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NEGOTIATING WITH SHAKESPEARE

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
Taekyeong Kang, M.A.

The Ohio State University
1997

Dissertation Committee
Professor Thomas Postlewait, Adviser
Professor Alan Woods
Professor Esther Beth Sullivan

Approved by
Adviser

Department of Theater
ABSTRACT

In the early 1980s, Shakespearean studies took a distinct turn away from new criticism and psychological analysis toward a decidedly political and historical analysis. This "new historicism" has been predominantly concerned with the ideological and political functions of the stage and the drama of the early modern London theatres. Accordingly, competing critical models have been advanced to explain the social and cultural processes in which these theatres participated. The subsequent development of this new critical trend has in turn revealed that a fundamental binarism underlies its theoretical and methodological paradigms. Known better as "subversion-containment" debate, the contention over the ideological effectivity of Shakespearean drama is only one of the many instances in which the practitioners of New Historicism, Cultural Materialism, and Feminism take side with one or the other proposition.

My study describes and analyzes the definitive critical methods and assumptions of these new historical criticisms in order to ground a more flexible reading position from which an access to the historical period and its drama is to be made. Distinct sets of binary terms deployed in recent criticism are investigated: the ruling class vs. the ruled, patriarchal oppression vs. women's liberation, and powerful theatre vs. powerless theatre. Since these binaries derive from limited and fundamentally dichotomous historical perspectives as well as theoretical inadequacies, an attempt is in turn made to locate the critical construct of 'negotiated reading position' in the historical subjects, who were the playgoers in the early modern London. Among the 'middling sort of people,' who were the staple constituency of the theatre audience, distinct components are identified: citizens, women, and apprentices.

Queen Elizabeth's coronation entry and Shakespeare's English chronicle plays are analyzed from the London citizens' viewpoint, which might have entertained the interstices
between the ruling power and the subordinate position of its subjects. The binary of patriarchy and female autonomy is explored in the light of both social differences and solidarity among Shakespeare’s heroines and among their counterparts in the audience. *Julius Caesar* is read from the perspectives possibly taken up by the London apprentices, whose precarious situation within the urban culture best encapsulates the social complexity and the ideological differences within the formation of the middling sort of people in early modern London. In this cultural exchange and negotiation between the central institution of apprenticeship and the marginal institution of the professional theatres, the binary of powerful theatre vs. powerless theatre is finally seen to dissolve.

The conclusion toward which these readings urge is not a specific cultural theory or a definitive critical position whereby an ideological critique of the competing versions of historical criticism is maintained. Since one of the major problems with the new historicist enterprise lies in its insufficient contact with the professional historical scholarship, a consistent effort is made throughout the study to envision a different mode of historicization based upon a critical engagement with the historical scholarship. Thus, the study as a whole explores a preliminary methodology of “negotiation” for a better understanding of the relationship between past and present, between history and criticism, or between us and Shakespeare. As such, it further points toward the necessity of developing a more rigorous discipline of interdisciplinary work among literary, theatre, and historical scholarship.
Dedicated to My Parents

And

Lord Jesus
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. Then Paul stood in the midst of Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: To the Unknown God. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you.

Acts 17:21-23

In Jesus of Nazareth I have found the unknown god that I was searching for in ancient Athens, in Shakespeare’s England, and in late twentieth-century world. Him I praise with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind, and with all my strength.

With Shakespeare I learned to negotiate and live with the limits of humanity. In Lord Jesus I have learned to die toward such limits. During the journey from early modern England back to ancient Palestine, I met three great teachers, to whom I wish to acknowledge my deepest gratitude on this page.

I wish to thank my adviser, Dr. Thomas Postlewait, whose sage advice and warm encouragement sustained me throughout my research and writing process. I am especially indebted to his balanced approach as a scholar, which I have tried to adapt in my dissertation.

I am also grateful to Dr. Oak Song, my former adviser at Korea University, who not only introduced me to Shakespearean scholarship, but who also took pains to enlighten me with the discipline for both a scholar and a human being.

Finally, I humbly give thanks to Pastor Keun-Sang Lee, minister of Korean Church of Columbus, who has been a ghostly father — to use a Shakespearean term — to me. He nourished me with the Words of God and showed me where the footprints of Jesus are to be found.
VITA

January 8, 1962 ........ Born in Busan, Korea

1989 .................. M.A. English, Korea University

1993-95 ............... Graduate Research Associate
Jerome E. Lawrence & Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute
The Ohio State University

1995-96 ............... Graduate Teaching Associate
Department of Theater
The Ohio State University

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Theatre
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION:
HISTORICIZED RENAISSANCE AND CRITICAL MODELS

The subject of this study is both the theatre of the English Renaissance, as produced in the era, and the interpretive models for explaining that theatre, as reproduced in contemporary historical criticism such as new historicism, cultural materialism and feminism. I thus wish to study on the intersection between the ways in which Shakespeare’s plays were produced and received in their own cultural moment and the ways in which this cultural moment is reformulated by competing critical modes of our own time. I do not suggest, however, that there are two separate domains of reality — one presumably objective and the other purely speculative. I do not assume, in other words, that authenticity lies only in the originating moment of the cultural production we habitually call “Shakespeare’s theatre.” Nor do I intend to privilege our own view as the only solid foundation on which to build any historical understanding of an elusive past. Rather, the project is conceived in acknowledgement of both the tantalizing inaccessibility of the past on its own terms and the inevitable partiality of the present attempts to retrieve what is significant about the past — significant, that is, in a particular viewpoint of the present. Throughout the study, therefore, I will keep the interactions between the historical Renaissance and the historicized Renaissance(s) in focus, though my primary analysis will consider the competing models of historicization.
At one level, I attend to the cultural transactions between the audience formation and the commercial theatres in early modern London. While I explore the social structures that both enabled and delimited the range of such transactions, my particular interest lies in the theatrical event that, in its unique ways, reproduced and reinvented the cultural relations of London’s urban economy — symbolically, socially, and politically. In other words, I assume that theatre and society, event and structure exist within a mutually defining condition. Accordingly, I do not want to consider this relation purely as a formal or aesthetic exchange. By focusing on the make-up of the audience — citizens, women, and, more broadly, the growing ‘middling sort of people’ who, I believe, became the predominant constituency in the public playhouses of early modern London — I can attend to not only the specific set of cultural exchanges and negotiations that occur between theatre performance and spectators but also the shaping social, political, and economic factors that contributed to the shape and meaning of performance and response. Where appropriate, then, I will consider the place and importance of the city authorities, the aristocratic culture, and the crown in the cultural exchange.

The question of the historical audience has not always been articulated in the recent historical criticism. On the one hand, literary critics still tend to assume that the Renaissance drama is to be read and interpreted as written texts, even when they do not entirely ignore the fact that almost all the plays from the period were intended for and actualized by stage performance. In some cases, the assumption goes as far as to become an assertion that the ‘deeper meaning’ of the text cannot be unraveled by performance or stage-centered reading. On the other hand, the microcosmic interest in theatre audience is often displaced in favor of the macrocosmic concerns over the social formation as a whole. The underlying assumption is that the English Renaissance theatre, as a microcosm of its society, entertained heterogeneous social groups, which is, in my view, certainly justifiable. The assumption falters, however, when one takes a further step to postulate that it would be redundant, therefore, to constantly harken back to the audience or even a particular kind of audience, once the total picture of the society is securely obtained. That the ‘critical point of view’ has replaced that of historical subjects’ is evidenced by the significant lack of attention to the audience in both Steven...
Greenblatt’s and Jonathan Dollimore’s work — the leading proponents of new historicism and cultural materialism (Greenblatt 1980, 1988; Dollimore 1984). For the historicist critics, whose main interest lies in the definitive relationship between a configuration of the society at large and its dramatic representation, the historical audience becomes a nuisance, causing complications and confusions to the supposedly apprehensible, if not transparent, reality -- textual and social -- of the past.

