuading a wide social spectrum can be seen in several ways. It can be gauged in part through the emphasis given by the Patriots

¹²⁶ "Farther Considerations on the True Nature of Government," *Daily Gazetteer*, 27 January 1742.

themselves to the “voice of the people” and the “nation.”¹²⁷ They frequently drew attention to the ways in which their ideas had found a far-reaching audience. The ideology of the Patriot Opposition could be inclusive. Bolingbroke’s theory of government had argued that hereditary, monarchical government was the best form of government, but its authority rested on the support of the people, conceived of as a middling, rational opinion – an attack on the Hanoverians who lacked widespread support at this time. The government’s writers, however, criticized the opposition for their willingness to cater to this non-elite demographic. They disparagingly noted how the Patriots claimed to represent the opinions of a wide and diverse segment of the population, and criticized them for using that opinion as a guide in political decision-making. The government’s authors disdained “some celebrated writers,” who argued daily that “popular clamour is proof, and that a number of people abetting any proposition is sufficient to shew that it is true and reasonable”¹²⁸ Patriot appeals to the population more generally showed the strength of their attempts to position themselves as representatives of “Britishness,” and history was one of the most obvious languages in which to reach that wide audience.

It is hard to hear the voices of the “multitude” in the writing and political speeches, but there are ways in which their presence can be gleaned. One is from the material culture that arose around this war. As Kathleen Wilson has shown, the diversity of activities and products relating to the war demonstrated a keen interest of a wide

¹²⁷ Henry Pelham to Parliament. *The History and Proceedings of the House of Commons, from the Death Queen Anne, to the Present Time*, vol. 10 of 12, (London: Richard Chandler, 1742), 239.

¹²⁸ "Farther Considerations on the True Nature of Government," *Daily Gazetteer*, 27 January 1742.

variety of people, particularly the growing urban, commercial middling sorts, in exhibiting their political beliefs through conspicuous consumption.¹²⁹ Opposition politicians and writers embraced the importance of public approval, perhaps simply because they were doing so more effectively than the administration. A government, claimed “Milton” in the *Champion*, could not exist without the people, and their opinion took precedence over everything else.¹³⁰ More sedately put, the monarch would govern best when he had a clear idea of the “sense of his People.”¹³¹

Perhaps the voices of the multitude can be heard in the very choice of Elizabeth. Her story was widely known. It was an entrenched and popular part of English culture. She may have been chosen less by the Patriots than by those to whom they appealed. The Patriots’ historical arguments drew on pre-existing understandings of the past that could harness the support of a socially- and economically-diverse group. The ability of the opposition to use Elizabeth so effectively also speaks to the importance of history to existing popular notions of British identity. History appears to have been an important way in which nationhood was understood and a largely successful way to promote those same ideas.

The government’s writers had two tactics with which to attack their opponents, strategies that developed only once the war had started. First, they tried to reject the authority of the crowd by discrediting it as uneducated, untrustworthy, misinformed, and irrational. They blamed the opposition for creating “clamour” and “ferment,” and

¹²⁹ Wilson, "Empire of Virtue," 130.

¹³⁰ Milton, "On Political Rewards and Punishments," *Champion Or Evening Advertiser*, 25 February 1742.

¹³¹ "Farther Considerations on the True Nature of Government," *Daily Gazetteer*, 27 January 1742.

described their supporters, not as informed politicized people, but as a faceless, vulgar “multitude,”¹³² whose opinion was not something from which to base important decisions. The ignorance of this multitude made it easy to sway and dangerously susceptible to conniving orators. There was, however, a tension in these responses between the malleability of the crowd and its potential for harm. Generally, the crowd was accorded little subjectivity. It was described as the pawn of rational politicians who used rhetorical tricks, their “Thorny ways of Politicks,” to manipulate its thinking.¹³³ But the “multitude,” as Rogers had demonstrated, “operated within well-established conventions of popular politics which had allowed it a crucial, though subaltern, role.”¹³⁴ It was, therefore, a poor political ally; once unleashed, it could embrace different, alternative priorities. Government writers frequently sought to counter this potential power by portraying any position with popular support to be consequently irrational.¹³⁵ Whether owing to its leaders or to its own inherent strength, political support from the unenfranchised was considered dangerous and untrustworthy.

The second response to the emphasis on the value of popular opinion was to claim that the public had been provided with information that was purposely false or misleading. In these instances, the crowd was not conceived of as threatening but simply as the victims of a party prone to lies and exaggerations. “O Good People!” wrote one *Daily Gazetteer* correspondent, “Wither do you think you will be led, if you follow such

¹³² All these terms were frequently used. See, for example, “Continuation of the Letter to a Young Gentleman of Distinction, Begun in Our Paper of Monday Last,” *Daily Gazetteer*, 10 October 1740. Or, *Daily Gazetteer*, 12 January 1741.

¹³³ Freeman, “To a Freeholder in the Country,” *Daily Gazetteer*, 6 February 1740.

¹³⁴ Rogers, *Crowds*, 170.

¹³⁵ R. Freeman, *Daily Gazetteer*, 18 April 1740.

guides as these?"¹³⁶ "Seditious persons" had alienated the people from their rulers by "false accounts of the actions of former princes, or ministers."¹³⁷ There was, however, some hope that if the correct information were presented, the people of Britain would see that their true enemy was not the administration.¹³⁸ The expansion of the newspaper press and the popularity of opposition papers had been detrimental to the proper education of the general opinion. Knowledge and authority were being gathered from what was written in the media and "received with greater Reverence than Acts of Parliament."¹³⁹ Supporters of the government were wary of the influence of those who provided information merely for entertainment purposes, willing to propagate information no matter its value or accuracy. For some, the crowd was not necessarily unreliable, but was led astray when political authority was taken out of the hands of those who, according to the structures of government, should rightfully control it.

Both sides could agree on the potential power of history in such a debate. It was clear to the government and their opponents that Elizabethan history had been a powerful motivational tool for widespread political action around the war with Spain, though they disagreed on the meaning of that involvement. Control of the dominant interpretation of Elizabethan history allowed the opposition to access this wide base of support. It seemed to represent ideals that spoke to several groups, up and down the social ladder. The government, in fact, contended that using history in political debate

¹³⁶ P.R., "To the Daily Gazetteer," *Daily Gazetteer*, 16 February 1740.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ "Farther Considerations on the True Nature of Government," *Daily Gazetteer*, 27 January 1742.

¹³⁹ Joseph Danvers to Parliament. *History and Proceedings of the House of Commons*, 58.

amounted to cheating. As a tool to raise discontent, they complained, history “work[ed] stronger than any arguments [*sic*].”¹⁴⁰

Conclusion

One of Samuel Johnson’s earliest successes was a poem he published anonymously in the spring of 1738, shortly after moving to London to try his hand at professional writing. Johnson’s *London, A Poem, in imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal* struck a particular chord with his biographer, James Boswell. Though never meagre with compliments, Boswell believed it “burst forth with a splendour, the rays of which will for ever encircle his name.”¹⁴¹ The poem made many references to contemporary concerns and drew on Elizabeth’s memory in support of the Patriot cause. “Struck with the Seat that gave Eliza birth,” wrote Johnson, “We kneel, and kiss the consecrated Earth;/ In pleasing Dreams the blissful Age renew,/ And call Britannia's Glories back to view;/ Behold her Cross triumphant on the Main,/ The Guard of Commerce, and the Dread of Spain.”¹⁴² It achieved immediate success, going into its second edition within a week. For Boswell, half a century later, this poem demonstrated “manly force,” “bold spirit,” and “masterly versification.” Yet, he had some reservations. While this was undoubtedly a poetic masterpiece, he acknowledged that

the flame of patriotism and zeal for popular resistance with which it is fraught, had no just cause. There was, in truth, *no* 'oppression': the

¹⁴⁰ "To the Daily Gazetteer," *Daily Gazetteer*, 28 February 1740.

¹⁴¹ James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1999), 60.

¹⁴² Samuel Johnson, *London: A Poem in Imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal*, ed. J. D. Fleeman, *Samuel Johnson: The Complete English Poems* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971, 1738), 61. Lines 23-28.

'nation' was *not* 'cheated.' Sir Robert Walpole was a wise and a benevolent minister, who thought that the happiness and prosperity of a commercial country like ours, would be best promoted by peace, which he accordingly maintained, with credit, during a very long period.¹⁴³

Boswell may not have liked the taint of fervour in this poem, but it was hardly the only artistic product of the time in which it is in such evidence. The emotions stirred up by the Patriots made for good propaganda and there are many examples of the same excitement about patriotism and the British past, such as Lord Cobham's Temple of British Worthies at Stowe and James Thomson's "Rule Britannia," written in 1740, which emphasized the themes of naval power, honour, and liberty.

This chapter has examined how history was used in the debate over war with Spain in the late 1730s and early 1740s. Elizabeth I, her politicians, and her explorers were used by the opposition to argue for an aggressive foreign policy that focused on expansion overseas instead of negotiations about the balance of power on the European continent. The opposition was successful, though not unchallenged, in portraying her and her era as fiercely patriotic, concerned for the honour of the country, the protection of the Protestant religion, and the expansion of trade and colonial holdings. Building on the existent popular knowledge of her reign, the opposition created a large and heterogeneous coalition of support for the war and against Walpole. The importance of history to this debate highlighted other key ideological questions of this period: the role

¹⁴³ Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*, 67.

of Europe and empire in British identity and politics, the importance of the past as path in the present, and the role of the wider nation in politics. British history was fundamentally central to debates over the war with Spain and offered one of the most powerful languages in which to express the growing sense of national identity.

Chapter Two
Statues and Ghosts
Remembering Shakespeare in the 1730s

While the memory of Queen Elizabeth invigorated the political opposition in the 1730s, her most famous literary contemporary was also haunting the period. William Shakespeare featured prominently in a range of cultural events in the 1730s and early 1740s. Shakespeare's works on the stage and in print, as well as his importance as a representative of British drama writ large, were becoming more popular, but his reputation, even as it grew, failed to connect with the broad social and political concerns to which Elizabeth was being harnessed. While small enclaves of businessmen, writers, and patriots tried to exploit his image, it was not one that resonated with the same diverse audience that opposed Walpole, and favoured a war with Spain in the Caribbean. This chapter investigates why an Elizabethan figure, who was constructed by some to represent many of the same ideals and values as did Elizabeth, failed to cohere into a rhetorically powerful symbol during the latter half of the 1730s. Uncharacteristically for an investigation of Shakespeare's posthumous legacy, an exploration of the multiple uses and discourses around the playwright in the mid- and late-1730s demonstrates the ways in which his memory failed to become an important and popular focal point.¹

¹ There are numerous books on Shakespeare's posthumous reputation. I found the following particularly useful: Avery, "Cibber."; Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions*; Connell, "Death and the Author."; Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769*; Dugas,

Numerous commentators, from a variety of backgrounds and in a variety of fields, expressed anxiety about the potential power of not only Shakespeare's tangible works, but that of his ghost. There was a palpable unease with the role of the cultural past in a rapidly changing present. This discomfort around raising the ire of a dead poet masked misgivings about the changing political role of the public sphere. The importance of popular politics, as evidenced in the popular agitations for the war with Spain and in the celebration of its victories, as detailed in the first chapter, was growing in tandem with the emergence of a commercialized cultural world of cheap print, music, and performances. The perceived speed of the growth of this emerging world caused many commentators on Shakespeare in government and in the press to hark back to an antediluvian time when the culture of the many was controlled by the few.

Despite multiple efforts by a group of elite men and women, most of whom were closely associated with the anti-Walpole Patriot movement, the memory of a sixteenth-century writer failed to resonate with the wider political nation's fears and hopes in the same way as Elizabeth had. Representatives of a British cultural past, like Shakespeare, had less political purchase than political figures. But the potential power of cultural figures to represent new, untamed popular political ideas was beginning to surface. Commentators could see that Shakespeare, both the man and his works, might provide a new language of dissent. His words could be moulded into arguments about liberty and freedom in ways that favoured wider political participation. As Jonathan Bate argues in

Marketing; Halliday, *The Cult of Shakespeare*; Jonathan Brody Kramnick, *Making the English Canon: Print-Capitalism and the Cultural Past, 1700-1770* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Daniel O'Quinn, *Entertaining Crisis in the Atlantic Imperium, 1770-1790* (Baltimore, MA: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

his examination of Shakespearean references in political caricature after 1760, the value of art is often in its ability to be read in multiple and contradictory ways.² It can be interpreted to represent a wide range of aspirations and desires. The fears expressed by elites hinted at their concerns that once unleashed, this latent cultural power might run out of the control of the traditional ruling classes.

Throughout this period, commentators voiced concerns about the memory of Shakespeare. Writers and politicians argued over how the dead author would react to the modern state of publishing, writing, and acting. In his study of Shakespeare in the eighteenth century, Michael Dobson argues that the late 1730s sought to represent this ephemeral Bard in bodily form. He examines this embodiment through the erection of a statue of Shakespeare in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey and Shakespeare's reincarnation through actor David Garrick's body on stage.³ Dobson describes the statue as able only to provide Shakespeare with "at best the living death of official ghosthood,"⁴ because his canonization rested on the usurpation of his theatrical past by his new identity as a man of literature, a member of the growing canon of the English language. For Dobson, Shakespeare's displacement from the stage to the page was tied to growing desires to demonstrate a more restrained masculinity. He associates these new gender mores with the rise of a bourgeois respectability that was espoused by editors, readers, and David Garrick himself. While agreeing that this moment failed to see the creation of a widely acceptable image of Shakespeare, something Dobson sees as occurring only

² Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions*, 203.

³ Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769*, 159, 184.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 159.

after Garrick's Stratford Jubilee in 1769, this chapter gives deeper consideration to the concern over the spirits of the dead. This discomfort was palpable, evidence of a changing understanding of how the past influenced the present. Where Dobson sees the domestication, or an embourgeoisement, of Shakespeare, I see, along with Joseph Roach, a wider social and political trend that looked to solidify and know the past.

In *Cities of the Dead*, Roach uses Richard Steele's discussion of the funeral for actor Thomas Betterton in *The Tatler* in 1710 to show how actors' bodies perform a complicated role as surrogates for a range of cultural fears and hopes.⁵ Part of the strength of Roach's investigation of celebrations and performances in honour of the dead is his emphatic correlation between performance behaviour in eighteenth-century Britain and developments in the other points of the triangular slave trade – West Africa and the Americas. In his argument for the domestication of Shakespeare, Dobson understates the importance of the power of the dead over the living – which Roach sees as part of a growing emphasis on categorical differences that permeated the culture of the early and mid-eighteenth century: free and slave, black and white, living and dead. Concerns about the power of the public sphere were concerns with ideas of liberty and the public, and therefore, understandings of slavery and race. In the 1730s, these discourses of difference and the role of a dominant British identity in creating those differences were still being crystallized. They rested on shaky cultural ground, and thus, were the cause of debate and insecurity. Who should have freedom and how they were to use it was of great concern in debates about Shakespeare's influence.

⁵ Roach, *Cities*, 76. The discussion of Betterton's funeral is in *The Tatler*, 4 May, 1710.

Shakespeare became an increasingly well-known name in the decade preceding David Garrick's 1741 debut, the London stage's most famous eighteenth-century champion of the Bard. In seeking to understand the wider cultural and political meanings of Shakespeare, this chapter draws from a wide range of materials, debates, and media in which his memory or works were used. The discussion begins with an overview of Shakespeare's reputation on the stage and in print by the mid-1730s. It then focuses on three important events that used or changed Shakespeare's memory: the Licensing Act of 1737, the activities of the Ladies' Shakespear Club, and the erection of a statue in his honour in Poets' Corner at Westminster Abbey. Each of these events was in response to the wider political moment of the late 1730s. Many of those involved in these ventures had invoked the memory of Elizabeth for similar reasons: they wanted to remove Walpole from power, support the Atlantic trade instead of a European balance of power, and encourage a more aggressive foreign policy. Yet, in 1741, as Walpole fell from power, and Garrick rose on the London stage, Shakespeare remained too inchoate a figure to be a focus for the kind of wide and popular support that Elizabeth had.

A confluence of events resulted in William Shakespeare, the historical person, the writer, the poet, and the playwright, gaining considerable popularity by the middle of the 1730s. Whereas he had been resting in posthumous anonymity during most of the Restoration period, from the late seventeenth century onwards his works were performed with increasing frequency, were printed more regularly, and his authorship of those works was more often acknowledged. And while it used to be argued that Garrick's

career, beginning in the 1740s, had been the main impetus to Shakespeare's rising popularity in the eighteenth century, recent authors emphasize that the Bard's reputation had been on the upswing throughout the first decades of the eighteenth century.⁶ This growth was the result of events in both the publishing and the entertainment industries.

By the 1740s many of the modern Shakespearean editorial and publishing practices had emerged.⁷ The first modern edition of his collected works, published by the Tonsons and edited by Nicholas Rowe in 1709, set many of these. A playwright and later poet laureate, Rowe edited the extant folio texts for discrepancies among them to establish what he saw as the author's intended version of the material.⁸ He also provided a biographical sketch of Shakespeare, the first of its kind, which became a standard

⁶ The importance and growth of Shakespeare's reputation and the publication of his works before the 1740s was examined by several authors in the 1950s: Scouten, "Increase in Popularity.,"; George Winchester Stone, Jr., "Shakespeare in the Periodicals 1700-1740: A Study of the Growth of a Knowledge of the Dramatist in the Eighteenth Century," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (1952); George Winchester Stone, Jr., "Shakespeare in the Periodicals 1700-1740: A Study of the Growth of a Knowledge of the Dramatist in the Eighteenth Century," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 2, no. 3 (1951). Recent authors do still like to emphasize the importance of the pre-Garrick events, even if few Shakespeare scholars would now disagree: Connell, "Death and the Author.,"; Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769*; Dugas, *Marketing*; Fiona Ritchie, "The Influence of the Female Audience on the Shakespeare Revival of 1736-1738: The Case of the Shakespeare Ladies Club," in *Shakespeare and the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Peter Sabor and Paul Edward Yachnin (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008).

⁷ For works on the editions of Shakespeare's works in the eighteenth century, see, Margreta De Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim: The Reproduction of Authenticity and the 1790 Apparatus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Dugas, *Marketing*; Colin Franklin, *Shakespeare Domesticated: The Eighteenth-Century Editions* (Aldershot, UK: Scolar Press, 1991); Halliday, *The Cult of Shakespeare*; Simon Jarvis, *Scholars and Gentlemen: Shakespearean Textual Criticism and Representations of Scholarly Labour, 1725-1765* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Kramnick, *Making the English Canon*; Mark Rose, "Copyright, Authors and Censorship," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, ed. Michael F. Suarez, S. J. and Michael L. Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Trevor Ross, "Copyright and the Invention of Tradition," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 26, no. 1 (1992); Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History, from the Restoration to the Present* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989).

⁸ Franklin, *Shakespeare Domesticated*, 9.

inclusion in later texts and created a link in readers' minds between the life and personality of the author and his creative works. The Tonsons, an uncle and a nephew both named Jacob, packaged the plays in smaller octavo sheets and included engravings, making them more convenient and more adjusted to contemporary reading fashion.⁹ By the end of the 1730s, two other major editions had been published: Alexander Pope's in the mid-1720s and Lewis Theobald's in the mid-1730s. While each editor had his own style, like Rowe's, these later versions included texts edited through an amalgamation of the folios available to the editor and a biography of the author. Combined with the emergence of popular amateur textual criticism in the London press, these editions did much to determine how Shakespeare and his works were understood. All of them, however, remained expensive and elite products.

This was transformed by a battle over the publication rights to Shakespeare's works in 1734, that challenged the ownership claimed by the Jacob Tonsons. The first copyright law, the Statute of Anne in 1710, made ownership of published material a matter of public and governmental jurisdiction instead of private property.¹⁰ While there were various exceptions and possible extensions, it was premised on a limitation of the length of a copyright to fourteen years after the death of the author. By the early 1730s, the Tonsons' ownership of the rights to Shakespeare's works was soon to expire, and they attempted to retain their property beyond what had been established in the Statute. This, in turn, was challenged by other publishers, who began to print cheap copies of individual plays for sale. To prevent their competitors from gaining the upper hand, the

⁹ Dugas, *Marketing*, 130-179.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*; Rose, "Copyright, Authors and Censorship."; Ross, "Copyright."

Tonsons undercut their prices, publishing even cheaper copies. The cost of a single play, such as *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, dropped from the customary shilling to fourpence, and eventually down to a penny.¹¹ The result was a glut of inexpensive single plays on the print market. While the impact of the more expensive, larger editions, such as those of Rowe, Pope, and Theobald, on popular knowledge and performance of Shakespeare is harder to establish, the growth from the mid-1730s of cheap and plentiful copies of single plays has been shown to be directly connected to the growing interest in seeing his works performed on the London stage.¹²

Theatre historians of this period, however, argue that the history of performance influenced that of publication, not the other way around. Until the end of the 1730s, it was the interest in and popularity of the stage that drove a growing desire to read the plays.¹³ Shakespeare's reputation on the stage began its long and more gradual ascent earlier than the popular publication of his works. Late-Restoration theatre, particularly under the auspices of actor William Davenant, began to produce more of Shakespeare's works and in a form that was closer to the originals.¹⁴ During the first decades of the eighteenth century, his works were performed more frequently and were more often advertised with reference to Shakespeare by name. His plays had waves of particular popularity around 1700 and again between 1717 and 1723.¹⁵ While many of his plays were

¹¹ Scouten, "Increase in Popularity," 197.

¹² Dugas, *Marketing*, 183.

¹³ Ibid., 182; Roach, *Cities*, 74; Scouten, "Increase in Popularity," 197.

¹⁴ Halliday, *The Cult of Shakespeare*, 29.

¹⁵ Scouten, "Increase in Popularity," 190,195.

presented in altered forms (as they would be for the rest of the century), most were still recognizably the original story and play.

Beyond the world of print and stage, there was some popular knowledge of Shakespeare by the late 1730s. Studies of his role in the cultural imagination rarely discuss how ordinary people might have interacted with his memory outside of the theatre and beyond the page, especially before mid-century. One way in which this can be seen is in the number of places in and around London named in his honour. By 1739, there were at least four different taverns in the London area named after the Bard. The one most frequently mentioned as a site of meetings or events was the Shakespear's Head Tavern under the Piazza at Covent Garden. There was also a Shakespear's Head tavern in Moorfields, in the Square on London Bridge and on Marlborough Street. Other locations also commemorated the Bard, such as the Shakespear's Walk in Shadwell.¹⁶ While not unique in his presence in the metropolitan urban landscape, Shakespeare had already become a name with some cultural purchase, geographically dispersed across the capital.

By the mid-1730s William Shakespeare was a popular source of entertainment for eighteenth-century audiences. He was increasingly a staple both in print and on the stage. While many of his plays continued to be popular with both audiences and managers, the growth in the availability of his work in its printed form, beginning with

¹⁶ This information is gleaned for announcements and advertisements in contemporary papers. Several are mentioned repeatedly but, for example, in the order mentioned in the text, see, *London Evening Post*, January 29 – February 1, 1737; *London Evening Post*, April 9 – 12, 1737; *London Spy Revived*, 23 December 1737; Anderson, *The Free and Accepted Masons*; "To Be Sold by Auction," *London Tatler*, 18 December 1737.

the modern edition of Nicholas Rowe and the Tonsons and culminating in the publication battle in the mid-1730s, had led to a wider dissemination of his work. Readers, not audiences, were beginning to drive the demand for performance of his work.¹⁷ At the same time, Shakespeare had a growing life as a cultural icon accessible to wider audiences through his place in the psyche of London as part of its cultural geography, seen in the use of his name in the naming of businesses and locations. This growth of contact and knowledge could be seen as both positive and threatening. As more people had access to his works, they could increasingly read and interpret his oeuvre, according to their own cultural and political priorities. His stories and characters could be used as a language in which to comment upon the present.¹⁸ His role as part of the British imaginary past could be reassembled in new ways. It was this growth of cultural knowledge, coupled with the growing political tensions described in the previous chapter, that caused different and often competing groups of cultural elites to desire to manipulate how Shakespeare, as the representative of the British past and the growing canon of British culture, was portrayed. Questions about who was using the past, and to what ends, led those with influence and power to exert themselves to control those meanings. This can be seen in the three nearly simultaneous manifestations already mentioned: the passing of the Licensing Act in 1737, the actions of the Ladies' Shakespear Club, and the movement for the erection of a statue in his honour in Westminster Abbey. In different ways, the elite groups participating in each of these

¹⁷ Dugas, *Marketing*, 182.

¹⁸ This was a trend that was only emerging in the 1730s. By the 1760s, it was an important part of the political vernacular, see Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions*.

moments sought to preserve the past from unwanted manipulation and to control the contested meanings of that past in the present. They were all keenly aware that their actions would be judged by the past, by Shakespeare's ghost.

Concerns about the social and cultural effects of the theatre were well-trodden paths of moral anxiety by the 1730s. These had been most obviously expressed during the Civil Wars and Interregnum, when theatre had been prohibited. But its return with the Restoration was hardly met with universal acclaim, and many groups and communities greeted its revival with mistrust and resistance.¹⁹ The passing of the Licensing Act in 1737 drew on these long-standing fears, coupled with contemporary worries about the popularity of foreign stage products, and was specifically caused by the particular concerns of Sir Robert Walpole's government in 1737. The effects of this act were wide-ranging and extremely long-lasting. For the theatre of the late-1730s, the Act spoke to fears of how popular entertainments might serve as crucibles for political ideas and organizations. The Act itself reinforced both the importance of the past as a source of entertainment acceptable to the government's interests and their concurrent fears that even well known and established works could be moulded and reinterpreted in subversive ways.

¹⁹ Görel Garlick, "Theatre Outside London, 1660-1775," in *The Cambridge History of British Theatre*, ed. Joseph Donohue (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). The mistrust remained significant throughout the century, forming an important part of local attitudes to David Garrick's Stratford Jubilee in 1769. See Chapter Four, "Pasteboard Shakespeares: The Shakespeare Jubilee of 1769 and the British Past."

Anxieties about theatres focused both on the content and the location of the performances. The theatre was understood to be both a space and an event. On the stage, the ability of deft portrayals to influence the manners and morals of the audience was seen as dangerous. Plots about infidelity and insubordination might encourage potentially dangerous personal, sexual, and political emulation. One correspondent to the *Weekly Miscellany* commented on the importance of the “inseparable Relation between real Life and the Taste of a People.” The author believed that the content of the theatre had to be closely monitored, as it was formative of the morals of the nation: the “Gentry’s,” through their attendance at the theatre and the “Common People’s,” through their emulation of the gentry. But in representing both virtues and vices, “the embellish’d, frequented, admired Scene [would] be transcribed into real Life, and become the Fashion, the Model, the Taste of People.”²⁰ To avoid the threat the theatre posed to the degradation of social morality, the author encouraged greater attendance at school theatrical productions, locations, he believed, of moral honesty and uprightness.

The popularity of foreign productions on London stages was also a cause for concern. The growing interest in Italian operas and French pantomimes, in particular, was believed to undermine the acceptable gendered and nationalist lessons that the theatre might offer. Both sides of the political divide in the press, those who supported Walpole and the 1737 Act and those who did not, could unite in their distaste for the popularity of French and Italian performances. They were portrayed as lacking meaningful content and diverting audiences from properly “English” (occasionally,

²⁰ "Mr. Hooker," *Weekly Miscellany*, 23 December 1737.

“British”) ideas and morality. A poem in the *Daily Post* in 1738, after the passing of the Act, recalls the theatre before the government took steps to curtail its content. During this immoral time, Italian *castrati* seduced audiences from stouter material, while French actresses “shew[ed] their Ar—s in immodest Dance.”²¹ These distracting foreign performers drew attention away from themes considered more proper for English audiences, according to the poet, such as the importance of freedom and liberty.

Finally, and of the most direct relevance to the passing of the 1737 Act, the London stage was being used as a platform from which to voice virulent opposition to Walpole’s ministry. This was done most successfully, and therefore, most offensively, according to the government, by Henry Fielding at his new theatre in the Little Haymarket. In the springs of both 1736 and 1737, he wrote and produced satires of Walpole that drew large and repeated crowds. *The Historical Register of 1736*, staged in April of 1737, concluded with characters representing governmental ministers performing a jig and receiving coins tossed to them by a fictionalized but easily-identifiable Walpole.²² Fielding implied that all support for Walpole came from financial kickbacks. This play and the popularity of its obvious attacks on the Prime Minister and his supporters was a form of criticism that Walpole, who was shutting down presses for similar anti-government commentary, was not willing to let stand.

²¹ "London," *Daily Post*, 9 November 1738. For a discussion of the *castrati*'s sexual and political appeal in this period, see Joseph Roach, "Power's Body: The Inscription of Morality as Style," in *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance*, ed. Thomas Postlewait and Bruce A. McConachie (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989).

²² Henry Fielding, *The Historical Register for the Year 1736.*, (Edinburgh: W. Cheyne, 1737).

But the politics on the stage were not the only ones of concern. The space created by theatres, within and without the buildings themselves, was thought to encourage prostitution and absenteeism at work.²³ It was generally seen as an irresistible place to waste time and money. The collecting of young persons susceptible to any form of influence was particularly dangerous when the content of the performance was political.

The Walpole government had dabbled with the idea of restricting theatres more than once in the 1730s. Most seriously, a bill had been presented to Parliament in March 1734/35. In focusing on interludes and interlude players, the short pieces that were most prone to offensive forms of content, the bill's goals were more restricted than the 1737 Act's.²⁴ But Walpole had decided that the moment was not right and the bill was dropped. Two years later, the growing dissent in Parliament, in the press, and in the streets gave Walpole more reason to consider the benefits of restricting the freedom of the theatres. The new bill was an amendment to a vagrancy law passed during the reign of Queen Anne. It proposed broader and more far-reaching changes. Under its provisions, the stage would be under the absolute control of the Lord Chamberlain, and productions would be restricted to the two patent theatres, Covent Garden and Drury Lane. Further, the Lord Chamberlain was invested with the absolute power to licence theatres and to censor all dramatic productions, including reviewing the scripts of any adaptations of existing works.²⁵ The Act was presented to Parliament in May 1737. There

²³ Phil. Dram., "The Occasional Prompter. Number X," *Daily Journal*, 29 December 1736.

²⁴ P. J. Crean, "The Stage Licensing Act of 1737," *Modern Philology* 35, no. 3 (1938): 247.

²⁵ Harry William Pedicord, *The Theatrical Public in the Time of Garrick* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1954), vii.

was only one half-hearted dissenting speech from Lord Chesterfield before it was quickly passed, receiving Royal Assent on 21 June.²⁶

The Licensing Act changed the theatre industry in Britain. It limited the number of new pieces written and produced. It encouraged talented writers, like Henry Fielding, to focus on writing for print instead of for the theatre.²⁷ In so doing, it quickened the trend towards the importance of newspapers and other publications, instead of stage performance, as the location of artistic production and debate. It changed how audiences understood the content of performances and how actors and producers conveyed meaning to their audiences. Outside of the patented West-End theatres, performances could no longer use spoken language and grew to rely increasingly on music, dance, pantomime, and spectacle to create meaning and entertainment.²⁸ In the patented theatres, it also changed what was acted, by whom, and how frequently.

The tightening of censorship of plays and after-pieces encouraged theatre managers to rely on older English plays, and increasingly on the works of William Shakespeare, to both avoid the censor's pen and to be able to present affordable productions.²⁹ Managers fell back on trusted favourite pieces to attract and please audiences.³⁰ As a result, more of Shakespeare's plays were produced more frequently. By the 1740s, Shakespeare's texts or adaptations of them represented just under a quarter

²⁶ Crean, "Stage Licensing Act," 252.

²⁷ Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare*, 137.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Dugas, *Marketing*, 283; Ritchie, "Influence of the Female Audience," 58.

³⁰ Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions*, 26.

(23-24%) of all plays in all theatres.³¹ That proportion would remain stable for more than the next fifty years. For the rest of the century, Shakespeare would be the most-performed playwright in England.³²

The popularity of Shakespeare created a growing belief in a golden theatrical past. As the theatre became a less appealing market for writers' work, the use of older authors filled that void. The collapse of the market for new theatrical works discouraged experimentation and favoured the reiteration of successful formulae, thus ensuring that the new pieces that were written and produced would not be of the same calibre as those of preceding generations.³³ The reliance of managers on Shakespeare's work increasingly positioned him as more worthy and more talented than contemporary writers.

The belief in this superiority was founded on a gendered and political understanding of the past. Shakespeare's works, his tragedies in particular, were understood to present characters that were more acceptably manly than those created by modern authors, either domestic and foreign. In a poem dedicated to George Lillo, John Bancks bemoans that since the days of Shakespeare, that "mighty Atlas of the Stage," theatre had sought "to make us Lovers, not to make us Men."³⁴ The prologue to James Worsdale's *A Cure for a Scold*, an adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*, offers a British cure, Shakespeare, for the curse of "fops" and of "stages" that are "gay with

³¹ Scouten, "Increase in Popularity," 192.

³² Dugas, *Marketing*, 283.

³³ Scouten, "Increase in Popularity," 198; Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare*, 137.

³⁴ John Bancks, *Miscellaneous Works, in Verse and Prose, of John Bancks.*, vol. 1 of 2, (London: T. Aris, 1738), 44-45.

French Wit and gaudy with French Lace.”³⁵ As a representative of the best of English drama, Shakespeare was woven into a discourse, identified by Michèle Cohen, which gendered languages themselves.³⁶ The performance of more English drama would revive “the manly spirit of English Wit and Humour.”³⁷ Shakespeare was conceived of as the father of characters who, in their lack of eighteenth-century refinement, would offer viewers models of strong, masculine behaviour.

Despite the government’s attempts to curtail dissent on stage, and control the political messages presented, this gendered interpretation of Shakespeare and the past was still linked to an anti-Walpole political agenda. The growth of interest in Shakespeare was used to bolster the rhetoric of the opposition to the government, in support of a belligerent foreign policy, which from 1737 was increasingly aimed at Spain’s attacks on British ships in the Caribbean. In addition to praising the rough, aggressive masculinity of many of Shakespeare’s characters, numerous authors commented on the link between a strong, well-liked government and a flourishing artistic scene. The evidence for Queen Elizabeth’s success as a monarch was to be found, by these calculations, in the brilliance of the works by Shakespeare. Therefore, Walpole’s failures could be found in the commensurable lack of any meaningful cultural productions during his government. A correspondent to the *Country Journal* linked the Queen’s support of her people with Shakespeare’s portrayal of a belligerent nationalism

³⁵ James Worsdale, *A Cure for a Scold. A Ballad Farce of Two Acts. (Founded Upon Shakespear's Taming of a Shrew) as It Is Acted by His Majesty's Company of Comedians at the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane.*, (London: L. Gilliver, 1738).

³⁶ Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity*.

³⁷ Anglicus, "To the Author of the Daily Post," *Daily Post*, 7 October 1738.

in *Henry V*.³⁸ Further, Shakespeare's work was believed to reflect many of the political virtues espoused by the Patriot Opposition, focusing on the importance of liberty, virtue, and a strong feeling of national pride. An anonymous poet in the *Daily Post* harkened to "happy days" when Shakespeare's writing was paired with the martial glory of the sixteenth century.³⁹

The Licensing Act, therefore, not only increased the number of performances of Shakespeare, but created a discourse which viewed the past as a location of national artistic genius. It celebrated a strong, nationalist masculinity and a belligerent foreign policy, linking the politics of the present to the production of lasting and important cultural works. The Act helped to create a national past for which the vocabulary of Shakespeare's works was both readily available and culturally significant.

Walpole's ministry, however, was not the only body looking to contain the political power of the theatre by favouring, albeit incidentally, the production of Shakespeare's works. As the government and the supporters of the Licensing Act busied themselves with raising Shakespeare's ghost to more prominence, a group of women also looked to use the playwright's aura to remedy the perceived problems of the present. At the end of 1736, the Shakespear Club, sometimes known as the Ladies' Shakespear Club, was formed as an association of women seeking to unite to encourage the performance and appreciation of the Bard's work's on the stage. The Club is believed to have exerted

³⁸ "To Caleb D'anvers, Esq.," *Country Journal or The Craftsman*, 28 April 1739.

³⁹ "Verses Upon Hearing That a Licence Has Been Refus'd to a Play, Entitled, Gustavus Vasa, the Deliverer of His Country," *Daily Post*, 24 March 1739.

significant influence on managers of the West End's theatre and been a considerable factor in the increase in performances of Shakespeare's work in the late 1730s. Its activities cemented in the popular collective memory of the eighteenth century the link between women and the Bard's work. David Garrick would remind his audience of the Ladies' efforts at the Shakespeare Jubilee some thirty years later. At the peak of the Club's influence, in the theatrical seasons of 1736-1737 and 1737-1738, more Shakespeare plays were performed in a less adulterated state. But its attempts to sculpt the theatrical taste of its time were haunted by the ghosts of the past.

The past was a constitutive part of both the Shakespeare Club's agenda and the reception it received. Like the Licensing Act, the Club sought to control the politics of public entertainment through a prioritization of the past over the present. It did this not only by thrusting the dead poet on theatre managers, but by specifically pushing for more performances of his English history plays. But the revival they helped to create caused concerns about the meaning of bringing back the dead. Those who commented on the women's activities in the press and in the theatre frequently addressed whether and how well the plays fit into a narrative of the national cultural past. If the first half of the eighteenth century looked to concretize and define categories of difference, this blurring of the line between the dead and the living, or between the past and the present, was as much a cause for concern as celebration.

The importance of this group of women to Shakespeare's reputation in the 1730s, and in the rest of the eighteenth century, was identified by Emmett L. Avery in the

1950s.⁴⁰ Since then, further work has been able to identify some of the members of the Club and to trace some of the Club's activities. Michael Dobson's excellent investigatory work unearthed some previous unknown sources relating to the Club, and identified authors Mary Cowper and Elizabeth Boyd as members.⁴¹ Dobson links the activities of the Ladies to the political ideology of the Patriot Opposition. He sees their work as supporting the Patriot ideology but simultaneously opposing some of the misogynistic rhetoric of the movement's more public members, particularly Alexander Pope. More recently, Katherine West Scheil and Fiona Ritchie have added to the knowledge of the Club's role in the growth of interest in Shakespeare and its influence on theatre managers.⁴² Scheil argues that the Club was representative of the expansion of philanthropy, clubs, and women's literacy in this period.⁴³ Ritchie has quantified the extent to which the Club was able to influence the West End theatre managers. While many details about the Club's activities have been lost, historians of Shakespeare's reputation in the 1730s agree that this group was unique in its specifically female membership and its success in changing theatrical productions to conform to the Club's political and cultural goals.

The first signs of the Shakespeare Club's activities came late in 1736. The *Daily Journal's* theatrical correspondent, the Occasional Prompter, reported that there had begun "a noble attempt to revive the Stage, by a Club of Women of the first Quality and

⁴⁰ Avery, "Shakespeare Ladies Club."

⁴¹ Michael Dobson, "Embodying the Author," in *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

⁴² Ritchie, "Influence of the Female Audience."; Scheil, "Shakespeare Ladies' Club."

⁴³ Scheil, "Shakespeare Ladies' Club," 122.

Fashion.”⁴⁴ In the following months, this group of women pressured theatre managers at both Drury Lane and Covent Garden to perform more of Shakespeare’s work. Their success can be seen in both the greater number of Shakespeare plays performed “at the Particular Desire of Several Ladies of Quality” and in the poems and prologues published at this time referring to the Ladies’ actions.⁴⁵ In addition to their pressure tactics, many of the known members of the group had literary interests, women such as Mary Cowper, Elizabeth Boyd, and Susannah Ashley-Cooper, Countess of Shaftesbury, and used their writing to support the cause of Shakespearian drama.⁴⁶ Their actions were revived the following year, but had petered out by the 1738-1739 season.

The Shakespear Club wished to root out many of the same vices in contemporary theatre that the supporters of the Licensing Act had sought to curtail. In her poem, “On the Revival of Shakespear's plays by the Ladies in 1738,” Mary Cowper argued that, as women, the members of the Club were best suited to judge the quality of indigenous cultural products. It was “the softer Sex” that would “[redeem] the Land” by making such edification trendy. “For *Fashion's* Sake,” wrote Cowper, “the very *Beaux* [would] attend/ And by their *Smiles* [would] seem to *comprehend*.”⁴⁷ It was through women’s influence that the values of British entertainments could be elevated above the pernicious appeal

⁴⁴ Phil. Dram., “Occasional Prompter,” *Daily Journal*, 29 December 1736.

⁴⁵ While performances at the behest of ‘ladies of quality’ were not unknown outside of the period in which the Club was most active, historians of the Club agree that their regularity and their uniformity in advertisements for performances of Shakespeare during that time are good indicators that these works were produced because of the Club’s pressure. See Avery, “Shakespeare Ladies Club,” 154; Ritchie, “Influence of the Female Audience,” 64; Scheil, “Shakespeare Ladies' Club,” 111.

⁴⁶ In addition to these women, Scheil posits that Eliza Haywood might have been a member of the Club. Scheil, “Shakespeare Ladies' Club,” 118.

⁴⁷ Mary Cowper, “On the Revival of Shakespear's plays by the Ladies in 1738,” as quoted in Dobson, “Embodying the Author,” 151.

of foreign actors and singers. The women were also concerned about the edifying quality of entertainments that were being presented. Along with French and Italian performances, all forms of physical, sensational, or light entertainments, such as dancing, tumbling, and wire-walking, were deemed to be potentially harmful. According to a news item in the *Common Sense*, during the 1737-1738 season, the Club took to purposefully exiting the theatre after the performance of the Shakespearean main piece, before the afterpieces, thereby avoiding any “buffoonery.”⁴⁸ The women were asserting the value of the Shakespearean entertainment in itself, not as a prologue to lighter fare.

The group’s agenda had ties to the political rhetoric of the Patriot Opposition. Like them, they hoped to encourage a stronger, more aggressive masculinity through the emulation of strong British characters from the past. A great deal of the praise for the Shakespear Club held up the intellectual and educated behaviour of the women against the vain and petty occupations of men, who were urged to be more rational and to take more care in the cultivation of their minds. In “To the *Ladies of the Shakespear’s Club*,” an address reprinted on several occasions, the speaker laments that “Men [of] this Age consulted Dress,/ While *Ladies* studied *Shakespear’s Wit*.”⁴⁹ The men of the audience were encouraged: “Strive, *Britons*, strive t’improve the Mind;/ Make Wit, not dress, employ your Care,/ Since nothing in this Age, you find/ But *Wit* and *Sense* can charm the *Fair*.” The belief that men had failed to meet the intellectual level of the Club’s

⁴⁸ "Postscript," *Common Sense or The Englishman's Journal*, 11 March 1738.

⁴⁹ "To the Ladies of the Shakespear's Club," in *A collection of miscellany poems, never before publish'd*. (London: H. Woodfall, 1737).

members exemplified a more general belief in the failure of British masculinity, one that was feared to have an impact on foreign and imperial policies.

The Club's insistence on the Englishness of Shakespeare and its focus on his English historical characters was also a criticism of Walpole's and the Hanoverian monarch's close ties with the continent, one of the main foci of the Patriots' displeasure. Many members of the Club, Elizabeth Boyd and Susannah Ashley-Cooper, for example, were closely associated with prominent opponents of Walpole, and supported their political positions. The Club's preference for the performance of the English history plays, its disdain for French and Italian entertainments, and the discourse in the press and theatre about the benefits of British authors to a British audience, all highlighted strongly the nationalist priorities for which the Club felt Shakespeare was an appropriate figurehead.

But the women's attempts to use the theatrical past to rectify the weaknesses from which they felt the British stage suffered raised unwanted specters. Commentators compared the Club's work to bringing back forgotten dramas with bringing back the dead author himself. In "On the Revival," Mary Cowper argues that the women were more successful in bringing Shakespeare back to life than men had been: "*Shakespear* live[d] again by their *Command*."⁵⁰ The prologue to Francis Lynch's *The Independent Patriot* imagined Shakespeare as an elderly ghost, who "smile[d] to be with tender Care,/ Old as he [was], supported by the Fair."⁵¹ But not everyone agreed that such spirits were benevolent. A new prologue for George Farquhar's *The Constant Couple* warned that

⁵⁰ Cowper, "On the Revival," quoted in Dobson, "Embodying the Author," 151.

⁵¹ Francis Lynch, *The Independent Patriot: Or, Musical Folly. A Comedy.*, (London: J. Watts, 1737).

“the Ladies of such specters [as Old Shakespear] should take heed;/ For, twas the DEVIL did raise the Ghost indeed.”⁵² These concerns over the theatre as a conduit to the other world, where women acted as the mediums, underscore the intermediate cultural space afforded the theatre. It was between worlds: between the now and the then, the living and the dead, the individual and the community. Bringing forth the British past as a didactic curriculum in national history, gender constructions, and cultural mores might open more interstitial places for other groups to redefine and reuse. The private space of spirit and memory was being transformed into a public forum for debate and discussion. And while the women felt they were channeling that power through the appropriate avenues – a focus on English history and a disdain for popular, frivolous entertainments – not everyone was convinced such natural forces could be so easily contained.

Ultimately, the women succeeded in some of their goals and not in others. Shakespeare was featured more prominently in playbills from the 1736-1737 season onwards, but that was the effect of a combination of factors, including the passing of the Licensing Act that June. Much as in religious contexts, their work entrenched women’s role as the emotional judges of cultural performances, whose choices would help British men become fully actualized. In this way, the appreciation of Shakespeare’s work as part of a particularly female sphere of emotional knowledge was established.

The women’s attempts to use Shakespeare failed in two other ways. First, the politics that informed their actions, the desire to see manly Britons fight for their country at the expense of effeminate foreign nationals, were lost from subsequent

⁵² "A New Prologue," in *The constant couple: or, a trip to the Jubilee. A comedy* (London: John Clarke, 1738).

recountings of the Club's actions. Their goals were depoliticized. Second, their ultimate goals of reasoned, tempered masculinity, growing out of an edifying and coherent national body of theatre, was limited by the Club's own focus on an elite audience. Such objectives failed both to appeal to a broader socio-economic sphere of men and women and to be incorporated into their cultural imaginary. While the increase in Shakespeare performances they encouraged would help to percolate knowledge of Shakespeare and his characters through the various social classes, this would not be an immediate outcome of their activities. Thus, whereas the history of Elizabeth harnessed support for the war effort by drawing on a variety of cultural languages, the desire to edify and to restrict interpretations of the past by the Club meant their actions did not gain wider meaning. The ghost of Shakespeare remained, largely, the concern of the elite, educated few.

In *Don Sancho: Or, The Students Whim*, a play by Elizabeth Boyd, a member of the Shakespear Club, a group of Oxford students enlist the help of the mysterious eponymous Don Sancho to raise the spirits of Shakespeare and John Dryden through incantation.⁵³ Don Sancho's magic is successful; the ghosts of both authors appear and chide the men for resurrecting resting spirits. The back of the stage then opens suddenly to reveal Minerva and Apollo descending majestically from above in a chariot. As the ghosts, gods, and their attendants celebrate the importance of knowledge with a dance,

⁵³ The play received a reading in the Green Room at Drury Lane but was never performed on stage. Elizabeth Boyd, *Don Sancho: Or, the Students Whim, a Ballad Opera of Two Acts, with Minerva's Triumph, a Masque*, (London: G. Parker, 1739).

they are disrupted by another descending chariot. This one carries two monuments: one to Shakespeare and one to Dryden. The statues serve as a bridge between the worlds, and the students are momentarily able to join in the godly, ghostly dancing. The apparitions then disappear. As they recover from their vision, the students are surprised to see the monuments have remained. One of the intrepid Oxonians translates the Greek inscription on Shakespeare's: "Six score Years, [after] Death upreard I stand,/ The Wonder, as the Glory of the Land." Dryden's Latin epitaph read, in English : "As *Shakespear's* Friend, I here erect my Throne/ The grateful Burden, of Unfeeling Stone."⁵⁴ As the words are spoken, the monuments crumble and evaporate. The students return to their rooms, happy to have escaped without being caught out of bed, and promising, "No more attempt, to Raise, the sleeping just."⁵⁵

In this piece, Boyd addresses two of the ways in which Shakespeare was being commemorated at the end of the 1730s. First, the play was part of broad cultural activities of the Shakespear Club. Through its celebration of the importance of Shakespeare but also in the piece's prologue, which disparaged Alexander Pope, and through the importance of Minerva, as a female deity, to the knowledge of the cultural world, embodied by Shakespeare and Dryden, Boyd established this play as part of the gendered agenda of the Club. Second, however, by its references to monuments to Shakespeare and Dryden, it entered into the current discussions about raising just such a memorial to the Bard in Westminster Abbey.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 18.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 20. Punctuation as in original.

In the winter of 1737-1738, a group of nobility, politicians, and writers associated with the Patriot Opposition decided to launch a campaign to commemorate Shakespeare at Westminster Abbey. Their plan came to fruition three years later in the unveiling of a monument in the “poetical corner” of the Abbey. Despite its heavily politicized message, the monument and the man it celebrated failed to extend that rhetoric beyond the elite group that had united to erect it. In their emphasis on the importance of the “public” in its creation, however, the organizers were participating in the concerns about the role of a new, wider political public and that public’s use of the past. Shakespeare was again constructed as a useful tool for educating wider, non-elite understandings of the national past, but one that needed careful utilization. While the monument did not achieve its immediate goals of politicizing the memory of Shakespeare, it did help create a visual identity for the poet that would extend beyond his work in print or on the stage and would grow over the remainder of the century. The desire to erect the monument indicates that, while a broad, appealing Early Modern past would eventually become more significant, in the 1730s it failed to successfully align itself with the rhetorical power of the memory of Queen Elizabeth.

It took two theatrical seasons of fundraising benefits at the patent theatres and a further year and a half of design and production before the statue was erected. Unveiled in January 1741, his was not the first monument in the Poets’ Corner, nor was this the first attempt to mount a memorial to him in that location. The Abbey became the home to numerous retrospective commemorative representations of literary figures in the 1720s and 1730s, including Dryden, Ben Jonson and, its most recent addition, John

Milton in 1736.⁵⁶ During these decades, the idea of honouring Shakespeare in a similar manner had been considered. The Dean and Chapter of Westminster had approved space for such a monument in 1726 and in 1734.⁵⁷ Either for lack of organization or for lack of funds, nothing came of these attempts. The success of the trustees of the monument that was erected in 1741 at the Abbey, who included the Earl of Burlington, Alexander Pope, Dr. Richard Mead, a bibliophile and collector, and Mr. Fleetwood,⁵⁸ relied heavily on the personal investment of a small group of men in the political message they hoped the statue would communicate.

A month after the renewed effort to commemorate Shakespeare within the Abbey was announced, the first benefit was held, a performance of *Julius Caesar* at Drury Lane Theatre on 28 April 1738. One advertisement, in the form of a letter to the editor, argued that Shakespeare deserved the same immortalization that had recently been bestowed on Milton. It emphasized that Shakespeare held a special place in the public's heart, and that it was through the public's generosity and interest that such a plan would come to fruition.⁵⁹

This trust in the public's generosity appears to have been a bit premature. Little was said about the project in the press after the initial fundraiser. A year later, in March 1739, a correspondent to the *Common Sense* expressed concerns about what had been done with the funds, shortly after which a second fundraising performance, this time of

⁵⁶ Connell, "Death and the Author," 559.

⁵⁷ Roscoe, "Monument," 72.

⁵⁸ A.Z., "London," *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, 26 April 1738. Roscoe also names Thomas Martin, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, as a trustee. Roscoe, "Monument," 73.

⁵⁹ "London," *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, 21 April 1738.

Hamlet, was held on 10 April 1739 at Covent Garden.⁶⁰ This also failed to raise the desired sum. A large personal gift from Lord Burlington, however, subsequently ensured that they could go ahead with the statue.⁶¹ George Vertue, a contemporary theatrical insider, believed that just over £300 had been collected through the various benefits and donations.⁶²

Work began on the monument in the summer of 1739. The trustees chose William Kent as the designer and Peter Scheemakers as the sculptor for the piece. The choice of Kent was strategic both for the aesthetics of the space and the politics of the design. Kent was the designer of numerous memorials in the Abbey, including the one to Isaac Newton (1732).⁶³ But he had also been the architect of the Temple of British Worthies, a visual representation of the Patriots' alternative historical vision, commissioned by Lord Cobham for his estate at Stowe.⁶⁴ The sculptor for the Westminster statue, Scheemakers, had likewise participated in the Temple, sculpting several of the busts contained it, including that of Shakespeare.⁶⁵ Both commemorative projects, at Stowe and at the Abbey, sought to link important national figures from the past with a profoundly jingoist and belligerent national identity through which to harangue and oppose the Hanoverian and Walpole regime.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ *Common Sense or The Englishman's Journal*, 24 March 1739.

⁶¹ "London," *London Evening Post*, 10 April 1739. The total raised by the benefit was £82 16s, see "London," *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, 18 April 1739.

⁶² Roscoe, "Monument," 74.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁶⁴ Dobson, "Embodying the Author," 138.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Coutu, *Persuasion*, 148.

Approval to place the monument in the South Cross, in what is now known as Poets' Corner, was given by Westminster's Dean and Chapter in October 1740.⁶⁷ By January 1741 it was unveiled to the public's delight and quickly became one of the most popular attractions in the Abbey.⁶⁸ The final product was an almost life-size standing figure of Shakespeare in a casual pose, one leg crossed, resting on an elbow, placed in a pedimented niche. Ingrid Roscoe has traced the visual lineage of this image of Shakespeare, and believes that it draws most heavily from the Chandos portrait, with its relaxed open shirt collar and loose drawstrings.⁶⁹

The form and content of the memorialisation sought to link Shakespeare with the political goals of the Patriot Opposition. The work is significant in the informality of the subject's pose [Fig. 2.1]. The relaxed posture emphasized a rugged, casual masculinity that informed the Patriot's politics. Shakespeare leans on a pile of untitled books while pointing to a scroll with lines from *The Tempest*. The lines on the scroll allude to the fleeting quality of earthly possessions, a criticism frequently levelled at Walpole, compared to the Opposition's perception of their own goals as lofty and eternal.⁷⁰ To support the Patriot attacks on the foreignness of the monarch and the European aims of his Prime Minister, the statue accentuated Shakespeare's role as a distinctly English author and interpreter of the English past, through the inclusion of the heads of

⁶⁷ "Westminster Chapter Book," 1738-1749, WMA Chapter Book, IX, Westminster Abbey Muniments, Westminster.

⁶⁸ "London," *London Evening Post*, 29 January 1741.

⁶⁹ Roscoe, "Monument," 75.

⁷⁰ The inscription from *The Tempest* on the monument reads, "The Cloud capt Tow'rs,/ The Gorgeous Palaces,/ The Solemn Temples,/ The Great Globe itself,/ Yea all which it Inherit,/ Shall Dissolve;/ And like the baseless Fabrick of a Vision/ Leave not a wreck behind." The lines are spoken by Prospero in Act 4, Scene 1.



Figure 2.1. Monument to Shakespeare, Westminster Abbey, 1751, engraving.

monarchs, Elizabeth, Henry V, and Richard III, around the pedestal on which the books under his elbow rest.

The monument has often been considered an attempt to provide a physical emblem for the project of creating a national literary canon, in particular in its emphasis on the written works instead of their performance. In her studies of *Scheemakers* and the statue, Roscoe argues that the monument was part of an aesthetically cohesive attempt to tie the Abbey as a whole to the national literary past.⁷¹ Philip Connell supports this reading, adding that layered memorialisation of the national literary past presented by the Abbey helped to obscure the ways in which this past was a construction.⁷² Both the unified nation in the present it claimed to represent and the lineage it created of the past were unstable entities that required as much forgetting as remembering to make them viable cultural memories. For Michael Dobson, it was part of the Patriot Opposition's attempts to "explicitly [politicize] questions of culture."⁷³ The attempt to bring Shakespeare into their discourse was complicated, according to Dobson and Connell, by the tension between his two manifestations, as an author of printed works and as a playwright of favourite performances.

The statue has been also been interpreted as an unstable signifier. Dobson sees the monument as a partial failure because of its inability to reconcile the rough Shakespeare of the stage with that of the respectable author represented in the Abbey. There was also a tension between the Abbey's long-time purpose as a site of elite, familial memorials

⁷¹ Roscoe, "Monument.,"; Ingrid Roscoe, *Peter Scheemakers* (The Walpole Society, 1999).

⁷² Connell, "Death and the Author," 558-559.

⁷³ Dobson, "Embodying the Author," 135.

and its emerging role as a place for public, national commemoration. Many of its ostensibly national projects were the products of personal power and influence.⁷⁴ This relationship between the private patronage needed to finance such monuments and the Abbey's role in civic commemoration destabilized the image presented; the Shakespeare Monument was unable to live up to the political goals set by its investors. Part of this failure was the result of the inability of the Patriots and their supporters to harness the image of Shakespeare to a national past that had meaning for a broader constituency. The medium also limited the ability of the monument to popularize this interpretation of Shakespeare. The stone statue took a long time to design, create and mount.⁷⁵ By 1741, the military concerns of the nation had changed. War with France, not Spain, became more attractive and the imminent fall of Walpole was reshaping political allegiances. The political message of the monument did not have the same immediacy it might have had in 1738 or 1739.

Yet, the trustees did seek to associate their project with public opinion. The editorial advertisement for the 1738 fundraising performance argued that this project was unique in that it would rely on public funds. The author claimed that this was “the *first Instance of any Monument being erected by the Publick.*”⁷⁶ The prologue spoken at the 1739 fundraising performance of *Hamlet* stated that Shakespeare would be given “A

⁷⁴ Connell, "Death and the Author," 566; Coutu, *Persuasion*, 105; Matthew Craske, "Westminster Abbey 1720-70: A Public Pantheon Built Upon Private Interest," in *Pantheons: Transformations of a Monumental Idea*, ed. Richard Wrigley and Matthew Craske (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004).

⁷⁵ Later in the century, the Monument to General Wolfe faced similar issues. It was unveiled long after its immediate political reference had passed (and after Benjamin West's popular painting of the scene had been unveiled). Coutu, *Persuasion*, 144.

⁷⁶ "London," *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, 21 April 1738.

Fame fresh blooming at the Publick Cost.”⁷⁷ Ultimately, however, the public was reluctant to part with its money for this project. But the desire to make this monument representative of a wider, “publick” voice speaks to ways in which the boundaries of political discourse were being transformed. Literary history presented a possible start from which to persuade a wide audience to the political cause of the Patriots. But the lack of unified vocabulary in which to articulate a singular representative of the cultural past, one that would be both malleable yet unimpeachable, caused a feeling of discomfort in some.

This unease was expressed through a concern for the spirit of Shakespeare. The monument seemed to release the author’s spirit instead of encasing it in stone. In the “Prologue” from the 1739 benefit, Shakespeare was, like his Caesar, “mighty yet!/[His] spirit walk[ed] abroad.”⁷⁸ It concludes, however, by incorrectly implying that the monument would hold the remains of the poet, “his honour’d bones.”⁷⁹ The monument, then, struggled with Shakespeare as both a respected author and a more lurid purveyor of stage entertainment, but also with a tension between the dead and the living, between the reality of stone and the elusiveness of performance. Attempts to solidify Shakespeare as a physical representative of a popular political position were not successful in the late 1730s. Both the corporeality of recreating a dead poet and its representativeness of a common and popular historical knowledge were problematic. As a result, the organizers had to have recourse to the financial power of their own group to ensure that the

⁷⁷ "London," *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, 12 April 1739.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ The monument did not hold Shakespeare’s remains, which were left in Stratford-upon-Avon. *Ibid.*

commemoration occurred. The historical lessons they espoused might not have created the monument, but they could hope it would serve a didactic function, teaching the future about the significance of Shakespeare for the British psyche.

While the monument failed to unite the public in the late 1730s, the statue would have a significant long-term impact on the conceptualization of Shakespeare in the national historical constellation. The statue itself would do what the act of commemoration did not; it created an image of Shakespeare that could be commercialized and around which the popular historical imagination could coalesce. Scheemakers' statue would become an iconic image of the Bard. Garrick would strike a pose inspired by the monument in a famous portrait by Thomas Gainsborough, painted at the time of the Stratford Jubilee in 1769. A large market for small-scale reproductions of the statue in a variety of qualities and prices developed.⁸⁰ And while the statue itself had a more limited audience, as these iconic diminutive Bards spread, so too did the desire to possess and participate in the culture he was believed to represent.

Unfortunately for Elizabeth Boyd, her elegy to the monument of Shakespeare in *Don Sancho* was a concept that proved too appealing not to borrow. A similar performance was presented at what had been the theatre in Goodman's Fields, a few months after the unveiling of Scheemaker's monument in Westminster Abbey in 1741. Like Boyd's piece, a "Representation of SHAKESPEAR'S MONUMENT, As lately

⁸⁰ Connell, "Death and the Author," 570-573; Roscoe, "Monument," 80.

Erected”⁸¹ featured an assembly of ancient gods, including Minerva, to celebrate the poet. The festivities occurred around and through the visual anchor of the monument from Westminster. Increasingly through the eighteenth century, a literary past that could be quantified, edited, commodified, and sold would become the most significant way in which the national past was celebrated. But in the late 1730s, Shakespeare failed to unify any broader politicized public opinion.

During this period Shakespeare remained only one of several important authors and playwrights. His later pre-eminence was far from predetermined. He was frequently mentioned in the same breath as Dryden, as in *Don Sancho*, or Milton, as in discussions about monuments at Westminster Abbey. Or, he was grouped with other English playwrights: Jonson, Otway, or Beaumont and Fletcher. For each of the events examined in this chapter that tried to highlight Shakespeare’s particular, unique value, there were similar groups that wanted to celebrate the uniqueness of other authors. There was more than one mention of the intention to organize a Ladies’ Beaumont and Fletcher Club. A news item shortly after the first benefit in 1738 for Shakespeare’s Westminster monument claimed there was also “a design a foot [...] to erect a Monument to the Memory of Beaumont and Fletcher.”⁸² It would take further changes to how the cultural past was constituted and manipulated before Shakespeare would emerge alone at the apex of an imagined British cultural historical hierarchy.

The Licensing Act, the Shakespear Club, and the monument at Westminster all sought to manipulate Shakespeare to provide didactic lessons. For the government, there

⁸¹ *London Daily Post, and General Advertiser*, 27 February 1741.

⁸² "London," *London Evening Post*, 4 May 1738.

was desire to stomp out potential criticism and to control the meaning and interpretation of the theatrical performances. Through their pressure on theatre managers to perform more Shakespeare, with an emphasis on his histories, the members of the Club looked to use the theatre to give women a central role in the creation of a Patriot Opposition founded on a dynamic, belligerent nationalism. They saw Shakespeare as a tool that they could wield to help teach those lessons. Finally, the male trustees of the monument at Westminster looked to tie the Bard's image to their agenda by creating a permanent, physical representation of the playwright that would serve as an icon of their political goals.

Each of these attempts demonstrated how a cultural historical figure failed to garner wider respect at this time. Throughout the late 1730s, desires to use the past as represented by Shakespeare were haunted by a discomfort with the role of the past in the present. The expansion of participation in public debate brought to light the limits of the discourse of freedom. Each attempt to control the historical image of Shakespeare looked to contain contemporary freedoms to interpret and use the past. In a growing world of public opinion, the space provided by cultural products for multiple interpretations and meanings caused unease. The dead haunted the living. The many haunted the few.

Chapter Three

The Designs of the Few and the Folly of the Many

The Uses of the Elizabethan Past during the Seven Years' War

In a piece for *The World* in October 1756, a correspondent ventured out into the streets of London to assess whether or not the British nation, and the human race more generally, was in a state of perpetual deterioration.¹ His first stop was a coffeehouse, where the president of a political meeting was lamenting the recently-declared war with France. The orator warned that the cost of the war was far too great to warrant its continuation. He concluded by saying, “things were not carried on in this way in Queen Elizabeth’s days; the public was considered, and able men were consulted and employed. Those were the days!” The intrepid reporter left the coffeehouse to mull this comparison over, but his thoughts were interrupted by the tumult of a crowd pouring into a nearby public house. Among the throng, the author spied a friend, a tailor, who informed him that this was a meeting of master tailors to discuss their problems with journeymen tailors. Once within the assembly, the friend addressed his fellow craftsmen, emphasizing the insolence and unreasonableness of the journeymen. Their behaviour, he concluded, would not have been tolerated in the days of Queen Elizabeth, who “would have *worked* them with a witness.” Our author made a quiet exit but had gotten no farther than the next street when he was waylaid by another large gathering,

¹ *The World*, 7 October 1756. The letter was republished as the work of the Earl of Chesterfield in *The London Magazine and Monthly Chronologer*, October, 1756.

that of the journeymen tailors looking to vent their own grievances. The injustice and oppression they suffered at the hands of their employers was ruining them and their families. “Had the master taylor done these things in Queen Elizabeth’s days,” said the eloquent journeyman who had the floor, “she would have mastered them with a vengeance, so she would.”

This faith in the value of the Elizabethan era, among groups otherwise quite different in age and status, did not fool our correspondent. He could see clearly that such claims about both the excellence of the past and the vices of the present were but the ploys of certain elite groups; they were “scattered by the designs of the few, and blindly adopted by the ignorance and folly of the many.” He might forgive the master and journeymen tailors who believed in their own historical interpretations, but not the coffeehouse politician, whose “interior conviction” was much more suspect. Those who looked to the past as an alternative to the present, he concluded, did so out of self-interest; they were poets looking to strike a pathetic tone or politicians hoping to gain influence and power.

At the end of the 1750s and the beginning of the 1760s, during the period of the Seven Years’ War, the image of Queen Elizabeth was again a meaningful historical device for interpreting the present. Her memory was recalled, used, and performed not only by the tailors and coffeehouse orators of *The World’s* article, but by a wide range of groups and individuals. For some, the Elizabethan past represented a time that valued their ideas and priorities. For others, it was a rhetorical device through which to express disenchantment with the present. And for others still, like our confident author, history

had little relevance in dealing with the problems and politics of the current day. These divergent understandings of the role of historical examples, specifically the Elizabethan past, reveal how older ways of manipulating and understanding history were incorporated into newer narratives, forms of knowledge, and communication styles. Both the old and the new coexisted. In the discussions about popular political participation, in civic governance, in popular entertainments, and in the debates over the war, the deployment of the armed forces, and a possible French invasion, Elizabethan history retained its ability to represent diverse sets of priorities and ideas. In many cases, these continued to be drawn from long-standing practices, moulded by timeworn methods of communication and performance. Elizabeth's era was a regular and significant referent through which to understand British society, culture, and politics. At the same time, the mid-eighteenth century uses of history also demonstrate a turn towards an accumulation of rationalized knowledge, spread and acquired through new modes of transmission and dissemination.

This chapter examines how Elizabethan history was used and transformed during the period of the Seven Years' War, between 1756 and 1763. It focuses especially on the period from the middle of 1759, and the success of the British troops under General James Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham, to the end of 1760, and the ascension of the third Hanoverian monarch, George III, on the death of his grandfather in October of that year. Combined with other naval and military victories in the European sphere of combat at that time, Britain experienced a surge of newly-wrought geopolitical and imperial power. Faced with what appeared to contemporaries to be a historical

disjuncture, numerous actors made the Elizabethan past a meaningful way in which to comprehend the present.

Seeking to put new wines in old bottles, Britons combined older uses and sources of the past with newer means of collecting and sharing information. Examining three discrete moments or debates at this time, and the ways in which Elizabeth's history was used, demonstrates how the opportunities for diverse groups to use and interpret the past were supplanted by increasingly dominant narratives, conveyed by newer technological and commercial means. The first debate is about the war itself. The memory of Queen Elizabeth was repeatedly employed in numerous discourses about the war: fear of invasions, the importance of colonial acquisition, the importance of a militia, and the tradition of strong naval heroes. The second moment is the movement of a celebration of Queen Elizabeth's founding the Westminster School. In these festivities, the Queen was used in older celebratory ways in which communities were physically and socially delineated. But these ends were communicated in ways that simultaneously drew on newer developments in politics and the media. Finally, the third section compares some of the popular ways in which history was used in print. In 1759, David Hume published his two-volume *The History of England under the House of Tudor*, which would become the standard English history text until well into the following century. It presented a unified, educational, and rational narrative of the English (and Scottish) past. But the growth of the publishing industry created demand for other forms of history that did not aspire to such modern enlightened interpretations of the past. Jest books, one of the oldest forms of popular publications, relied on different

sources for their presentation of the past and continued to put it to different use. Yet, even these works were being formed and shaped by the emerging commercialised economy in knowledge and entertainment.

Together, the uses of the past in these three moments, in discussions of government and the war, in celebrations, and in commercialized print culture, reveal the tensions between older ways of knowing the past which were more personal, more certain, and more immediate and emerging desires to accumulate rationalized knowledge about the historical other, to use that knowledge for political and economic goals and to distance the past from the modernity of the present, through nostalgic recollections. While Queen Elizabeth's period remained a building block in different groups' understandings of themselves, it was less able to serve to legitimize contemporary choices in the present.

Queen Elizabeth and the Seven Years' War

The Seven Years' War has been seen as a watershed in British political, social, and imperial history. Over the course of the protracted struggle against France and Austria, British fortunes swung from early lows – the loss of Minorca and isolation from their traditional continental allies – to the highs of 1759 and 1760, including successes against the French off France's Atlantic coast, in North America, and in the German states.² By the time a peace treaty was signed in 1763, Britain's global domination of shipping and maritime commerce had been confirmed. At France's expense, Britain retained many of

² Daniel A. Baugh, *The Global Seven Years War, 1754-1763* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2011); Simms, *Three Victories*.

its territorial acquisitions, creating an unprecedented large empire. The length of the conflict and the popular interest both in the debacles and the triumphs helped to change the tenor of public discourse about empire.³ Beyond a concern for commerce and international competition, the growth and protection of a British empire would thereafter be of greater interest within government and among the reading public.

Throughout these tumultuous events, Parliament, the government of the City of London, and the popular press debated a wide range of choices and priorities affecting Britain's performance in the war. In these discussions, British history, specifically the Elizabethan period, remained a significant tool with which to shape the present. Historical precedents remained guides for present actions. The continuing debates about the war with France, addressing issues relating to fears of invasion, the desire to protect colonial holdings, and the importance of maintaining naval dominance, demonstrated the ways in which the Elizabethan period could still be a potential source of legitimation for actions in the present. But the role of history in these debates was tinged with new ideas about historical time, influenced by emerging ideas about the differences between the "then" and the "now." Different, more novel, discourses did not find the past a useful guide for contemporary affairs. The debates around this mid-century war demonstrate the multiple understandings of the past that existed at this time.

³ Nicholas Rogers, "From Vernon to Wolfe: Empire and Identity in the British Atlantic World of the Mid-Eighteenth Century," in *The Culture of the Seven Years War*, ed. Frans de Bruyn and Shaun Regan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

Many of the issues raised by the war lent themselves to the use of the popular Elizabethan memory. In a conflict that was fought in the Americas, the Caribbean, the European continent, and involving smaller colonial outposts across the world, British politicians and commentators tried to prioritize the various spheres of action in order to allocate resources in such a way as to achieve their goals. This war was sparked by arguments over trade in North America, but for many in Britain it was seen as an opportunity to curb France's European and colonial power.⁴ So, repeating the arguments of earlier eighteenth-century wars, opinion within Britain was split between prioritizing the defence of shipping and trade, on the one hand, and counteracting French influence and protecting Hanover on the continent, on the other. People promoting both sides held Queen Elizabeth up as an exemplar.

For those who felt that Britain should focus on the *outré-mer*, Elizabeth had been a monarch who had rightfully prioritized shipping, naval strength, exploration, and avoided costly interferences in continental disputes. In the *London Evening Post*, "Anglicanus" argued that Elizabeth had respected Britain's natural, "insular situation," and thereby supported her nation's maritime strength. This policy made her era one of the only ones, along with Oliver Cromwell's, in which England had "shone forth in her true lustre, without being clouded, or clogged, with burthensome, restrictive or useless connections."⁵ Favouring Britain's colonial and imperial interests required strong

⁴ Baugh, *Global Seven Years War*, 622.

⁵ Anglicanus, "To the Author, &C.," *London Evening Post*, 26 July 1759.

leadership, the “cool solidity of a Queen Elizabeth,”⁶ to set an example in dealing with European governments.

Those who favoured helping Hanover and Prussia maintain a balance of power in the European sphere of battle could also find a model in Elizabeth. From their perspective, she had not isolated her nation from Europe. Elizabeth had been “so far from paying no attention to foreign affairs,” argued a correspondent to the *Lloyd’s Evening Post* in 1760, “that they principally engaged her attention; and perhaps were never better understood than in her celebrated reign.”⁷ She had been an active and intelligent participant in the broader international politics of her time. Her keen advisors and her desire to protect the Protestant religion had guided her to a Eurocentric foreign policy.