What I intend to do by addressing the audience formation is to add complications, if not confusions, to the relatively schematic understandings of the early modern theatre and its surrounding social conditions expounded by the Renaissance literary scholarship during the past fifteen years or so. In an effort to complicate the textual reality, I shall also read the plays, in some occasions, as performance texts, attending to the stage conditions and conventions of London playhouses. In this sense my aim is to let the deeper meanings go and seize the elusively theatrical meanings instead.

The plays I select to examine in relation to their audience’s reception and formation are Shakespeare’s, about which I should say a word. Ever since the rise of new historical criticism, a beleaguering question has been that of canonicity. As a self-avowedly deconstructionist and revisionary project, which prefers to look at the ‘margin’ instead of the ‘center’ of individual text and literary canon, the historical criticism often contradicted itself by constantly returning to the canonical texts of Shakespeare, Marlowe, or Jonson. As a result, a variety of new readings of the same ‘classical’ texts has been offered, inviting an indictment that the practitioners of historical criticism have actually privileged Shakespeare and thus reinstated the standard canonical measure they were allegedly revising. This accusation, I believe is ill-directed. For, if the cultural prestige accorded to Shakespeare is the product of the dominant cultural assumptions and attitudes, what else could be a more effective way to interrogate, and undermine if necessary, such values than to confront and ‘deconstruct’ the canonical texts or the Author?

Still, the indictment is not entirely void, particularly in view of some critics’ inadequately apologetic tone with which they defend their interest in Shakespeare. Steven Mullaney justifies his focus on the playwright on Shakespeare because he is “one of the
few playwrights whose career encompassed both the height and the decline of popular theatre in Elizabethan and Jacobean England not simply because of his culturally created reputation” (1988: x). Mullaney tries here to evince the question of canonicity, while what is at stake in historical criticism is exactly the status of Shakespeare as a powerful cultural icon which could and should be tested, shattered, or even reinforced by more ‘new readings.’ In questioning the defensive posture assumed by new historicist critics, I do not, however, side with the cultural materialists who, in the words of Alan Sinfield, practice “critical vandalism” (1992: 1-29) -- a radical revision of the canonical text against the grain, according to the critic’s political, invariably oppositional, commitment. Sinfield’s view of Shakespearean canon as tyrannical “Empire” makes a striking contrast to Stephen Greenblatt’s more conventional view of the author’s text as having achieved “the most satisfying intensity” as “a simulation of life” (1980: 7, 1988: 2). Notwithstanding their respective emphasis on political aesthetics of texts, both cultural materialism and new historicism reveal limitations that are symptomatic of a deeper problem in which the historical criticism of the 1980s was embedded -- that is, an inadequate conception of historical writing, or of the past-present relationship.

Sinfield’s iconoclasm lays a greater, if not an absolute, emphasis on the present. Since canon formation is inextricably connected to the social formations of the critic, the task of cultural materialism is to question and overturn the contemporary uses and values of Shakespeare. Oppositional reading thus helps to alter the dominant social relations. In his Marxist commitment, Sinfield postulates that history is a continuum of the essentially same power struggles between the great and the little. ‘Caesars’ and ‘Vandals.’ Advanced from the ‘present point of view,’ his criticism thus allows little sense of the past except as an obscure, or skeletal, replica of the present.

By contrast, in Greenblatt’s fascinating ‘simulation’ of the past, there is an inadequate emphasis on the present, even as he frequently uses his personal anecdotes as a springboard for the critical venture into the past. Under Foucauldian influence, which imagines a radical rupture between past and present, the new historicist emphasis on the different historicity of the past tends to mark out the critic’s standpoint in the present and, simultaneously, to collapse it into the simulacrum of the past. Greenblatt acknowledges
a necessarily "indirect access" to the past (1980: 7). Yet, his vivid and totalizing description of the past rarely leaves traces of such access, and instead creates -- or 'represents,' in new historicist terminology -- the past in the image of a self-contained aesthetic whole. In new historicist discourse history thus becomes something else than 'here and now,' although it is a part of current debate that the unthinkable 'here and now' is actually the determining force, in the last instance, of new historicist representation of the past.7

Admittedly, this is a far too simplified account, especially in regard of the diverse trends and varying emphases within historical criticism. Nonetheless, I feel somehow justified in finding in cultural materialist and new historicist what Robert Weimann has called "unhistorical critic" and "uncritical historian" (1984: 51-6. 267-324). For, as I hope to show in the following discussion, the seemingly irreconcilable demands of history and criticism are predicated on and in turn reproduce the false dichotomy of past and present, continuity and discontinuity, the powerful and the powerless, or for that matter, subversion and containment. Accordingly, it is more than necessary to break a third path in order to envision both historical criticism and critical history at once.

II

At every turn, the key issues within and debates over the historical criticism indicate that they are actually the consequence of a series of binary conceptions underpinning the theoretical paradigm of historicization.8 Probably the most turbulent site of conflict between new historicism and cultural materialism is what has been known as the "subversion-containment" debate. The debate surrounds the question of whether the theatre of Renaissance England mainly served to function as a site of contestation or a site of reaffirmation of the dominant cultural values. The locus of the debate is centered on the alternate readings of Shakespeare's history plays. Greenblatt's essay on the second historical cycle, "Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and its Subversion," entails a much-debated thesis that Renaissance authority produced subversive elements only to
contain them, thus consolidated its legitimacy, whose strategy in turn was adopted in Renaissance dramaturgy (1981, rev. 1988: 21-65). Dollimore and Sinfield, in their alternative reading, “Ideology and History: the instance of Henry V” (1985), agree with Greenblatt that Renaissance drama was the ideological vehicle of political authority and as such deployed strategies of containment of dissident elements. But the British critics modify the thesis with a counter-argument that conflict and contradiction, once produced in culture and represented in drama, could not be totally erased, thus enabled interrogation and subversion of dominant ideology.

Beyond the much-debated issue of political orientations of each position, the binary model of subversion-or-containment is implicated in different leading questions the critics ask. Greenblatt’s containment-thesis is predicated on the issue of how a society reproduces itself. By contrast, the cultural materialist critics are more concerned with the question of how a society changes, which leads to the subversive side of the debate. What is missing in both viewpoints is a kind of balancing act. Had these perspectives only entailed a difference in emphasis with an acknowledgement of the specificity and the fundamentally unpredictable development of each social or textual instance, the two propositions would have been less binary and more complementary. But the ideological consequences of a particular instance have been continually asserted to be representative of the whole culture, creating thus an incorrigibly one-sided picture of absolute containment or totalized subversion. In turn, such a totalizing tendency subscribes to the traditional narratives about irrevocable triumph of capitalism or engulfing battle between idealism and materialism, reenacting the binary conception of change and continuity that have dominated the historical scholarship of early modern England (Sacks 1987: 103-11).

Of course, the possibility of a balancing act does not conceal the theoretical problems inherent in the critical model of social process itself. First of all, both positions are embedded in a conflictual model of society in which a Foucauldian theme of power plays the central role. Whether one takes up Foucault’s conservative viewpoint that emphasizes the omnipresence of power or his subversive viewpoint that stresses the site of resistance within the power structure, the fact remains that Foucault’s conceptualization of power is
unable to imagine the social relations except in terms of domination and subordination/resistance.\textsuperscript{11} Despite its advantages over a "consensual" or "functional" social model for explaining what is at stake in the general movement of social change, this fundamentally conflict-based model of society does not account for the intermediate process by which issues are developed, modified, complicated, and finally settled — not always in the form of resolution but often of suspension.\textsuperscript{12} Nor does it take into consideration the ways in which competing parties in social or ideological conflict compromise and negotiate in order to settle the issue, often with reciprocal advantages.

Consequent upon the conflictual model of society is another scholarly binarism that divides the English Renaissance society in terms of "two cultures," of elite and popular, of high and low, in which the presence of any substantial intermediary social group is entirely forestalled. This dichotomized view of society and culture derives from the long-standing tradition of social history that, whatever variations may be observed, has conscripted the pre-industrial society under the rubric of a "two-class structure." Probably the most influential formulation derives from E. P. Thompson's binarism of "Patrician society, Plebeian culture," in which only two social groupings are figured: "the rulers and the ruled, the high and the low people, persons of substance and of independent estates and the loose and disorderly sort," whereas "the professional and middle classes," Thompson dismisses, "appear to offer little deflection of the essential polarities" (1974: 382-405). Peter Laslett's concept of "one-class society" seems to be an alternative model, but Laslett nonetheless shares with Thompson the basic premise of two distinct social strata in the early modern England (1983: esp. ch. 2).