Constructed as a struggle against a rival national “Other,” that is, France, the discourse around the war helped to structure the on-going formation of a dominant British identity.⁸ The reputation and meaning of being “British” was perceived as an essential ingredient in the war effort. Queen Elizabeth, her captains, her admirals, and their success against the Armada, were believed by many to represent a high-water mark in British honour. Further, as in discussions in the 1730s, England during her reign was

⁶ *Considerations on the Present State of Affairs, with Some Reflections on the Dutch Observer.*, (London: S. Hooper, 1756).

⁷ “Remarks on the True Interest of Great Britain, with Regard to Continental Connections,” *Lloyd’s Evening Post and British Chronicle*, 19 September 1760. See also, *Party Spirit in Time of Publick Danger, Considered. Wherein, the Effects of the National Debt; the Necessity of Our Connections on the Continent; with the Nature of Our Present Subsidy Forces, and the Antient Mercenaries; Are Fully Discussed.*, (London: T. Waller, 1756).

⁸ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, 2nd ed. (London: Pimlico, 2003), 368.

believed to have demonstrated great courage and intense devotion to its monarch and the national ideal.

The performance of the national leadership, particularly the failures of naval commanders like Admiral John Byng, was dissected in the light of the Elizabethan era. The upper echelons of the admiralty had long been evaluated by a worldview that favoured men who seemed to have risen through the ranks, who were willing to risk life and limb in dangerous manoeuvres, and were capable of inflicting violence on the enemy, all characteristics that Elizabeth's men were believed to have demonstrated, but that were noticeably lacking in the Royal Navy's performance in the Mediterranean in the 1750s. These priorities, argues Stephen Moore, created a discourse in which assessment of naval officers was understood through a dichotomy: the heroic "tarpaulins," in the line of Sir Francis Drake, who successfully represented these ideals, and the disappointing "gentlemen," their antithesis.⁹ This characterization emerged out of events in the 1660s, and relied heavily on the historical memory of the Elizabethan era. By the mid-eighteenth century, naval disappointments were understood as the result of the inordinate influence of the "gentlemen" in the navy's governance, at the expense of the "tarpaulins." Discrediting Admiral Byng after the loss of Minorca was achieved through a comparison of his "gentlemanly" behaviour with the successful "tarpaulins" of a previous reign. A few years after Byng's court martial, "[s]o far from hearing of a naval commander obeying signals to quit an enemy," wrote John Tavernier,

⁹ Stephen Moore, "'A Nation of Harlequins'? Politics and Masculinity in Mid-Eighteenth-Century England," *Journal of British Studies* 49, no. 3 (2010).

“we find them desperately attempting things that seemed impossible.”¹⁰ The use of Elizabethan examples, including Sir Walter Raleigh and Captain John Hawkins, reinforced this understanding of naval success and failure by holding up the Elizabethan era as the preeminent historical moment in which the “tarpaulins” had been encouraged and rewarded.

The honour and bravery of the British population was also important to this international contest. Many in the 1750s voiced concerns that insufficient measures had been taken to organize a militia to ensure the physical safety of the British Isles. As a standing army was still a taboo, many turned to the possibilities of using the general population as a defence force in case of an invasion. It was felt that Elizabeth had both prioritized this form of defence and that ordinary individuals of her era had been more ready, more willing, and more capable of being involved in such activities. Her ministers had “trusted the safety of her person, and the liberty of her people, to the loyalty and courage of that people.”¹¹ In a letter to *Westminster Journal*, “Britannicus” praised not only the importance and trust Elizabeth placed in her militia but the skill and organisation of these bands in her day.¹² A strong, well-disciplined militia, “Britannicus” argued, was based on the desire of men of means to serve and protect their country, instead of paying to avoid participating. Such a militia, “formed upon the same principles as that of Elizabeth,” would save Britain in the case of an attack. In Elizabeth’s age, argued a different author, “a *Dudley* at the Head of a few *English*

¹⁰ John Tavernier, *The Entertaining Correspondent; or, Newest and Most Compleat Polite Letter Writer. In Three Parts*, (Berwick: R. Taylor, 1759).

¹¹ *An Address to the Electors of England*, (London: M. Cooper, 1756).

¹² Britannicus, "From the Westminster Journal," *London Chronicle*, 24 April 1759.

Regulars, and *British Militia*, was thought a sufficient Defence against the most formidable Invasion with which *Britain* was ever threatened."¹³

The valour of the British regular soldiers was also at stake. The interest in the organisation of a militia force was in part a reaction to the contentious decision by the Duke of Newcastle and George II to use foreign mercenaries.¹⁴ The government's decision to employ and station Hessian and Hanoverian troops on British soil brought negative comparisons with the armed forces in the time of Elizabeth. Even when faced with the overwhelming size of the Spanish army in 1588, "Queen Elizabeth's ministers never thought of sending for foreign troops to defend this nation from so formidable an attack both by sea and land."¹⁵ In that braver time, they had relied on the courage of the ordinary citizens to protect the nation. By emphasising the strength and ability of average Britons, such arguments for a stronger local militia acted as criticisms of the government's dependence on paid foreigners, at the expense of its trust in their own, British people.

The significance of the bravery of Britons, and their potential ability to act as a militia, was part of a larger, immediate concern about the possibility of a French armed invasion. These threats of an assault on British shores rekindled interest in the history of the Spanish Armada. In 1756, and again in 1759, Britain faced the threat of a French military landing.¹⁶ Fears about the weakness of the navy and of British defences were

¹³ *A Dutiful Address to the Throne; Upon the Present State of G*****T B*****N.*, (London: J. Scott, 1756), 21.

¹⁴ Simms, *Three Victories*, 417.

¹⁵ *An Address to the Electors of England.*

¹⁶ Baugh, *Global Seven Years War*, 427.

expressed through comparison with Queen Elizabeth's era, her success against the Armada, and the seriousness with which she dealt with a possible invasion. The success of the English in 1588 was believed to have been the result of military qualities that were of particular contemporary importance: the heroism of the Navy and the courage of the militia on the coasts in the face of an overwhelming enemy. Consequently, the Armada scenario was summoned up to demonstrate the importance of relying on the strength of the perceived character of the British population and to admonish the naval leadership for failing to act in a similarly aggressive manner. While the responsibility for the victory might be assigned to different actors, the militia, the army, merchants, the monarch, or her captains, they had all exhibited a willingness to engage in aggressive actions to defend their nation against the incursions of an over-proud continental power.¹⁷ The *London Magazine* published a history of all the invasion attempts against the islands to illustrate this point. There had been seven successful invasions, including William of Orange's, and sixteen unsuccessful ones, including the Armada.¹⁸ The article concluded that the experience of these invasions should teach the importance of a strong navy to ward off the attacks and of a disciplined militia in the event of an enemy landing. The author of a pamphlet from 1756, entitled *A Dutiful Address to the Throne; upon the Present State of Great Britain*, sought to educate the German-born monarch on the "gallant and warlike" ways of the English in Queen Elizabeth's time. In contrast, "Now

¹⁷ Britannicus, "From the Westminster Journal," *London Chronicle*, 24 April 1759; "The Following Is an Extract from Mr. Postlethwayt's Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce," *London Evening Post*, 13 November 1760.

¹⁸ "An Account of Invasions, or Attempts Towards Invasions, from the Conquest," *The London Magazine and Monthly Chronologer*, March 1756.

an *English* Fleet, consisting of thirteen Sail, is conquered and flies before a *French* Squadron of twelve ill-conditioned Ships.” The author hoped the example would encourage George II to “Rouse [himself] and be the King of *Great-Britain*.”¹⁹

The memory of the Armada was also mobilized to encourage more specific concerns regarding a possible invasion. Several authors felt that greater defensive preparations were needed in the event of an attack and that the example of the Armada provided useful tactics and strategies. The frontispiece for an anonymous account of the incidents of 1588 published in 1759, which included a copy of Elizabeth’s Tilbury Speech, was a large and detailed map of the warning beacons in Kent in the time of Elizabeth [Fig. 3.1].²⁰ This map, which was featured as one of the selling features in advertisements for the work, represented, through solid drawn lines between beacon stations, the direct and effective means of communication offered by this system in case of an attack.²¹ The adoption of the defense methods of Elizabeth’s time would help to guarantee the safety of the realm.

The Elizabethan past could also offer a possible model and guide for international relations. In the Seven Years’ War, Britain faced the combined strength of the French and Austrians in part because of the decision of Holland to remain neutral. Many were angered by what they perceived as this betrayal by the Low Countries. Numerous commentators felt the behaviour of the Dutch dishonoured the help they had been

¹⁹ *A Dutiful Address*, 21, 22. Original emphasis.

²⁰ *The History of the Spanish Armada, Which Had Been Preparing Three Years for the Invasion and Conquest of England, and Which in the Year 1588 Came Upon the English Coast to Effect It*, (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1759).

²¹ This work was widely advertised in August 1759. For example, *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*, 7 August 1759.

A MAP of the BEACONS in KENT as they were appointed by S^r WILLIAM BROOKE
 IP. COBHAM, I.^d Chamberlain to QUEEN ELIZABETH THE THIRD of KENT. From Leonard Forman's *Foramulations of Kent*.

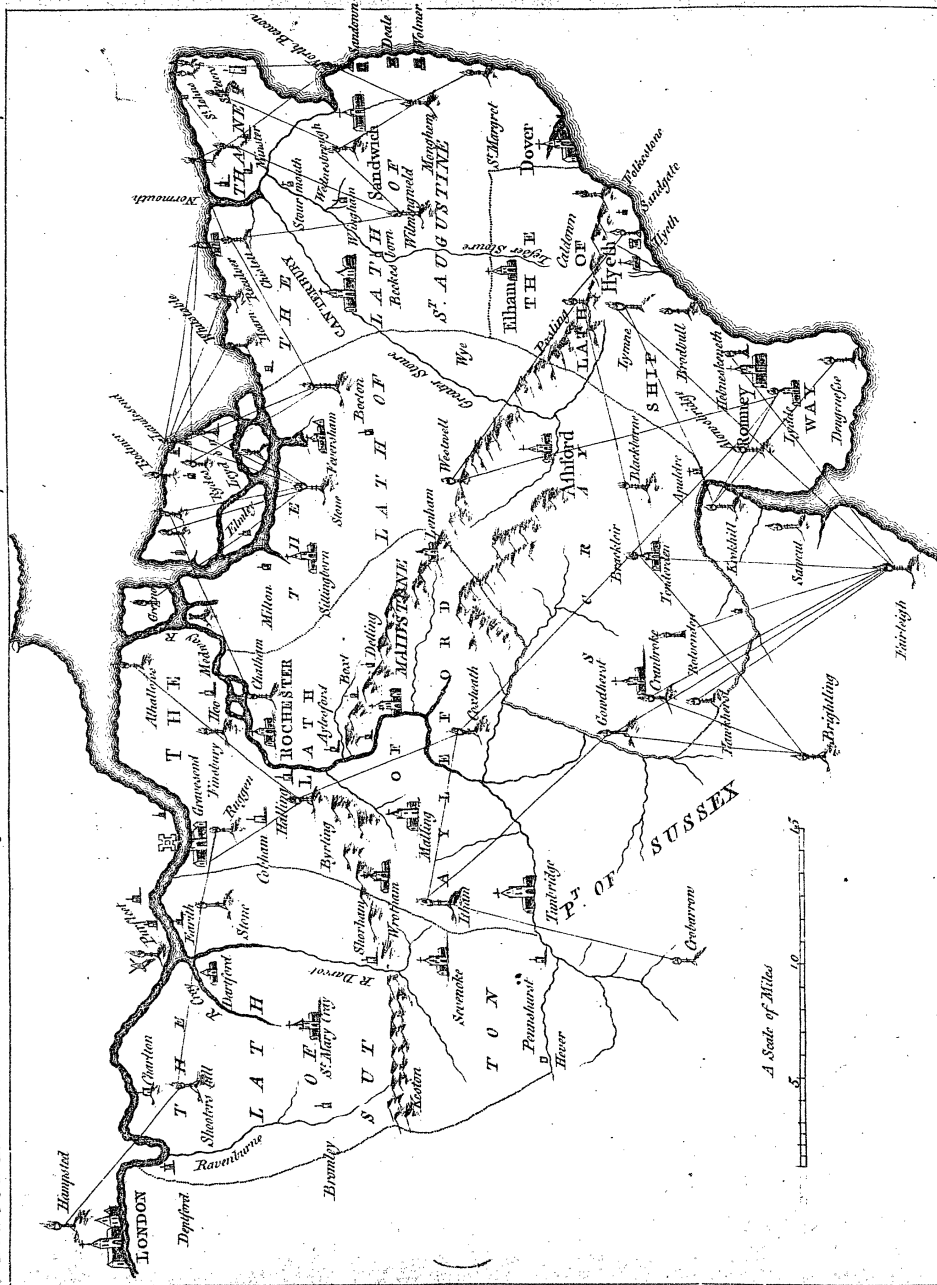


Figure 3.1. "A Map of the Beacons in Kent [...]," frontispiece to *The History of the Spanish Armada*, London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1759.

provided with during Queen Elizabeth's reign in order to fight the Spanish.²² Others argued, instead, that this was a continuation of the self-interest that had motivated the Dutch since that time.²³ Whether Dutch neutrality was outrageous or cynically predictable, many felt that the events of the sixteenth century could be used to judge current Dutch attitudes and priorities.

Throughout the war, history was used as a tool for understanding and evaluating the events of the present. These assessments were based on a variety of readings of the past. History provided the discourses through which to assess the performance of nations and individuals. It was a source of potential solutions to current problems. But by the late 1750s, the sense of historical time was also being shaped by newer trends that were limiting reference to the past as a form of legitimization. In the context of the debates around the Seven Years' War, this was demonstrated through a growing emphasis on the importance of change and progress, and a simultaneous nostalgic longing for that lost, more distant past.

Some commentators felt that the material and ideological conditions of the present were better than those that had preceded them. The past, they conceded, could be interesting and might provide information about how present situations came to be, but it was not a guide for future action. In the late 1750s and early 1760s, the importance of a progressive conceptualization of history can be seen in the growing desire to date the

²² Thomas Touchit, "From the *Westminster Journal*," *London Chronicle*, 22 May 1759.

²³ Charles Jenkinson, Earl of Liverpool, *A Discourse on the Conduct of the Government of Great-Britain, in Respect to Neutral Nations, During the Present War.*, Second ed, (London: R. Griffiths, 1759); Probus, "To the Editor of the Public Ledger," *Public Ledger or The Daily Register of Commerce and Intelligence*, 8 August 1760.

values and interests of the present back to the time of Elizabeth. In an article in the *Busy Body*, the author recounted a dream in which he was taken prisoner in France while the French had prepared their invasion. To his captors, he defended the prime minister, William Pitt, as the “the honestest [sic] minister that our country had produced since the reign of queen Elizabeth.”²⁴ Her era began to be envisioned as the moment at which the modern period emerged; her reign was seen as the first to encourage the values that were held to be most significant in developing nationalistic military, commercial, and imperial apparatus. The Elizabeth age delineated what was modern and of contemporary concern, from that which was different and had preceded it.

Mid-eighteenth-century preoccupations were believed to have been first kindled under her leadership. She had first fostered the interest in colonial acquisitions.²⁵ The importance of maintaining a strong navy had first been understood during her reign; her government had been first to make it a priority. Hers was the first era in which ministers had been able help shape policy in a way that the current government might emulate. Hers was the first reign to have strong men in government worthy of emulation. The importance of Britain’s naval power, the need to prioritize commerce, and the desire for colonial influence and acquisition were also all trends that were believed to have begun during Elizabeth’s reign.

Discussions of the war were suffused with concerns about development and progress. For some, recent changes in British politics and society were framed as the

²⁴ "The Flat-Bottom Boats. A Vision.," *Busy Body*, 25 October 1759.

²⁵ *Considerations; The World Displayed; or, a Curious Collection of Voyages and Travels, Selected from the Writers of All Nations.*, vol. 4 of 20, (London: J. Newbery, 1760), 9.

proper advancements of a civilizing society. Previous periods, at earlier stages of development, could offer little guidance for improvements. Yet even when rejecting comparisons between the past and present as inadequate, authors still frequently framed the Elizabethan age as the point of departure for their analysis. The author of a pamphlet in reply to Israel Mauduit's highly popular 1760 tract, *Considerations on the present German War*, believed there was "no period that [could] be brought in the least parallel with the present time."²⁶ He nonetheless found the strength of the army, navy, and British "conquests" as the best "since the days of queen Elizabeth to the present." The modernity of eighteenth century was confirmed through a comparison with the sixteenth century.

Conversely, some saw the differences as the result of deterioration, not improvement. They believed modern society had degenerated to such an extent that the present could not conceivably aspire to past successes and strengths. While dismissing such ideas as "vulgar," the author of the article from *The World*, whose work opened this chapter, expended a great deal of ink in contradicting the popular and Christian idea that the world was in a spiral downwards, not upwards.²⁷ It was clear to many authors disillusioned with the war that the present state of deterioration made the examples of the past, such as the bravery and aggressiveness of Queen Elizabeth's commanders, an unachievable ideal.²⁸

²⁶ *A Full and Candid Answer to a Pamphlet, Entitled, Considerations on the Present German War.*, (London: J. Pridden, 1760), 64.

²⁷ *The World*, 7 October 1756.

²⁸ See also, "To the Monitor," *Monitor or the British Freeholder*, 8 September 1759.

This concern with beginnings created an impenetrable difference between the late 1500s and the 1750s. This allowed many authors to look back nostalgically on the earlier period. They constructed the Elizabethan past as a time of unified and whole identities, in contrast to the feelings of fragmentation and disassociation in the present caused by noticeable social, cultural, and economic changes.²⁹ The mid-eighteenth century world no longer seemed to foster the right British characteristics, traits that had been encouraged and celebrated in the earlier period. The late Tudor period symbolized a time when England had successfully established its influence on the international scene. It was conceived of as a time of self-reliance, that had not needed foreign troops, and when Britons had been more gallant, more warlike, and braver.³⁰ Only in Elizabeth's day had Britain commanded the respect of nations like France. Only then had French ships "yielded to pay compliment to the British flag," because, said a correspondent to the *London Magazine*, Elizabeth had taken care of her country's "honour," not just its "interests."³¹

This nostalgic reading of the past drew on continuing concerns with French cultural influence and a desire to rid Britain of its pernicious effects. The Elizabethan era was held up as time that was more profoundly "English." It was a time when tastes, fashions, and culture had been domestic, not imported. As the desire to eliminate French influence was a strongly gendered and classed argument, so the nostalgic longing for the earlier period aspired to constructions of masculinity focused on

²⁹ Chase and Shaw, "The Dimensions of Nostalgia."; Davis, "Nostalgia."

³⁰ *A Dutiful Address*.

³¹ "An Impartial and Succinct History of the Origin and Progress of the Present War. Continued from P. 403.," *The London Magazine and Monthly Chronologer*, September 1759.

nationalism and a strong male body and hierarchical social relationships that were imagined to be static and accepted.³² It compared the British elite negatively to the growing, commercial middling classes. The former were portrayed as foreign, frenchified, and effeminate; they failed to support or understand the culture and priorities of the English population. The elite needed a greater investment in vernacular entertainments and indigenous occupations. In a letter to the *Monitor*, one correspondent argued that such luxury and effeminacy had eroded the discipline and glory that had existed in Elizabeth's forces.³³ The proposed solution was to prevent all officers from having French persons in their employ: no "French cooks," no "French valets."

The national identity constructed by this nostalgic mode was expressed through an acknowledgement of the importance of the Elizabethan period in the national progressive narrative. In part, this was revealed through the description of an Elizabethan past as a "golden era," accentuating both the communal and the personal values lost to the present. Although not a recent assessment, by the Seven Years' War, more authors referred more frequently to Elizabeth's era as a favoured, gilded age than they had in the preceding decades. Further, acknowledgements of the significance of Elizabeth's period in English history were affirmations of a particular epistemology of British identity. Public avowals of the importance of Elizabeth's reign were deemed to help materialize the desired British identity, one that was more unified and more insular.

³² Armitage, *Origins*; Clark, *Scandal*; Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity*; Colley, *Britons*.

³³ "To the Monitor," *Monitor or the British Freeholder*, 8 September 1759.

The variety of uses of the Elizabethan past in debates around the conduct and progress of the Seven Years' War demonstrates how the historical memory of the sixteenth century was informed by a combination of old and new narrative constructions. As they had in the 1730s, Elizabeth and the heroes of her age continued to be seen as a time when more effective policies towards France had been implemented. They continued to find in the reign of Elizabeth useful models of behaviour, military strategies, and sympathetic anecdotes and personalities. It helped assess the honour and capability of those who held public office. History could therefore still be a powerful instrument to consider the issues of the present. But its usefulness was challenged by a discourse of change and progress. The "golden era" of the late sixteenth century featured prominently in the construction of national identity, but as a starting point, fundamentally different from the modern period. In separating the present from the past, these arguments delineated a progressive modernity that had more to learn from itself than from what had come before it.

Elizabeth at the Westminster School

At the same time as these debates, Elizabethan history was given contemporary meaning through social performances that similarly combined long-standing uses of the past with emerging identities and forms of communication. On Tuesday, 3 June 1760, the Westminster School, a public school nestled within the larger Abbey, celebrated with a jubilee the foundation of its charter by Queen Elizabeth two hundred years earlier.³⁴

³⁴ Westminster School is a public school in the British educational system, what in North America would be called a private school. Its archives are held at the Westminster Abbey Muniments.

This day of festivities used a variety of techniques to advertise the ways in which their foundress remained a meaningful icon for the values prioritized by the school's elite community of men and boys. Prose, poetry, sermons, feasting, drinking, music, and movement were combined to present an impressive vision of a past that had clear ties to the present. It was an opportunity for the boys and young men of the school to learn about their place in a genealogy tracing back to Elizabeth and to physically manifest their role in its continuation. This section examines how the visual, aural, and kinetic experiences at this event were woven together to give the past meaning, particularly through the use of a stand-in Queen, Elizabeth's funeral effigy, and its movements, along with the school body, through the spaces of the church and school. Attention to the meaning of imagery and action at this event illustrates the school's use of a variety of historical forms of knowledge to reinforce the continued relevance of religious and social hierarchies, to themselves and to those excluded from their community.

Westminster School is part of the Westminster Abbey establishment. It was, and still is, housed in the buildings facing a courtyard adjacent to the main Abbey, Little Dean's Yard. Between the early seventeenth and the early nineteenth centuries, it was the premiere elite preparatory educational institution in Britain – where the most powerful and wealthiest sent their sons. A jubilee in honour of its founding had been conceived of early in 1760 when the Dean of Westminster Abbey, who was also the titular head of the school, and the Chapter of the Abbey, its governing body, decided it would be appropriate for the school community to celebrate this anniversary with a

“solemn Jubilee.”³⁵ The festivities began at ten o’clock in the morning on June 3rd with a procession from the school to the Abbey. According to the account in the Chapter Book of Westminster Abbey, they went “two and two abreast and the Juniors preceding the Seniors.” The service at the Abbey included prayers of thanksgiving, Henry Purcell’s *Te Deum* (Purcell was an alumnus of the school, an Old Westminster) and a sermon on the subject of Queen Elizabeth by Zachary Pearce, the Dean of Westminster and also an Old Westminster. The participants processed back to the School’s main hall, where they were treated to orations and verses written by the students in commemoration of Elizabeth and the school. At two o’clock they all sat to eat and drink. At half past four, they processed back to the Abbey. They prayed some more. They heard more music by Purcell. They processed out. To cap the day, the Dean and the Chapter held a chapter meeting immediately following the jubilee to record the events of the day.³⁶

Visual representations, movement, and performance were central to the structure and meaning of this celebration. For scholars of performance studies, such as Joseph Roach and Diana Taylor, performance is an imperfect attempt to understand the present and the past through ritualized words and movements.³⁷ It is not only a means of transmission but also of redefinition, as knowledge and experiences are inevitably transformed as they are conveyed. This tension between transmission and transformation is demonstrated in the festivities around Westminster’s Jubilee. The

³⁵ “30 April 1760,” 1750, Westminster Chapter Book, WMA Chapter Book, X, Westminster Abbey Muniments, Westminster.

³⁶ The events of the day were also noted in the London papers. “The Monthly Chronologer,” *The London Magazine and Monthly Chronologer*, June 1760; “London,” *Public Advertiser*, 27 May 1760; “London Intelligence,” *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*, 31 May - 3 June 1760.

³⁷ Roach, “Power’s Body,” xi; Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 2.

memory of Elizabeth's era was used to affirm the school's Tory ideals, the authority of the Anglican religion, and the importance of the confined, elite community of the school. Through the queen, they sought to encourage the development of a national identity based on courage and patriotism. But theirs was a contested use of the past. The celebrations of, and interest in, Elizabeth demonstrated the need of those within this closed community to convince those without of the values and power dynamics they espoused. To do this, the men and boys of Westminster relied, therefore, on both older forms of interaction and new modes of association and communication to advertise their message.

At this Jubilee, Elizabeth's memory was closely tied to religious ceremony. In addition to the evidently religious character of the service in the Abbey and the prayers at the meal, this was achieved through the importance of processions. The members of the church and school formally processed in and out the Abbey twice and the School once during the festivities. These ritualized movements, choreographed for a group, and accompanied by music, were an important part of both the school's and the church's performances of community, demarcating hierarchies of wealth, influence, education, and age.

Such processions recalled both the mundane and extraordinary moments in the religious life of the Abbey. On the one hand, they were part of the everyday movements of the choir and members of the religious organization as they assembled for prayers. These daily rituals delineated the beginning and end of the transformation of the ordinary church space into a place of religious authority and power. Yet these same

movements also recalled the times in which the religious life of the church became more than a spiritual space, when it was intertwined with the political realm, at coronations, royal weddings, and funerals. In her examination of Charles II's use of procession and pageantry, Paula Backscheider argues that, at the time of the Restoration, such performances were central to the Stuart monarch's attempt to cement his newly acquired authority.³⁸ Most spectacularly, Charles's coronation at Westminster Abbey was an event that harnessed popular and highly legible symbols into a new hegemonic discourse supporting his reign. Thus, such ritualized movements, into and out of the church's space, could be given profoundly conservative meanings, visibly tying the state religion to the seat of political power. In the case of the Westminster School Jubilee, the image of Elizabeth was resurrected and laced into this religious and political power through the act of processing in and out of church spaces.

As they processed into the Abbey, and from there to the School's Hall, the celebrants carried with them the waxen funeral effigy of Queen Elizabeth [Fig. 3.2]. The effigy had been created in 1603 at the time of her death.³⁹ Such effigies were common in royal funerals of the late medieval and early modern periods. They were meant to take the physical place of the deceased person at the funeral celebration. They were adorned with magnificent clothing and jewelry, the visual indicators of power and importance.⁴⁰

³⁸ Paula R. Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics: Theatrical Power and Mass Culture in Early Modern England* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

³⁹ Phillip Lindley, "Queen Elizabeth I," in *The Funeral Effigies of Westminster Abbey*, ed. Anthony Harvey and Richard Mortimer (London: The Boydell Press, 2004).

⁴⁰ Phillip Lindley, "The Funeral and Tomb Effigies of Queen Katharine of Valois and King Henry V," *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 160(2007).

They were part of the public funeral rites, providing an enduring link between the worlds of the dead and the living.

During the Jubilee, this funereal Elizabeth acted as a visual representation of the commemorations, a standard around which the celebrations occurred. Surrogation, according to Roach, is the necessarily partial attempts by survivors to fill a death or absence. This space is filled by an effigy, which acts a reminder of the person who has been lost, but also of that loss itself.⁴¹ This figure is not only presented for the benefit of the audience, but stands in for the audience during the performance; the Elizabethan effigy was celebrated as an icon of the national past and a participant in these celebrations of the specific national, religious, and hierarchical identities being presented.⁴² Roach sees surrogation as a central characteristic of the circumatlantic culture that emerged in the eighteenth century. His concept helps identify some of the functions fulfilled by the Jubilee's Elizabeth. It simultaneously drew attention to the links between the present and the past while also indicating the difference between then and now. In underscoring the importance of the past, the effigy revealed what had been lost in the intervening time. Whereas in Elizabeth's era, England had been invigorated by her religious fervour, the Anglican Church was now faced with dissention and challenges to its authority. In a factious political time, Elizabeth was seen as a unifying

⁴¹ Roach, *Cities*, 36.

⁴² Joseph Roach, "Power's Body: The Inscription of Morality as Style," in *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance*, ed. Thomas Postlewait and Bruce A. McConachie (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989), 107.



Figure 3.2. Funeral Effigy of Elizabeth I (d. 1603). Westminster Abbey Museum. The clothing has been remade since the 1760 Jubilee, but the head, hands and shoes are the same.

figure, a monarch who had united her country politically and religiously. The effigy, therefore, provided a visual signifier for the Westminster School's celebrations that represented the Jubilee's ideals while, at the same time, haunting the present with the ways in which it failed to live up to the past.

Intertwined with the school and the church, the Jubilee also drew on a rich culture of defining the membership of a community by way of movement through its public spaces. History served to delineate the shared identity of those participating in the event. To parade as a group, with a representative image and religious oversight, recalled the early modern practice of walking or beating the boundaries of the parish, a ritual still common throughout the eighteenth century. These processions, also known as perambulations, were part of the Anglican ritual of Rogation, the only procession remaining in the Anglican calendar after the Reformation.⁴³ Once a year, in the spring, the parish minister and the congregation would collectively walk the boundary of their communal fields. The minister would lead prayers and recite biblical readings relating to the importance of respect for one's neighbour's land. These observances instilled a visual and corporal memory of the physical geography of the community. It was a religious moment that involved the naming and transmitting of kinetic knowledge.⁴⁴ Particularly at the Westminster Jubilee, the School's processions with their effigy through the Abbey's and the School's space helped create a similar kinetic memory.

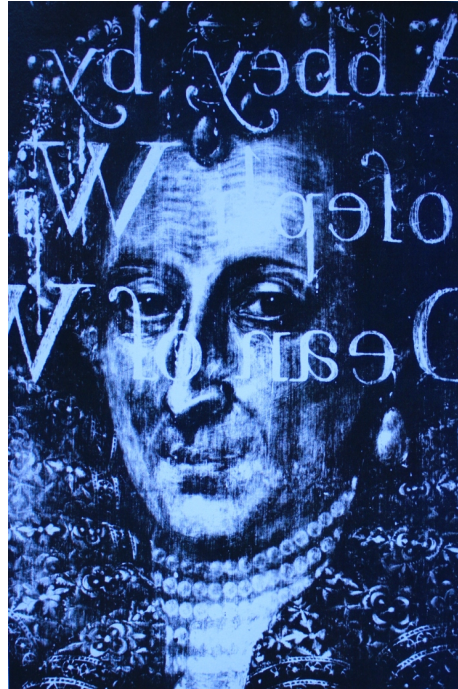
⁴³ J. M. Neeson, *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure and Social Change in England, 1700-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 320.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

It was important for the organizers that the queen's representations be cleaned and modernized for the event, thus prioritizing the immediate relevance of the historical past over an emphasis on its difference. To this end, several attempts were made to make images of the Queen at Westminster fit contemporary norms of female beauty. Elizabeth's effigy was refurbished for the first time since its creation. And while posterity has not looked kindly on these renovations, which damaged the original structure and were done with cheap materials, there was much excitement, within the school and without, about the promise of a new image of the queen, which was to be publically displayed after the event.⁴⁵ The effigy received a full makeover; it was given a new set of clothes, a new waxen head, new hands, new wooden legs, and iron shoes.⁴⁶ Further, the anonymous portrait of the Queen in Westminster's Deanery, believed to date from around the time of her death in the early seventeenth century, was also given a literal fresh face [Fig. 3.3]. A new face was painted on top of the previous one, as recent x-ray studies conducted by the Abbey have shown [Fig. 3.4]. These changes made the Queen look younger, more demurely dressed, and changed the structure of her face, giving her higher cheekbones, a smaller mouth, and a different chin [Fig. 3.5-6]. The Queen was thereby made to fit more closely with the current ideals of female beauty, as demonstrated by comparing the new face with any of a number of portraits of women by popular mid-century portraitist, Thomas Gainsborough [Fig. 3.5]. Westminster's icons were not made manifestly historical. Instead, they presented an image of the past that

⁴⁵ Lindley, "Queen Elizabeth I."

⁴⁶ Phillip Lindley, "Queen Elizabeth I," in *The Funeral Effigies of Westminster Abbey*, ed. Anthony Harvey and Richard Mortimer (London: The Boydell Press, 2004).



Figures 3.3-6. (Clockwise from top left) Artist unknown, Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I, c. 1603, oil on canvas, The Deanery, Westminster Abbey; X-ray of the Deanery Portrait showing the face under the current paint (the text is the inscription on the back of the painting); Detail, the Deanery Portrait; Thomas Gainsborough, *Portrait of Sara Buxton*, 1776-1777. Compare the skin, forehead, cheeks, chin and lips with the renovated painting of the Queen at the Deanery.

was immediate and relevant to viewers' gendered and historically specific conceptions of beauty. In demonstrating the significance of the Queen and her memory, the celebrants gave Elizabeth cultural value to the current and former students.

The closeness of this relationship was emphasized through the importance placed on the personal inheritance of knowledge, passed down through the school's pedagogical system from boy to boy (with an emphasis on those who had been particularly noteworthy) since Elizabeth had interceded in the school's development. Many of the verses written and spoken by the students at the Jubilee focused on creating a direct genealogy between themselves and the Queen. One verse reflected, "on the crowded line/ Of mitred sages, Bards divine/ Of Patriots active in their Country's cause,/ Who plan her councils, or direct her Laws."⁴⁷ The author made a figurative line from Elizabeth to the present, drawn between the members of the religious hierarchy, poets, and politicians. The poem names several members of that lineage, including John Dryden and Abraham Cowley. Stylistically, this form of praise was part of the rhetoric taught to students at the school.⁴⁸ According to Aaron Santesso, these elegies worked in part to ensure the continued political and financial support of successful graduates,⁴⁹ but they also established a personal relationship for the young but future leaders, between their experiences and education within the School and the monarch who had endowed it.

⁴⁷ "Not at Apollo's Vaunted Shrine," 1760, Verses spoken at the Jubilee at Westminster Abbey, June 3, 1760, WAM 64821, Westminster Abbey Muniments, London.

⁴⁸ Aaron Santesso, "'Playful' Poetry and the Public School," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 32, no. 1 (2008): 65.

⁴⁹ On the role of poetry in ensuring alumni support, see Santesso, Aaron Santesso, "'Playful' Poetry and the Public School," 65-66.

The uses of Elizabeth at the Jubilee also linked this event to the contemporary popular cultural celebrations and festivities. There was singing and music. Poetry was recited; word-plays and riddles were created. Food and drink were communally enjoyed. All these activities were aspects of a variety of eighteenth-century events that helped to define and reinforce social participation. National days of celebration, such as those commemorating military victories and anniversaries, were similarly popular and politically-charged moments of communal festivity, involving eating, drinking, and performing. They also occurred very regularly after the military successes of 1759 and early 1760. In his study of eighteenth-century popular politics, Nicholas Rogers argues that such “political festivals” brought together “the traditional functions of ceremonialism, the transmission of power through pageantry and beneficence, with an explicit didacticism.”⁵⁰ Linda Colley has argued for the importance of these festivities in allowing the government to conserve its power while allowing ordinary people a place in which to voice their patriotism.⁵¹ The celebrations of the past were tied to a reiteration of social and cultural hierarchies which were, nonetheless, very inclusive in their participation, if not in their message.

But while many aspects of the depiction of the past drew from older vocabularies, others built on changing and emerging relationships. The most significant were new conceptualizations of urban spaces and the growth of a commercialised market for history. Through various media, the representations of the Queen were part of a physical environment that was being integrated into the sphere of economic activity that used

⁵⁰ Rogers, *Whigs*, 358.

⁵¹ Colley, *Britons*, 51-52.

access to information about, and experiences relating to, the past as a means to sell products.

The visual and public nature of the history presented at the Jubilee, and embodied by the effigy, was widely inclusive, but interest in the event was also created through the more modern means of the press. Westminster's celebration was featured in numerous news items in a variety of London newspapers. Additionally, the sermon delivered at the Jubilee by the Dean of Westminster, Zachary Pearce, was quickly printed and published for purchase.⁵² Through the purchase of these printed media, newspapers and pamphlets, a more geographically-diverse community could participate in the significance of this historical anniversary.

After the Jubilee, the newly refurbished effigy of Queen Elizabeth was installed within the Abbey for public viewing. Westminster Abbey, by the mid-eighteenth century, had grown into a site of commercialized, nationalist leisure. Beyond the literary commemorations discussed in Chapter Two, the Abbey had become not only a space for elite, personal memorials but also the location of an evolving national narrative that emphasized the devotion of an oligarchical elite to an ideology based on the ideals of liberty, empire, and commerce. As the Abbey's monuments multiplied, so did the audience willing to pay to experience its interpretation of those values. The Abbey, according to Joan Coutu, became "the most public indoor space in eighteenth-century

⁵² Zachary Pearce, *A Sermon Preached at the Abby-Church, Westminster, on Tuesday June 3. 1760: At a Jubilee Then Kept by the Members of the Collegiate Church, on Account of Its Being the 200th Year since the Date of Their Charter of Foundation*, (London: B. Dod, 1760).

Britain.”⁵³ It was a space that provided affordable, enjoyable *divertissement*. Interest in viewing the Abbey also drew on a growing leisure spectator culture. Matthew Craske parallels the development of Westminster as site of commercialised pleasure in this period with the simultaneous growth in popularity of the pleasure gardens at Vauxhall.⁵⁴ In most news items about the Jubilee, it was the funeral effigy’s renovations and its display that inspired the most comment. Excitement over the display of the wax figure demonstrated an interest in incorporating the historic into this economy of leisure, display, and viewing.

At their Jubilee, the Westminster community sought to lay claim to ownership of its version of the Elizabethan memory. The movements of the celebrants and their waxen effigy demonstrate how the uses of national history at mid-century built on both older forms of participation in popular culture, but were also informed by newer economies of the past. The celebration of their conservative, Tory understandings of history can be read not as a fixed meaning, but as a construction that had to be constantly reasserted for those excluded from that society, unwittingly acknowledging the importance of multiple audiences and alternative understandings of the national past. By carrying her funeral effigy with them, the Westminster community sought to demonstrate its control of a physical manifestation of English history and of its meaning. They owned Elizabeth’s representation; they owned Elizabeth’s past. In them rested the right to manipulate that history for their modern purposes.

⁵³ Coutu, "Legitimizing," 65.

⁵⁴ Craske, "Westminster Abbey," 61.

History and Historical Jokes

The growing market for printed material encouraged the publication of a wide variety of works that used history to sell their contents. These diverse histories further exemplify the coexistence of different understandings of the British past. While the late 1750s saw a boom in the publication of what would become the classical works of Enlightenment history, other printed material continued to rely on more antiquated understandings of historical matter. They drew on a tradition of oral culture and performance, as well as on an interest in the personal and a taste for the miscellaneous. The appeal of historical knowledge in this alternative form was most clear in a type of book with a long history in England: the jest book. These two different but simultaneously popular forms of reading further demonstrate new and old uses of the past.

In the middle years of the Seven Years' War, several new works laid the foundations of how British history would be understood for the next hundred years. First, in 1759, David Hume published the two volumes of his *History of England under the House of Tudor*. These volumes formed part of a larger project that recounted the history of the British Isles from the Roman period to the Glorious Revolution. Though it met with controversy when it was first published, it would become the standard British history until the middle of the nineteenth century. Through his *History*, Hume tried to present an impartial view of the past, free from the nefarious influence of party affinities on historical understanding and writing. Such a recounting of the British past would lay bare the lessons Hume thought history could teach about liberty, government, and the

English Constitution. Published in the same year, *The History of Scotland: During the Reigns of Queen Mary and of King James VI. Till his Accession to the Crown of England*, written by another great Scottish Enlightenment historian, William Robertson, met with immediate acclaim, and quickly went through numerous editions. Robertson also believed that reason could help history serve a progressive and civilizing purpose. His country, he argued, had been hurt by deep social, political, and religious divisions. Since the reign of Mary Tudor in England in the mid-sixteenth century, these differences had stunted the economic growth and destabilized the political system of Scotland when compared with its southern neighbour. Unlike other Scottish historians, Robertson strove not to write “an apology for faction,” but to use research and rationalized narratives to present “the history of [his] country.”⁵⁵

These well-known works marked the beginning of a new way of narrating and explaining the past. Hume and Robertson based their historical writing on models from the Classical period, but moulded them to contemporary needs.⁵⁶ They felt an even-handed and informed explanation of past events could overcome the political divisions in modern society. Less factionalism would lead, in turn, to greater economic and political liberty, culminating in the growth of a more civilized society. Hume was no fan of Queen Elizabeth whom he faulted for her heavy hand in politics and religion. He also disliked what he perceived as her manly personal characteristics. Yet, he and Robertson both offered a narrative voice that presented a balanced picture of her successes and her

⁵⁵ William Robertson, *The History of Scotland. During the Reigns of Queen Mary and of King James VI. Till His Accession to the Crown of England*, Third ed., vol. 1 of 2, (A. Millar, 1760), iv.

⁵⁶ For an excellent analysis of the historical genre in the eighteenth century, see Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*.

failures. Even if their judgment did ultimately swing towards disapproval, this mattered less than the overall purpose of their works; through study and intellectual exercise, the ultimate, singular meaning of the past for the present would be detected. History, for writers like Hume and Robertson, was knowable.

They accomplished this, according to Mark Philips, by combining philosophical distance with the interior motivations of historical figures. The proper topic for historical study was thus "reorient[ed] from action to experience."⁵⁷ A variety of historical subgenres, including novels, memoirs, and biographies, as well as traditional historical narratives, such as those of Hume and Robertson, increasingly focused on evoking empathy in their readers, as a reflection of the contemporary understanding of the relationship between human nature and society. Humans were driven by ahistorical, universal passions, which could be best understood through the creation of empathy. They gave little room in their histories to majesty, pomp, and circumstance. Instead, Hume and Robertson focused on the emotional motivations of their subjects. They imparted their tales in a serious tone, emphasizing their research and philosophical analysis. The results were seemingly authoritative views of the past, which consequently forestalled alternative understandings or different interests.

As singular as they desired historical lessons to be, theirs was not the only voice available. At the same time as these authors were publishing their works, another form of writing sought to use the past in a much different way and to educate to very different

⁵⁷ Ibid., 20.

ends. Jest books were among the earliest popular publications in Britain.⁵⁸ They drew from older medieval forms of entertainment, which had been translated into printed text in the sixteenth century and remained popular throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The books featured miscellaneous collections of short jokes, riddles, and sayings. As the jests ridiculed a wide variety of individuals, women and men, the old and the young, the rich and the poor, so their humour appealed to a similarly wide and varied audience. This form of humour was very resistant to changes to cultural mores. The pleasure at the misfortunes of the elderly, the poor, and the physically disabled, according to Simon Dickie, coexisted late into the eighteenth century with the growing significance of ideas about sympathy and charity.⁵⁹ But while their humour often reinforced conservative, misogynist, and xenophobic cultural norms, Tim Reinke-Williams argues that such jests “affirmed shared values and fostered social bonds amongst those enjoying the joke.”⁶⁰ The historical past was similarly presented in a way that sought to shore up existing identities and to reiterate what was felt to be shared knowledge.

Jest books were a mainstay of the publication industry.⁶¹ By mid-century, numerous printers published their own editions. The frequency and consistency with

⁵⁸ Simon Dickie, *Cruelty and Laughter: Forgotten Comic Literature and the Unsentimental Eighteenth Century* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago, 2011); Kate Loveman, "'Full of Improbable Lies': *Gulliver's Travels* and Jest Books," *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 26, no. 1 (2003); Kurt-Michael Pätzold, "Thomas Deloney and the English Jest-Book Tradition," *English Studies* 53, no. 4 (1972); Tim Reinke-Williams, "Misogyny, Jest-Books and Male Youth Culture in Seventeenth-Century England," *Gender & History* 21, no. 2 (2009); Linda Woodbridge, "Jest Books, the Literature of Roguery, and the Vagrant Poor in Renaissance England," *English Literary Renaissance* 33, no. 2 (2003).

⁵⁹ See Chapter 1, "Jestbooks and the Indifference to Reform," in Dickie, *Cruelty and Laughter*.

⁶⁰ Reinke-Williams, "Male Youth Culture in Seventeenth-Century England," 327.

⁶¹ Dickie, *Cruelty and Laughter*, 20.

which they were published (Dickie estimates there were at least twenty new publications at a variety of price points each year⁶²) indicates that they were solidly-selling items.

Popular works were printed again and again. William Hickee's *Coffee-House Jests*, for example, was published in largely unaltered form in 1686, 1688, 1733 and 1760.⁶³ But despite the new printings and editions, most were compilations of older material, collated over time. Jokes and riddles were copied and reused again and again.

Among this thriving and reiterative genre, Elizabethan history was a common element. In 1759 and 1760, there were at least nine separate jest books published which contained humorous material relating to Queen Elizabeth. One of these, Ferdinando Funny's *The Merry Andrew*, was reprinted in both 1759 and 1760.⁶⁴ In these works, there were approximately twenty different jokes or witticisms in which either Queen Elizabeth or her era featured as part of the humour. Many of the jokes were reprinted in several of the books. A joke in which Elizabeth asks the Speaker what had passed in the House of Commons, and was answered, "seven weeks," appeared almost verbatim in four collections.⁶⁵

⁶² Ibid., 22.

⁶³ William Hickee, *Coffee-House Jests. Being a Merry Companion: Containing Witty Jests, Wise Sayings, Smart Repartees, Jokes, Pleasant Tales, Notable Bulls. With Several Short Delightful Histories, Novels, and Other Curious Fancies.*, (London: S. Crowder and Comp., 1760). Loveman, "Gulliver's Travels and Jest Books."

⁶⁴ Ferdinando Funny, *The Merry Andrew: Being the Smartest Collection Ever yet Published, of Elegant Repartees, Brilliant Jests, Ridiculous Bulls, Comical Tales, Facetious Epigrams, Humorous Epitaphs, Droll Jokes, Profound Riddles, and Second Hand Conundrums*, (London: I. Pottinger, 1759); Ferdinando Funny, *The Merry Andrew: Being the Smartest Collection Ever yet Published, of Elegant Repartees, Brilliant Jests, Ridiculous Bulls, Comical Tales, Facetious Epigrams, Humorous Epitaphs, Droll Jokes, Profound Riddles. And Second Hand Conundrums*, (London: I. Pottinger, 1760).

⁶⁵ Ferdinando Killigrew, *Killigrew's Jests: Or, a Pocket Companion for the Wits*, (London: J. Warcus, 1759), 19; Laetitia Pilkington, *Mrs. Pilkington's Jests: Or the Cabinet of Wit and Humour*, (London: Mr. Kinnersley, 1759), 10; Ben Johnson's *Jests: Or the Wit's Pocket Companion*, sixth ed., (London 1760), 11;

Elizabeth appeared in a variety of roles, as the jokester, as the butt of the jokes, as the historical context for jokes about other individuals, and as the receiver of clever compliments. As the jokester, the queen was most often depicted handing out sharp verbal retaliations against men who failed to show her the proper deference. In one joke, she retorts to a courtier, who felt he had not received sufficient royal favour, that “anger makes dull Men witty, but it keeps them poor.”⁶⁶ In another, she tells a divine who uses scripture to castigate her that he is not well enough versed in the “Book of Kings.”⁶⁷ She was very infrequently the butt of the jokes. On those occasions, their criticism was gendered, comments on her failure to meet standards of feminine behaviour. In one, she is said to physically resemble a man; in another, after the queen says suggestively that she liked that a particular divine at court was unmarried, he replies, “In Troth, Madam, I like you the Worse for the same reason.”⁶⁸ Individual jest books do not appear to have taken a particular position on the queen, and often feature both the negative and the positive depictions of her.

The Elizabethan period more broadly provided the context for numerous entries. Her period was used in one instance as the context for a joke that played on the idea of witches. In several others, the Queen or her period were the background for the stupid remarks or actions of others, but that were not particularly specific to her or her era. In one, for example, an unnamed dunce, on being misinformed about her death, declares

The London, Oxford, Cambridge, Coffee-House and England's Jests. Being the Most Compleat, Cheapest, and Best Book of the Kind Ever yet Published., (London: Henry Woodgate and Samuel Brooks, 1760), 52.

⁶⁶ Killigrew, *Killigrew's Jests*, 73.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.

he will not believe she is dead until he had it “under her own hand.”⁶⁹ The Elizabethan period was on several occasions the context for entries in which her counsellors were the protagonists. Lord Burleigh and the Lords Bacon, father and son, were all presented as witty men of her age. Francis Bacon featured as a clever commentator on human nature, as in a timelessly-themed joke about lawyers and politicians. Burleigh and Nicholas Bacon were often the deliverers of clever compliments to the Queen. Upon visiting a house that Nicholas Bacon had built before rising in her favour, the Queen asks him why it is so small. “My house is well enough,” he replies, “but it is you that have made me too great for my house.”⁷⁰ Many of the Elizabethan entries, like that about Bacon’s house, were not jokes, but examples of *bon mots*, witty phrases used to deliver a compliment to the Queen.⁷¹ As the eighteenth century was still an era in which patronage was a significant way in which to gain advancement, these books served as entertainment but also instruction on how to participate in that social and political structure.

In both these forms of publications, jest books and philosophical histories, British history was a central component with which to sell their ideas and wares, but they partook of very different economies of knowledge. The works of the Enlightenment historians, like Hume and Robertson, were long and linear. They presented their findings in language that lent itself to quiet, individual contemplation. In contrast, the

⁶⁹Ben Johnson's *Jests*, 51. The same joke appear in two other books: *England's Jests*, 78; Pilkington, *Mrs. Pilkington's Jests*, 10.

⁷⁰ Killigrew, *Killigrew's Jests*, 82.

⁷¹ A popular such complimentary tales was about the Duke de Villa Medina who, on being asked by the queen who his mistress was, sent her a mirror. Funny, *Merry Andrew*, 30; Killigrew, *Killigrew's Jests*, 75; *The Entertaining Companion, or, the Merry Jester; Being a Choice Collection of the Most Entertaining Jests, Witty Sayings, Smart Repartees, Remarkable Stories, Comical Tales, &C*, (London: C. Sympton, 1760), 25.

history of the Elizabethan period in the jest books was integrated into an oral and performative culture. The longevity, recurrence, and conciseness of the jests lent them to memorization, repetition, and adaptation. Their short sections were not meant solely for private consumption but also for reintegration into social and verbal interactions. Through being recounted to friends and acquaintances, their information was meant to leave the page. If coffeehouse patrons were able to memorize and repeat newspaper information, as argued by Markman Ellis,⁷² these books provided even more easily remembered, bite-sized forms of entertainment, readily available for multiple situations and interpretations.

Jest books presented their material, not in a temporal, linear fashion but grouped by the type of entertainment they offered: “jests,” “conundrums,” “epigrams,” and so forth. The lack of a single overarching narrative linking each of the entertainment units, gave readers the opportunity to jump and skip between items at their leisure. This freedom allowed them to create a personal relationship to the material in a way that pre-packaged narrative could not. The discrete nature of each jest also allowed jokes about different time periods, many without specified historical referents, to be mixed together. The aim of these publications was not to present an accurate interpretation of the past, but to allow the past to serve the purposes of the present. The professional historians relied instead on chronology as their main organizational technique. Their narratives encouraged readers to work their way through the piece from beginning to end as the

⁷² Ellis gives an example of the public nature of reading in coffeehouses in a letter from William Shenstone in 1741, in which two persons, liking some lines of poetry, repeat them “forty times, and in the end got them by heart.” Ellis, “Coffee-House Libraries,” 32.

story developed. They presented a single, cohesive argument. At the end of the second volume of *The History of England under the House of Tudor*, after recounting the occasion of Elizabeth's death, Hume clearly summarized what he saw as the value of her reign, that she had demonstrated the ability to overcome difficult circumstances and successfully conduct government, and the problems, her authoritarianism and her lack of sexualized femininity, which made it difficult to "reconcile our fancy to her as a wife or mistress."⁷³ This was an attempt by Enlightenment authors to control the meaning of the history. They wanted to ensure that the proper lessons were taken from actions of the past. Any history lessons taken from the jest books, in contrast, were more open-ended.

In the jest books, the English past was presented as a presumed shared knowledge of characters and situations. The historical personages were included with little explanation as to who they were or what their significance was. The success of the medium was based on the ability to provide entertainment by building on an assumed common knowledge. The variety of the readership was accommodated through reliance on a broad spectrum of possibly familiar periods, just as the targets for the jokes were drawn from a wide selection of well-known stock characters. Conversely, in the professional histories, the purpose was to provide source material for a particular version of British identity. Both Hume's and Robertson's work traced the roots and causes of the development of this identity. They believed it relied on the importance of a middling, commercial class to safeguard the liberty of the nation by acting as the

⁷³ David Hume, *The History of England under the House of Tudor*, vol. 2 of 2, (London: A. Millar, 1759), 715-716.

balance to the authority of the monarchy and elite. The role of the nation-state in the growth of the now-united nations of England and Scotland was central to their work. Their histories gave readers the knowledge about the past they would need to understand contemporary politics.

These two genres demonstrate the emerging and receding understandings of the past. Both the professional histories and the jest books represent forms of writing that tried to use Elizabethan history to sell books. To examine the professional histories while ignoring the lesser-known historical content of the jest books is to present an uneven picture of the role of historical example during the mid-eighteenth century. History was drawn from multiple sources, not only from the texts and archives used by the likes of Hume or Robertson. The past was just as likely to be used to divert, as it was to edify.

Conclusion

In his narrative about the coffeehouse orator, the master tailors, and their journeymen, the *World* correspondent sought to expose the irrational ways in which the Elizabethan past was used in contemporary debate. In so doing, he demonstrated how, at mid-century, the uses of the past were at an intersection. Many different people used the malleable memory of Elizabeth's period. Despite the correspondent's enlightened disdain for such eclectic uses, the popularity of using Elizabeth's period as a historical model worthy of emulation, spoke to the legitimating quality it retained for many. *The World* article inadvertently demonstrated that its importance still extended up and down the social ladder.

In *Politics and the Nation*, Bob Harris argues that the most important trend in mid-eighteenth century politics was the idea of a revival of past institutions.⁷⁴ This was reflected by many of the commentators on the war who hoped Elizabethan policies might help in the current conflict. Self-consciously historical works, like those of Hume and Robertson, based on research, presented rationally, and promising to help reveal universal human experiences, were also part of this desire described by Harris to see the modern world improved by the past.

But in emphasizing change, Harris underestimates the continuing significance of older attitudes to the past. These were drawn from different sources and used for different ends. There was an immediacy to many of the experiences of the national past at this juncture. The celebrations of history represented by the Jubilee at Westminster used cultural referents that were still relevant and personal to many. The jest books continued to encourage alternative chronologies and different collective memories.

The scepticism of the *World* correspondent about the utility of historical examples was informed by the growing distance between conceptions of the past and of the present. As many individuals looked to revive older institutions and ideas, they did so with a firm belief that the contemporary period was better than any that had preceded it. For them, the past was a useful conceptual tool, but had questionable value in the geopolitics and economics of the 1750s and the 1760s. A space was thus created in which some old historical heroes might be replaced with new ones. Within a few decades, it

⁷⁴ Bob Harris, *Politics and the Nation: Britain in the Mid-Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 10.

was the cultural icons of the past that would come to have the most persuasive and legitimating power.

Chapter Four

Pasteboard Shakespeares

The Shakespeare Jubilee of 1769 and the British Past

As the theatrical season drew to a close in the spring of 1770, theatre critic and author Francis Gentleman could only look back on the previous months' performances in disgust. London audiences had been seized that year by an "extraordinary madness" that Gentleman found an insult to patrons who had either taste or sensibility. That the "public appetite should feed so long and greedily upon one dainty," he lamented, "[was] almost beyond the bounds of credibility."¹ The disappointing season, he argued, was the fault of managers who had catered to the lowest common denominator, "fools and children," and presented week after week of unbearable "mummery." There was no apology that could justify theatrical productions that could only chase away the sensible public.

Gentleman's critical ire was sparked by the production of two short plays based on events in Stratford-upon-Avon the previous September. Leading actor and manager of the Theatre-Royal at Drury Lane David Garrick had organized a three-day festival to celebrate William Shakespeare in what became known as the Shakespeare or Stratford Jubilee. This celebration began a frenzy, not so much for the Bard's works, but for contemporary productions that recreated the events at Stratford. Most notable were

¹ Francis Gentleman, *The Dramatic Censor; or, Critical Companion*. ... vol. 1 of 2, (London: J. Bell and C. Etherington, at York, 1770). 387-388.

George Colman's *Man and Wife* and Garrick's own *The Jubilee*. Garrick's piece, by far the more popular, was performed over ninety times that season, making it the most performed play in a single season in the eighteenth century.² It was these plays and their presentation night after night that drew such emotion from Gentleman.

According to the angry critic, the crimes committed by these productions were not that they were merely without "written or acting merit," but that they violated the memory and art of William Shakespeare. The set-piece in both *Man and Wife* and *The Jubilee* was a pageant of Shakespearean characters across the stage. In these mimic Jubilees, "a wooden, or pasteboard representation of SHAKESPEARE [was carried] about the stage in a kind of lord mayor's shew triumph, and pantomiming those excellent characters which he has so richly supplied with affluence of language and sentiment."³ And while Gentleman granted that *The Jubilee* featured a few redeeming qualities, particularly an "excellent admirably performed" Irishman, the popular interest in the recreation of the events in Stratford and the desire for their repetition was not, to Gentleman, an appropriate way in which to celebrate the Bard's work. "Oh Shakespeare, Shakespeare," he cried, "what a spectacle art thou made; how is thy muse of fire cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd, by such mechanical representations."⁴

But what revolted Gentleman thrilled large numbers of theatregoers. By considering how ideas about the British past were presented and experienced at the festival in Stratford, in the subsequent theatrical pieces, and in the media discussion of

² Pedicord, *The Theatrical Public in the Time of Garrick*. 198-199.

³ Gentleman, *The Dramatic Censor; or, Critical Companion*. ... 387.

⁴ Ibid. 388.

those events, this chapter investigates the ways in which these Shakespeare festivities helped define and popularize specific conceptions of the national past. Using the languages of political culture, religion, and popular celebrations, the Jubilee presented a British past, through the icon of William Shakespeare, which appeared to be affable and inherently appealing, a real-life Falstaff. Acknowledgement of Shakespeare's superiority attested to a celebrant's implicit membership in a constructed British historical community, which emphasized Protestantism, commerce, empire, and a particular form of masculinity. The Jubilee gloried in Shakespeare as a totem, at the expense of discussions of his plays and works. In its elision of the complicated ways in which class, gender, and ethnicity mould understandings of the past, the Stratford festival contributed to the growing imposition of a hegemonic and increasingly uniform vision of British history.

In the thirty years since the passing of the Licensing Act, the activities of the Ladies' Shakespear Club, and the erection of a monument at Westminster Abbey, discussed in Chapter Two, William Shakespeare as a historical person had come to embody the idea of a singular national genius. His rise in popularity as a historical signifier was the result of the ability of Garrick and others to depict him as a masculine but apolitical icon. Shakespeare represented the idea of a national past in an approachable way. The interest in editing and quantifying his work meant he could stand in for a historical past that could be rationalized, commodified, and, therefore, encompassed. He had become a part of the growing industry of knowledge presentation. Through the wide range of products, paraphernalia, and merchandise at the Jubilee, the

availability of this history for purchase created the illusion of democratic access to the British past, seemingly available for the experience of all in Stratford, not simply the elite. Shakespeare was particularly able to represent the emerging modern form of national identity and subjectivity, which constructed itself on a differentiation between a rational present and an Othered but controllable past. After an examination of the events of the Jubilee, this chapter discusses how the ideas about the past were presented in Stratford and to whom those ideas were presented. Among the throngs assembled in the fields and small streets of Stratford, and afterwards in recreations of those fields and streets on London stages, there were numerous expressions of how the past might inform and educate the present, but these were being muffled by an increasingly dominant commercial, political discourse.

The Shakespeare Jubilee was held from Wednesday, 6 September through Friday, 8 September 1769, in the sleepy rural town of Stratford-upon-Avon.⁵ There were three narratives that intersected to produce the festival: the growth of Shakespeare's reputation during the mid-eighteenth century, the approaching end of David Garrick's successful career, and Stratford-upon-Avon's stagnant economy. Since the events of the early 1740s, access to Shakespeare's works and performance of them had greatly increased. There was a growing body of critical analysis expounding the value of his

⁵ While there have been many works that discuss the Shakespeare Jubilee in other contexts (biographies of Garrick, Shakespeare's reputation in the 18th century, theatre in the 18th century, histories of Stratford), there are only a few works specifically on the Jubilee. Most recently, Kate Rumbold, "Shakespeare and the Stratford Jubilee," in *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Fiona Ritchie and Peter Sabor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). See also, Christian Deelman, *The Great Shakespeare Jubilee* (London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1964); Martha Winburn England, *Garrick's Jubilee* ([Columbus]: Ohio State University Press, 1964); Carola Oman, "Garrick's Shakespeare Jubilee, 1769," *History Today* 19 (1969); Johanne M. Stochholm, *Garrick's Folly: The Shakespeare Jubilee of 1769 at Stratford and Drury Lane* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1964).

plays and poems.⁶ New editions of his collected works, with greater editorial efforts, denoted a growing academic interest in his oeuvre. In 1765, four years before the Jubilee, Samuel Johnson published his critical edition of the works of Shakespeare. His highly respected analysis of the plays made it a popular edition for purchase and a general topic of discussion.⁷ The growing availability of Shakespeare's works, in collected editions and single plays, as well as the interest in the man himself and his significance to the idea of a English literary canon meant that his characters became part of a language of popular iconography used, for example, in political cartoons.⁸ On the stage, since its passage in 1737, the Licensing Act had continued to encourage the two patent-theatres to rely extensively on Shakespeare's works to appease government censors.⁹ By the time of the Jubilee, he was widely known as an author, a poet, a playwright, and part of the vocabulary of Britishness.

The Bard's popularity had been particularly encouraged - by his most famous fan, actor extraordinaire, David Garrick. Originally from Lichfield, Garrick moved to London as a young man to pursue a career in the law or business but had been bitten by the

⁶ In addition to works cited in Chapter Two, the following were particularly helpful on Shakespeare's mid- and late-eighteenth century reputation: Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions*; Conaway, "'Thou'rt the Man."; Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769*; Franklin, *Shakespeare Domesticated*; Halliday, *The Cult of Shakespeare*; Jarvis, *Scholars and Gentlemen*; Kramnick, *Making the English Canon*; Ritchie, "Influence of the Female Audience."; Scouten, "Increase in Popularity."; Stone, "Shakespeare in the Periodicals."; Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare*.

⁷ Samuel Johnson's work won such respect that before the Jubilee, there was some question as to whether he, and not Garrick, should have the honour of chairing the event. See, Alethes, *Public Advertiser*, 29 July 1769. Johnson did not attend the Jubilee.

⁸ Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions*, 2. 2. Bate uses political cartoons featuring Shakespearean characters as one of his main sources.

⁹ On the effects of the Licensing Act on revivals of Shakespeare's works, see Matthew J. Kinservik, *Disciplining Satire: The Censorship of Satiric Comedy on the Eighteenth-Century London Stage* (London: Associated University Presses, 2002), 111-112.

acting bug.¹⁰ As an actor, and eventually as a patent-theatre manager and owner, Garrick revolutionized the experience of the theatre. On stage, he promoted a naturalistic style, which was more active and emotional. His success made the conventions of performance of the mid-eighteenth century, entrenched since the days of Betterton, seem rote and stale. His changes were particularly felt in Shakespearean roles to which he added previously unthought-of layers of characterization.¹¹ In his famous representations of Richard III, for example, instead of a one-dimensional villain, he made the hunchback king more sympathetic, presenting a man with complex emotional motivations. It was in this role that he first gained the notice of London audiences, and it was largely through it and other major Shakespearean roles, including King Lear, Romeo, and Benedict from *Much Ado About Nothing*, that his career was built. Garrick also used his position as theatre-manager to promote Shakespeare by offering many performances of the Bard's works and producing previously rarely staged plays. His influence as the most respected actor of his time, his lengthy control of one of the patent-theatres, his adaptations of plays for the eighteenth-century stage, and his public speaking on the importance of Shakespeare, all combined to make David Garrick one of

¹⁰ There are many biographies of Garrick. The standard biography is George Winchester Jr. Stone and George M. Kahrl, *David Garrick: A Critical Biography* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979). But see also, Benedetti, *Garrick*. and Kendall, *Garrick*. Garrick was a pupil at Johnson's short-lived 'private academy' in Lichfield. They left together to find careers in London. They remained close throughout their lives though the relationship, perhaps due to their close ties and competitive nature, was a fraught one. Garrick was one of the other great obsessions of the young James Boswell. See the works cited above and James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1999), 50-53.

¹¹ On Garrick's revolution of acting see, Benedetti, *Garrick*; Thomson, "Celebrity and Rivalry." Conaway, "'Thou'rt the Man'." 22.

the most influential forces in the growth of the interest in the Bard and the form that interest took.¹²

Garrick was still very popular and successful, if past the zenith of his acting career, when, in the late 1760s, he was approached by the corporation of the town of Stratford. The small market town of about 2,200 felt its newly-built town hall would be further beautified by the addition of a new statue.¹³ Unable to find the funds locally, they decided to flatter Garrick with the Freedom of their town in the hopes that he would offer to provide the statue.¹⁴ While there was little tourism to the town, there was a local awareness of their most famous progeny. His memory lived on in local lore through a memorial in the town's church, his still-standing birthplace, and a mulberry tree in the yard of the house to which he had retired, said to have been planted by his "own hand,"¹⁵ though the house itself had been torn down earlier in the century. Enticed by the idea of connecting himself with the birthplace of his idol, Garrick was happy to oblige the burgesses. He gave them not only a copy of the 1741 statue of Shakespeare by Peter Scheemakers at Westminster Abbey, but also, in true celebrity style, a full-length portrait of himself by Thomas Gainsborough. He then proposed to organise a festival to dedicate the statue. So was born the idea of a Jubilee.

¹² Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769*. Dobson convincingly argues for the interrelationship between the canonization and the adaptation of Shakespeare in the eighteenth century.

¹³ Kendall, *Garrick*, 130; Joan Lane, "'A Little Purging and Bleeding': Poverty and Disease in Eighteenth-Century Stratford," in *The History of an English Borough: Stratford-Upon-Avon, 1196-1996*, ed. Robert Bearman (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Limited in association with The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, 1997), 126-128.

¹⁴ Kendall, *Garrick*; *ibid.* 130.

¹⁵ Benjamin Victor, *The History of the Theatres of London, from the Year 1760 to the Present Time. Being a Continuation of the Annual Register of All the New Tragedies, ... That Have Been Performed within That Period. ... By Mr. Victor*, (London: T. Becket, 1771), 201.

At the beginning of May 1769, “a jubilee in honour and to the memory of Shakespeare” at Stratford was announced to the London public.¹⁶ The Jubilee became one of the main news items in the major London papers throughout the summer, taking up a large amount of news space with announcements, descriptions of the upcoming events, and advertisements for tickets, costumes, and other products for the event. Scandal and dispute came early to the Jubilee. Some claimed that the motivations of both Garrick and Stratford were far more pecuniary than artistic. Others questioned whether Garrick was the most qualified person to lead such a celebration, or whether he had not made himself into the real object of the celebration.¹⁷ The debates were fuelled by gossip about the preparations and the promised entertainments, frequently leaked to the press by Garrick,¹⁸ but also by rumours about the slow speed and the inadequacy of such preparations and the Stratfordians’ mistrust of the whole endeavour.¹⁹ The local excitement was flamed by Warwickshire regional press, such as the *Jopson’s Coventry Mercury*, which prepared those in the area for the celebrations, the actors, and the *bon ton* from London.

¹⁶ The first announcement of the Jubilee was in, “London,” *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 6 May 1769. It was reprinted in various other newspapers in the following days. *Middlesex Journal or Chronicle of Liberty*, 9 May 1769. “London.,” *Public Advertiser*, 11 May 1769. *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*, 9 May 1769.

¹⁷ For the former, in poetic form, see, Philomusus, “Shakespeare’s Feast, an Ode.,” *Public Advertiser*, 5 August 1769. For the latter, see, Alethes, *Public Advertiser*, 29 July 1769. *Public Advertiser*, Sat. July 26, 1769. A common rebuttal to criticism of Garrick was to claim that the vituperative writers were probably disappointed playwrights whose work Garrick had turned down. See, Philalethes, “To the Printer of the *Public Advertiser*,” *Public Advertiser*, 29 July 1769.

¹⁸ Charles Dibdin, *The Professional Life of Mr. Dibdin, Written by Himself.*, (London: Charles Dibdin, 1803), 74.

¹⁹ *Public Advertiser*, 11 September 1769.



Figure 4.1. A ticket for the Jubilee. ER1/14, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Archives, Stratford-upon-Avon, UK.

By the first day of the celebration, the town of Stratford was overflowing with humanity. Preparations had been made throughout the small town. The “Amphitheatre,” a grand rotunda in style of the one at Ranelagh, had been built on the banks of the Avon and was to house the major performances and balls. The town hall and church would also host events. Shakespeare’s residences, the streets of Stratford, and the riverbanks of the Avon were decorated with banners, streamers, and illuminations. On the eve of the Jubilee, there were not enough accommodations for all those who had arrived. Many of the richer attendees arranged tents and cots for themselves in local fields. Other visitors rented every comfortable and every uncomfortable space in town. There was such a lack of space that there was not enough room to house all the horses and several ran loose about the town, a danger to pedestrians.²⁰ This want of lodging would be a running theme in the theatrical productions about the Jubilee, particularly in Garrick’s *The Jubilee*, where the main character, an Irishman, spends the night in a post-chaise.

Each day of the Jubilee had a morning, afternoon, and evening entertainment. On the first day, the town was awoken at five in the morning to songs and music performed in the streets by some of the performers from Drury Lane. After a public breakfast, there was an Oratorio, *Judith*, with music by Dr. Thomas Arne and lyrics by Isaac Bickerstaffe.²¹ There was no obvious connection between the piece, which told the

²⁰ Deelman, *The Great Shakespeare Jubilee*. 170.

²¹ Most of the newspapers in London printed several narratives of the events during and immediately after the Jubilee; James Boswell’s quoted above, as well as the frequently reprinted accounts of ‘Musidorus,’ see, for example, *Gazetter and New Daily Advertiser*, 11 September 1769. Musidorus’s account was also published in the *Cambridge Magazine* and the *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*. Most

biblical story of Judith and Holofernes, and Shakespeare, though one commentator suggested that the link was Shakespeare's daughter of the same name.²² Despite this rather tenuous link, James Boswell, one of the most prolific writers on the event, enjoyed it immensely and wished that there had been even more religiously-themed entertainments to "consecrate" the events in Stratford more fully.²³ Dinner, the large afternoon meal, was then served to guests in the amphitheatre while songs and ballads written for the occasion were performed. After retiring to prepare for the ball, Shakespeare's revellers danced hours of minuets and several more hours of country-dances before heading for bed at three in the morning.

The second day had been planned to start much as the first, but was greeted by the sounds of pouring rain. The rain was so heavy that Garrick had to cancel one of the set pieces of the Jubilee, the pageant of Shakespeare's characters that was to have wound through the streets of Stratford. Garrick had little choice but to move to the next item on the agenda, his performance of "The Ode upon dedicating a building, and erecting a Statue to Shakespeare, at Stratford upon Avon," which had been intended as the grand finale of the pageant.

The "Ode" was part song, part recitative, part opera, and lyrically called forth the celebration of Shakespeare. It opened: "To what blest genius of the isle / Shall Gratitude her tribute pay, / Decree the festive day, / Erect the statue, and devote the pile?" And

papers and journals printed a detailed account of the events, see "Intelligence from Stratford.," *Lloyd's Evening Post*, 6 September 1769., "Intelligence from Stratford," *Middlesex Journal or Chronicle of Liberty*, 9 September 1769., *ibid.*, "London.," *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 9 September 1769.

²² *Garrick's Vagary: Or, England Run Mad. With Particulars of the Stratford Jubilee.*, (London: S. Bladon, 1769).

²³ J.B., "To the Printer of the Public Advertiser," *Public Advertiser*, 16 September 1769.

answered, twenty lines later, “Shakespeare! Shakespeare! Shakespeare!”²⁴ It ran through various poetic and musical forms of praise, with Garrick impersonating many of the most famous characters from the plays, including Sir John Falstaff, whom he had never performed on stage.