As for the contestatory relationship between the two cultures, Mikhail Bakhtin's influence has been more decisive and informative for literary scholars (\textit{Rabelais and His World}). Subscribing to Bakhtin's interpretation of carnival activities as "a world upside down," critics nonetheless differ in their choice of privileged site and perspective. Adopting the 'plebeian' perspective, Michael Bristol stresses "the capacity of popular culture to resist penetration and control by the power structure" (1985: 4).\textsuperscript{13} For Leah Marcus who privileges the elite's point of view, festive activities were manipulated by the rulers for their own social and political purposes and as such constituted "a form of social control"
(1986: 7). According to Bristol, Renaissance drama was informed by popular cultural forms such as charivari and skimmington. Leonard Tennenhaus sees the matter in opposite terms; the carnivalesque and other traces of popular culture were mobilized only to be appropriated to buttress the hegemonic ideology of “empowered community” of the aristocracy (1986: 41). So, two cultures? The problem with these interpretations is that, in assuming the existence of two separate cultures or classes insulated from each other, they unwarrantedly privilege one over the other without establishing the ways in which the competing cultures are engaged in a dialogue, as Bakhtin imagines, to create a common culture of “heteroglossia.” If one is willing to acknowledge, as Bristol seems to be, that either culture existed “never in a ‘pure’ and uncontaminated form” (1985: 5), what must be sought is not its pristine origin but the impure and contaminated form itself. For in such a hybrid form we will better grasp the dialogue going on not only between the high and the low but also among additional social groups.

Yet another binarism concerns the question of human agency, which in fact constitutes the initializing gambit of the subversion-containment debate. Both Greenblatt and Dollimore launched their critical enterprise with an investigation of “Renaissance subjectivity.” Having set out to analyze “the role of human autonomy in construction of identity.” Greenblatt finds the human subject “remarkably unfree, the ideological product of the relations of power in a particular society,” overpowered by social institutions. The realization that “there were no moments of pure, unfettered subjectivity” rehearses in an anxious tone the Foucauldian theme of “our subjection to power” (1980: 256). Again, with the subversive Foucault whose “aim is to cleanse [the subject] of all transcendental narcissism.” Dollimore contends that the decentered subject is not something to be regretted as “a loss of center” but to be affirmed as a creative “noncenter,” which will serve as a site of resistance (1984: 270). Catherine Belsey balances the counter-propositions by asserting that, though power produces subject, “subjects exceed the space allotted to them and work to challenge as well as confirm the existing order” (1985: 219). But that “as well as” does not avoid the binarism of power and subject, of challenging and conforming subjects. Only two subject-positions are made available, and any alternative position somewhere between the two remains unconceptualized. According to such binary
formulations, the Elizabethan-Jacobean theatre audiences are constrained to only two options in their reception of the message transmitted by the theatrical event or dramatic narrative. Though delegated to the early modern subjects, the two subject-positions are nonetheless implicated in the theoretical and ideological positions occupied by the critics themselves. By valorizing the dissident subject, cultural materialism privileges the role of human agency over social constraints; in underlining the subjection of the subject, new historicism assumes that cultures maintain themselves somehow by self-regulation without effective social agency or transformation.

There has been much criticism leveled at new historicism and cultural materialism for their shared construct of the subversion-containment model. Accordingly, efforts have been made, even within each of the two positions, to modify the terms of the binary model. Attending to the fact that the Elizabethan public theatres were located in “Liberties,” marginal districts to the City of London, Stephen Mullaney within the new historicist position postulates that, by virtue of its topographical ambiguity, the public theatres entertained not just two oppositional sites but a number of different ideological positions (1988: esp. ch. 2). From a cultural materialist perspective, Graham Holderness attempts to reframe the either/or model into a both/and model, by offering a provisional analysis of how the different configurations of court and public theatre performances might have engendered a dramatic representation with ideological differences (Shakespeare Out of Court 136-194). However, these efforts hardly go beyond a balancing act of the fundamental dichotomy inherent in the social, historical, and cultural paradigms deployed by the historicist critics. A radical revision is yet to come.

Another weakness inherent in both new historicism and cultural materialism is their relative reticence to confront the gender-politics of the Renaissance drama. Though there have been sporadic efforts from these predominantly ‘male perspectives’ to address ‘women’s issues,’ these attempts at accommodation have not constituted a productive dialogue with the feminist criticism of Shakespeare, which has a distinct line of development during the past two decades. Nonetheless, the scope and range of its development has also been gripped by the same theoretical problem that has plagued the new historicism and cultural materialism, that is, the binary paradigm. In feminist discourse
on the Renaissance drama, the binary model was engendered in the question of whether “Shakespeare” was entrenched in patriarchal values or posed a resolute opposition to them. The question itself has been reframed into different sets of binaries roughly according to the successive movements in feminist discourse in general: patriarchy vs. mutualism (liberal feminism), masculine vs. feminine principle (cultural or essentialist feminism), and domination vs. transgression (materialist feminism). Before the materialist feminist intervention, the only solution was a balancing act by way of the proposition that the Shakespearean plays moved away from misogyny and patriarchy toward a more equitable, humane portrayal of relations between women and men.

One particular problem that the feminist criticism of Shakespeare had to cope with was the ‘lack’ of women’s history in the Renaissance English society, which entailed its restricted focus on dramatic representation with, at best, generalizing contextualism. Within the limited scope, however, earlier materialist feminism questioned the received notion of female subjectivity as passively constructed, penetrated by the patriarchal values (e.g., Belsey 1985: 129-148). Still, the binary surrounded the formulation of male domination vs. female transgression. Even as the transgressive act was seen to have effected a disruption of the patriarchal structure, the theoretical formulation itself did not undergo a significant change. Various attempts at social contextualization were also made, but the limited range of reference hindered a production of substantial analysis of women’s position in the society of Renaissance England. It is in the recent development of materialist feminist criticism that a feasible solution to the theoretical and referential problems, not only of feminist but also of new historicist and cultural materialist positions, has been proposed.

Jean Howard’s progressive move from women’s “precarious” position within patriarchal society to their “ideologically negotiable” positions provides an active way of rethinking the construction of Renaissance female subjectivity, breaking the double-bind of feminist criticism on the issue (1994: 74). Another contribution of Howard’s work is that, by drawing specifically on the women audiences of “middling sort” in the Elizabethan public theatres, she calls attention to and in part breaks through the two most significant limitations of historical criticism of Shakespeare. First, new historicism and cultural materialism as well as feminist criticism had restricted their focus on the Renaissance
drama fundamentally as literary texts and not as theatre, the consequence of which is not just a matter of "limited" focus of literary criticism but misconceptions and misunderstandings of the plays themselves. As noted earlier, Greenblatt's lack of attention to the theatre audience is symptomatic of such misconception; a discourse is seen to circulate without mediation, without significant intervention by the specificities of a particular cultural level. Even when he notes the Elizabethan players' appropriation of the aristocratic culture—noblemen's apparel purchased and donned by the players on the stage, for instance—Greenblatt tends to construe the consequence of such a practice to be merely reproductive of the ideologies (invested in the properties) of aristocracy. Dollimore gestures toward the diverse conditions of reception in the theatre. Nonetheless, substantial accounts of the contemporary reception of the plays are not offered, but only the two oppositional ideological positions are hypothetically advanced.

What eludes the critics' primary focus on representational, discursive level of plays involves the very specificities of the cultural practice in question, that is, the theatre. Howard rightly argues that in order to configure the ideological consequences of the theatre it is necessary to attend to more than dramatic narrative, considering as well the material and non-discursive practices and conventions of the stage and of playgoing. For there is no fixed, unchanging ideological significance which is unaffected by the conditions of production and consumption; "politics of playhouse and playgoing" may serve to function "as a supplement and/or alternative to the politics of playscript" (1994: 73). One such instance is articulated around the complex interaction between theatrical practice of male-crossdressing and dramatic narrative of female-crossdressing, out of which divergent ideological effects emerge: Epicoene and The Roaring Girl occupy the opposite extremes, while As You Like It ranges over the spectrum of responses to the representation of misogyny and patriarchal values.