According to those in attendance, the experience of the “Ode” was so much more than its printed text. Descriptions could do no justice to the power of Garrick’s performance. Those most predisposed to dislike it, loved it. His supporters were delirious. No epithet was too great. For Boswell, Garrick’s transformation and emoting during the performance “gave us all the Idea of a mortal transformed into a Demi-god as we read in the pagan mythology.”²⁵ If anyone had tried to disturb the performance, as some of Garrick’s nemeses had threatened to do, their lives would have been in danger.²⁶ Musidorus, another prolific reporter of the events at the Jubilee, believed it to be the “strongest impression” Garrick had ever made. Several times, Garrick had had to pause his recitation due to the “turbulence of [the] applause.”²⁷ Several years later, theatre historian Benjamin Victor believed that the “Ode” had allowed Garrick to distinguish “himself equally as a Poet, an Actor, and a Gentleman.”²⁸ And one noble spectator, Lord Grosvenor, congratulated Garrick after the performance, saying that it

²⁴ *The Dramatic Muse: Or, Jubilee Songster, Containing 1 the Favorite Songs from Shakespeare’s Works. 2 All the Songs Sung at the Stratford Jubilee. ... Making Together Upwards of Three Hundred and Ninety Songs, Odes, Catches, and Cantatas; ...* (Canterbury: Simmons and Kirkby, 1770). 25-26.

²⁵ J.B., “To the Printer of the Public Advertiser,” *Public Advertiser*, 16 September 1769.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Musidorus., “To the Printer of the Whitehall Evening Post. Sept. 7, 1769,” *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*, 7 September 1769.

²⁸ Victor, *History of the Theatres of London*. 217.

had affected his whole body, and showed the actor “his veins and nerves still quivering with agitation.”²⁹

The Ode was followed by a staged debate between Garrick and actor Thomas King, “in the character of a macaroni,” on the importance of Shakespeare. King argued against the theatrical value of the Bard, emphasizing his gratuitous use of character and unbridled emotion, based on Voltaire’s ideas on the subject. The crowd then relaxed with more singing, much more drinking, and a feast featuring a hundred-and-fifty pound turtle, before retiring to prepare for a Shakespeare-themed masquerade.³⁰

Unfortunately, the rain had not abated. The Avon, swollen from a wet summer, was rising quickly and threatened the amphitheatre, which was perched precariously on its banks. The unpaved roads of Stratford had disintegrated into ankle-deep mud, mixed with the discarded ephemera of two days of celebration: handbills, advertisements, and decorations. And still the rain poured down.

The wet and muddy masked crowd arrived at the amphitheatre for the masquerade ball. The cold and damp took a long time to disperse. Enough wine and people were eventually united to provide amusement, but as the evening progressed, the Avon rose, lapping around the Rotunda. The roads had become a danger to those who attempted to regain their rooms. Boards were laid down to help navigate the mire, but tired partygoers returned to the Rotunda, unable to return to their lodgings, and now covered in dirt for their pains. Many stayed on until the sun rose to be able to see where

²⁹ J.B., "To the Printer of the Public Advertiser," *Public Advertiser*, 16 September 1769.

³⁰ Victor, *History of the Theatres of London*; Musidorus., "To the Printer of the Whitehall Evening Post. Sept. 7, 1769," *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*, 7 September 1769.

they were going. By the end of the evening, the Avon was seeping through the floorboards.

The last day featured a horse race in the rain won by a brown colt named Whirligig, owned and ridden by a certain Mr. Pratt. Upon receiving the Jubilee Cup, worth 50*l.*, Mr. Pratt remarked that he was "determined never to part with it; though he modestly confesse[d] he ha[d] not extraordinary taste for dramatic performances."³¹

It took several days, some said weeks, for all the guests to leave Stratford. But the stories and anecdotes about the Jubilee remained exciting fodder for the press. In the deluge of accounts and comments that followed, the most amusing and biting description of the events was written by Samuel Foote, a major acting and managerial rival to Garrick. It was reproduced numerous times and incorporated into the prologue of Colman's theatrical production based on the Jubilee. "A Jubilee," according to Foote,

as it has lately appeared, is a public invitation, urged by puffing, to go post without horses, to an obscure borough without representatives, governed by a Mayor and Aldermen who are no Magistrates, to celebrate a great Poet, whose own works have made him immortal, by an Ode without poetry, music without melody, dinners without victuals, lodgings without beds, a crowd without company, a masquerade where half the people appeared bare-faced, a Horse-Race up to the knees in water, fire-works extinguished as soon as they were lighted, and a

³¹ "London.," *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 9 September 1769. *St. James's Chronicle*, Saturday, September 9, 1769.

boarded booth (by way of amphitheatre) which was to be taken down in three days, and sold by public auction.³²

But such bitterness (and there were many complaints about the Jubilee) only served to keep it in the realm of public discussion.

And thus ended the celebrations that commemorated neither the author's birth nor his death, timed, as it was, to coincide with no particularly relevant dates of his life. And most conspicuously, it was a three-day celebration of a playwright and poet without a single performance of his work.

At the beginning of October, both patent theatres produced plays based on the events in Stratford. The most successful of these was *The Jubilee*, written by Garrick, supposedly in his carriage on the way home from Stratford. Performed as an after-piece, it followed several bumbling characters - two old Stratfordian ladies, an Irishman, and two young country girls - through the Jubilee. The main narrative focus is the experience of the Irishman, who was played by King.³³ Garrick's play, and the competing *Man and Wife* at the Covent Garden Theatre, presented the main elements of the entertainment from the Jubilee itself: the songs, ballads, and the *Ode*. The heart of both productions, according to the newspaper accounts, was the resurrection of the drowned pageant of Shakespearean characters, that now paraded safely across a dry stage. *Man and Wife* lived to see a respectable twelve performances that season, but *The Jubilee*

³² "For the Public Advertiser," *Public Advertiser*, 16 September 1769.

³³ David Garrick, *The Jubilee in Honour of Shakespeare. A Musical Entertainment. As Performed at the Theatre in Waterford. With Additions.*, (Waterford: Esther Crawley and Son, 1773).

was presented for ninety-one nights, would be presented over 150 times by the end of the 1775-1776 season, and was further revived in the mid-1780s.³⁴

The Stratford Jubilee, as both an event and a theatrical production, had wide and long lasting effects. In September 1769, it was able to supplant almost every other news item in the London newspaper.³⁵ In the long run, it fuelled the desire to watch and read about Shakespeare by creating a greater awareness, not only of his *oeuvre*, but of his significance as the representative of the British genius. Over a century later, the late-nineteenth-century theatre critic Sydney Lee declared the Jubilee to be the birth of the cult of Shakespeare. It “gave an impetus,” he claimed, “to the Shakespearean cult at Stratford which thenceforth steadily developed into a national vogue, and helped to quicken the popular enthusiasm.”³⁶ While Garrick’s position as first celebrant at Shakespeare’s shrine had been questioned, after the Jubilee his position as “Shakespeare’s self-proclaimed representative on earth” was no longer in dispute.³⁷ Stratford’s economy was forever changed, as the inhabitants realized the appeal a pilgrimage to their town held for lovers of the Bard.

At the Stratford Jubilee, the conception of national history put forward struck a chord with audiences there and in London. It presented a unified and coherent set of ideas about the role of Shakespeare in British identity and a particular conception of

³⁴ Pedicord, *The Theatrical Public in the Time of Garrick*. Appendix C, 198-199.

³⁵ Napoleon Bonaparte was born in August of that year, and that comet was later believed to foretell his birth and importance.

³⁶ Quoted in, Kendall, *Garrick*. 142.

³⁷ Phrase from Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions*. 30. For an example of the lasting links between Garrick and Shakespeare, see, "Dialogues of the Dead with the Living," *London Chronicle*, 5 August 1779. It is a feature article on the ghosts of Shakespeare and Garrick discussing his merits.

how that cultural inheritance fit into the narrative of the national past. It popularized the importance of history as a form of tradition from which modern society had emerged. Its appeal grew from its roots in a non-partisan representation of a patriotic Britishness, constructed on popular anti-French and imperial sentiments and the keen public relations eye of Garrick and his co-workers.³⁸ They wove particular morsels of the British past into a larger story about the importance of tradition, the triumph of the British empire, the growth of commerce, and particular forms of masculine identity that fuelled them, all of which emphasized the difference between the modern present and the ancient past.

One of the most striking differences between the Jubilee and more recent “Shakespearealia” is that the historical flavour of the event was not particularly reminiscent of the Tudor or Elizabethan age. No clear links were made between Shakespeare and the Elizabethan age. Given the amount written about the Jubilee, the number of specific references to the Queen and her era is minute. The victory over the Armada was hinted at in one line of the Ode.³⁹ Elizabeth, when mentioned personally, was most often used as a character reference, a noble patron whose favour bestowed credibility on an artist of low birth.⁴⁰ In the many representations of the characters from

³⁸ Colley, *Britons*, 6.

³⁹ In the third section, Shakespeare was “*Philip’s fam’d unconquer’d son.*” David Garrick, *An Ode Upon Dedicating a Building and Erecting a Statue to Shakespeare at Stratfor-Upon-Avon.*, (London: T. Beckett and P. A. De Hondt, 1769), 4.

⁴⁰ For example, a couple of the mentions of Elizabeth were made in the republication of parts of Nicholas Rowe’s 1709 biography of Shakespeare. Elizabeth was said to have recognized the value of Shakespeare’s work and to have encouraged him to develop the character of Falstaff. But the section dealing with Elizabeth concludes that “What grace soever the Queen conferred upon him, it was not to her only that he owed the fortune which the reputation of his wit made.” Musidorus., “To the Editor of Lloyd’s Evening-Post,” *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, 30 August 1769.

Shakespeare's plays, in printed images of celebrations in Stratford, masquerade costumes and representations of the *Jubilee's* pageant, they were presented in modern dress with the occasional historical accessory, such as a vaguely historical ruff, as was the theatrical custom of the time.

What Garrick did not do was make reference to a specific historical period or era. He infused the whole, instead, with a quality of historicalness. It delineated a traditional, imagined past that was fundamentally different from the modern present. Through a range of public performances, including the songs and dances but also themed decoration, free out-of-door events like a fireworks display (and the cancelled parade), Garrick presented a history lesson that was not based on fact, but was an emotional and physical experience. Martha England argues that Garrick tried to infuse the event with an "Olde England" flavour.⁴¹ She cites Garrick's interest in Thomas Percy's *The Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, a popular collection of ancient English songs, poems, and ballads, which Percy claimed to have unearthed.⁴² Percy had corresponded with Garrick about his book and borrowed from Garrick's extensive personal library of old plays and poems. Based on the memoirs of composer Charles Dibdin, one of several well-regarded musicians employed to write the music for the Jubilee, England claims that the lyrics Garrick wrote were infused with the "flavour of antiquity."⁴³ He had the composers create tunes that would recall old English songs, such as those in Percy's collection, while still suiting modern tastes. Mr. Dibdin achieved

⁴¹ England, *Garrick's Jubilee*, 40.

⁴² Philip Connell, "British Identities and the Politics of Ancient Poetry in Later Eighteenth-Century England," *The Historical Journal* 49, no. 1 (2006). 163.

⁴³ England, *Garrick's Jubilee*, 40.

this balance in one of the Jubilee's popular hits, the *Serenade*, which was set to flute and guitar, recalling the instrumental accompaniment of an earlier era.⁴⁴ While not discussed extensively in the press, Garrick's desire to create an "ancient" atmosphere was, for example, noted in the expectations that he would perform the *Ode* in historical dress, which he did not.⁴⁵ And, in subsequent years, Garrick demonstrated a growing interest in period costumes in his productions at Drury Lane. By tying tradition and festival together, Garrick presented a past, symbolized by Shakespeare and the rural town of Stratford-upon-Avon, which was different from the present, but recognizable, unthreatening, and appealing.

The English history presented by Garrick was insidiously uniting. Its very lack of specificity allowed it to be resolutely English while also seemingly addressing all of the British Isles. As an experience of perceived traditional culture, instead of a clearly articulated argument, it could stand above party politics at a time of intense political conflict, when Whigs and Tories were sparring over a range of issues including religion, nationalism, the influence of foreign and Scots on government. Garrick never publically declared his political point of view, preferring an ambiguous middle ground which might appeal to either side. He positioned his cultural nationalism in the same way, outside the scrum of the two main parties. In his speech to "The Ladies," delivered at the Jubilee after the "Ode," Garrick proclaimed, "'In these strange times of Party and Division,/ Why should not I amongst the rest petition?/ In Shakespeare's Name I

⁴⁴ Dibdin, *The Professional Life of Mr. Dibdin*, 80.

⁴⁵ "To the Printer of the Whitehall Evening Post," *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*, 9 September 1769.

invoke the Fair!/[*shews the medal of Shakespeare*] Whilst on my Breast their Patron-Saint I wear.”⁴⁶ By blending history, religion, and politics, Garrick drew on a murky English past. His British past of songs, music, dancing, and beloved characters, created an aura of nationalism, without the taint of Wilkes-esque enthusiasm. It thus held the potential of achieving a wider popularity.

His success in positioning his celebration of Shakespeare within a language of popular culture but outside of current political debates can be deduced from ensuing attempts to use the popularity of jubilees for specifically political issues. A brief news item in the *Whitehall Evening Post* a few days after the events in Stratford announced that the “friends of freedom” were contemplating holding their own Jubilee in honour of the signing of the Magna Carta. And while this jubilee never materialized, by referencing the Stratford celebrations but changing the historical referent, the “friends” used Garrick’s idea in the politically charged context of debates about Wilkes, freedom of the press, and liberty.⁴⁷

But while on one the hand Garrick created an amorphous historical feeling in the elements of the Jubilee, his most frequent claim about Shakespeare was that he was “immortal.” Repeated several times within the “Ode,” it was most dramatically used in the climactic final lines, when he declared that those present would “sing immortal Shakespeare’s praise!/ The song will cease, the stone decay,/ but his name,/ and undiminish’d fame/ Shall never, never pass away!”⁴⁸ In the letters between Garrick and

⁴⁶ Victor, *History of the Theatres of London*. 223.

⁴⁷ “London Intelligence,” *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*, 9 September 1769.

⁴⁸ *The Dramatic Muse*. 35.

the burgesses of Stratford announcing the proposed celebrations, the honours were declared to be in the memory of the “immortal Shakespeare.”⁴⁹ But this claim was not Garrick’s alone; it was repeated *ad nauseum* by authors across the political and cultural spectrum in their debates over the various elements of the Jubilee. The immortality of Shakespeare had become a cliché.⁵⁰

These authors sought to place their own English icon beyond the reach of mere modern European authors. The constant reiteration of Shakespeare’s immortality was a thinly veiled attempt to position English culture as superior to other cultures, with particular emphasis on the French. His immortality would place English culture outside of mere chronological time. Britain was divided at home, but it was also in a cultural, political, and imperial battle with France. The French, they hoped, might have fashionable Corneille, Racine, and Molière, but the English had a poet who would prove everlasting.

Discussions of the Jubilee praised Shakespeare in nationalistic terms; it was his ability to illuminate the English character that made him the best author. During the Jubilee’s mock debate, the macaroni’s arguments drew from Voltaire’s view that Shakespeare was vulgar and unpleasant to those of delicate feeling. The macaroni censured Shakespeare “as a very ill-bred fellow, for making people laugh and cry as he

⁴⁹ See, for example, the letter to Garrick in *Middlesex Journal or Chronicle of Liberty*, May 9, 1769. It also appears in numerous of the advertisements for the events, for example, *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, 9 August 1769.

⁵⁰ See for example the debates over Garrick’s claim to be the head of the Shakespeare celebrations, where both sides use ‘immortal’ to describe Shakespeare (Alethes, *Public Advertiser*, 29 July 1769. *Public Advertiser*, Saturday, July 29, 1769 and Avoniensis, *Public Advertiser*, 12 August 1769.) Or, the debates about the success or failure of the Jubilee in its immediate aftermath, such as the negative review of it in “Extract of a Letter from the Banks of the Avon, Sept. 9, 1769,” *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, 15 September 1769.

thought proper.”⁵¹ In a reprise of a prologue he had given in 1747, Garrick responded by arguing for the superiority of a freer, less reserved style, which he saw as the Englishness of Shakespeare’s work.⁵² This English genius was less mannered both in terms of his playwriting, which rejected the neo-Classical rules of unity, and in terms of the more emotional acting style his works encouraged on the stage. This emphasis was highly gendered. Shakespeare’s sentimentalism was not effeminate, but strong and authentic; his narratives showed a freedom of action and expression, a vulgarity and violence, which were not constrained by feminizing influences of French *salon* fashion.⁵³

The claims of Shakespeare’s immortality were also the statement of a national identity that was beginning to consciously imagine itself as imperial. The neo-classical aesthetic style drew attention to older, better known empires. In the pageant of characters on the London stage, for example, classical characters abounded. A plaster bust of Shakespeare - the “pasteboard Shakespeare” Francis Gentleman so disparaged - was immediately preceded by “Apollo with his lyre” and “the Tragic muse” in Garrick’s *The Jubilee*. In Colman’s *Man and Wife* it was pulled around the stage by the muses.⁵⁴ The figures of Comedy and Tragedy, as antiquely-dressed women, were engraved on one side of the mulberry box in which the Freedom of Stratford was presented to Garrick.⁵⁵ The allusions to the ancient period can be seen, in part, as attempts to create a nation

⁵¹ *Gazette and New Daily Advertiser*, Monday, September 11, 1769. Page 2.

⁵² Benedetti, *Garrick*. 212.

⁵³ Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity*.

⁵⁴ "The Jubilee, the New Entertainment," *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*, 14 October 1769. "An Account of the New Comedy Called Man and Wife; Which Was Performed for the First Time, at the Theatre Royal in Covent-Garden, on Saturday Last.," *Independent Chronicle or Freeholders Evening Post*, 6 October 1769.

⁵⁵ *The Cambridge magazine: or, Universal repository of arts, sciences, and the belles lettres. ... By a society of gentlemen, of the University of Cambridge.*, May 1769. 200.

and imperial identity that would be indelibly written in the annals of history, or be at least as long lasting as these favoured historical referents.

English history was thus presented in two ephemeral ways at the Jubilee. The first linked the events with an invented historical tradition, undefined but socially and culturally appealing to the entire spectrum of patriotic sentiment. The second sought to find a place for Shakespeare that was outside historical context, motivated by international competition, mainly with France. But who was part of the nation this past claimed to represent?

Inclusion in the social imaginary presented at the Jubilee can be delineated in part by asking who was laughing at, or who was in the “know” about, the jokes presented in the Ode and in the pieces of theatre based on the Jubilee.⁵⁶ The humour aimed to alienate the rich and Frenchified, the rich and self-involved, and the poor and rural, particularly the Irish. In *Man and Wife*, the hand of Miss Cross is fought over by Marcourt, the effeminate suitor her mother favours, and Kitchen, an elderly epicure whom her father prefers, but both lose to the man she had already chosen, the upright Colonel Frankly. Frankly comments to Marcourt that the latter’s overly fashionable outfit, including a “french hat cut to the quick,” entitled him to be “in the pageant and shew [himself] as one of the characters of Shakespeare.” But, “no faith!” cries Marcourt.

⁵⁶ Peter Bailey, "Conspiracies of Meaning: Music-Hall and the Knowingness of Popular Culture," *Past & Present*, no. 144 (1994).

“Such an original,” as himself, he declares, “did not exist in [Shakespeare’s] days.”⁵⁷

Bachelor number two, Kitchen, is better versed in Shakespeare, but cannot describe him without using food metaphors. The critics’ favourite was that Shakespeare was “the Turtle of Literature:” “[t]he lean of him may perhaps be worse than the lean of any other meat; - but there is a deal of green fat, which is the most delicious stuff in the world.”⁵⁸ In the various plays about the Jubilee, it is frequently a servant or waiter who teaches his upper-class clients about Shakespeare and his importance. In the same scene, though Marcourt has travelled to Stratford, he must ask the landlord of the inn what is “this jubilee.” The landlord replies knowledgeably that it is to celebrate Shakespeare, and names several of the plays he wrote, including *King Lear* and *Othello*.⁵⁹ The tenuous plot of Garrick’s play follows the fate of an Irishman to whom a variety of servants, singers, and peddlers explain the meaning of the celebrations and the importance of Shakespeare.

The audience for these ideas was the urban, middling ranks, those with the most access to the printed and stage discourses on the importance of Shakespeare as a representative of an ideal Britishness. In the performances at the Jubilee and in the afterpieces, the humour was aimed at ridiculing those at the bottom, too poor or too rural to be familiar with the urban literary discourse around Shakespeare, and those at the top, who were equally distanced from mainstream popular culture and patriotism.

⁵⁷ George Colman, *Man and Wife; or, the Shakespeare Jubilee. A Comedy, of Three Acts, as It Is Performed at the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden.*, (London: T. Becket and Co.; and R. Baldwin, 1770). 13.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 19. For a review of the play, see "An Account of the New Comedy Called Man and Wife; Which Was Performed for the First Time at the Theatre Royal in Covent-Garden, on Saturday Last.," *London Chronicle*, 7 October 1769.

⁵⁹ Colman, *Man and Wife*. 16.

The main character in *The Jubilee*, the Irishman, desires to be part of the festivities, but lacks the knowledge, common sense, and wherewithal to be a full participant. He misses the pageant when he falls asleep in a post-chaise. Women were included within this imagined social identity, but they were relegated to a subordinate, supportive position. As with religion, a recurrent metaphor for the Jubilee celebrations, women were described as having a particular emotional openness that allowed them a unique understanding of Shakespeare's works. In part, this built on the continued memory of the work of Ladies' Shakespear Club, which Garrick thanked after the Ode, as he had on previous occasions during his career. But while upper-class women might have access to the education and knowledge required to understand Shakespeare's work, lower class women did not. In plays and songs, working women were portrayed as unable to understand the importance of the growing British literary canon. William Shakespeare, thus conceived as "a perfect Falstaff," was friend to the ladies, but came into his own in the company of educated, nationalistic, middling, urban men. By encouraging the belief that British identity was upheld by and reflected in the masculinity of its citizens, Shakespeare, and male Britons by extension, were outside of history, islands of true manliness in a sea of ephemeral and effeminate others.⁶⁰

The plays include many references to characters, stories, and contemporary discussions of Shakespeare, allowing audiences to revel in their own knowledge of the author, his works, and their import. A peddler in *The Jubilee*, for example, quotes

⁶⁰ Desqueeze-Oh, "To the Printer of the Public Advertiser," *Public Advertiser*, 21 July 1769.

Samuel Johnson's "each scene of many colour'd life he drew."⁶¹ After calling Kitchen a "John Bull," Marcourt shows his distaste for Shakespeare by echoing Voltaire and agreeing with "foreigners" that his work could not be "endured." Kitchen, the embodiment of a brash, unrefined patriotism, replies, "they can't taste him, because they don't understand him. [...] This is a mere hash of foreign criticism, as false as superficial, and made up of envy and ignorance"⁶² In these pieces an understanding of the importance of Britain is equated with understanding the importance of Shakespeare, though not with in-depth knowledge of his work.

Approximately two thousand people paid to participate in the Jubilee at Stratford. They were the public for whom these ideas of nation and culture had the most resonance. The price for a ticket to the Jubilee was one guinea. This included entry to all the entertainments except the Masquerade, for which tickets were sold separately. Breakfast and dinner were offered to ticket holders for an additional shilling a meal. This price, which did not include the cost transportation and accommodations, which was thought to be exorbitant, made full attendance at the event too expensive for most people in Britain at the time but within reach of the solidly middle-class and above.⁶³ And while some of the *beaux-monde* went to Stratford and were obsessively listed in

⁶¹ Garrick, *The Jubilee*. 11.

⁶² Colman, *Man and Wife*. 18-19.

⁶³ Pedicord, *The Theatrical Public in the Time of Garrick*. 22.

accounts of the events, based on the published accounts, most attendees were not of the titled classes, and their absence was remarked upon by many correspondents.⁶⁴

The theatrical productions in London would have appealed to similar socio-economic groups, though the ease of access and the availability of cheaper seats and half-performance, or late entry, tickets would have widened the potential audience. Harry Pedicord found that even a fully employed journeyman in a successful trade would have had some difficulty in treating himself and his family to the occasional theatre outings at London's patent theatres. Any lower down the salary scale and a worker would not be able to regularly afford this entertainment.⁶⁵ But though their wages would not seem to allow for attendance, contemporary witnesses frequently noted the presence at the theatre doors of working men and women, waiting for entrance.⁶⁶ In his very useful estimates of audience in the eighteenth century, Pedicord estimated the capacity of Drury Lane in the 1760s at between 2,200 and 2,300 persons, with each performance on average filled to fifty-percent of the total capacity.⁶⁷ Ignoring any repetitive attendance, a rough estimate of 90,000 people saw the ninety-one performances in the 1769-1770 season. Many thousands of people, therefore, saw the Jubilee in Stratford and on stage in the West End. Some would have been from the working classes but most would have been of a more middling rank.

⁶⁴ Vindex, "To the Printer of the Whitehall Evening Post.," *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*, 7 September 1769.

⁶⁵ Pedicord, *The Theatrical Public in the Time of Garrick*. 22-23.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 22-23.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 153.

For those to whom this construction of the national past spoke most strongly, the Jubilee was not just an experience of sounds and sights, but also an interaction with the material culture it created, a veritable industry of related products. The popularity of such souvenirs indicates the ways in which people sought to associate with the event. Primarily, these were commemorative favours, publically and visually identifying the owner with the celebrations. The most popular were rainbow ribbons, which were “universally worn.”⁶⁸ The rainbow colour scheme, a visual interpretation of Johnson’s line, was first used by an unnamed Coventry ribbon manufacturer, and gained much popularity. These “Shakespeare ribbands” [fig. 4.2] were believed to represent the author’s genius by “uniting the colours of all parties.”⁶⁹ An anonymous correspondent claimed that the sales of the ribbons at the Jubilee amounted to over a thousand pounds. There were other mementos, such as medals that depicted Shakespeare or replicated the medallion given by the town of Stratford to Garrick. There were Jubilee souvenirs produced in agreement with the organizers: official handbills, plays, and poems and the official song book, which Garrick had published and ready for sale on the first day of the Jubilee simultaneously in Stratford and London. There was an even greater number of unofficial mementos that could be purchased. These ranged from the respectable, such as themed handkerchiefs and prints, to the far less respectable, including an endless supply of knock-off “mulberry” souvenirs.

⁶⁸ J.B., "To the Printer of the Public Advertiser," *Public Advertiser*, 16 September 1769. The ‘universally worn’ favours were mentioned in several narratives of the Jubilee, including "Intelligence from Stratford," *Middlesex Journal or Chronicle of Liberty*, 9 September 1769. *Middlesex Journal or Chronicle of Liberty*, Sept. 9, 1769 and in Musidorus’s narrative, *Whitehall Evening Post*, Thurs., Sept. 7, 1769.

⁶⁹ J.B., "To the Printer of the Public Advertiser," *Public Advertiser*, 16 September 1769.



Figure 4.2. A rainbow-coloured ribbon favour from the Jubilee. ER1/27, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Archives, Stratford-upon-Avon, UK.

The famous mulberry tree, which appeared regularly in references to Shakespeare at the time, was a tree supposedly planted by Shakespeare himself at New Place, his last residence. It had been cut down some years before the Jubilee by the local curate who had bought the site and felt it obstructed his view. The enraged citizens of Stratford promptly chased him out of town and divided up the tree. It was surely a large tree, but contemporary commentators noted the over-abundance of items made from the “real” mulberry tree, clearly more than a single tree could produce. This story was included in Garrick’s stage production in which two vendors approach the Irish man to sell him “authentic” artefacts from the Tree.

Souvenirs are lasting physical memories of an event. They can serve as mnemonic devices for that experience; as gifts, they are tangible links to the occasion for those who could not attend; displayed in the home, they are personal reminders and public displays of participation and association with the ideas represented. Writers at the Jubilee noted the extent to which participants sought to purchase a piece of the experience, an indication that many attendees hoped to keep the souvenirs after the event had ended. These were physical demonstrations of the status granted through attendance at the Jubilee. In his work on the celebrations of the tercentenary of the founding of Quebec City in 1908, H. V. Nelles argues that the simple existence of souvenirs long after an event shows the importance that those items hold for their owners, demonstrating that they were worthy of a special care and transmission.⁷⁰ Such is the case with several hand-made commemorative journals in the Shakespeare

⁷⁰ H. V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999). 6.

Birthplace Archive collections.⁷¹ These collections of drawings, newspaper clippings, entertainment bills, favourite songs, images, and a variety of ephemera had value and meaning to the people who assembled them. These personal interactions and manipulations of the materials of the past attest to a desire to associate with the world presented at the Jubilee.

The importance of this material culture demonstrates two important themes in the relationship among art, the nation, and the past that this dissertation hopes to elucidate. First, while being overtly apolitical, the Jubilee drew on the increasingly material aspects of political culture. The wearing of ribbons and rosettes, the use of posters and signs, and the organization of large public demonstrations through the streets were common ways in which to publicly display political views.⁷² These advertisements could be used in support of political candidates, popular issues, or individual causes. For example, Clare Midgley has shown the importance of material culture in drawing links between the private and public sphere in the abolition movement of the late eighteenth century.⁷³ The Jubilee drew on what Kathleen Wilson has characterised as a “‘commercialized’, accessible and largely urban political culture.”⁷⁴ So while positioning itself outside contemporary squabbles, Garrick’s

⁷¹ There are such scrapbooks in both the Saunders and the Wheeler collections. J. Saunders, "Miscellanies," early 19th century, ER1/83, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Archives, Stratford-upon-Avon; Robert Wheeler, "Stratford Jubilee, 1769," 1801, ER1/14, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Archives, Stratford-upon-Avon.

⁷² Rogers, *Whigs*. 367-368.

⁷³ Clare Midgley, "Slave Sugar Boycotts, Female Activism and the Domestic Base of British Anti-Slavery Culture," *Slavery and Abolition* 17, no. 3 (1996). Amanda Foreman has also demonstrated the importance of political material culture in the political activities of the Duchess of Devonshire in the 1780s. Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London: Harper Collins, 1998).

⁷⁴ Wilson, "Admiral Vernon and Popular Politics." 91.

celebrations visually coded themselves as political, but in support of a perceived traditional past, with Shakespeare as its representative.

Second, the importance of this material culture demonstrates the ways in which consumer items were being given new and alternative meanings. With the growth of a consumer economy, material things began to hold new and additional significance. In her study of the ownership of household goods in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Lorna Weatherill argues that material goods “made physical and visible statements about accepted values and expected behaviour.”⁷⁵ By the 1760s, it was no longer enough to understand the significance of Shakespeare; Jubilee attendees sought to touch, feel, and retain material pieces of the past as indicators of their participation in a modern world, but one built upon older traditions represented by the artifacts. This is particularly evident in the mania for objects made from the mulberry tree. Their popularity indicates a growing interest in physically interacting with objects that were either from or, more likely, represented a meaningful past. Owning a piece of the simulated mulberry tree highlighted the possessor’s support for the nationalism developed at the Jubilee, an understanding of the perceived importance of Shakespeare in the national psyche, and finally, ownership over that past through ownership of the object. For the receptive audience in Stratford and in the West End, celebrating the past was now intertwined with a politics of cultural nationalism and ownership of historical objects.

⁷⁵ Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour*. 9.

But only the select few could afford the souvenirs. The majority of those present in Stratford were not there to celebrate a historical personage but to eke out a living from those purchasing the ribbons, posters, songbooks, and cups made of mulberry. "The company," according to one *Whitehall Evening Post* correspondent, "consisted not of persons whose rank in life was likely to do honour to the Festival; on the contrary they consisted chiefly of itinerant hair-dressers and figure-dancers from the Theatres."⁷⁶ There were, therefore, at least as many people at the Jubilee (and probably several times that number) who were neither ticket holders nor included in the imagined social collective presented there. The published accounts frequently highlighted the immense number of people who swarmed the Warwickshire countryside. This crowd included residents of Stratford and its surrounding areas, the actors, musicians, and singers from Drury Lane, the army of servants and attendants who arrived with their employers, waiters, cooks, stablehands, painters, carpenters, "itinerant" dance-teachers and hair-dressers, barbers, peddlers of all kinds, renters of dresses, wigs, and costumes from London, and all those in the carrying trades of both peoples and things to Stratford and within the town. One report claimed there had been a mass exodus of carters from Bristol to the Jubilee. This great number of bodies led one contemporary to believe that there were 100,000 people in Stratford for the Jubilee, an inflated number surely, but one that gives an impression of the mass of people present.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Vindex, "To the Printer of the Whitehall Evening Post.," *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*, 7 September 1769.

⁷⁷ "London," *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*, 5 September 1769.

Two kinds of people who were not paying participants were commonly portrayed in accounts of the Jubilee: those in the service industry and the rural peasantry. There was a sharp division between the portrayals of urbanized workers, waiters, and innkeepers, who had access to the culture of the middle and upper classes, and that of the rural poor, who did not. In *Man and Wife* and *The Jubilee* but also in less successful, unstaged pieces about the events in Stratford, such as the anonymous *Garrick's Vagary*, the waitstaff are frequently presented as being better versed in Shakespeare than their patrons. They were the foils to the ignorant aristocrats.⁷⁸ The rural poor, however, were derided not only for having never heard of Shakespeare, but for being afraid of the whole Jubilee, frequently claiming it to be a “popish” plot.⁷⁹

As far as the form the celebrations took, the fear that the Jubilee was part of a Catholic plot was closer to the mark than it might seem. While there is no evidence that Garrick had Catholic proclivities, he frequently expressed his relationship with Shakespeare to be of a religious calibre. As Garrick stated numerous times and restated in the *Ode*, Shakespeare was, to paraphrase Juliet, “the god of his idolatry.” The Jubilee opened with a Church service paired with Thomas Arne’s impressive oratorio. It included masks, costumes, and parades. Though a common upper-class form of celebration, jubilees were based on a Roman religious festival which took place every seven years, and some of the celebrants in Stratford made clear links between the two,

⁷⁸ *Garrick's Vagary*.

⁷⁹ See, for example, the first scene of Garrick, *The Jubilee*.

suggesting that the Stratford Jubilee should also be revived every seven years.⁸⁰

Additionally, the fireworks, lanterns, cannon fire, and other forms of the celebration used by urbanites would have been sufficiently culturally different from those of the quiet countryside that they could easily have been seen as threatening and the language most readily available to express such fears often included accusations of links to Catholicism.⁸¹

Beyond a mistrust of strangers through the idiom of religious difference, the “meaner” sort were portrayed by the urban press as being cheap and money-grubbing. There was a whole genre of Jubilee anecdotes that related the outrageous ways in which the narrator, or a friend, had been bamboozled by a local. They included being required to pay to know the time of day and being charged rent for their dog to stay in the same inn. In these tales, the narrator is frequently outraged at the audacity of the demand but is condescendingly amused by the far-fetched attempts to make money from the out-of-towners. When not entertained by such stories, authors were incensed by the costs required to attend the Jubilee, from coaches, to costume hire, to food and lodging. Few published narratives did not include some kind of complaint about the expense of staying in Stratford, with the blame resting firmly on the shoulders of the Stratfordians themselves.

⁸⁰ "London," *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*, 5 September 1769. *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*, Tuesday, Sept. 5, 1769.

⁸¹ Rogers, *Crowds*. 53. See also Garlick on theatre outside of London at this time. He argues that while certain rural areas were open to theatrical productions, many others retained an aversion to such displays, a hold-over from more puritanical eras. Garlick, "Theatre Outside London."

But while correspondents might have been outraged at working people's gouging tactics, Garrick, as a man of the theatre, knew the importance of the cheap seats to any successful theatrical enterprise. He planned numerous public, visual elements that could appeal to the entire range of people present in Stratford. There were events visible in the public spaces of the town, like the proposed pageant and the fireworks displays. Around the town, in the windows of important buildings, such as Shakespeare's birthplace and the new town hall, but also along both sides of the banks of the Avon, there were silk, painted transparencies, which were lit from behind at night. These were decorated with either Shakespearean characters or allegorical images of, for example, the sun bursting through the clouds, representative of "Shakespeare overcoming his low birth."⁸² They fluttered in the evening breeze, enchanting viewers, beautifying the town, and infusing the entire space with the cultural tradition Garrick was seeking to create.

Garrick also designed a range of songs, glees, and choruses that were short and catchy, written to be heard once and remembered. And if that was not the case, he provided a booklet with the words for sixpence. From a variety of accounts, the song the *Warwickshire Lad*, seems to have caught on immediately. It began,

Ye Warwickshire lads, and ye lasses,
See what at our Jubilee passes,
Come revel away, rejoice and be glad,
For the lad of all lads was a Warwickshire lad,
Warwickshire lad,

⁸² J.B., "To the Printer of the Public Advertiser," *Public Advertiser*, 16 September 1769.

All be glad,

For the lad of all lads was a Warwickshire lad.⁸³

In subsequent verses, Shakespeare was the Bard of all Bards, the Will of all Wills, the Wag of all Wags, and the Thief of all Thieves. In a culture still attuned to oral mnemonics and performance, such easy-to remember and popular songs would have been an effective way to involve a broad audience.

For many, the Jubilee was a place of work, but there is evidence that even workers were able to partake in some of the amusement: singing the songs, seeing the sights, and finding other forms of merriment. “A Friend to Real Merit” reported that at dinner on the first day the crowd demanded that the cup made for Garrick for the occasion be passed around the room so that everyone could drink from it [Fig. 4.3]. “After all had had a drink,” says the author,

The person in whose custody the cup was, left the Amphitheatre, and was going to his lodgings, to place it in safety, but before he got home, was met by several friends, who earnestly requested they might have the pleasure of drinking some Warwickshire, or what they call Shakespeare's Ale, out of the cup. As it was time of mirth and Jollity, there was no refusing them; the Ale was called for, the cup was filled, and every one did honour to it. The company soon increased, and every

⁸³ *The Dramatic Muse*. 12.

Lad and Lass, as well as Darby and Joan, were permitted to partake of the Jollity.⁸⁴

The English past presented to the workers and the poor in Stratford was an appealing image of spectacle, song, and drink. It was a past that they could enjoy, and that had relevance to their own cultural forms. It was a past that had erased its own creation and emphasized the importance of tradition to a modern British identity. At the same time, however, it was one from which they were excluded as not having the cultural referents necessary to claim membership. This was clearly demonstrated in the opening scene of *The Jubilee*, in which two old Stratfordian women, Goody Benson and Margery Jarvis, not only are excluded from the Jubilee by their ignorance and fear of the celebrations, but also by their physical location, isolated in a house on the outskirts of town, while all the other action takes place in public spaces of Stratford.⁸⁵ An appeal to a past that presented itself as traditional and meaningful, but also as different from the modern condition, offered an alternative way to participate in the modernity promised by the nation-state. Despite being excluded from full participation, working men and women did therefore represent an important if unstable potential base for support of the state and hegemonic cultural system, just as they represented the power to subvert it.⁸⁶

On the second evening of the Jubilee, as the rich and aspiring trod through the

⁸⁴ A Friend to Real Merit, "To the Printer of the Public Advertiser," *Public Advertiser*, 16 September 1769.

⁸⁵ Garrick, *The Jubilee*. 3-5.

⁸⁶ Rogers, *Crowds*. 170.



Figure 4.3. Drawing of the Jubilee Mulberry Cup, given to Garrick by the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon. ER1/27, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Archives, Stratford-upon-Avon, UK.

muddy streets of Stratford to go to the masquerade, a large crowd assembled outside the amphitheatre and laughed the night away at the expense of the partygoers in their soiled Shakespeare-inspired costumes.⁸⁷ The Jubilee was not a carnival in the Bahktinian sense, but it did have its moments of social inversion. Yet as they were laughing, this multitude was also learning about who Shakespeare was, and they would eventually find ways to incorporate him and the affable past he had come to represent into their own identity, culture, and understanding of tradition.

Conclusions

During the Jubilee, one of the most popular songs was “The Country Girl, A Comic Serenata,” sung in the character of two local country girls, who would later find themselves in Act 2, scene 2 of *The Jubilee*. In the song, one country girl expresses her astonishment that the hullabaloo in her town is for the sake of a poet. The chorus of the song went: “All this for a poet - Oh no ----- / Who liv'd lord knows how long ago? / How can you jeer one,/ How can you sleer one,/ A poet, a poet, O no!”⁸⁸ The song emphasizes the link between Shakespeare’s perceived literary values as a poet and his position as a representative of a particular construction of the value of the past. Those who did not understand the importance of Shakespeare also did not understand the importance of national history. The positions of the women in the song as young, rural, and feminine, excluded them from the modernity with which the past presented at the Jubilee contrasted itself. The country girls’ disparagement of the poet, because he lived long ago,

⁸⁷ Deelman, *The Great Shakespeare Jubilee*. 250.

⁸⁸ *The Dramatic Muse*. 18-19.

points to how those who understood his importance would also understand the importance of history in the construction of that same modern, national identity.

The Jubilee was the result of the concurrent and rather pedestrian desires of Garrick at the end of his career for lasting fame and of the small borough of Stratford for a statue for their new town hall. It gave attendees three days of festivities that were only partially dampened by two days of torrential rain. It used an atmosphere of historical activities to make the small, poorly-equipped town into a magical world of illuminations, music, shimmering costumes, and amusements.

Shakespeare's work played an insignificant part in the celebrations. What was celebrated instead was his cast of characters and the idea of a national genius, a particularly British spirit. He represented an imagined masculine past: a little less formal and a little less civilized, but rooted in strong emotions and strong personalities.

Through the events of the Jubilee in Stratford, their discussion in the London press, and their representation on stage, Garrick sought to popularize an idea of the British past that was outside contemporary political debate but was focused on a politics of cultural nationalism. He intertwined the forms of religious and political celebration to create a powerful idea about the role of Shakespeare in the British psyche. This meant that even those excluded from the identity presented, the poor, particularly the rural poor and those from the Celtic fringe, could still participate in its creation; they could still help to give it meaning. Garrick had planned many of the visual and musical elements to appeal to as wide a range of people as possible. The Jubilee also highlighted that, in an increasingly consumer society, those who formed the core of that national

identity, as envisioned through the writings of and about the Jubilee, wanted to participate physically in such celebrations. There was a keen desire to own a piece of the past or to possess a visual identifier with celebrations of Shakespeare.

The friendly Shakespearean past that the Stratford Jubilee promoted lent itself to both rationalization and commodification. It was presented as a packaged whole, built on the analysis of authors such as Samuel Johnson and the professional knowledge of actors like David Garrick. It drew an image of a lost England that could highlight parts of the eighteenth-century national identity. It was understandable, and therefore appealed as an interpretation of the past that could be worn, sung, and owned. Its power was not in lending legitimacy to the present but in differentiating present and past. History was increasingly an alternative on which modernity built its own chronology. While this confined history increased the meaningfulness of a cultural icon such as Shakespeare, it divested political history of its sting and its relevance.

Chapter Five

An Acquaintance with the Past

Elizabethan memory during the American Revolutionary War

After months of fearful anticipation, in early August 1779, a joint French and Spanish fleet sneaked past the Royal Navy in the night, and entered the English Channel. Combined with the growing awareness of the inability of the British armed forces to subdue the revolt in the American colonies, this resurrected Spanish Armada provoked fear and panic. As imminent invasion loomed, various social and political actors drew on the example of Queen Elizabeth and her era to understand the threat. Both George III and Charles James Fox, a leading Whig politician, mentioned her to illustrate the ideal defence against foreign invaders.¹ In the government, in the press, and on the stage, the Elizabethan past was used to understand how the nation should face this aggression and how it might prepare to counter an attack.

This foray into Elizabethan historical memory nonetheless struck many contemporaries as being more insipid than inspiring. The opportunity afforded by this invasion scare to rile the population in support of a range of priorities established earlier in the century by patriots such as Bolingbroke, frequently appeared repetitive and unoriginal. Despite the continuing, if not growing, importance of those aims to numerous elements of the political nation, the promotion of colonial expansion, the

¹ For George III, see O'Quinn, *Entertaining Crisis*, 221.. Fox: "House of Commons," *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 22 June 1779.

protection of commerce, and a strong monarchy, the past was no longer perceived as the best authority with which to defend and promote those goals. In the public discussions of the administration and its policies in Britain in the late 1770s and early 1780s, the role that Elizabeth's historical memory had once held was waning.

The period of the war with the American colonies and their eventual European allies, France, Spain, and the Netherlands, demonstrates the lessening ability of Elizabethan historical memory to provide a source of communal identity and political motivation. Compared with the period earlier in the century, and despite numerous immediate governance and military issues that presented clear possible parallels with the Tudor past, during the war Elizabeth and the famous men of her period were used less frequently, in less numerous contexts and, when recalled, were tended to be cloaked in qualifications and reservations. The differences between the past and the present were becoming more significant than their similarities. The usefulness of Elizabeth's era was more likely to be found in the public sphere, as a site of nostalgic yearnings for alternatives to modern identities, and in the private, as a component in the education of the ideal rational human. There were individuals and particular issues for which the past continued to present an immediate and meaningful alternative to the present. This was particularly true of the vitriolic arguments about the importance of Protestantism to the British state in the late 1770s, boiling over into the violence of the Gordon Riots in 1780. But in the evolving and intensifying radical politics of the 1770s and 1780s, the Elizabethan past was more likely to provide the decoration than the substance to the

emerging tensions among post-war radicalisms, middling demands for reforms, and the conservative ruling elite.

The period of the American Revolutionary war has been interpreted as a moment of intense internal conflict with long-term significance within Britain. It was a profoundly divisive experience, politicizing public debate and discourse throughout the country. By exposing the inner workings of the British state, the colonists' struggle for independence encouraged Britons to think critically about the principles they desired their government to espouse. As Stephen Conway has shown, most of those who participated in public discussions about the war considered the Americans to be British, and therefore subjects of the same monarch, at least until their alliance with the French in 1778.² The King and his cabinet's response to the Americans, the dismissal of their rights to representation, for example, was therefore of immediate concern to those who felt they shared the rights and obligations as their co-nationalists in the colonies. Further, the government's attempts to mandate support for its policies were met with a great deal of resistance. Those with access to the halls of power who rejected the government's impositions used the numerous platforms at their disposal to voice their opposition: in private and public discussions, in parliament, on the stage, and in the press.³ Further down the social scale, the debates around the war divided the middling ranks of small communities across the country. According to James E. Bradley, many

² Stephen Conway, "From Fellow-Nationals to Foreigners: British Perceptions of the Americans, Circa 1739-1783," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (2002): 100.

³ David Francis Taylor, *Theatres of Opposition: Empire, Revolution, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 24.

localities were politically aware, actively engaged, and deeply divided by these issues.⁴ The war effort relied on the money, labour, and lives of Britons in an unprecedented but not undisputed way. Among the poorer sorts, the government's undemocratic means of manning its forces were frequently met with violent resistance.⁵ The war was experienced as a difficult and transformative event.

This politicization has meant that the period between 1775 and 1783 has been seen as a watershed moment in British history, exaggerating and exacerbating trends that would reveal themselves more fully in the subsequent French Revolutionary wars. According to Brendan Simms, this was the dawn of a new era in imperial policy, when the empire's value as a site of commerce supported by naval power would supersede its significance as the financial fuel for power struggles in Europe.⁶ The war also brought about the dissolution of alliances within British politics that had been in place since the Seven Years' War. The ruling elite closed ranks and invested in public and popular celebrations of their conception of the nation, while the radicals were split over who was to be included and what would be the focus of their demands.⁷ At a more personal level, Dror Warhman sees the period of the American war as introducing a new "regime" of identities, the basis for a new, modern understanding of the individual, premised upon a

⁴ James E. Bradley, *Popular Politics and the American Revolution in England: Petitions, the Crown, and Public Opinion* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), 15.

⁵ Nicholas Rogers, *The Press Gang: Naval Impressment and Its Opponents in Georgian Britain* (London: Continuum, 2007). See p. 55 for affrays against impressments across the country.

⁶ Simms, *Three Victories*. An argument also made by Bruce Lenman, *Britain's Colonial Wars 1688-1783* (Harlow, England: Pearson Education Limited, 2001).

⁷ Rogers, *Crowds*; Kathleen Wilson, "Inventing Revolution: 1688 and Eighteenth-Century Popular Politics," *Journal of British Studies* 28, no. 4 (1989).

gendered, “innate, fixed, determined core.”⁸ The *ancien régime* of identity had ended with the “short eighteenth century,” “up to about 1780,” a moment after which dramatic changes in conceptions of selfhood occurred.

These deep and wide transformations have also been interpreted, not as sudden developments, but as the culmination of longer trends, crystallized by the experience of the war. This more elongated chronology is supported by an analysis of the uses of the Elizabethan past in this period. J. G. A. Pocock demonstrated that the changes in the rhetoric around concepts central to the war, such as liberty and property, were the result of transformations in the meanings of those concepts begun in the first part of the century, if not earlier, and given fresh emphasis by the activities of John Wilkes in the 1760s. While the impetus for changes in British attitudes to the Americans was the French alliance, Conway believes this shift was ultimately the result of priorities and policies that had evolved over the longer *durée*.⁹ He conceptualizes the war with America as hastening the trends for greater mobilization and greater involvement of the whole national economy begun earlier in the century. By the 1780s, national history was understood and used in dynamic ways, but, as the previous chapters have demonstrated, they were the result of gradual developments over the course of the century.

As the war unfolded, there were numerous incidents that might have lent themselves to comparisons with Elizabeth’s reign. The naval failures, particularly

⁸ Dror Wahrman, “Percy’s Prologue: From Gender Play to Gender Panic in Eighteenth-Century England,” *Past & Present*, no. 159 (1998): 153; Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 275.

⁹ Stephen Conway, *The British Isles and the War of American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 347.

Admiral Keppel's failure to contain the Brest Fleet within European waters in 1778, and the possibility of invasion by the French and Spanish fleets in 1779, compared poorly with the success of the Elizabethan period. The debates around Keppel's trial could draw on the century-old discourse that equated naval success with a distinct and historical masculinity. Where George III's government relied on violent impressments to attempt to adequately man its navy, Elizabeth's armed forces were believed to have relied on the service of volunteer forces on the land and on the sea. Where Elizabeth could depend on the loyalty of the militia, the current ministers mistrusted such a force, seeing it as a possible hotbed of insurrection, a potential tool for opposition politicians. The entry of other European powers into the conflict recalled both the old treachery of the Spanish and the new duplicity of the Dutch, who supported the Americans from 1780 onward. While the current government's calls for consensus grated on many in such a deeply divided society, Elizabeth had been able to unite a country divided by religion and politics. Finally, the increasingly tense religious situation, as Catholic imperial acquisitions were granted some limited religious accommodations, might prompt historical parallels. These liberties granted to Catholics were understood by some to be in violation of the memory of Elizabeth, who, as Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* continued to remind readers, had heroically fought to ensure the success of the Protestant religion, at the expense of a dangerous Catholicism.

Within this passionately divided public life, and among these possible parallels, the role of Elizabethan historical example in public discourse was changing. A growing perception of Britain as modern made the past seem more different and less

immediately relevant to the construction of politicized identities in the present, to the mobilization around such ideas, or to the formation of political strategy. When it was used with vigour, instead of supporting a political argument, it was more likely to be perceived as concealing it. At the same, despite the growing number of voices in the public sphere, disseminated through printed matter, at public meetings, and on stage, fewer constructions of the Elizabethan past were invoked. This chapter focuses first on how events of Elizabeth's era were marshalled around the issues of the war, then on how two plays used her period to respond to the invasion crisis of 1779. The first, "The Prophecy, or Queen Elizabeth at Tilbury," a musical extravaganza presented at Sadler's Wells, problematically called on the memory of a military Elizabeth facing the threat of the Armada. The second, Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The Critic, or a Tragedy Rehearsed* at the larger, patent-holding Drury Lane Theatre, questioned the political value of such commemorations. Among public uses of the Elizabethan memory there were ways in which Elizabeth remained germane: in the fights over religion and as a tool for personal development. Among the proliferation of expressions of historical consciousness during the late 1770s and 1780s, Elizabeth and the individuals who were part of the memory of her reign were still an integral part of British understandings of the national past, but that past was growing more distant, less vibrant, and was expressed in an increasingly limited vocabulary.

During the conflict with the nascent United States of America, particularly once France had entered the fray, Elizabeth, her government, and her era's men of note were

employed in public discourse both by those who supported the government's policies regarding its American colonists and by those who opposed them, though with less frequency than in conflicts earlier in the century. Her reign was recalled as one that featured a decisive and successful foreign policy and was regularly interpreted as one in which the monarch had acted in a masculine and warlike manner for the sake of her country, reflecting the fears of government supporters of a possible negotiated settlement with the Americans. Unlike her "dastardly" Stuart successor, Elizabeth was perceived as willing to reject "inglorious" peace treaties, choosing, instead, to take military action against insulting enemy nations.¹⁰ James I's acceptance of Spanish terms, in contrast, had opened the door for the country to be delivered, "bound hand and foot, to the rapacious Scots, his countrymen." Elizabeth's proper and masculine behaviour was, according to the *General Advertiser*, demonstrative of her English nationalism, a comment on the un-Englishness of the first Stuart and the latest Hanoverian. Her policies were evidence of a "political self-love;" she had prioritized her nation's well-being above all else. "Policrites," in the *Public Advertiser*, also felt she had not been overly concerned with ideological positions, and had given precedence to the political and economic well-being of her own nation. When the situation demanded it, she had been willing to turn like-minded (co-religionist) allies, such as the House of Austria, into enemies.¹¹ On the whole, her aggressive attitude towards the ambitions of her European neighbours was seen as patriotic and appropriate.

¹⁰ "Morning Intelligencer," *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer*, 13 October 1778.

¹¹ Policrites, "To the Printer of the Public Advertiser," *Public Advertiser*, 10 November 1779.

In domestic politics, the heated discussions about the organization of voluntary troops again marshalled the memory of the Elizabethan period. Given the intensity of the political divisions of the late 1770s, the government was resistant to and distrustful of opposition clamour for the creation of a militia, which they thought might be more likely used against those in power than a possible invading force. Elizabeth, in contrast, was held up by some as having understood the importance of relying on local volunteers and the innate martial nature of Britons. Her reign served to highlight the potential value of raising a local militia and the ability of a successful monarch to rely on such troops, instead of fearing them. During the invasion crisis in 1779, a news item in the *General Evening Post* reminded readers that, when raising voluntary bands to face the threat of the Spanish Armada, Elizabeth had trusted, not only her own judgment and that of her ministers, but also those appointed to lead the troops, “all the officers, and men of distinguished reputation and wisdom.”¹² The result was an armed force that had been united, organized, and had unanimous support. Implicitly, unlike George III and his government, she had been able to depend upon the loyalty of the men of property of her nation. In *An Enquiry into the State of the Militia*, the author juxtaposed the ability of the London militia under Elizabeth with that of its contemporary counterpart.¹³ The former met the standards of armament and training of the time while the capital’s current six regiments were “by custom” required to use antiquated formations and weapons. The author warned that, undermanned and poorly armed, the city would not be in a position to help the “British Lion,” if roused by a French landing. Support for the

¹² "London," *General Evening Post*, 24 June 1779.

¹³ *An Enquiry into the State of the Militia*, (London: J. Bew, 1779).

militia was seen as a trust in the patriotic sentiment of the country, which Elizabeth had been able to rely upon, but Lord North's government could not.

While her popularity among her subjects was still celebrated, her tight rein on her government received an increased share of comment and praise. While some recalled her "good sense" in aligning her personal interests with those of the "people,"¹⁴ a theme common in earlier uses of the Elizabethan past, many in the late 1770s chose to discuss her "fortitude." For those who supported George III's decision to coerce the thirteen colonies into submission,¹⁵ most executive heavy-handedness was understood as the correct means to enforce the necessary, if unpopular, measures. Her ability to re-establish centralized power and dominion over recalcitrant subjects was seen as an appropriate model. According to a correspondent in the *Public Advertiser* in May 1780, Elizabeth had been correct in her use of authority as "[i]nfluence acquired by the right Means, and directed to right Ends, is the natural Parent of Order, and well-regulated Government."¹⁶ A strong leader such as Elizabeth, and possibly George, would ensure the re-establishment of peace.

Among her more unilateral uses of power, there was a marked interest in espionage during her reign. Her secretary, Francis Walsingham, was touted for his wisdom in establishing a system of informants. He represented a government that had

¹⁴ *A Series of Letters Addressed to the Greatest Politician in England: Containing a Description of Several Public Characters; a Defence of Sir George Saville; and of Lord Chatham's Political Sentiments, and His Upright, Spirited, and Constitutional System, Contrasting It with That, First Formed by Lord Bute, and since Completed by Lord North*, (London: Mess. Almon and Debrett, 1780), 38.

¹⁵ Eliga Gould argues that there was significant support for the government's attempts to force the American Colonies back into the imperial fold. Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

¹⁶ Phidippus, "To the Printer of the Public Advertiser," *Public Advertiser*, 6 May 1780.

closely controlled its knowledge networks, one that would not have been surprised by other nations' sudden support for the enemy, like that of Spain in 1779.¹⁷ Walsingham was also praised for his intelligence-gathering at home. There were implications that divisions between Britons about the war with the United States were the result of the machinations of other governments, "their arts and their gold."¹⁸ Walsingham, however, had adeptly used spies within England's borders to weed out foreign-fomented dissent. If he had been in charge during the current war, he would have found troublemakers on British soil and punished them without, "say[ing] much about it, but do[ing] it effectually."¹⁹

Her memory could equally serve, not as a celebration of a leviathan, but as an example of a wise government that had upheld the rights and liberties of its citizens. In this context, Elizabeth was used to criticize George III's undemocratic and unpopular choices in dealing with the American colonies and in preventing dissent at home. An "anecdote" in the *Public Advertiser* reminded readers that Elizabeth had relied on three maxims to defeat her numerous enemies: to be loved by her people, unlike George's refusal to acquiesce to demands to dismiss Lord North, or to negotiate with the American; to be thrifty, instead of a corrupt sinecure system that Parliament was demanding be reformed; and to encourage dissent among her neighbours, instead of dissent at home and unity amongst Britain's enemies.²⁰ Elizabeth could also provide an example of the protection of oppressed states. In the *General Advertiser*, "A Stander-

¹⁷ Caxton, "Spanish Invasion, and Utility of Spies," *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 15 July 1779.

¹⁸ Cassander, "To the Printer of the London Chronicle," *London Chronicle*, 21 October 1780.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ "London," *Public Advertiser*, 17 June 1779.

By” felt that the truly patriotic act was to support those English ideals of truth and justice, as he felt Elizabeth had done. He hoped that his “being an Englishman, [would] never lead [him] to sacrifice truth and justice, though in favour of my native country.”²¹ In both cases, Elizabeth represented an ideal English nationalism that supported liberties and parliamentary power, in contrast to the policies currently being followed by the King and government.

One of the most popular uses of the Elizabethan period, across the political divide, was as a reminder of the aid given in the sixteenth century to the still-perfidious Dutch, after their alliance with the French and Americans in 1780. Beginning in 1779, numerous commentators sought to remind the Dutch Republic of its debt to Queen Elizabeth for her financial and military help during its earlier war with the Spanish. “Glorious Elizabeth,” as one account pointed out, “had effected that independence for them.”²² The “ingratitude” of the Dutch seemed all the more insulting given that they had once petitioned the queen for help as the “poor” and “distressed” States.²³ In the *Public Ledger*, the “hatred” of the Dutch for the English was thought to have been made possible by the very freedoms she had granted them.²⁴

These evocations of the Elizabethan past were more frequently qualified than they had been in previous periods of the eighteenth century. The reservations related to the immediate usefulness of historical examples. In some instances, while the

²¹ A Stander-By, “To Aratus.,” *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer*, 5 September 1778.

²² “An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Seven United Provinces,” *London Chronicle*, 12 August 1779.

²³ “London, Thursday, March 30,” *British Chronicle Or Pugh's Hereford Journal*, 6 April 1780; *ibid.*

²⁴ “Extract of a Letter from Amsterdam,” *Public Ledger*, 30 December 1779.

Elizabethan age was recognized as the beginning of a progressive modern historical period, representative of ideas and trends that were significant in the present, these had only just emerged during her reign and could not therefore be used for guidance. In other cases, a nostalgic envisioning of her period allowed the different forms of identity available in the past to be praised without seriously considering challenging contemporary priorities. Finally, the potential usefulness of the Elizabethan era was circumscribed by an uncertainty about the relationship between the will of monarchs and the will of their subjects in past events.

These explanatory limitations were evident, for example, in the discussion of Elizabethan imperialism. The issues at the heart of the war with the United States elicited debate about the proper role and aims of colonial holdings. In this, Elizabeth's reign figured prominently as a foundational moment in the growth of England's territorial expansion. Hers was seen as the first reign in which the true value of colonies was understood. The first, though unsuccessful, settlement at Roanoke, Virginia, was a popular point of reference.²⁵ Beyond generalizations about their political and economic importance, arguments about colonies focused on the individual efforts of the captains at the expense of the emphasis in earlier discourses on an over-arching policy of acquisition on the part of the Queen. It was her representatives, like Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Francis Drake, who had wisely fought disease, famine, and intemperate weather to establish the foothold on the continent that allowed the English economy to prosper.

²⁵ *The History of the War in America, between Great Britain and Her Colonies, from Its Commencement to the End of the Year 1778*, vol. 1 of 2, (Dublin: Company of Booksellers, 1779); S.T., "Essay on Sugar and the Sugar Cane," *The Farmer's Magazine, and useful family companion*, November 1778.

Elizabeth might have been a supporter of trade but the real successes were those of the men who had sought to benefit from the potential riches of the New World, like Raleigh who had first imported tobacco from the Americas for the purpose of smoking it.²⁶

The importance of naval power further articulated the growing constraints on Elizabethan memory. Her navy was used as the yardstick for naval strengths. The present naval force compared very positively with that of her reign, argued a *Morning Chronicle* correspondent, affirming the progress of military firepower and influence since that time.²⁷ Alternatively, as in the *Annual Register*, it could be used to disparage those who were considered, or hoped to be, less powerful, and consequently less modern. The Americans' sea-power was therefore portrayed as much weaker than England's had been in 1588.²⁸ Given the failures of the Royal Navy off both the American and the French coasts in the early years of the war, the sailors of the Elizabethan age were felt to have been comparatively heroic and successful; their hard living often equated with their victories.²⁹ The image of Elizabethan sailors drew from nostalgic imaginings about the period. It ignored the physical and economic difficulties faced by those serving at sea in the 1770s. Instead, these representations celebrated navy life as a mixture of difficult but rewarding and courageous physical work, with a social life based on loyalty and respect for each other, paired with a paternalistic concern for the women and children left on shore. But while the heroism of her captains and sailors

²⁶ Jonathan Carver, *A Treatise on the Culture of the Tobacco Plant; with the Manner in Which It Is Usually Cured.*, (Dublin: Luke White, 1779).

²⁷ J.H., "Cursory Observations on Certain Passges in the Play of "King Henry the Fifth," as Written by Shakespeare [Never Printed before]," *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 10 October 1778.

²⁸ *The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1779.*, (Londo: J. Dodsley, 1780).

²⁹ "London, December 30," *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer*, 30 December 1779.

was celebrated, it was unclear what role Elizabeth played in this history. And while her period might be commended, some authors, such as Agricola in his *Two Letters* of 1779, saw the glory of the Navy to be in spite of her reign, not the result of it.³⁰

The value of Elizabethan historical example in public debate changed as a result of a decrease in its perceived applicability to the present. It now appeared less relevant to contemporary issues, and, therefore, less useful as a tool with which to craft logical arguments. The limitations to and reservations about the meaning of the Tudor past relegated it to appendices to arguments about the present, and footnotes to discussions of the conflict with the Americans. Including a surfeit of historical detail was interpreted as self-serving and dishonest, a failure to participate in public debate in a respectable, masculine way. Audiences and readers were felt to be so familiar with the events of Elizabeth's reign that they were commonly said to be "too well known" to deserve repetition.³¹ The purposeful omission of historical detail, therefore, helped to marginalize the value of this public and political memory.

In June 1779, when Spain entered the war and increased the possibility of a combined invasion attempt with the French, several members of Parliament drew on the memory of Elizabeth's experiences. In a speech to the House of Lords on 17 June, Lord Shelburne compared the few resources available to the Queen to prepare for a possible invasion with the effort that had nonetheless been made to protect the English Coast in

³⁰ Agricola, *Two Letters from Agricola to Sir William Howe; to Which Are Annexed, by the Same Author, Political Observations.*, (London: J. Millidge, 1779).

³¹ "For the Gazetteer: *Conclusion of the Debate on the State of the Nation, on Wednesday Last, in the House of Lords.*," *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 11 April 1778.

case of a landing.³² The following week, Charles James Fox questioned whether the government had put in place a system of alarm as the Queen had.³³ Colonel Barré, the member for Calne and a supporter of Shelburne, also mentioned Elizabeth's military preparations a few days later. This flurry of Elizabethan debate left the press largely unimpressed. Fox's questions about Elizabeth were listed among "many other questions put to the Ministers," after an already lengthy list printed by the *Morning Post*. Barré spoke on the topic "to a greater degree of extent" than the *Morning Chronicle* could follow him.³⁴ And while Shelburne claimed to "amuse himself with reading" history, the press was not entertained. His attempt to "carr[y] the House with him into the history of his country" was considered to be evidence of an "extensive latitude of argument."³⁵ While the political stances of these orators were significant, they were all against the ministry, the criticisms in the press harped, not on the targets of their political arguments, but on the ineffectiveness of their historical examples in the discussion of contemporary issues.

This collective understanding was heavily indebted to the continuing and growing importance of dominant published narratives, particular that of David Hume, in *The History of England*.³⁶ Authors looking to discuss the Elizabethan era pillaged from his

³² "House of Lords. Some Account of Yesterday's Business: Spanish Manifesto," *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 18 June 1779; "House of Lords," *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 21 June 1779.

³³ "House of Commons," *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 22 June 1779.

³⁴ "House of Commons. Some Account of Yesterday's Business," *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 25 June 1779.

³⁵ "House of Lords. Some Account of Yesterday's Business: Spanish Manifesto," *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 18 June 1779.

³⁶ In the years between its original publication in 1759 and the end of the American war, new editions of the work were published regularly in eight volumes by publisher T. Cadell (London): 1763, 1767, 1770,

facts, phrases, and interpretations to cobble together their own. In some "Cursory Observations," for example, a *Morning Chronicle* correspondent cited Hume at length to prove the comparative power of the current British navy.³⁷ In newspaper columns, Hume was frequently named as the source of Elizabethan history.³⁸ In an age in which public writing was predicated on borrowing and copying, his had become not only the accepted interpretation, but the most common way in which to describe to events of the past. Hume was not the only source available, Rapin de Thoyras, for example, was still popular. But many of Hume's interpretations, such as Elizabeth's use of authority and her relationship with Mary, Queen of Scots, as well as his assessment of her reign as passable, if unlikable, had become the most frequently reiterated narratives of that period. This repetition of a known and respected source led to a sense of shared knowledge, not only with the information it contained, but also with the way in which it was expressed.

Despite its familiarity and the dangers of falling into selfish antiquarianism, a basic but superficial knowledge of this accepted national historical narrative was necessary to participate in public debate.³⁹ In particular, authors and orators sought to

1773, and, after Hume's death in 1776, new editions in 1778 and 1782. Six-volume editions were also published by A. Millar (London): 1763, 1764, and 1767. Several editions were published in Dublin by James Williams: 1769, 1772. And, a French translation was published (London: publisher unknown) in: 1761, 1763, and 1766.

³⁷ J.H., "Cursory Observations on Certain Passges in the Play of "King Henry the Fifth," as Written by Shakespeare [Never Printed before]," *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 10 October 1778.

³⁸ Eg. "London," *Public Advertiser*, 28 June 1780; Phidippus, "To the Printer of the Public Advertiser," *Public Advertiser*, 6 May 1780; Jun. Sydney, "To the Printer of the Public Advertiser," *Public Advertiser*, 20 January 1780.

³⁹ On the negative attitudes towards some antiquarian practices, see "The Rise of the Antiquary," in Sweet, *Antiquaries*.

establish their own “acquaintance” with history.⁴⁰ In a speech to the House of Commons in the spring of 1780, Sir Grey Cooper extemporized against a bill that would allow members to vacate their seats at their leisure, by providing numerous historical examples, including a “precedent so early as the reign of Queen Elizabeth.”⁴¹ The *General Evening Post* acknowledged that Grey had proven himself to be “perfectly well acquainted with his subject,” but his speech nonetheless produced “a very tedious and uninteresting debate.” In his *Two Letters*, “Agricola” countered Fox’s speech about Elizabeth’s preparations for invasion by assuming that, as Fox was “undoubtedly so well acquainted” with the state of the nation at the time, and therefore “conversant with the History of England,” he must have known the example suited his argument only in the most cursory way. In each of these cases, an ordinary amount of knowledge about the past, an acquaintance with its narratives, was deemed to be widely shared among readers and listeners, and sufficient to understand its meaning. Deviations were the result of a lack of the knowledge necessary to participate meaningfully in public debate or of the deceitful misappropriation of that knowledge.

There were still aspects of late eighteenth-century political discourse that could draw meaningfully on the Elizabethan past, finding in it a source of motivation and identity-formation. In the face of a looming French and Spanish invasion, there was a

⁴⁰ For an example of its frequency, in a single passage from his pamphlet supporting the national loyalty of religious groups that had seceded from the Church of England, David Walker uses forms of the phrase, “acquainted with [the history/transactions of these times],” three times. David Walker, *The Morality and Obligation of Public Religious Vows, or Covenants, Illustrated. A Sermon, Preached at Pollockshaws, on a Day of Public Fasting, 4th Nov. 1779 ... Together with Animadversions on the Rev. Mr. Patrick Hutchison's Attacks on the Secession in General, and Covenanting in Particular*, (Glasgow: William Smith, 1780).

⁴¹ “House of Commons,” *General Evening Post*, 29 February 1780.

surge of interest in the history of the Spanish Armada, which produced multiple interpretations of the meaning of that event for the present. For some, the destruction of the Spanish fleet in 1588 demonstrated the resolve of the monarch and her willingness to participate actively in the conflict. For others, such as Frederic Hervey, in the *Naval History of Great Britain*, whose work featured a large engraving of the battle with the Armada off the coast of Plymouth, it was the bravery and dedication of average Britons as they readied the ships, joined the militia, and protected the coasts in the case of an enemy landing. Hervey believed that it was “the spirit of the nation [which had been] roused to undertake the most distant and perilous voyage,” while the queen remained at home, attempting to curtail the liberties of the House of Commons.⁴² Regardless of who was responsible, the Armada was evoked to highlight the strong character of those involved and a willingness to actively engage in the protection of the nation. But there were qualifications to this memory as well. For some, the sixteenth-century Spanish force had been so much smaller and more ill-equipped than the modern American forces that the techniques and ideas that had succeeded in vanquishing the former were of no use in fighting the latter.

The Armada was commonly used as an allegory of national success, particularly the elect status of the British people. In his poem, “Stanzas to Britons,” William Augustus Willis, M. D., encouraged Britons to rise, unite, and humble the pretensions of France and Spain. As an epigraph to this call to action, which cited other historical military victories, Willis provided Elizabeth’s commemoration of the Armada: “God

⁴² Frederic Hervey, *The Naval History of Great Britain; from the Earliest Times to the Rising of the Parliament in 1779*, vol. 1 of 5, (London: William Adlard, 1779), 350-351.

blew his breath and they were scatter'd."⁴³ The Spanish fleet's annihilation was further presented in Willis's poem as a demonstration of godly favour, not of political acumen. The power of the Almighty, not the monarch, was the lesson to be taken from this event. In a published sermon, Thomas Simcockes also argued that it was not "the arm of flesh, or the power of man," but "he who controuleth the winds, or commandeth the seas" that had defeated the Spanish.⁴⁴ This was not the first time the role of the supernatural in this event had been found to be the deciding factor. Robert Walpole had supported this interpretation in the 1730s, but by the 1770s, while the victory remained an important national moment, the success over the Spanish was more frequently interpreted as the result of the actions not of the Queen, but of others, mortal or divine.

The memory of 1588 provided a site of narrative alternatives to the interpretations of the Enlightenment historians. In the celebratory *The Spanish Armada; or, Defeat of the Invincible Armada*, the anonymous author thoroughly mined Hume's work for source material, but then formed his own, frequently contradictory, analysis and conclusions. According to the poem's lengthy introduction, Elizabeth had not behaved inappropriately toward Mary Stuart, as Hume would have it; she had acted out of an understandable and intelligent "self-preservation."⁴⁵ Her reign was not a time of retrenchment of parliamentary liberties, but one whose "glorious memory" would

⁴³ William Augustus Willis, M.D., "Stanzas to Britons," *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 23 July 1779.