Secondly, the breakthrough of Howard's work is made possible by its specific reference to the audience configuration of the "middling sort," the significance of which cannot be overestimated. For the concept brings a third category into the binary paradigm that has prevailed in the Renaissance literary and theatre studies. "Middling sort" was first theorized by Theodore Leinwand (1993) in the field of Elizabethan theatre audience studies, which
has had a distinct development since the mid-century. Two earlier models dominating the field were both established by Alfred Harbage: first, Elizabethan theatre as the “Theatre of a Nation” drawing its audiences from every stratum of the society (Shakespeare’s Audience); and then Elizabethan theatre as a division between “Popular (public)” and “Coterie (private)” theatres, patronized respectively by lower and upper classes (Shakespeare and the Rival Tradition). The studies of audiences during the following four decades were, except a few occasional attempts to reach back to the singular model, no more than recapitulation and elaboration on the latter model whose binarism overlaps with that of the dominant paradigm of literary studies in the 1980s. As noted earlier, the unquestioned assumption underlying these paradigms is that the Elizabethan England was either a one-class society or a society of a bi-partite class structure, comprised within either a unified national culture or two oppositional cultures. By drawing on recent developments in social and cultural history that have reconfigured the socioeconomic and political structure of Elizabethan England as articulated around the middling sort of people -- a prefigurement of bourgeois middle class -- Leinwand’s study brings about a significant revision on the theoretical problematic of any dyadic model that “does not allow for substantive third, fourth, or more terms” (1993: 284). The impact of the introduction of a third term into theatre studies of the period is immediate as glimpsed in Howard’s work.

Concomitantly with his attention to the Elizabethan middling sort of people as both the primary constituency of theatre audience and the object of dramatic representation, Leinwand tries to take the historical criticism through the theoretical impasse reached in the subversion-containment debate (1990). He modifies the conflictual social model by suggesting that a “negotiation-based model of social relations” has the significant advantage of being able to account for both change and resistance to change and of recognizing the social process not as a simple dichotomy of domination and opposition but as a complicated process of negotiating for a consensus. This is a significant breakthrough, concurrent with more recent efforts to explore beyond the dichotomy of subversion and containment or of popular and elite cultures. However, Leinwand’s approach is not without limitations. Particularly in regard to the interpretive conjunctures between what he himself terms ‘historical sociology’ and ‘dramatic representation,’ his
major concern remains restricted to the latter without much interest in the relations between the two levels. At certain points, a reconfiguration of the Elizabethan audience, contextualized within the overall social structure, tends to relapse into a microcosm of dramatic narrative: Coriolanus is read as 'reflecting' the triad class structure of Elizabethan London. More significant problems arise when he attempts to reconstitute the audience responses to the representation of the middling sort. In establishing the connection, he tends to treat the 'sort' as a homogeneous social group. Accordingly, interpretation of the plays hardly goes beyond highlighting the heroes of middling sort such as Dogberry and Elbow, the Shakespearean constables, or the Citizens of Shakespeare's Rome. now privileged over the ‘charismatic’ Hal (Greenblatt 1981, 1988: 21-65) or “infinite” Bottom (Patterson 1989: 52-70). More often than not, “the middling sort” functions as a substitution for “the plebeian” merely with an elevated status. In consequence, the ineluctable binarism is reinstated in a modified form of middling sort vs. patricians.²⁰

The challenge, then, is not just to bring in an additional category or another distinct social group as a privileged perspective. Nor is it sufficient to deploy one such perspective in order to explode the existing binarism into a sheer heterogeneity. The uneven consequences Leinwand's introduction of third term revealed in the actual process of analysis may be seen as a result of misapplication. In my view, however, the third position is yet to be fully theorized so as to reconceptualize -- not merely modify -- the terms used to configure the relations between containment and subversion, agency and social structure, or elite and popular cultures. Probably the most important and the least clarified of the critical terminology employed in the recent historical criticism is “ideology.” In an attempt to ground the third position on a more rigorous foundation and simultaneously set the theoretical parameter of this study. I shall turn to competing accounts of ideology and the most viable alternative suggested in Stuart Hall's concept of “articulation” and “negotiated reading position.”

However, let us pause here and take a look at a specific instance of the clash between the competing critical models that I have outlined so far. For my sweeping generalization certainly warrants an investigation of the various and often incompatible critical agendas operating in a reading of a play. Stephen Greenblatt and Jonathan Dollimore, the leading
exponents of new historicism and cultural materialism, offered stimulating interpretations of King Lear, to which commentators have not paid as much attention as they deserve. I choose to compare Greenblatt’s and Dollimore’s alternative readings of the play not only because they comprise of much of the whole array of critical methods and assumptions in recent historical criticism but also because they result from their contrasting views on the raison d’etre of historical criticism. Since these views are most palpably inscribed in the critical procedure whereby the critics situate Shakespeare’s text and/or theatre in relation to the culture(s) of the Renaissance England, I will concentrate on the question of historical contextualization. Let me insist that there is much to learn from each critic’s work. I will attend, however, more to what is problematic in order to clarify the limits that should be confronted in any attempt to ground ‘a third position.’

III

Greenblatt’s essay on King Lear, “Shakespeare and the Exorcists” (1988: 94-128), begins with an anecdote — a typical move of new historicist criticism — concerning the exorcist ritual clandestinely conducted by outlaw Jesuit priests in the English countryside in the late sixteenth century. The first of the two sections of the essay focuses on Samuel Harsnett’s A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures (1603), a detailed account and refutation of the controversial practice of exorcism, written by a chaplain to the Bishop of London. From Harsnett’s text Greenblatt deciphers institutional and rhetorical strategies of the state-supported Church of England to eliminate competing religious authorities, Catholic and Puritan, empowered by their ‘charismatic’ practice of exorcism. Greenblatt observes that Harsnett’s rejection of the practice of exorcism depended upon a tactical exposure of demonic possession as fraud and of exorcism itself as merely theatrical. In the second section of the essay Greenblatt moves into King Lear, with a claim that, in creating the Bedlam Beggar Poor Tom, Shakespeare borrowed from Harsnett’s book not only the names of the devils invoked by the disguised Edgar but also the institutional and discursive strategies of Harsnett’s refutation of exorcism. Analyzing the scene with Edgar
and the blinded Gloucester on the imaginary cliff of Dover as paradigmatic of Shakespeare’s use of Harsnett, Greenblatt construes the scene as “a disenchanted analysis of both religious and theatrical illusions” (118), and relates it to a view of King Lear as a whole “haunted by a sense of rituals and beliefs that are no longer efficacious” (119). The final spin of the essay is Greenblatt’s conclusion that Shakespeare’s ‘reiteration’ of Harsnett’s argument involved not only a confirmation of the official religious position but also an ‘evacuation’ of the ideological premises upon which the Anglican Church sought to drive out the competing religious ideologies and institutions.

On the one hand, Greenblatt seems to move beyond the subversion-containment impasse with an insistence upon the theatrical power to ‘transvaluate’ and consequently ‘unsettle all official lines.’ This is a remarkable departure from his earlier reading of history plays where the emphasis fell on the theatrical power to reproduce the dominant ideologies in its very production of subversive elements. Where the difference comes from is not explained, although the generic distinctiveness of tragedy is marked out as the achievement of an ‘artistic self-consciousness’ whereby transvaluation or evacuation was presumably made possible. On the other hand, the essay leaves unresolved the much-debated issue on the new historicist use of anecdotes or social texts as representative of the cultural process that the dramatic text addressed and participated in. Greenblatt seems to acknowledge this problem, as he attempts with much care to establish the intertextual relations between Harsnett and Shakespeare.