⁴⁴ Thomas Simcockes, *A Sermon Preached at Saint Thomas's Church, on Sunday the 19th and 26th of September, 1779.*, (Dublin: P. Higly, 1779).

⁴⁵ *The Spanish Invasion; or, Defeat of the Invincible Armada: A Poem. With Critical Notes, Explaining Every Principal Circumstance of That Singular Enterprize, and the Methods Then Taken to Defend This Nation. To Which Is Prefixed a New Sketch of the Life of Queen Elizabeth. And an Introduction, Proper to Be Read at This Important Crisis, Which Resembles, More the Any Other Period, the Danger We Were in During the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, and the Mode of Our Deliverance under the Auspices of Providence and That Glorious Queen.*, (London: J. Maggowan, 1780), vi-vii.

“only expire with time.”⁴⁶ Facing a new invasion, British bravery would be mobilized by the memory of the Armada. The introduction cried for Britons to remember the victories of their forefathers, and “[rise] from your torpid state!” But examples such as this, which found meaning in the defeat of the Armada, reframing dominant analyses and presenting alternative understandings of the past, were in the minority.

Religion continued to be an issue to which the Elizabethan past was believed to have immediate relevance. In a period of increasing evangelism, there was growing tension between the revivalism of groups such as the Methodists, and the urban, cosmopolitan, and inclusive religious values of the ruling elite. Many felt that the Protestantism on which the British government was built was under threat. The government showed increasing leniency in the prosecution of Catholicism within its dominions, in violation of the Act of Toleration of 1689, first, with the Quebec Act of 1774, and then, with the Catholic Relief Act of 1778. These allowed some Catholics within the empire to practice their religion with the support of the state. The opposition to these measures grew and organized itself, particularly through Lord Gordon’s Protestant Association. The tensions spilled over in the capital in the Gordon Riots, five days in June 1780, and across the empire in attacks on urban symbols associated with Catholicism or specific Catholics.⁴⁷ The new legal dispensations for Catholics kindled a debate on the relationship between national loyalty and religious belief. In these debates, both sides tried to establish their own interpretation of British religious history,

⁴⁶ Ibid., viii.

⁴⁷ Brad A. Jones, ““In Favour of Popery”: Patriotism, Protestantism, and the Gordon Riots in the Revolutionary British Atlantic,” *Journal of British Studies* 52, no. 1 (2013).

regarding not only the continuing importance of the sixteenth-century split with Rome, but also the meaning of the subsequent fissures within the Protestant religion.

For anti-Catholics, the Elizabethan past was the turning moment in the success of the reformed religion in Britain. By ending the persecutions of Mary Tudor's reign, and in the face of continuing threats from the Pope, Elizabeth had re-established a reformed Church of England. Not since her reign, said a thankful father in a fictional dialogue with his son, had "the Popish superstition [...] reared its head."⁴⁸ Of more immediate concern, the loyalty of Catholics was believed to rest with their religious authority, the Pope, not their political one, the King. Catholics might seek to "conceal their *real* sentiments," warned the author of a Scottish tract against the Relief Act, but "the dreadful principles of the church of Rome," which claimed supremacy over worldly leaders, and that had excommunicated Elizabeth, continued to be a foundational part of their religious canon.⁴⁹ Readers were reminded of the treasonous acts of Catholic subjects during Elizabeth's reign, such as the Babington Plot and Tyrone's Rebellion in Ireland.⁵⁰ As one poet put it, with particular bluntness given the metaphoric possibilities

⁴⁸ John Fellows, *A Fair and Impartial Enquiry into the Rise, Propagation, Doctrine, Discipline, Practice, and Ceremonies of the Church of Rome: In a Series of Familiar Dialogues between a Father and a Son.*, (London: Frys, Couchman, and Collier, 1779).

⁴⁹ *A Short View of the Statutes at Present in Force in Scotland against Popery: The Nature of the Bill Proposed to Be Brought into Parliament for Repealing These Statutes: And Some Remarks Shewing the Propriety and Necessity of Opposing Such Repeal.*, (Edinburgh: 1779). (Original emphasis.)

⁵⁰ *An Impartial Enquiry; Whether the Two Propositions, to Be Abjured by the Oath of Abjuration, Are Doctrines of the Church of Rome.*, (Dublin: W. Hallhead, 1780).

of poetry: "Popery five hundred years ago,/Was just the same as it is now,/And what it is, it always was,/A bane to salutary laws."⁵¹

Those who supported greater civil rights for Catholics, as well as those for whom this debate raised questions about the position and loyalty of dissenters, also found Elizabeth's memory to be an aid with which to understand contemporary religious politics. The pro-Catholic authors had rebuttals for their opponents: the Catholics in Elizabeth's reign had renounced the authority of the Pope in favour of the Queen⁵² or, Elizabeth's autocratic political style should warn against agreeing with her religious zeal.⁵³ As to the patriotic position of dissenters, her era was portrayed as both one of heroic religious devotion and of dangerous, puritanical disturbers of the peace.⁵⁴ The Church of England also continued to find meaning in its own Elizabethan past, publishing a series of sermons from that period for modern convenience.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Charles Chandler, *Ancient and Modern Popery, Compared and Considered. A Poem, (with Large Explanatory Notes) Dedicated by Permission to the Rt. Honble. Ld. George Gordon*, (London: Printed by the author, 1780). (Original emphasis.)

⁵² John Berington, *The State and Behaviour of English Catholics, from the Reformation to the Year 1780.*, (London: R. Faulder, 1780).

⁵³ John Floddon, "John Floddon to the Roman Catholics of England," *London Courant and Westminster Chronicle*, 22 December 1779.

⁵⁴ A Protestant Dissenter, "To the Printer of the Morning Chronicle," *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 15 September 1778. *The Church of England Vindicated: Or, a Defence of the Visible Church of Christ, as Established by the Legislative Authority of This Realm: In Answer to All Objections, Which Have Been Offered by Dissidents of Every Denomination. With a Prefatory Address to the Pious and Learned Prelates of Great-Britain and Ireland.*, (Exeter: Barnabas Thorn, 1779).

⁵⁵ Church of England, *A Sermon Concerning the Coming Down of the Holy Ghost, and the Manifold Gifts of the Same. For Whitsunday. Two Hundred and Seventeen Years Old, Published by Order of Queen Elizabeth. 1562.*, (London: 1779); Church of England, *A Sermon for Good-Friday, Concerning the Death and Passion of Our Saviour Jesus Christ. Two Hundred and Seventeen Years Old, Published by Order of Queen Elizabeth. 1562.*, (London: 1779); Church of England, *A Sermon of the Worthy Receiving and Reverend Esteeming of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. Two Hundred and Seventeen Years Old, Published by Order of Queen Elizabeth. 1562.*, (London: 1779); Church of England, *A Sermon on the Resurrection of Our Saviour Jesus Christ, for Easter-Day, Two Hundred and Seventeen Years Old. Published by Order of Queen Elizabeth. 1562.*, (London: 1779).

While there were sites such as these within public debate in which the Elizabethan past continued to represent multiple and contested narratives, they were fewer and fewer. The memory of Elizabeth's period was used, instead, in debates over governance, strategy, and mobilization in ways that appeared to be supplemental to the issues at stake, not fundamental to understanding them. As a focus for public debate and political policy, Elizabeth's past no longer held the influence it had earlier in the century.

Despite its continued relevance to debates about religion, the bulk of the meaning assigned to Elizabethan history had migrated out of the public sphere and into the private one. The limitations and commonness of Elizabethan history did not hinder its ability to encourage the edification and growth of the modern self through its examples. It served as a fount of ideals for the moral, mental, and physical life of Britons. In his examination of history-writing in the second half of the eighteenth century, Mark Salber Phillips argues that writers of all historical genres found the past to be a useful way to explore the relationship between human passions and communities.⁵⁶ History offered an avenue to explore how societies shaped and were shaped by human emotions. Writers made history more "proximate," emphasizing the genre's possibilities to develop the moral psychology of its readers. While Phillips focuses on producers in the historical genre, an examination of how historical knowledge was reused by its consumers, recycled into political and entertainment culture, further demonstrates history's

⁵⁶ Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, 19.

growing role as a moulder of human beings. The Elizabethan past was mined for the times and places that highlighted the lessons that might best prepare people for their social life. Consequently, the aspects of this history that garnered the most comment and interest were those focused on the personal behaviours, thoughts, and feelings of the age.

History was an essential ingredient in perfecting both the intellectual and physical facets of sociability. Knowledge of the past was a part of the material from which social human could be fashioned. William Scott, author of *Lessons in Elocution*, believed that his choice examples from “almost every species of composition,” including the entire concluding paragraph from Hume’s volume on the Tudors, would exercise not only “the diversity of voice and gesture” necessary to proper public speaking, but would also “exercise all the feelings of the soul.”⁵⁷ He promised his exercises would be both “a useful assistant” to readers and an “amusement [for] every Person who may give it perusal.” Pedagogical texts such as Scott’s, on a variety of topics from letter-writing to ancient and modern languages, drew on the diversity of information about the past from which they developed new, modern, and socially-significant skills.⁵⁸

History provided the model, as Scott asserted, for the body as well as the mind. As a source of intellectual development, Elizabeth’s era offered a wealth of possibilities

⁵⁷ William Scott, *Lessons in Elocution; or, Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose and Verse, Selected from the Best Authors, for the Perusal of Persons of Taste, and the Improvement of Youth in Reading and Speaking*, (Edinburgh and London: The compiler (Edinburgh), T. Longman (London), 1779).

⁵⁸ For example, Ann Murry, *Mentoria: Or, the Young Ladies Instructor, in Familiar Conversations on Moral and Entertaining Subjects.*, (Dublin: Messrs. Price, Sheppard, Potts, S. Watson, W. Coles, Williams, Walker, R. Moncrieffe, Jenkin, E. Cross, Wogan, Exshaw, White, Beatty, Burton, and B. Watson, 1779), 77-78; Mr. Porny, *Grammatical Exercises, English and French*, Fourth ed., (London: J. Nourse, 1780), 71.

through which to improve the physical health of modern individuals. Since the mid-century, her age had been increasingly heralded for the Queen's wholesome and nationalistic diet, the "Old Roast Beef of England" celebrated in one of the eighteenth century's most popular songs.⁵⁹ In the play, *Tony Lumpkin in Town: A Farce*, written by John O'Keeffe and performed at the theatre in the Haymarket in 1778, a jovial English servant, Diggory, offends a Frenchified servant, Frank, by eating some of the beef from his master's breakfast plate. "What a vulgar breakfast!" cries Frank. "My old master," replies Diggory, "said that beef was Queen Elizabeth's breakfast; and, if that's the case, I think it's good enough for I."⁶⁰ Her healthy lifestyle extended to her daily schedule. In contrast to contemporary society, she had kept early mornings, had enjoyed out-of-doors activities, and had gone to bed not long after the sun. According to the report of a meeting of the all-female *Belle Assemblée* debating society, addressing the question of the relative vanity of the sexes, one orator praised Elizabeth and the women of her court for their "wholesome" habits, which gave them "fresh complexions of natural red and white."⁶¹ A letter from a "Watchman" to the *Public Advertiser* positively

⁵⁹ Frequently republished during the war with the American colonies: Joseph Vernon, *The New London and Country Songster; or, a Banquet of Vocal Music. Consisting of a Complete Collection of the Newest and Most Admired English Songs, Ballads, Catches, Glee's, Duets, Airs, and Cantatas, Which Have Been Sung, and Lately Received Applause, at the Public Theatres, Vauxhall Gardens,* (London: Alex. Hogg, 1780); *The New Merry Companion, or Complete Modern Songster: Being a Select Collection of the Most Celebrated Songs, Lately Sung at the Theatres Vauxhall, Ranelagh, &C. Few of Which Ever Were Printed in Any Book of Songs. Also a Collection of the Most Esteem'd Catches and Glee's. Set to Musick.*, (London: John Wheble, 1780); *The New Merry Companion or Vocal Remembrancer; Being a Select Collection of the Most Celebrated Songs Lately Sung at the Theatres*, Second edition, with considerable additions. ed., (London: Wallis & Stonehouse, 1780).

⁶⁰ John O'Keeffe, *Tony Lumpkin in Town: A Farce. As Performed at the Theatre-Royal in the Hay-Market*, (London: T. Cadell, 1780), 3.

⁶¹ The Ladies' Critic, "To the Printer of the Morning Chronicle," *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 28 March 1780.

compared her healthy lifestyle with the debauched habits of elite men.⁶² In this context, the past provided a useful counter to the perceived ills of contemporary British culture: a loss of connection with rural society and a concern for the effeminacy of the nation. In this, Elizabeth's age served as a healthy, rural, and masculine alternative.

While providing a counter to degenerate masculine society, Elizabeth was also frequently presented as a model for female education and intelligence. Numerous commentators found the learnedness of women in Elizabeth's reign to be worthy of emulation. William Johnston Temple, in an essay on the dangers of luxury, digressed to celebrate her education, particularly her daily study and her skills in Latin translation. He hoped that modern wives and daughters would spend less time discussing their children, and instead, like the Queen, "bestow a little more of their leisure in the improving and adorning of their tastes and understandings."⁶³ In a common jest-book joke, Elizabeth's witty retort to a bitter gentleman of her court was now in Italian, a fact missing from earlier versions.⁶⁴ In the report, mentioned above, of the debate on vanity by *la belle assemblée*, it was the erudition of the Queen and her ladies that garnered the most praise. In the past, according to one debater, it was the accomplishments of a woman's mind that attracted admiration. Elizabethan women had been better versed in Greek and Latin, spoken more languages, and been wittier than "the macaronies of the

⁶² A Watchman, "To the Printer of the Public Advertiser," *Public Advertiser*, 16 May 1780.

⁶³ William Johnston Temple, *Moral and Historical Memoirs*, (London: Edward and Charles Dilly, 1779), 63-64.

⁶⁴ It was the joke with the punchline: "anger makes dull men witty, but keeps them poor." *Joe Miller's Jests: Or, the Wits Vade-Mecum. Being a Collection of the Most Brilliant Jests, the Most Excellent Bons Mots, and Most Pleasant Short Stories in the English Language; Many of Them Transcribed from the Mouth of the Facetious Gentleman Whose Name They Bear.*, a new edition ed., (London: H. Fenwick, 1780), 61.

present age.”⁶⁵ Elizabeth’s era promised an alternative to the intellectual dissipation of both sexes in the present.

In *The Ladies History of England*, published in 1780, Charlotte Cowley found a great deal in Elizabeth’s person and rule to be worthy of emulation by contemporary women. In her introduction, Cowley promised that the “polish of education” and “an intercourse with the world” would refine and transform the universal human character. To that end, though she acknowledged common criticisms of the Queen, such as her imperiousness, she found the Queen to be deserving of posterity’s approbation, largely on the basis of her intelligence and learning. Cowley cited a “celebrated writer,” Hume and his final sentence on the matter: that Elizabeth’s “qualities as a sovereign, though liable to some considerable exceptions, are the objects of undisputed applause and approbation.” But in omitting Hume’s qualification of that statement, that it was “difficult to reconcile our fancy to her as a wife or a mistress,”⁶⁶ Cowley twisted the otherwise very tepid assessment into a description that emphasized the Queen’s laudable personal strengths: her strong memory, her skills in numerous languages, and her knowledge of both arts and sciences.⁶⁷ In the image accompanying Cowley’s section on Elizabeth, the Queen is presented on horseback, entering London after the defeat of the Spanish Armada. She is young, glowing, and feminine, suggesting that her intelligence and erudition did not have a negative effect on her physical appearance.

⁶⁵ Critic, “To the Printer of the Morning Chronicle,” *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 28 March 1780.

⁶⁶ Charlotte Cowley, *The Ladies History of England; from the Descent of Julius Cæsar, to the Summer of 1780. Calculated for the Use of the Ladies of Great-Britain and Ireland; and Likewise Adapted to General Use, Entertainment, and Instruction.*, (London: Printed for the proprietors, 1780), 291. See Hume, *History of England*, 716.

⁶⁷ Cowley, *Ladies History of England*, 291.

Elizabeth represented, for Cowley, an excellent historical example of a woman who had education and wisdom, the skills necessary for the social refinement required by modern life.

There is some indication, among these discussions of the value of the queen as a source of emulation for women in the present, that women and men had different attitudes to Elizabeth's memory. Male authors, in the same vein as Hume, tended to be disapproving of Elizabeth's deviation from contemporary gendered norms for female conduct. Much was made, for example, of Elizabeth's vanity. In particular, her actions towards Mary Stuart were commonly interpreted as the result of Elizabeth's jealousy of the Scottish queen's beauty. In the debate of the *belle assemblée*, the clearly partial author of the article, the "Ladies' critic," strongly disagreed with the debaters' praises of the days of Queen Bess. Instead, he agreed with Hume that the Queen had been "sullied" by a "masculine genius" and "the most excessive personal vanity."⁶⁸ On the occasions when their voices can be heard, women, however, appear to have been more willing to forgive her imperfections and to celebrate her strengths. Charlotte Cowley might have agreed that Elizabeth's execution of the Queen of Scots showed evidence of duplicitous behaviour, but she interpreted those actions as being motivated by concerns for the

⁶⁸ Critic, "To the Printer of the Morning Chronicle," *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 28 March 1780.



Figure 5.1. Colbier [?], "Queen Elizabeth going to St. Paul's to return thanks for the conquest of the Spanish Armada," 1780, engraving. In Charlotte Cowley's *Ladies History of England*.

security of her throne, not by jealousy of Mary's looks.⁶⁹ For female writers, looking to find a space for intelligent and well-educated women, Elizabeth could be held up as an icon.

The Elizabethan past promised the possibility of well-educated women, and provided examples that might shore up a faltering modern masculinity. It was a time of health, fresh air, good food, proud nationalism, and intelligent Britons. While couched in a nostalgic interpretation of the period, this form of knowledge would prepare a person for gendered norms of respectable social interactions in the present. History had become one important way through which to form the individual for engagement in the social realm.

Two pieces of theatre first performed in 1779, "The Prophecy" at Sadler's Wells and Sheridan's *The Critic* at Drury Lane, demonstrate how the increase in the personal uses of history and its perceived familiarity made broader uses of the Elizabethan period seem superficial, and consequently frustrating to contemporaries. While both works were popular with audiences, neither used history convincingly, in Sheridan's play, it was the focus of satire; at Sadler's Wells, it was couched in doubts about the present, enclosed in hopes for the future, and concealed behind a veil of contemporary popular culture. "The Prophecy" tried to mobilize Elizabeth's memory for immediate ends, but as Sheridan sought to demonstrate, it could not do so effectively. "The Critic" underscored

⁶⁹ Cowley only uses the word "jealousy" twice in reference to Elizabeth. The first instance related to her desire that Mary not marry a Catholic, and the second to her keeping a "jealous eye" on the imports from the west indies that Philip and Spain were enriching themselves on. Cowley, *Ladies History of England*, 267, 281.

that reiterations of an overly familiar historical past robbed it of its persuasive abilities. What remained were facts fragmented by a lack of rational thought, unable to provide a broader narrative. To Sheridan's chagrin, a heady mix of spectacle and antiquarianism had subverted the political power of a living collective memory.

"The Prophecy, or Queen Elizabeth at Tilbury" was first performed at Sadler's Wells, at the height of the invasion scare, on 9 August 1779. Most probably the creation of Thomas King, manager of the theatre and an actor at Drury Lane, it featured recitatives, singing, dancing, tumbling, visual spectacles, but no spoken text, in accordance with the Licensing Act.⁷⁰ The piece opened on a panoramic view of Tilbury Fort and the Thames.⁷¹ An old woman and her two daughters are on their way to Tilbury to see Queen Elizabeth. After meeting some countrymen, they hear music in the distance and stand aside as Queen Elizabeth enters on a palfrey. After a "loyal chorus" from the assembled crowd, the Queen addresses them and sings of the historical successes of the British. The "Genius of Britain" descends from a cloud, and presents Elizabeth with a view of the future, in the reign of "mighty George," when England's navy will defeat the fleets of France and Spain, the destruction of which is depicted on transparencies. The eponymous prophecy is: "That England will ever be victorious, if Britons are true to themselves."⁷² The show was declared the most popular production ever presented at

⁷⁰ David Crane, "Satire and Celebration in *the Critic*," in *Sheridan Studies*, ed. James Morwood and David Crane (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 92.

⁷¹ "The Prophecy" was never published as a play. This description of the action of the play draws primarily from the lengthiest newspaper account: "Intelligence from Sadler's-Wells," *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 10 August 1779. But similar descriptions were printed in other papers, for example, "Intelligence from Sadler's-Wells," *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 11 August 1779; "Intelligence from Sadler's-Wells," *Public Advertiser*, 11 August 1779.

⁷² "Intelligence from Sadler's-Wells," *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 11 August 1779.

Sadler's Wells.⁷³ It received extensive coverage in the press, and its songs were reprinted numerous times. It ran almost every night until the end of the summer season, and was revived the following year. It was so successful that the theatre printed apologies to the many people who had been turned away at the door for lack of space.

For those who were able to gain entry, "The Prophecy" offered a disjointed presentation of the past. Ostensibly, it drew on a well-known historical moment to provide an entertaining evening of singing and dancing that would appeal to the heightened nationalism created by the war and the possibility of invasion. Through music based on popular songs about other naval successes, such as "Russell's Triumph, or the Memorable Ninety-Two,"⁷⁴ and recognizable visual imagery, such as the pantomime figure of "Britain," it presented an aggressive, united, Protestant vision of the nation to itself. In many ways, "The Prophecy" attempted to evoke Elizabethan history as it had been used: combining narratives of national triumph with meaningful popular culture to forge politicized group identities. Yet, this project was unrealized.

In its conclusion, "The Prophecy" abandoned its historical frame. The producers relinquished the past, in favour of what was perceived as the truly convincing endpoint for such a jingoistic narrative: a timeless Britain showing a desired outcome, the destruction of the contemporary French and Spanish Armada by the current British Navy. As demonstrated by Daniel O'Quinn, the conditional within the prophecy, that

⁷³ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, Wednesday, September 1, 1779.

⁷⁴ *Russell's Triumph or the Memorable Ninety Two*, (London: Henry Roberts, 1762). In the discussions of "The Prophecy," this song is most commonly referred to as the song "beginning with the words, 'On Thursday in the Morn.'" "Intelligence from Sadler's-Wells," *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 11 August 1779.

Britons *might* be successful only if they were true to themselves, emphasized that victory would be a product of future acts.⁷⁵ The acclaimed transparencies of the battle used their awe-inspiring technical prowess, state-of-the-art visual representations of movement through colour, lighting, and mechanical devices, to present an unrealised event: the victory over the fleets of 1779, not of 1588. At its climax, the Elizabethan moment was subsumed in the potential of an imagined future. The piece could not sustain its own claims about the power of the Tudor historical example.

This hesitancy was also demonstrated in the paucity of the historical content within the piece. While the song sung by Queen Elizabeth on horseback, performed by Miss Dowson, did reference a few specific historical or legendary names, King Arthur, Cressy, and Agincourt, the most popular song, performed by the woman and her daughters, cautions against those who fail to think about the future consequences of their present acts. Each verse repeated a common idiom to that effect, such as “a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.” As stated in the final verse, the song was “ ‘Bout [the] present and [the] future.”⁷⁶ At a moment of crisis, Elizabethan Britain might provide the background, but it could not provide the substance.

If political uses of Elizabeth’s past were being replaced by an emphasis on the individual, so the envisaged outcomes of the piece were conceived of as best suited for personal development. Despite its use of shared cultural products, “The Prophecy” aimed at individual, not communal, change. Instead of promising an assured victory, like that over the Armada, as it might have, the prophecy admonished individuals,

⁷⁵ O’Quinn, *Entertaining Crisis*, 229.

⁷⁶ “A Dialogue Song,” *Public Advertiser*, 18 August 1779.

“Britons,” that it was through their own enlightenment that the national project might be realized. Reactions to “The Prophecy” also attested to the hopes that this amalgam of past, present, and future would change the attitudes of individuals. Reviews of “The Prophecy” expressed a desire to make the patriotism presented in the piece appeal to its audience. Numerous commentators noted, not that the audiences were showing the loyalty being promoted, but that they *should* show it. These attempts to present patriotic content in a popular idiom were not only “allowable,” but “commendable.”⁷⁷ One correspondent to the *Morning Chronicle* recommended that sergeants sing Queen Elizabeth’s song “frequently to [their] men,” as it might “inspire them with that ardour and zeal for the glory of their country.”⁷⁸ The soldiers, it would seem, had not spontaneously taken to the tune, but its repetition promised the possibility of teaching them to change from the inside out, as it were.

There was an imploring quality to these claims that “The Prophecy” might create feelings of pride and bravery in the minds of individuals. Such desires hinted at the unreliable character of the support for the nation’s military projects. This was inadvertently demonstrated by the *Morning Chronicle*. On 26 August 1779, it juxtaposed an item on the growing popularity of “The Prophecy,” particularly among an audience of a higher economic background than normally attended Sadler’s Wells, with an item about a mob in Oxford Street that had attacked a press-gang in order to “liberate” a man from its clutches.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ "Intelligence from Sadler's-Wells," *Public Advertiser*, 11 August 1779.

⁷⁸ "London, August, 28, 1779," *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 28 August 1779.

⁷⁹ Rogers, *Press Gang*.

“The Prophecy” succeeded because it integrated enjoyable aural and visual experiences with nationalist hopes for the future. Elizabethan history, however, was peripheral to its aims, its message, and ultimately, most of its content. As predicted in its initial advertisements, it was the decorations, the imagined destruction of the invading fleet, and the tumbling, dancing, and singing that would be most popular.⁸⁰

By October, the Sadler’s Wells’ season had run its course, and the patent theatres were opening. Drury Lane manager Richard Brinsley Sheridan joined the discourse about theatre, the nation, and the past, through the presentation of one of his own creations, *The Critic, or A Tragedy Rehearsed*.⁸¹ This play met with even greater success than “The Prophecy.” It ran for over fifty performances that season, which places it among the most popular plays of the eighteenth century, and was revived the following season.

Drawing from the well-trodden idea of a play about the theatrical “behind-the-scenes,” the three-act after-piece follows Mr. Dangle, a self-appointed theatre critic, and his friends, Mr. Sneer, a playwright, and Mr. Puff, a theatre manager. They discuss the dirty business of the theatrical world, mocking contemporary characters, and waxing humorous on the roles of writers, critics, and producers. The three main characters attend a rehearsal of Puff’s latest work, “The Spanish Armada.” This play-within-a-play focuses on the tragic fate of Tilburina, the daughter of the Governor of Tilbury Fort, who

⁸⁰ The announcement of the forthcoming piece was printed in numerous papers, for example, “London,” *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 9 August 1779.

⁸¹ All quotes and descriptions are from, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *The Critic: Or, a Tragedy Rehearsed. A Dramatic Piece of Three Acts. As Performed at the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane.*, (Dublin: Messrs. Sheppard, Wilkinson, W. and H. Whitestone, H. Chamberlaine, Wilson, Gilbert, Walker, Beatty, Wogan, White, M'Donnel, Burne, Perkin, 1785).

has fallen in love with Don Ferolo Wiskerandos, a member of a captive Spanish ambassador's entourage. The play features the sixteenth-century personages, Sir Christopher Hatton, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Lord Burleigh, as they manoeuvre the convoluted tragic plot, the ridiculous comic subplots, and the impending Spanish invasion. Tragedy occurs when Wiskerandos is stabbed by Tilburina's rejected suitor. As a result, Tilburina goes mad, and so does her maid. The play ends with a depiction of the defeat of the Armada and a pageant of the rivers of England uniting and escorting Father Thames across the stage.

The main satirical focus in the second and third acts, the representation of "The Spanish Armada," is the conventions of theatrical tragedies. Puff's characters frequently conduct themselves on stage in an irrational way that Puff ascribes to the requirements of the genre. The watchmen in the first scene are asleep at their posts so that the main characters may converse without being overheard (II.1). Hatton and Raleigh, after saving their nieces from Wiskerandos, conveniently drop their swords on stage as they exit to allow the characters in the next scene to use them for a duel (III.1). Tilburina comes out in white satin for her mad scene because, according to Puff and Dangle, "when a heroine goes mad, she always goes in white satin." (III.1) The play was, therefore, largely a comment on the contemporary tragic theatre, particularly the works of Shakespeare, such as *Hamlet* and *Othello*, which were both featured as the main-piece preceding *The Critic* during the season.⁸² But despite the theatrical tenor of much

⁸² Many of the jokes in *The Critic* targeted *Hamlet*, which was the mainpiece after which it was first presented. The scene in which the characters overstate the impending action has been seen as dig at the opening scene of *Hamlet*. Tilburina's mad scene was also a play on Ophelia's. James Morwood, *The Life*

of the criticism, Sheridan's work also featured a keen social and political commentary. In particular, Puff's Elizabethan history was used to criticize appropriations of the past, as in "The Prophecy," which used historical content as a distraction from important immediate political issues.

In *The Critic*, Puff is overtly cynical in his uses of history. His historical setting is unashamedly economically motivated. When history provides a convenient parallel, according to Puff, an author, "if he knows his own interest, [will] take advantage of it" (II. 1). Further, Puff does not feel any responsibility to truthfully represent the historical record. He repeatedly argues that the past can be rightfully fashioned to the purposes of the present. As an author, he can "fill up" history with a romantic story at his own discretion. He does not feel beholden to present things that have happened, but "things just so strange, that tho' they never *did*, they *might* happen" (II. 1, original emphasis). In any case, Puff concludes, the priority is not accuracy but creating a "striking scene." Echoing doubts about the honesty with which Elizabethan memory was used in political arguments, Sheridan aimed the tenor of these criticisms at the misuse and misrepresentation of the past by pieces such as "The Prophecy," and other, similarly historically-themed patriotic entertainments, for example, Richard Cumberland's *The Battle of Hastings* from the previous year.

Puff's "The Spanish Armada" fails to deliver much of its promised historical content. Given the short rehearsal time, Puff has permitted the prompter and actors to cut the piece as they see fit to facilitate its quick production. The actors, as becomes

and Works of Richard Brinsley Sheridan (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985); O'Quinn, *Entertaining Crisis*, 235.

evident, have taken a free hand with the piece. They have “lopp[ed] and topp[ed]” (II. 2) to such an extent that the romantic narrative is incoherent, and much of the historical content has been skipped. Despite being constantly expected, and against the better judgment of Sneer, the snarky voice of reason in the play, Queen Elizabeth herself does not make it on stage, as Puff leaves her forever languishing in the green room to “keep up expectation” (II. 2). Perhaps the most heavily historical content in the play was the closing number, the visual representation of the battle against the Spanish Armada, “the only quite new thing in the piece,” but it was tacked on to the end of the action without any relationship to the narrative. It was included, Puff informs the doubtful Sneer, because his play, after all, “is *called* the Spanish Armada.” (III.1, original emphasis) Despite his desire to compare the present and the past, to demonstrate a “case in point to the times in which [the] author writes,” (II.1) like “The Prophecy,” Puff’s piece cannot sustain the historical frame it sought to use.

Much of Sheridan’s satire was bathetic; it relied on the humorous effect of a sudden descent from the exalted to the trivial. Given his dismissal of historical accuracy at the beginning of “The Spanish Armada,” many of the jokes about the historical matter stemmed from Puff’s emphasis on small, seemingly unimportant details. He notes that the actor portraying Sir Christopher Hatton turns his toes out, to indicate that Sir Christopher was known for his dancing. “I like,” boasts Puff, “to preserve all the little traits of character.” Puff makes this claim even though, as Mr. Sneer points out, it is at the same moment that his characters, Hatton and Raleigh, are unrealistically discussing the arrival of the Armada, as if this were news to them.

Sheridan extended his commentary on the over-determination of historical information in theatrical productions to the visual elements of his play. According to descriptions of the piece, the characters in “The Spanish Armada,” Tilburina, Raleigh, and Hatton, wore exaggerated Tudor costumes.⁸³ Tilburina’s dress had an exceedingly long and humorously cumbersome train. Hatton and Raleigh sported ridiculously large Tudor lace ruffs [Fig. 5.2]. In distorting the purportedly historical aspects of their dress, Sheridan accentuated the meaninglessness of replacing emotional and political content with historical decorations.

Recent scholarship has investigated *The Critic*’s political agenda. Sheridan ably combined a criticism of theatrical conventions with biting satire of the government.⁸⁴ The satire focused principally on inactivity: a comment on Lord North’s administration reflecting Sheridan’s views that the war was wrong-headed and poorly managed.⁸⁵ Hatton and Raleigh discuss their own situation at length, facts with which they should already be familiar, such as the impending Spanish landing, but without the conversation leading to a resolution to do anything.⁸⁶ In the third act, Burleigh enters, walks downstage, looks pensive, shakes his head, and exits without reciting a line. Puff

⁸³ The tragedians were dressed “with great humour,” according to “Theatrical Intelligence,” *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 1 November 1779.

⁸⁴ In 1975, V. C. Rudolph pointed out the use of the Thames within its banks in the final pageant was a comment of social and political disorder. V. C. Rudolph, “Exit Thames between His Banks”: An Emblem of Order in Sheridan’s *the Critic*,” *Theatre Survey* 16, no. 1 (1975). For more recent discussions of the political content of *The Critic*, see Crane, “Satire and Celebration.”; Robert W. Jones, “Sheridan and the Theatre of Patriotism: Staging Dissent During the War for America,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 16, no. 1 (2002); John Loftis, *Sheridan and the Drama of Georgian England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1976); Morwood, *Sheridan*; O’Quinn, *Entertaining Crisis*; Gillian Russell, *The Theatres of War: Performance, Politics, and Society, 1793-1815* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

⁸⁵ Jones, “Sheridan,” 38.

⁸⁶ Sheridan, *Critic*, act II, scene 2.

explains that this single pregnant pause should clearly indicate to audiences that, “even tho’ they had more justice in their cause and wisdom in their measures – yet, if there was not a greater spirit shewn on the part of the people – the country would at last fall a sacrifice to the hostile ambition of the Spanish monarchy.”⁸⁷ Contemporaries interpreted this as an attack on Lord North’s lack of action; writers competed to decipher George III’s reaction to this scene, when he attended a performance of the piece in December 1779. At Puff’s explanation, some felt the king had evinced sadness, putting his hand to his head and “[feeling] the force of the application.”⁸⁸ Others felt he had loudly supported the statement by banging on the railing of the royal box.⁸⁹ Either way, the political meaning of Burleigh’s actions was seemingly not lost on the king.

Of the several satires of Sheridan’s play written and published after its initial success, only one, *The critic; or a tragedy rehearsed: a new dramatic piece in three acts* by Israel Pottinger, addressed the historical scenes.⁹⁰ Though with a less deft pen, he echoed Sheridan’s criticism of history. Pottinger’s Wiskerandos praises his beloved Tilburina’s knowledge of “the history of the great naval review,” that is the Armada, but

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, act III, scene 2.

⁸⁸ *London Courant and Westminster Chronicle*, Friday, December 10, 1779.

⁸⁹ *London Courant and Westminster Chronicle*, Saturday, December 11, 1779.

⁹⁰ Israel Pottinger, *The Critic; or a Tragedy Rehearsed: A New Dramatic Piece in Three Acts; as It Is Performed by His Majesty’s Servants, with the Greatest Applause.*, (London: S. Bladon, 1780). Other satires of *The Critic* include, *The Critick, or, a Tragedy Rehearsed, a Literary Catchpenny! By Way of Prelude to a Dramatic after-Piece*, (London: H. Kingsbury, 1780); R. B. S. Esq., *The Critick Anticipated; or, the Humours of the Green Room: A Farce. As Rehearsed Behind the Curtain of the Theatre Royal, Drury-Lane.*, (London: 1779).



Figure 5.2. “Mr. Waldron. In the Character of Sr. Christopher Hatton in the Critic. Publish’d as the Act directs March 1st: 1788 by E. Harding 132 Fleet Street.” Drury Lane Production File, 1779. *V&A Theatre Archives*. Note the humorously large Tudor ruff.

Pottinger's Puff quips that she knows nothing of contemporary military reviews at Wimbledon, Black-Heath, and Warley-common, a reference to the mobilization of volunteers for the war with the American States. Like Sheridan, Pottinger used the characters of "The Spanish Armada," to demonstrate the inability of history to elucidate present situations.