At the theoretical level, such relations are securely grounded. What immediately follows Greenblatt’s initiating narrative about the exorcist practice in the late Elizabethan England is a recapitulation of his earlier challenge to the conventional distinction between literary foreground and historical background, between artistic productions and other social productions -- an assumption upheld within the ‘old’ historicist tenets and implemented by the conventional source study. Literary source study has tended to posit, Greenblatt argues, a protective separation between a literary work and its sources. Scholars have thus been satisfied in providing a glimpse of the raw material that the artist fashioned into a freestanding, self-sufficient, disinterested work of art. Source studies, accordingly, have posited a point of departure or a transformation in the relationship of
the source-text and the literary text. Alternatively, Greenblatt argues for a point of contact or a site of 'institutional negotiation and exchange of social energy' between the two texts.

...history cannot simply be set against literary texts as either stable antithesis or stable background, and the protective isolation of those texts gives way to a sense of their interaction with other texts and hence of the permeability of their boundaries... When Shakespeare borrows from Harsnett, who knows if Harsnett has not already, in a deep sense, borrowed from Shakespeare's theater what Shakespeare borrows back? Whose interests are served by the borrowing? And is there a larger cultural text produced by the exchange?" (95, emphasis added)

The promising theoretical position notwithstanding, Greenblatt's reading of King Lear suggests that there is little exchange and negotiation between the source and the text, between the central institution of the Church and the marginal institution of theatre, except on unequal terms. Nor is it so much a mutually permeable relationship as a unidirectional process of ideological inscription that characterizes the 'intertextuality' of Harsnett and Shakespeare. How does this backsliding occur? At the least, we need to investigate two strategic points in Greenblatt's argument: the actuality of the 'borrowing' and the critical procedure of constructing the 'larger cultural text.'

In the first place, Greenblatt seems to have grappled with a formidable task of establishing an actual connection between Harsnett's Declaration and Shakespeare's Lear, that is, beyond the latter's borrowing from the former the names of the devils. Greenblatt's attempts to stabilize the connection are at best tenuous. To suggest a structural homology between Harsnett's argument and Shakespeare's dramatic treatment of exorcism, Greenblatt cites two earlier, comic instances of Shakespeare's allusion to exorcism -- in Comedy of Errors and The Twelfth Night -- which suffices for him to insist that "by 1600, then, Shakespeare had clearly marked out possession and exorcism as frauds" (115). This leads to a further insistence that "when in 1603 Harsnett was whipping exorcism toward the theater, Shakespeare was already at the entrance to the Globe to welcome it" (115). At another place, a one-word instance of repetition is highlighted as paradigmatic of Shakespeare's transvaluation of the in-forming text. Citing Harsnett's description of an exorcist ritual in which a corky woman is being exorcised.
Greenblatt snatches a line from Shakespeare, Cornwall’s order to tie the captive Gloucester to the torture-chair: “Bind fast his corky arms” (3.7.29). In view of the recurrence of the ‘unusual’ adjective, Greenblatt declares that “now Shakespeare’s eye was caught by the word ‘corky’, and he reproduces it” (121). The context into which Shakespeare reproduced the word is radically different, Greenblatt continues, from that of Harsnett’s sardonic explanation of how an old woman playing the role of the possessed was manipulated by a fraudulent exorcist. In Shakespeare’s torture scene, “a flourish of Harsnett’s typically bullying comic style becomes part of the horror of an almost unendurable scene” (121). Such an assertion may be justifiable, if the transference from Harsnett’s ‘farce’ to Shakespeare’s tragedy of the word *corky* had actually taken place. What might have been a coincidental recurrence is declared an intentional reiteration; ‘repetition as transvaluation’ is assumed when there might have been no relation between the two uses.

The efforts to establish the connection between the two texts are obviously strained; so is the attempt to construe the play as a ‘transvaluation’ of the official ideological position, that is, as sympathetic to the persecuted Catholics in England. Greenblatt suggests that the play can be read as “an allegory in which Catholicism is revealed to be the persecuted legitimate elder brother forced to defend himself by means of theatrical illusions against the cold persecution of his skeptical bastard brother Protestantism” (121). Such a reading is certainly entertainable. However, the problem arises when a possibility is asserted as a historical fact. Greenblatt seeks to anchor the play’s alleged sympathy toward the English Catholics to a supposed contemporary reception of the play. Citing an incidence of a travelling company of players whose repertoire included *King Lear, Pericles*, and a Catholic saint play, and who, together with their hosts, ‘were denounced for their recusancy by their Puritan neighbor’ after a 1610 performance at a Yorkshire recusant gentleman’s manor house. Greenblatt concludes: “It is difficult to resist the conclusion that someone in Stuart Yorkshire believed that *King Lear*, despite its apparent staging of a fraudulent possession, was not hostile, was strangely sympathetic even, to the situation of persecuted Catholics” (122). It is questionable, however, whether the players actually selected *King Lear* to perform on that specific day and whether ‘the
Puritan neighbor' or recusant hosts were primarily reacting to the play in question or other explicitly anti-Reformation plays, if there had been any, in the repertoire.

All of these vulnerable links, which attest to the attenuated relationship between Harsnett and Shakespeare, are drawn from and in turn have an unsettling effect upon Greenblatt’s entire project of constructing the ‘larger cultural text.’ Although Greenblatt attempts to locate both texts within the transitory period when religious authority was being contested through ‘bitter struggles over religious doctrines and practice,’ such an endeavor seems to be belied by his own methodology. Just as the Geertzian thick description traverses the complex network of institutions, practices and beliefs only to end in constituting the culture as an inescapable cobweb of significations aligned to the symbolic center, the anecdotal instantiation of the ideological and institutional contestation among the competing religious authorities of the post-Reformation England is subsumed under one authoritative voice of Harsnett’s, which for Greenblatt represents the dominant discursive formation. In Greenblatt’s account, the dissident voices of Catholics or Puritans are occasionally allowed to be heard: nonetheless, it is an audition refracted through Harsnett’s or other associate writers’ documentation of prosecution.

Furthermore, it is often confusing to tell who is speaking in condemnation of exorcist ritual. Consider this: “The significance of exorcism, then, lies not in any intrinsic quality of the ritual or in the character of the marks of possession but in the impression made upon the minds of the spectator” (100). The interpreter’s voice is continually merged into the voice of the Anglican chaplain, whose argument of exorcism as counterfeiting theatre is followed ad verbatim by no less a ‘skeptic witness’ of the twentieth-century: “what seems spontaneous is rehearsed, what seems involuntary carefully crafted, what seems unpredictable scripted” (106). In brief, Greenblatt’s ‘thick description’ does not interpret but replicates or even reinforces the ideologically constructed analogy between theatre and exorcism. The result is not merely a forestalling of the possibility in any authentic quality of exorcism but a virtual displacement of the non-conformist positions from what Greenblatt himself sees as “an intense and sustained struggle in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England to redefine the central [religious] values of society” (95).
This is in turn related to the larger framework of which the essay on King Lear is a part: *Shakespearean Negotiations: Circulation of Social Energy in the Renaissance England*. Greenblatt's central concept of 'circulation' presupposes a smooth penetration of dominant ideologies throughout the multi-layered social formation, whatever mediations, i.e., *negotiations*, intervene between the different levels of practices and institutions. Both Geertz's interpretive anthropology and Foucault's concept of *episteme* as a closed cognitive system are the decisive influence. Likewise, the concept of *social energy* derives from Geertz's 'charisma' and Foucault's 'power,' although Greenblatt directly draws upon sixteenth-century writers like George Puttenham. While the 'circulation of social energy' with the intermediary 'negotiations' is a powerful theoretical construct to explain the social process in a constant flux, it also tends to produce a totalizing account of culture, subsuming the diverse trends and movements of a complex cultural formation under a dominant, all-inclusive discursive formation. This is why and how Greenblatt insists upon a chain of co-relations where there are pockets of disjunction. In such an overintegrative account of social process even the consciously oppositional and radically alternative practices are seen to function as a corollary of what they attempt to contest, subvert, or replace. One immediate consequence is that any social change becomes inconceivable, since culture is conceptualized as a reproductive system in which established cultural assumptions and values are constantly reaffirmed even when they are questioned and unsettled.