Despite Sheridan's attack on irrational uses of history, most alternative *Critics* and reviews of the piece focused on the wit in the first act and the great sets in the third. The tragic play-within-a-play was generally found to be rather long and less successful than the first act. One critic felt that "the tragedy parts [that is, the historical parts] rather failed in supporting that flow of laugh and humour occasioned by the first act, arising from the solemnity of *tragic burlesque* not being generally understood."⁹¹ While audiences would eventually come to appreciate the later acts, particularly after editing and re-writing during the season, part of the lack of appeal of the historical sections came from the new ends to which Sheridan pushed the logic of the contemporary attitudes to history.⁹² Sheridan disapproved of the self-interested and meaningless way in which works such as the "The Prophecy" offered beloved tunes, jokes, and dazzling transparencies in a patina of historical significance. Sheridan supported the idea that history was best suited to support logical and rational public debate. The product of this process was a history that could serve the purposes of civilization, conferring modernity

⁹¹ "Theatrical Intelligence," *London Evening Post*, 30 October 1779.

⁹² When first performed, Sheridan cut most of the third act on account of the length of the whole. It presented a convoluted subplot mocking the finding of children and parents at the end of many plays of the period. By January 1780, according to the *Morning Chronicle*, they had tightened up the first two acts sufficiently to present the third one as well. "Theatrical Intelligence," *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 3 January 1780.

on its audience.⁹³ Sheridan sought to contest the continued appeal of the spectacular, the personal, and the physical, as evidenced in “The Prophecy.” The liberty and freedom that Sheridan hoped to establish in his political work needed to be supported by a historical foundation that did not distract from the present concerns, but would foster those ideals.

In his examination of how Edmund Burke’s understanding of history framed his response to Thomas Paine in the 1790s, Steven Blakemore argues that Burke’s “great insight” was that history and, by extension, reality, were framed by the linguistic conventions which assigned meanings to the words used to construct them.⁹⁴ Burke objected to Paine’s attempts to tear words from their historical context, and empty them of their traditional meaning.⁹⁵ Sheridan, however, actively promoted this revolution. He rejected history’s role in structuring the politics of the present. Instead, he offered a critical alternative, what David Taylor calls “a radical prescription of patriotism,”⁹⁶ in which the present, not the past, would be the source of support for an alternative political power, one that would be more inclusive, more egalitarian. Historical facts might be known but, like Hatton’s ruff, they could not provide the impetus for political change.

It was not its historical analysis that made Sheridan’s *The Critic* so celebrated, but its spectacular qualities. In stark contrast to the doubtful quality of Puff’s play, the

⁹³ This point is made by Nigel Leask about the concept of “curiosity” in the eighteenth century. Leask, *Curiosity*, 52-53. This is supported by other works on the understanding of history and modernity in the eighteenth century. See, Dirks, “History as a Sign of the Modern.”; Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*.

⁹⁴ Steven Blakemore, *Burke and the Fall of Language: The French Revolution as Linguistic Event* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1988), 93.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁹⁶ Taylor, *Theatres of Opposition*, 62.

closing pageant featured the technical and artistic expertise of London's foremost set designer, Philippe de Loutherbourg.⁹⁷ He had created a moving panorama of the battle against the Armada, complete with individually moving ships and waves, strategically lit to heighten the effect. Where many reviews discussed the second and third acts only briefly, almost all of them praised the scenery. The *London Evening Post's* critic hailed the motion of the sea and the ships as "truly picturesque;" De Loutherbourg had been able "to *bring nature to our view.*"⁹⁸ While Sheridan was able to incorporate his political critique into the piece, part of its popularity also stemmed from the spectacle of the recreation of the sea battle between the English and Spanish in 1588, patriotic in both its content and its drive for ever-greater technical virtuosity.⁹⁹ This finale was neither a presentation of a "reassuring sense of history,"¹⁰⁰ nor a "sign of desperation"¹⁰¹ on Sheridan's part, but a combination of his savvy showmanship with his belief in the importance of patriotism to a new political future.

"The Prophecy" and *The Critic* both found use for the memory of the Armada at a historical moment that lent itself to previous experiences of invasion. At Sadler's Wells, a plea for individual support of the national project was presented as a promise for the future among images of the past. In *The Critic*, Sheridan linked the use of Elizabethan history with his satire of the North government and bombastic, imperial politics.

⁹⁷ For more on Loutherbourg, see Christopher Baugh, "Philippe De Loutherbourg: Technology-Driven Entertainment and Spectacle in the Late Eighteenth Century," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (2007).

⁹⁸ "Theatrical Intelligence," *London Evening Post*, 30 October 1779. [Original emphasis.]

⁹⁹ For the perceived patriotism in theatrical technical displays, see Taylor, *Theatres of Opposition*, 44.

¹⁰⁰ Christopher Baugh, "Shakespeare and the Rhetoric of Scenography 1770-1825," in *Shakespeare in Stage: New Theatre Histories*, ed. Christine Dymkowski and Christie Carson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 189.

¹⁰¹ O'Quinn, *Entertaining Crisis*, 232.

Sheridan argued for the irrelevance of a history that was cynically used for economic gain and that failed to be applied to rationalized purposes. While Sheridan made his point more emphatically, neither piece found in the past the paths for the future.

Epilogue

In November 1788, associations across Britain gathered to celebrate the centenary of the Glorious Revolution. The landing of William of Orange on 5 November 1688, and his birthday the day before, were celebrated with the panoply of eighteenth-century public commemorations: church services, bell-ringing, cannon-fire, processions, feasting, toasting, and singing. The ideas and events of the 1680s and 1690s continued to be a contested site of memory in contemporary political ideologies, not only in regards to Protestantism and the Hanoverian succession, but also in the role of extra-parliamentary politics in the rightful government of Britain. As demonstrated by Kathleen Wilson, the radical celebrants of 1788, such as the Revolution Society, were reforming the lessons of the Revolution to support a revolutionary tradition for the “people” that would help legitimize demands for increased access to political power.¹⁰² Most of these events, however, framed themselves as celebrations of the “three eights”: 1788, 1688, and 1588.

These interpretations of the Glorious Revolution, therefore, attempted not only to use the events of 1688 to create a narrative about the political structure of Britain, but to make a point about historical progress and repetition. The Armada was most frequently incorporated into these accounts as an earlier foreign attempt to diminish the freedom

¹⁰² Wilson, "Inventing Revolution."

and liberties of Britons. One popular song written for the occasion, by a Mr. Goss of Salisbury, equated the threat of “Dons” with that of “Monsieurs,” both of whom had tried to enslave “Britannia’s bold fellows.”¹⁰³ The destruction of the Armada, like the removal of the foreign-allied James II by William in 1688, had secured the political liberties cherished by the radicals of 1788.

While the victory over the Spanish in the sixteenth century could be incorporated into a progressive narrative of defeats against threats to “liberty,” the role of the Queen in that memory was problematic. Many of the recollections of the Armada made no mention at all of Queen Elizabeth. Some favoured the passive voice, as in a Mr. Hewardine’s song for the Constitutional Club, in which, “In Fifteen Hundred Eighty-Eight,/Th'Armada was defeated.”¹⁰⁴ Others mentioned only the naval heroes of the period. After stating the dangers of “dons and monsieurs,” Mr. Goss continued, “Two centuries since was our freedom attack'd/ By Armada from Spain, with the Pope's blessing back'd:/ But Howard and Drake, and a few hearty fellows,/ Boldly fac'd these Galleons vaunting o'er the proud billows.”¹⁰⁵ When Elizabeth was named, her femininity was difficult to assimilate into the narrative of heroic fights to preserve liberties. A play first performed during these celebrations, *The Highland Reel*, at Covent-Garden, used the popularity of this theme in its music. An air sung by Mr. Bannister made the relationship between a gendered hierarchy and political achievements clear. After

¹⁰³ "The Following Song, Was Sung by Mr. Goss, at the Centenary Revolution Jubille of King William Iii. At the Council-Chamber, in the City of Salisbury, on Wednesday the 5th Instant.," *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 15 November 1788.

¹⁰⁴ "Celebration of the Revolution by the Constitutional Club," *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 6 November 1788.

¹⁰⁵ "Mr. Goss," *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 15 November 1788.

Elizabeth overcame the invincible Armada, “Old Neptune” said to William III, “If woman once could guard my realm, / What triumph now, when at my helm.”¹⁰⁶ In such an interpretation, the accomplishments of her reign were lesser than those of the later Revolution, just as the qualities of woman were inferior to those of a man. These celebrations evidenced an increasing difficulty in accommodating both Elizabeth’s politics and her womanhood into the public discourse of the late 1780s.

Given their timing, these festivities were given yet another level of historical significance by the Parochial Committee of Westminster by its adding the Gunpowder Plot to the list of occasions being celebrated. The Plot had not, unfortunately, occurred in a year ending in an eight, but it had, thankfully, been on a fifth of November. Such gratuitous use of the historical record did not escape the sharp wit of Richard Brinsley Sheridan. In his speech to the Whig Club during its celebrations on the fourth of November, Sheridan criticized the other associations for their willingness to meaninglessly attach historical examples to each other, instead of focusing on the political meaning in the present of such past precedents. They had connived, he argued, to have the Spanish Armada “tow” the Revolution and the backward members of the committee to port.¹⁰⁷ Instead, the Glorious Revolution was sufficient, “unaccompanied by other matter,”¹⁰⁸ to venerate the system of liberties enshrined at that time.

The two-hundredth anniversary of the destruction of the Spanish fleet had more accurately been during the previous summer and had received little comment at that

¹⁰⁶ "An Account of the New Comic Romance, Entitled, *the Highland Reel*, Performed Last Night for the First Time at Covent Garden Theatre.," *London Chronicle*, 6 November 1788.

¹⁰⁷ "Centenary of the Revolution. Whig Club," *General Evening Post*, 4 November 1788.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

time. Instead, it was given significance only as a support for the commemorations of 1688. These celebrations were haunted by the desire to find meaning in the world of 1788, one in which no major successes as in its “eight” predecessor had obviously occurred. Instead, the King had been incapacitated by illness. Queen Elizabeth had featured in the popular culture of that year in a popular song hailing the “Golden Days of Good Queen Bess.” Part of a dramatic entertainment produced by a Mr. Collins, first presented in Bath but brought to London in the spring of that year, the song was a nostalgic hodge-podge of Elizabethan memory. The first verse celebrated the destruction of the Armada, while subsequent verses celebrated the period’s rural character, the importance of community-based religious services, the availability of healthy food, unity at home, and influence abroad. The women had eaten beef and sported “close quilted coifs,” not towering wigs; the men had drunk ale and worn jerkins, doublets, hose, and “a pair of huge whiskers.” The final chorus expressed the hope that the glory and success of George’s reign might one day be remembered in the same way. The patriotic nostalgic sentiments of the “Golden Days of Good Queen Bess” expressed a hope that the present might live up the imagined political and cultural successes of the past. But, as in “The Prophecy,” these were desires, not accomplished facts. After the King fell ill in the summer, and as his condition worsened in the fall, many of these uses of the past at the celebrations in November were haunted by the question not of the significance of the past, but of 1788. For the radicals and the conservative loyalists alike, the relationship between the present, 1788, and its past, either 1688 or 1588, was undecided.

The celebrations of the Three Eights highlight many of the trends evidenced by the uses of Queen Elizabeth's memory at the time of the War of American Independence. It was increasingly difficult to incorporate the Queen's period as a reliable source of legitimation. Primarily, its public meanings were being relegated to explorations of personal improvement. Though the conflict with the Americans and their allies, particularly the invasion threats of 1779 and 1780, lent itself to a variety of comparisons with the Elizabethan age, it was mainly at the level of private life, morality, education, and gendered behaviour, that Elizabethan history served to validate the ideas of the present. Alternatives lingered. Most significantly, religious debates drew heavily on her as an emblem of an idealized, aggressive, Protestant monarch. At Sadler's Wells, "The Prophecy" sought to retain the multiple, sensational understandings of the historical past that were being pushed from the cultural stage. But, ultimately, it hesitated. Like Sheridan, it could not find in the past the ability to create a useful community to face the current political situation. While Miss Dowson moved audiences with her portrayal of Queen Elizabeth in "The Prophecy," at the close of Act II of *The Critic*, Puff demands to know what happened to a scene in his play that had featured a description of Queen Elizabeth on a horse. "Sir," the Under Prompter informs him, "the performers have cut it out."

Conclusion

Forging a new past

Remembering the Elizabethan age at the end of the eighteenth century

In February 1795, persons of taste were invited to 8 Norfolk Street in the Strand, the home of the Ireland family, to peruse its collections. Samuel Ireland, *paterfamilias*, had a penchant for amassing and displaying objects of curiosity. Like James Salter and his Don Saltero's, Ireland's house presented an intriguing assortment of the material of the past: the relics of monarchs, natural oddities, and the belongings of the famous and infamous. To these, he added a professional interest in print and visual culture: engravings, prints, paintings, rare books, and unique publications. But these were not the main attraction for those who paraded through his salon. They were enticed, instead, by Ireland's most recent acquisition: an extraordinary cache of lost Shakespearean papers. This archive, which included letters, legal documents, lost original scripts, and a previously unknown play, all written in the Bard's own hand, were, in fact, too good to be true.¹

¹ Samuel Ireland published an illustrated edition of the findings. Samuel Ireland, *Miscellaneous Papers and Legal Instruments under the Hand and Seal of William Shakespeare: Including the Tragedy of King Lear and a Small Fragment of Hamlet, from the Originall Mss. In the Possession of Samuel Ireland of Norfolk Street*, 1796, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Archive and Library, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Library and Archives, London. The definitive account of the Ireland forgeries is, Samuel Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Life*, New ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991). Recent works on the forgeries include, Patricia Pierce, *The Great Shakespeare Fraud: The Strange, True Story of William-Henry Ireland* (Stroud: Sutton, 2004); Carl T. Berkhout, "William-Henry Ireland's First Forgery," *Notes and Queries* 59, no. 2 (2012); Brean Hammond, "Shakespeare Discoveries and Forgeries," in *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Fiona Ritchie and Peter Sabor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

About a year earlier, Samuel's nineteen-year-old son, William-Henry Ireland, had finally made his enterprising father proud by finding these long-forgotten Shakespearean papers. Young William-Henry claimed to have met a gentleman in whose house he found a trunk full of unwanted documents, which fortuitously related to his father's favourite author. While they would be proven to be the work of William-Henry Ireland's hand, not William Shakespeare's, for a brief moment the Ireland findings were the talk of the London literary world. They inspired pilgrimages to see them, discussions of their authenticity in the press and around town, and a production of the new play, *Vortigern*, at Drury Lane, under Richard Brinsley Sheridan's management.

Vortigern, a tragicomedy based on a tale about the ancient Britons mentioned in Holinshed's history, the source of much of Shakespeare's historical content, was all but kicked off the stage at its one and only performance. Days earlier, Edmond Malone had published his emphatic proof of the contemporary authorship of the play and the rest of the archive.² Though Samuel Ireland refused to admit that he had been hoodwinked by his son, Malone's claims were confirmed when William-Henry Ireland published his own account of how he had manufactured the papers.³ Young Ireland's attempts at the content and form of historical documents, which Malone termed "spurious trash,"⁴ presented an opportunity for the established scholar to demonstrate the critical research

Numerous works on Shakespeare in the eighteenth century include discussions the Ireland forgeries: Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions*; Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare*; Franklin, *Shakespeare Domesticated*.

² Edmond Malone, *An Inquiry into the Authenticity of Certain Miscellaneous Papers and Legal Instruments*, Published Dec. 24, Mdcxcv, (London: H. Baldwin, 1796).

³ W. H. Ireland, *An Authentic Account of the Shaksperian Manuscripts, &C.*, (London: J. Debrett, 1796).

⁴ Malone, *Inquiry*, 11.

skills he aspired to bring to the study of Shakespeare's works. As evidenced in his own 1790 edition of the Bard's plays, Malone advocated for a literary criticism that purported to be objective and in search of authentic products by autonomous historical individuals.⁵ He was consequently outraged, not only by Ireland's audacity in pillaging a unique artistic genius, but by the young man's presumption in mimicking the past without proper research or sufficient knowledge of the historical context. According to the points of comparison that Malone prioritized, Ireland had been wholly unsuccessful in creating anything remotely similar to original sixteenth-century documents.

This fascinating and unseemly Shakespearean episode made manifest the historical cultural fantasies of the period. The popularity of Ireland's desired but non-existent documents evidenced the unfulfilled hopes of contemporaries for more information about the life of the national poet and for intersections between the elements of the national narratives that were deemed most significant. Not only did Ireland produce new works and hand-written versions of plays for which no original copy existed, but he also created manuscripts that aimed at filling perceived lacunae in the historical record. A Profession of Faith assuaged concerns over Shakespeare's possible Catholicism. Doubts about his marital fidelity were laid to rest by a love letter to his wife. And a letter from Queen Elizabeth to Shakespeare provided a sought-after connection between the monarch and the author.

⁵ De Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim*, 226.

In the note, Elizabeth thanked Shakespeare for verses he had sent her, and invited him and his “beste actorres,” in Ireland’s expressive antique spelling,⁶ to perform for her and Leicester at Hampton Palace [Fig. 6.1]. For good measure, in case the significance of the letter was not immediately evident, there was a note attached, by Shakespeare, indicating that the letter from the queen should be kept “with alle care possyble.”⁷ According to William-Henry Ireland’s version of his own creative spree, he produced this artefact “to make our *Bard* appear [noticed] by the greatest personage of his time, and thereby add, if possible, fresh lustre to his name.”⁸ In seeking to unite the history of Shakespeare with that of Elizabeth, Ireland was participating in the growing tendency to search for the logic and structure of the past. Yet, as with the profession of faith and the love letter, Ireland’s letter from the Queen demonstrates that, at the end of the eighteenth century, the links between important historical figures, were often not found, but willed. Some imagination might be necessary to fill the holes left by the messy, complicated, and irrational record of the past. Like James MacPherson’s Ossian forgeries in the 1760s, though with considerably less skill and much poorer spelling, Ireland sought to satisfy a desire for otherwise missing historical knowledge.

It was with Elizabeth’s letter that Malone opened his sally on the Ireland productions. He was not the only author to find its obvious anachronisms:⁹ the Queen

⁶ Malone found Ireland’s historical spelling “absurd.” Malone, *Inquiry*, 34.

⁷ Carl Berkhout has recently demonstrated that Ireland’s earliest attempt at forgery was probably a signature of the queen’s. Berkhout, “Ireland’s First Forgery.”

⁸ Ireland, *Authentic Account*, 17.

⁹ James Boaden, *A Letter to George Steevens, Esq. Containing a Critical Examination of the Papers of Shakespeare; Published by Mr. Samuel Ireland*, (London: Martin and Bain, Fleet-street, 1796), 36.

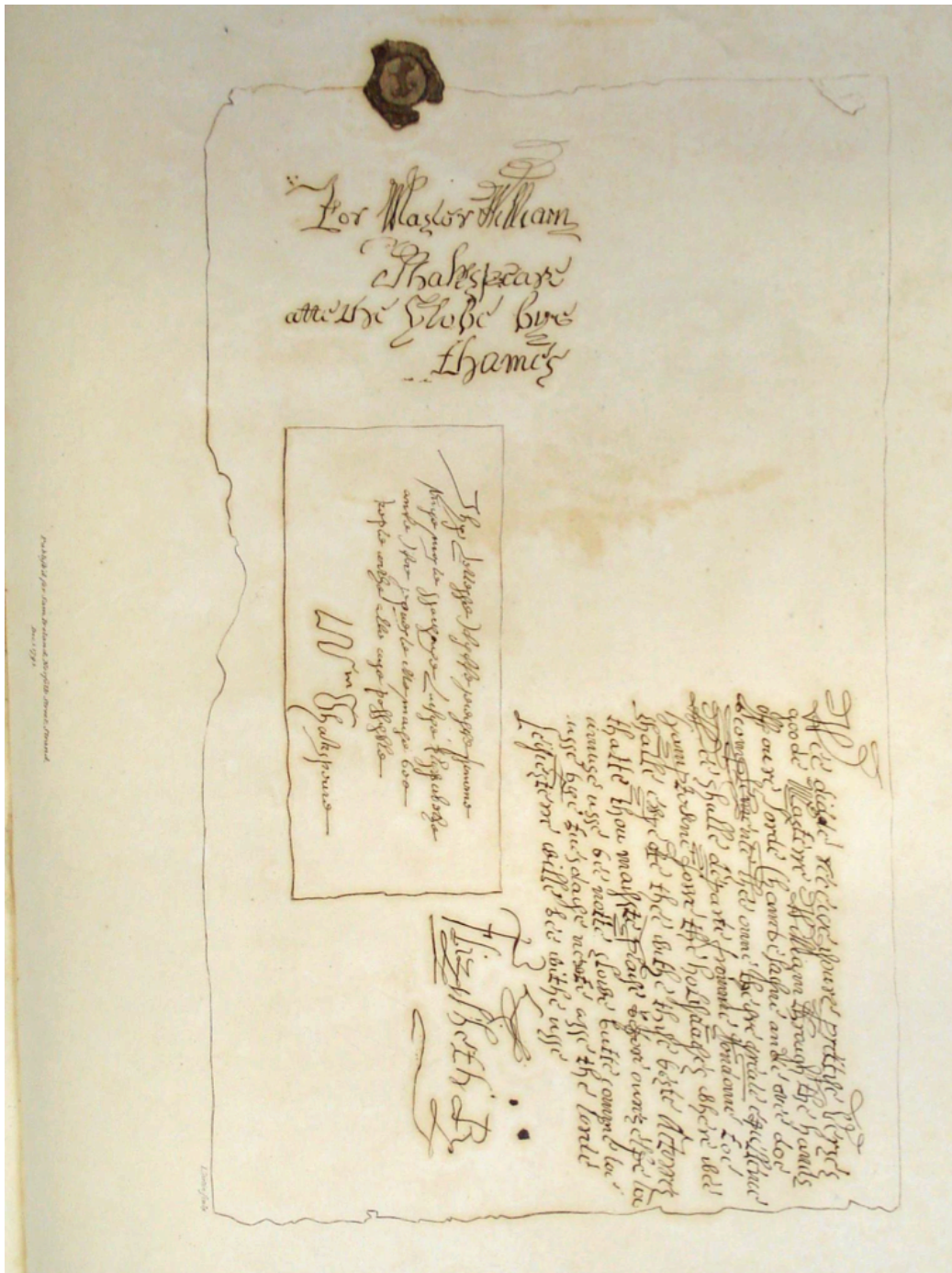


Figure 6.1. Reproduction of the letter from Queen Elizabeth to William Shakespeare, with note (centre) by Shakespeare. Samuel Ireland, *Miscellaneous Papers...* London: Cooper and Graham, 1796. Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Library and Archives, Stratford-upon-Avon, UK.

writes to Shakespeare at the Globe to come visit her and Leicester, when the latter had died several years before the theatre opened. But Malone found in this document a site on which to focus his attack, beginning with a ninety-one-page criticism of the letter's "orthography, phraseology, the date and the total dissimilitude of the hand-writing."¹⁰ This letter best allowed Malone to demonstrate his research technique, producing examples of a variety of kinds of ancient writing to showcase the breadth and depth of his understanding of the construction of historical texts. As a professional scholar, he assumed a narrative position that confidently encompassed the sixteenth century, understood it, and marshaled that knowledge against the incursions of the amateur Ireland.¹¹

The forgeries, and Malone's response to them, demonstrate the contested nature of knowledge about the past and its value in the present. As in the Renaissance, the end of the eighteenth century was experiencing the culmination in a slow change in authority.¹² The past was being used for different ends. Historical information was fit into didactic and systematic forms, which followed a clear set of assumptions about what could be taken from the material remnants of the past. In fixating on priorities at odds with those of Malone, William-Henry Ireland inadvertently helped solidify the kind of historical thinking favoured by the scholar. The forgeries provided Malone with a popular platform on which to demonstrate his skills and knowledge. Paradoxically, Malone's conclusions sought to achieve many of the same ends as Ireland's documents.

¹⁰ Malone, *Inquiry*, 30.

¹¹ Jarvis, *Scholars and Gentlemen*, 187-188.

¹² Burke, *The Renaissance Sense of the Past*.

They may have been working from different sets of rules regulating the meaning of ancient texts, but both ultimately hoped to establish connections between historical individuals and documents from the past that would have meaning in the present.

The creation and interest in the forgeries also demonstrates the growing desire to access the past through diverse forms of communication and the market for such materials and experiences. The Irelands drew on print culture, particularly the visual culture of engravings with which Samuel Ireland was familiar, to present their findings. They manipulated the dialogic aspect of newspaper and pamphlet culture in their numerous attempts to establish the authorship of their papers. These contestations engaged numerous other writers who participated in the debate over the authenticity of the works. The production of *Vortigern* testifies to the integral position of the theatre in the politics, economics, and culture of the capital. By inviting the public to view their pieces, the Irelands implicated themselves in the growing display and exhibition culture of metropolitan London. Such an interest in the consumption of pedagogic display was also an important motivator in another of the decade's best-known Shakespearean ventures, John Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery. Located on the Pall Mall, and lasting for just over a decade after its opening in May 1789, the Gallery commissioned and presented paintings and engravings of scenes from Shakespeare's works. Boydell hoped the project would encourage the development of an English school of art.¹³ Both the

¹³ Winifred Friedman, "Some Commercial Aspects of the Boydell Shakespeare Gallery," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 36 (1973); Rosie Dias, *Exhibiting Englishness: John Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery and the Formation of a National Aesthetic* (New Haven and London: The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University, 2013); Ann R. Hawkins, "Reconstructing the

Gallery and the Irelands' exhibition sought to attract individuals who were interested in consuming the experience of museums and art galleries, sites which promised personal development through the presentation of objects and the relationship between them.¹⁴ The Irelands' miscellany, therefore, provided numerous opportunities for individuals to engage with the culture of the past.

Taken as a historical moment, the Ireland forgeries demonstrate how Britain at end of the eighteenth century was facing multiple and contradictory understandings of history, national culture, and their relevance to the emerging modern experience. This dissertation has charted the transformations in uses of the Tudor age as they were influenced by the fluid understandings of historical time and of history's function in the present. The premise of this work was to examine how a popular and well-known historical period's meaning and usefulness was shaped by and reflected contemporary political, social, and cultural problems. By the closing decades of the eighteenth century, the Elizabethan era continued to represent a site of contested memories but one whose most frequent public reiterations were significantly different from what they had been at the beginning of the period. As Elizabethan political memory became more distant from contemporary concerns, so a cultural past focused on interior personal identities was created, regularized, popularized, and finally idolized, so that it might suit the needs of politicized, hegemonic discourses.

Boydell Shakspeare Gallery," in *Shakespeare and the Culture of Romanticism*, ed. Joseph M. Ortiz (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013).

¹⁴ Dias, "Pall Mall and the Topography of Display."

In the 1730s, the Elizabethan period had numerous possible meanings and was communicated through a diverse cultural repertoire. Songs, poems, jokes, theatre, images, paintings, statues, place names, speeches, political pamphlets, and books allowed for the Queen and the famous people of her era to have immediate relevance to those in the present. In the anticipation of a war with Spain, the Patriots, a coalition of disgruntled Whigs and Tories, informed by the ideology of Henry Bolingbroke, saw in her age examples of the priorities they hoped to instil in the present. For them, she represented a stark contrast to the Hanoverians: she was a decisive monarch who was willing to take action against foreign foes and who could rely on the loyalty of her people to help in the fight. But this political interpretation of the past was fed by a meaningful and popular memory. A range of individuals successfully used her period to give meaning to their organizations, discussions, and actions. Robert Walpole, the target of the Patriots' anger, was unable to offer a convincing alternative interpretation of her era. In spite of him, what had happened many reigns ago continued to be relevant for present decisions.

During the Seven Years' War, commentators and politicians continued to draw on her period. Her era remained an important precedent for an aggressive, blue-water foreign policy. She symbolized a leader who had entrusted the defence of her realm to her courageous subjects. But in debates about governance and the mobilization for war, a growing perceived difference between the past and present, the commercialization of knowledge, and the popularization of enlightened histories, such as those of David Hume and William Robertson, were challenging the utility of alternative constructions

of history. These different understandings, however, persisted. Popular historical knowledge continued to be accessed in direct and layered ways by communal celebrations and by publications such as jestbooks.

By the end of the war with the American colonies in the 1780s, the Elizabethan past served as the delineating moment from which the contemporary world had emerged. It represented the germ of the priorities that were deemed most important to the political form of the post-war state, possible alternatives to the many of the perceived problems with the contemporary world: an era of aggressive, strong, and heroic men, intelligent women, healthy habits, and access to a more rural way of life. From this progressive historical outlook, Queen Elizabeth's era appeared to be profoundly different. While it still had meaning in discussions of religion, its authority over matters of state had largely been circumscribed. It was part of the vocabulary of popular, national history, but its ability to effect change or to encourage individuals to associate collectively had been diminished by its rendering into a personal and domesticated story.

The popularity of the memory of William Shakespeare, on the other hand, had increased as the reputation of the period he came to represent diminished. In the 1730s, certain groups, most often those who identified with the Patriots, saw in him an example of the masculinity they wanted to associate with Britishness. For others, he could be an example of a progressive and competitive cultural genius. Several individuals, therefore, tried to make his memory fit contemporary needs. The Ladies' Shakespear Club and the subscribers to the Shakespeare Memorial at Westminster Abbey felt that he was an

important representative and interpreter of the British past. But, unlike those who called on Elizabeth's past, they lacked a complex, living collective memory from which to draw. Those interested in using his memory for political ends were unable to disassociate themselves from a fear that, once revived, his symbolism would be difficult to control. The dead, like the meanings of the past, were hard to master.

Thirty years later, propelled by David Garrick and the celebrations in Stratford-upon-Avon and on the London stage, Shakespeare had become one of the most revered English figures. Drawn from historical material, reformed for contemporary needs, Shakespeare, the historical person and his work, had been re-imagined to represent the ultimate creator of British characters, a representative of the national genius, able to compete in cultural comparisons on an international scale. The Shakespeare Jubilee was the most prominent of such sites of creation. As the father of popular characters and idioms, shorn of their unwieldy narrative contexts, Shakespeare represented a range of identities that could be used and appropriated as part of the identification of the modern self. As a source of accessible entertainment, his works provided a growing reading public with material with which to comprehend their own experience. As the icon for an emerging and competitive Britishness, he was positioned, as Garrick had positioned himself, as universal and apolitical.¹⁵ Intellectual effort was poured into finding what

¹⁵ If Linda Colley's *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (1992) presents a view of the late eighteenth century which erases divisions based on economic and material realities, as argued, for example, by Theodore Koditschek, it is interesting to note the ways in which history was moulded to those designs. This examination of Shakespeare supports the position, not that her thesis was wholly correct, but, as Koditschek demonstrates, that it was one that the dominant classes sought to tell about themselves. It created or promised a unity that did not reflect material or political conditions. The newly emerging narratives about Elizabeth and Shakespeare made them seem appealing across the social spectrum while

were deemed the best or most suitable versions of his writings, the singular exemplar of his unique genius most likely to provide meaningful characters and personal development. But as William-Henry Ireland learned from Malone, limits were being set as to where this material might be found.

The posthumous lives of Shakespeare and Queen Elizabeth would be ever more intertwined. While his star continued to rise, she was relegated to the fifth business in a story of his triumph and conquest. As the Georgian period gave way to the Victorian, the monarch's historical importance was increasingly as the signifier of an imagined age from which the author had emerged. William-Henry Ireland would not be the last to desire a greater connection between the poet and the queen as imagined relationships between them would flourish, culminating, perhaps, in a twentieth-century proposal that they were one and the same person.¹⁶ As access to Shakespeare's work in print and performance grew, so it would deepen and expand the forms of meaning for those who engaged with it. By the late nineteenth century, the plays would, for example, be a staple in the developing professionalized modern languages degrees at Oxford and Cambridge, while also being a meaningful part of the self-education of numerous early Labour Party members.¹⁷ Elizabeth's nineteenth-century meanings would be less varied, her memory used most notably as one of the figureheads for those seeking anti-modern alternatives to industrial capitalism: folklorists and craft revivalists.

being the constructions of a specific socio-economic class. Theodore Koditschek, "The Making of British Nationality," *Victorian Studies* 44, no. 3 (2002).

¹⁶ Dobson and Watson, *England's Elizabeth*, 135-137. Roland Emmerich's 2011 *Anonymous* posits that the Earl of Oxford, supposedly the real author of the works ascribed to William Shakespeare, was the secret, illegitimate son of Queen Elizabeth, as well as himself a father of an illegitimate son by the queen.

¹⁷ W. T. Stead, "The Labour Party and the Books That Helped to Make It," *Review of Reviews* 33, no. Jan-June (1906).

The transgressions of the Ireland family may seem peculiar, but Samuel Ireland's intense yearning to possess pieces of his historical icon was a common modern way to interact with the past. The changes to uses of the Elizabethan past in the eighteenth century foreshadowed the importance that physical interactions with the past would continue to have. The lust to claim ownership over the material world, both past and present, would be a significant motivating force in nineteenth-century Britain. This impulse, particularly for Shakespeare, has persisted into the current moment, as individuals continue to search for tangible pieces of his past, such as his notations in a dictionary or his most accurate portrait.¹⁸ These longings attest to the tensions between an individual's agency and the social and cultural forces that act to shape the form of those desires. The Irelands longed to engage in a wider historical moment, which was personally and financially significant to them. But the focus and form of their participation was constrained by larger structures. Conversely, even for as dominant a figure as Shakespeare, their violations serve as a reminder of the diverse, illicit, and immediate ways through which individuals have sought to connect their lives to national historical narratives.

Historians of the late Stuart and early Hanoverian period have been particularly interested in how the printed word, and the creation of regular news sources, changed experiences of time. Numerous authors have considered whether and how perceptions

¹⁸ Adam Gopnik, "The Poet's Hand: Why Do We Still Search for Relics of the Bard?," *The New Yorker*, 28 April 2014.

of time were altered and shaped by the development of daily or tri-weekly newspapers.¹⁹ These questions, as recently noted by Tony Claydon, are part of a current concern, in the decades spanning the turn of the millennium, with the ways in which forms of information and communications have had an unmooring effect on the role and authority of historical example.²⁰ Despite decades of academic emphasis on the constructed nature of texts, this insecurity persists in a popular concern with the truth claims of works about the past.²¹ Who gets to speak for the past, and from which sources, is far from settled. Magreta De Grazia argues, in her examination of the apparatus of Malone's *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare*, that Malone created the "modern" study of Shakespeare by fully exploiting the profound shift in the ways in which the authority of historical materials were judged over the course of the eighteenth century.²² This dissertation has charted this change in authority. It has demonstrated that concerns about the value of historical examples, questions about how constructed pasts are moored to contingent presents, are not only in flux, but subject to the hegemonic powers that structure forms of knowledge. By the end of the eighteenth century, economic, social, and cultural forces sought to limit and control the available meanings of the Tudor past. These attempts could be successful but not complete. Different employments of the past might continue unnoticed; they would emerge as new

¹⁹ John Sommerville, *The News Revolution in England: Cultural Dynamics of Daily Information* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Woolf, "News in Early Modern England." Many of these works were influenced by Stephen Kern's work on communication, technology, and sense of time at the turn of the twentieth century. Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983).

²⁰ Tony Claydon, "Daily News and the Construction of Time in Late Stuart England, 1695–1714," *The Journal of British Studies* 52, no. 01 (2013).

²¹ Carol Gluck, "Infinite Mischief? History and Literature Once Again," *Representations* 124, no. 1 (2013).

²² De Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim*, 52.

individuals questioned their own particular circumstances. In those spaces, in the fissures such as those exploited by the Irelands, we can see alternatives to the historical record and the possibilities for different ways of engaging with the experiences of those in the past.

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Read's Weekly Journal Or British Gazetteer Weekly Miscellany

Universal Spectator and Weekly Journal

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Busy Body

The Cambridge magazine: or, Universal repository of arts, sciences, and the belles lettres. ... By a society of gentlemen, of the University of Cambridge

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The London Magazine and Monthly Chronologer

Lloyd's Evening Post and British Chronicle

London Evening Post

London Chronicle

Monitor or the British Freeholder

Public Ledger or The Daily Register of Commerce and Intelligence

Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer

The World

1769-1770

Independent Chronicle or Freeholders Evening Post

Lloyd's Evening Post

London Chronicle

Middlesex Journal or Chronicle of Liberty

Public Advertiser

St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post

Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer

1778-1781

British Chronicle Or Pugh's Hereford Journal

The Farmer's Magazine, and useful family companion

Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser

General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer

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