How, then, does Greenblatt reach a conclusion that seems to eschew the theoretical impasse? How does he disconnect the discursive chain or posit a stoppage in the circulatory process? *Shakespearean negotiations* -- that is, the theatrical mediation via transvaluation or evacuation of Harsnett's 'official ideology.' I doubt, however, if such a conclusion enables a reconceptualization of social process, or if it makes a substantial difference from a formalist reading of the play. In my view, the difficulty stems from the terms of 'transvaluation.' A particular discursive instance or level -- exorcism and its representation in hegemonic religious discourse -- continually slips into another by virtue of permeability of boundaries, until the process of circulation comes to its culmination, and virtually a full-stop, in aesthetic, literary discourse of *King Lear*. Once the social
energy is driven into the marginal institution of theatre, any possible route to re-channel the social energy back into the society remains unconceptualized, except by means of aesthetic transcendence: “In its aesthetic self-consciousness, King Lear transcends all ideologies” (“Devil Fiction” 241).

If such an assertion is not a return to the formalist conception of literary texts, it might as well be a subtler form of containment. The claim on the transformative, refigurative power of art that Greenblatt brings to the closing moment of his reading has in fact two ramifications. On the one hand, the theatre (the aesthetic or the literary) is re-confined within the marginalized yet privileged domain (the a-political or the transhistorical). On the other hand, the critical project of lifting up the boundaries between literary foreground and historical background results in a paradoxical inversion; a critical construct of historical foreground and literary background emerges. For a glimpse of ideological and institutional contestation in the selected social text is eventually absorbed into the literary text, which for its self-empowerment ‘evacuates’ if not effaces ‘everything it represents.’ This is why, I believe, New Historicism has been criticized for aestheticization of the social, for its historical formalism.

Aestheticization is the least appropriate word to describe the character of Jonathan Dollimore’s “King Lear and Essentialist Humanism” (1984: 189-203). For this cultural materialist critic, “plays like Lear precisely disallow ‘transcendences’” (196). A prominent feature of the essay is its refusal to subscribe to the aesthetic, more specifically affective, power of the play. While Greenblatt attends to the gratuitous cruelty acted upon the persecuted in Lear and the intensified sympathy for them as the site of the dramatic transvaluation, Dollimore explicitly repudiates ‘pity’ partly from a Brechtian perspective. That is, empathy is an ineffectual tool for social change and often works to conceal the social contradictions that have produced human suffering. The distinct yet related ground for Dollimore’s rejection of sympathy derives from his contention with the dominant critical tradition of the twentieth century – that is, ‘essentialist humanism.’ Dollimore seems to place his reading of the play in a context more complex than Greenblatt’s historicist reading. While Greenblatt occasionally acknowledges an indirect-ness of the
access to the historical past, Dollimore stresses the necessity of critically engaging with the present constructions of the literary text transmitted from the past.

Dollimore claims that his work is an "exploration of the political dimension of Lear" (190). In particular, he focuses on the processes by which the play reveals the human subjectivity as a social construct rather than an essential identity: "In Lear, man is decentered...in order to make visible the social process and its forms of ideological misrecognition" (191). Dollimore takes issue with the various forms of essentialist humanism—Christian, Ethical, Existentialist—each of which contests the preceding tradition but is invariably predicated on "the categories of idealist culture," such as "suffering, affirmation and regeneration." The humanist view is rejected on the ground that "it mystifies suffering and invests man with a quasi-transcendent identity whereas the play does neither of these things" (190). From Dollimore's materialist viewpoint, the humanist 'apotheosis' of man 'fatalises social dislocation' by displacing the causes of suffering from the realm of the human and "confirming man's impotence to alleviate the social condition" (194).

What the play offers is exactly the opposite: a radical critique of the ideological misrecognition whereby characters of the play, and the humanist critics as well, are continually induced to reaffirm the human values already disintegrated by social contradictions. In Dollimore's view, these values are "not antecedent to the material realities but are, on the contrary, in-formed by them" (197); they serve to function, nonetheless, as "an ideological ratification of the very power structure which eventually destroys them" (193). In this context, Dollimore argues, King Lear decenters the concept of 'man' as a social construct; the play also demystifies power and authority as embedded in the material relations of the society. Thus, the play is redefined as "a play about power, property and inheritance" (197), in which the laws of 'human kindness' are seen to operate in the service of property, contracts, and power relations. In this materialist reading, Cordelia's filial transgression, placed within the context of property and dowries, shows that "even kinship then—indeed especially kinship—is in-formed by the ideology of property relations" (199).
Dollimore’s analysis of the family obviously draws upon Louis Althusser’s concept of ‘ideological state apparatuses’ by and through which dominant ideologies are reproduced throughout the social levels and internalized within the individual subjects. This explains the peculiar effects of ideological misrecognition, that is, why Lear and Gloucester cling even more tenaciously to the ‘human values,’ which, in Dollimore’s view, are ‘precisely the values which precipitated the social disintegration’: “Hence even as society is being torn apart by conflict, the ideological structure which has generated that conflict is being reinforced by it” (200). The dominant ideology is so deeply internalized that the individual subjects perpetuate the social conditions, even as they protest against them. Accordingly, Dollimore discounts the force of Lear’s and Gloucester’s protests against social injustice because they are not only intermittent and inconsequential but also made in terms of human values. Where, then, is the ‘radical critique’ to be located within the play? Edmund seems to occupy the standpoint from which such a critique can be produced.

By virtue of his oblique relation to the dominant social relations, this bastard son of the nobility brings the whole configuration of the ideological legitimation to the fore. In his soliloquy Edmund repudiates ‘the plague of custom’ and becomes an advocate of human identity as social construct, an agent of “revolutionary scepticism” (201). The agent himself is in turn discredited because his pursuit of a profitable position within the society cancels out the ‘revolutionary insight’ as an alternative, made only to serve an existing system of values: “Edmund embodies the process whereby... a revolutionary (emergent) insight is folded back into the dominant ideology” (201). Nonetheless, Dollimore represents the character as spokesman of the ‘materialist thinkers’ of the Renaissance by juxtaposing Edmund’s ‘insight’ with passages of a similar implication from Bacon and Montaigne. This calls attention to the larger context of Dollimore’s ‘materialist reading’ of King Lear.

As I pointed out, Dollimore’s dual objective is to develop a critical perspective which both recovers an historical understanding of subjectivity in the Jacobean period and its drama, and counters the essentialist ‘misrepresentation’ of the period and drama in modern literary criticism. However, his emphasis inclines heavily toward “the cultural
appropriation of the Renaissance in our own time” (175), which unwarrantedly entails an inadequately simplified view of the historical past. The Marxist grand narrative of history as successive stages of class struggle provides the larger framework in which Dollimore contextualizes the Jacobean drama as a cultural field contested between the dominant idealist and the emergent materialist traditions of the Renaissance. Although Dollimore seems to draw upon Raymond Williams’s formulation of ‘residual-dominant-emergent culture’ as constituting a social formation at a particular historical moment, his conception of historical process proves rather macro-diachronic. For he sees an uninterrupted line of continuity between Marx, Brecht, Foucault, Althusser, Gramsci on the one hand and Machiavelli, Galileo, Bacon, Montaigne on the other, claiming that “the one has its roots in the other” (154). By contrast, the post-Enlightenment humanism is seen as a mutation of the Renaissance Christian or Neo-Stoic humanism, partly on the ground of periodic disjunction and partly for strategic reasons, that is, for his critical challenge against the latter-day humanism. Oddly enough, materialism becomes historically transcendent, while idealism historically specific.

The disparity in fact derives from Dollimore’s view of the Renaissance as a break between two distinct epistemes, a period in which “the essentialist conception of man was in vulnerable state of transition...between Christian/metaphysical formulations and the later secular/Enlightenment mutations of these” (155). During the transition, Dollimore argues, the materialist view emerged with its decentering of human nature as socially constructed. Such a diachronic view has certain advantages over the kind of synchronic account that Greenblatt advances in terms of circulatory social process within a relatively closed system. Above all, the larger historical forces in conflict underlying the visible exchanges and negotiations become discernible. In Dollimore’s account, however, these historical forces are rarely seen in their interactive phase; the two opposed discursive formations — idealist and materialist — are treated as if each had resided in an isolated domain of its own, only connected over time to the modern offshoots.

More problematic is the unbalanced account of each discursive formation. While Dollimore seeks to locate internal tensions within the dominant idealist formation, he only finds a successive degree of reinforcement in the alternative tradition of the
Renaissance materialism. Calvinism is said to have replaced the medieval Providentialism, only to find itself in a formidable task of forestalling the advent of a more secularized Renaissance individualism that it unleashed. The emphasis on the contradictions within the idealist humanist formation does not lead to an understanding of its complexity, however. By arguing that “Calvinism creates a destabilizing tendency but was a variant rather than a denial of the same essentialism” (167), Dollimore is only intent on suggesting that the ‘dominant’ formation, enervated by its own contradictions, became vulnerable to the more aggressive force of materialism. Accordingly, the materialist formation is represented not in its variations or potential contradictions but as something like a united front operating on different yet related battlegrounds: Thomas More is cited for “lack of the idea of fixed human nature.” Machiavelli for “man as political agent,” Montaigne and Bacon for “move[ment] away from ‘nature’ to custom [i.e., ideology]” and Hobbes for “thoroughly anti-essentialist, uncompromising materialism” (169-74). A ‘fundamental contradiction’ is noted in the case of Montaigne - - “refusing ideology but at the same time circumscribed by it” (173) – but this point appears merely in a passing remark.

It is within this disproportionate contextualization of discursive formations that Dollimore places the Jacobean drama, which, he contends, derived its ‘radicalism’ from both the strength of materialist tradition and the vulnerability of humanist tradition.

It is not necessary to see the radicalism of the drama as constituting an absolute break with dominant cultural forms: rather, it emerges, at least initially, from potential contradictions within those forms. But by being (for example) intensified and/or transposed, these same contradictions become challenges to those forms... More important is... the way that Jacobean tragedy drew on estimates of human nature which were largely outside, or even in opposition to, these dominant forms and their internal strains (168).

This statement, which gives us little sense of interaction between the dominant and the alternative formations except in terms of ‘opposition’ or even non-relation (‘outside’), is indicative of the interpretive method Dollimore deploys in his reading of King Lear. While insisting upon the homology between the Renaissance materialism and its articulation by a dramatic character, the ‘materialist reading’ does not take account of the
ways in which such an articulation, enabled by the agent's 'exclusion from society,' are eventually made to 'serve the existing system of values.' For more than the personal motive of the agent must be at stake here. The difficulty then stems from the displacement of 'the idealist culture and its categories,' which supposedly are pre-empted by 'revolutionary skepticism.' If, as Dollimore admits, the idealist humanist discourses still occupied the dominant position during the transitional period, they must have set certain limits to the extent and even the nature of the emergent cultural categories of the 'Renaissance materialism.' It is in interaction, not in isolation, that an emergent or counter-hegemonic discourses can put pressures upon the limits imposed by a dominant or hegemonic discourses.

Dollimore seems in fact to be conscious of the delimited space within the play for a materialist perspective to secure its ground, as he closes his reading with a 'refusal of closure.' Marking a distance from his earlier assertion that "Jacobean tragedy prefigures the central tenet of materialist analysis" (153) – namely, demystification of the essentialist concept of man and clarification of the 'real' historical conditions that determine the individual subjectivity – Dollimore acknowledges the persistence of suffering and pity, the intractable 'human values.' at the very end of the play. The final resolution for the critic is again to refute a subscription to the emotional power of the play. By now, however, the ground of rejection is much narrowed, the force of critique much alleviated. Finding in the despairing exclamations at the sight of Cordelia's death a false attempt by the characters to recuperate the society in terms of 'human' values, Dollimore proclaims that these values have been already exposed to 'sceptical interrogation.' In this he seems to withdraw the earlier proposition of 'revolutionary scepticism.' The final statement thus comes in a mixture of assertion and appeasement.

The timing of these two deaths [i.e., Cordelia's and Lear's] must surely be seen as cruelly, precisely, subversive: instead of complying with the demands of formal closure – the convention which would confirm the attempt at recuperation – the play concludes with two events which sabotage the prospect of both closure and recuperation (203).
The 'subversion' of idealist cultural categories by the materialist counterparts may have taken place among the subjects in the playhouse of the Jacobean London, while it surely occurs in the oppositional reading of a cultural materialist critic. It is not certain, though, whether the 'sabotage' was initiated by the play which admittedly persists to articulate human values, or dictated by the critic who leaves the significance of the interaction between the recuperative attempts as limits and the interrogative perspective as pressures largely unaccounted.

The contrast in Greenblatt's and Dollimore's work on King Lear can be summarized in various ways: respective emphasis on synchronic operation or diachronic development of discursive formations; deployment of a mode of analysis that seeks to locate the relational or the disjunctive; conception of culture in terms of poetics or politics; priority of critical engagement primarily with the past or the present; role of critical practice as ideologically neutral interpretation or politically committed intervention. The variations seem almost infinite, all of which, however, point backward to the subversion-containment debate, and forward, more significantly, to the necessity of constructing intermediary, alternative, and even superceding positions that would both dissolve the dichotomy and combine the strength of new historicism and cultural materialism. Such interpretive positions should be able to envision, in the first place, a more productive mode of analysis whereby the social process of cultural production is seen in its complexity of relations and disjunctions. For an alternative theoretical position from which to avoid both too slippery and too rigid formulations of 'discursive formation' or 'ideology,' now I turn to Stuart Hall's concepts of 'articulation-disarticulation-rearticulation' and 'negotiated reading position.'

IV

Stuart Hall's "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms" (1981) addresses the theoretical problems in the "culturalist-structuralist debate" within Marxist theory of culture and/or ideology. Many lines of divergence between the culturalist and the structuralist positions...
flow from the counterposition of human agency and social structure, which can be traced back to Marx' controversial formulation: "Men make their own history, but on the basis of conditions which are not of their own making" (Marx 1968: 96). The culturalist conception of human beings as active agents in the making of their own history is sharply opposed to the structuralist notion of individuals as bearers of the structures that determine their place and consciousness. The culturalist stress on human agency accounts for its penultimate concern for historical changes, whereas the stress on determinate conditions enables the structuralists to grasp how, in spite of the human intervention, the society reproduces itself. Accordingly, the structuralist problematics has been centered upon the concept of “ideology,” without which the effectivity of culture for the reproduction of a particular mode of production cannot be grasped. By contrast, the key term in culturalist analysis is “culture,” although the term ideology occurs not infrequently.

Raymond Williams defines culture as “the way of life as a whole, the general social process.” In turn, he defines the theory of culture as “the study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life” with its focus on the “nature of the organization which is the complex of these relationships” (Williams 1965: 61). Williams’ stress on the complexity of social process is a part of his larger efforts to reconceptualize the base-superstructure dichotomy underlying the whole tenet of Marxist social theory. In place of economic determinism embedded in the formula of base and superstructure, Williams offers a radical interactionism, a more active idea of social structure as a field of mutually determining forces. While the complexity of social process is constituted by the fluidity and interrelatedness with which different levels of social practices move into and out of one another, this complexity is reducible, in the last instance, to the simplicity of “praxis,” human activity as such. For, in Williams’ view, social relations cannot be adequately thought in terms of structure that dispense with human subject: “Determinate natural laws operate external to and independent of human will, but determinate social process is always working interdependent with human will and practice; the given condition is maintained or changed by practice” (1977: 86). Final emphasis lies on ‘experientiality,’ and the aim of cultural analysis is thus to grasp how the interactions between different levels of social practices are ‘lived’ and experienced by the human agents.

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Althusser’s seminal formulation of ideology defines it as the themes, concepts and representations through which men and women live, in an ‘imaginary’ relation, their relation to their real conditions of existence. Ideologies are here conceptualized, not as the contents and surface forms of ideas, but as the underlying categories through which conditions are represented and lived. As such, ‘ideology’ seriously undermines the culturalist dependence on experientiality. In culturalism experience is the ground where consciousness and conditions intersect; in structuralism one could only live and experience one’s conditions in and through the categories, classifications and frameworks of the culture. These categories do not arise from experience, rather experience is their effect; so is consciousness that organizes experience as such. In culture and in language, the subject is spoken by the categories of culture in which he or she thinks, rather than speaking them. For Althusser, these categories are unconscious structures: “Ideology is indeed a system of representation, but in the majority of cases these representations have nothing to do with “consciousness”... it is above all as structures that they impose on the vast majority of men, not via their “consciousness”... it is within this ideological unconsciousness that men succeed in altering the “lived” relation between them and the world and acquiring that new form of specific unconsciousness called “consciousness” (1977: 233).

As the unconscious is structured like language for Lacan, so is ideology for Althusser. Therefore, it is ideology that speaks through and “interpellates” the subject rather than the subject acting upon it. No space for human agency, then, is allowed since the human will and action are always already determined by the internal relations between the unconscious structures whose operation cannot be accounted in terms of human intervention. “Ideology is forever” as is the unconscious. It is precisely from its appropriation of linguistic paradigm and psychoanalytical concepts that structuralism derives its a-historical and synchronic stress, as opposed to the historical emphasis of culturalism. The causal logic of determination is abandoned in favor of a structural causality - a logic of internal relations, of articulation of parts within a structure, of spatial arrangement rather than temporal sequence.

Stuart Hall is equally critical of both culturalist and structuralist formulations in which experience and ideology are linked, although he generally inclines toward the Althusserian
position. In Hall’s view, Williams gives too little emphasis to structure and tends to elevate experience while conceptually devaluing ideology. In particular, Hall notes the inadequacy of culturalist notion of human praxis as a conceptual tool for sociological analysis. The limitation in Althusser’s version of ideology, by contrast, is its insufficient attention to ideological conflict and to the specific balance of forces in a particular juncture of social practices. For Hall, it is Althusser’s “functionalism” that produces an “overintegrative” account of ideological reproduction, which in turn entails that the “ideological state apparatuses” reproduce the already given ruling ideology and cancel out “the struggle and contestation for the space in which to construct an ideological hegemony” (1988: 47). Within the functionalist cast, accordingly, ideology is seen to operate without contradiction and becomes a seamless whole, in which everything is pre-determined by the existing structures, and any possibility of social change, or human intervention, remains inconceivable.

While criticizing limitations on both culturalist and structuralist positions, Hall attempts to combine their respective strengths in order to develop a more fully dynamic model with a greater emphasis on the ideological contestation involved both in constructing and sustaining a particular hegemony and in opposing and attempting to change it. On the one hand, Hall incorporates Antonio Gramsci’s concept of “hegemony” as a term for mediation between the unconsciousness of cultural categories and the conscious intervention by human agency. The strength of “hegemony” lies in its insistence on relating the whole social process to specific distribution of power and influence, thus opening up a field of conflict and contestation, while its acknowledgement of the ideological process as one of internalization, saturation, or information endorses the Althusserian proposition of ideology. It is not, however, that Hall is merely attempting a balancing act between the essentially binary conception of ideology and subject, imagining subjectivity as occasionally “operating independently of ideology” (“Ideology/Subject” 115). Rather, his is a radical revision of ideology in that it is redefined as essentially contradictory: “… we must conceptualize the process by which the dominant ideology reproduces itself as a contradictory and contested one” (1988: 48). What should be grasped then is not ideology per se but a particular moment of the reproductive process at which different, conflicting
forces intersect to appropriate the existing ideological meanings. Hall describes such process with the concepts of articulation, disarticulation and rearticulation of ideological discourses:

The notion of the dominant ideology and the subordinate ideology is an inadequate way of representing the complex interplay of different ideological discourses in any developed modern society. Nor is the terrain of ideology constituted as a field of mutually exclusive and internally self-sustaining discursive chains. They contest one another, often drawing on a common, shared repertoire of concepts, rearticulating and disarticulating them with different systems of difference or equivalence...

... A particular ideological chain becomes a site of struggle, not only when people try to displace, rupture or contest it by supplanting it with some wholly new set of alternative set of terms, but also when they interrupt the ideological field and try to transform its meaning by changing or re-articulating its associations, for example, from the negative to the positive. Often, ideological struggle actually consists of attempting to win some new set of meanings for an existing term or category, of dis-articulating it from its place in a signifying structure (1985: 104, 112).

Within the purview of this formulation, the ideological field of English Renaissance studies is seen to have insistently subscribed to a simplified view of ideology entrenched in the opposition of dominant and subordinate, or hegemonic and counter-hegemonic, whether the emphasis rests on the pervasiveness of a self-contained discursive formation or on the mutual exclusion of two different sets of ideological meanings. Not only does Hall’s concept of “articulation” acknowledge a more complicated process of ideological reproduction; it also suggests ideological meanings are always situational or positional, constructed along the various and competing trajectories of subject positions.

In particular, Hall provides a hypothetical model of different reading positions in media reception (“Encoding/Decoding”). Most relevant to our context is his concept of “negotiated-corporate position,” which takes place between “dominant-hegemonic” and “oppositional” reading positions. While acknowledging the legitimacy of hegemonic significations on the global level, the negotiated position nonetheless makes its own ground rules by applying the “local conditions” to the dominant readings of events or issues in question. In turn, ensuing contradictions between the local and the global levels are made
visible but only on certain occasion. This intermediate position is then neither fully contained nor immediately turned into subversion. Rather, it is precariously situated in a form of potential act. Its specific articulation, determined under a particular circumstance, can be redirected into the dominant or the oppositional signification. Otherwise, it may be able to advance a radical alternative of itself. In any case, it is not completely absorbed into the existing social or discursive structure but brings about changing relationships among the distinct reading positions.

The term "negotiating" in my title posits this intermediary reading position as a central premise of this study. By being situated in the negotiated position we can avoid both absolute containment and totalized subversion, and begin to see the ideological meanings reproduced in the English Renaissance theatre as at once structured and structuring -- in a constant flux of construction and contestation, or of articulation-disarticulation-rearticulation. Conceived in the hope of overcoming the prevailing binarism in the recent historical criticism, the following study takes issue with the predominant theoretical paradigms and critical assertions of new historicism, cultural materialism and competing quarters of feminist criticism of Shakespeare. Thus, each chapter of the study begins with a separate introduction which foregrounds the binarism in the present understanding of the English Renaissance theatre and the Shakespearean drama. Subsequently, in two or three distinct yet related sections of each chapter, I shall explore the possibility of a negotiated reading position in relation to particular topics.

In Chapter Two, I investigate the methodological and ideological assumptions underlying the scholarship of English Renaissance theatre audience studies since the beginning of the present century. In this chapter, I locate the theoretical and interpretative problems, especially in regard to the historical perspective, which are replicated in the historical criticism. I will further present recent revisions on the subject in order to ground a
spectatorial position of the theatre audience in Elizabethan-Jacobean London that neither subscribes to an immediate subversion nor is readily susceptible to containment.

Chapter Three, consisting of two distinct sections, focuses on the place of citizens in London's symbolic economy. In the first section, I attend to the 'street drama' of royal processions -- Queen Elizabeth's coronation entry in particular -- to define the role of citizens as spectator and/or actor in the theatrically staged political event. The following section is an attempt to locate the places of citizens in the 'stage drama' by examining Shakespeare's history plays -- The First Tetralogy, Richard II and King John — within the stage structure of the Elizabethan-Jacobean playhouse. An analysis of Shakespeare's depictions of "Citizens" as a collective identity will show the negotiated position that the middling sort take up in their relation to those above and below in the social order. In both sections I contend against the new historicist trope of 'politics of spectacle' and its binary formulation of rulers vs. ruled.

Chapter Four joins the current debates within feminist criticism of Shakespeare. The first section considers the liberal feminist formulation of 'women's solidarity' by looking at the social differences among the women audience in the London theatres as well as the female characters of Shakespeare's plays. My thesis in this section may seemingly be contradicted by the following section, in which I offer a detailed reading of All's Well That Ends Well in an attempt to reformulate the question of female subjectivity, a key concept in the debate between 'liberal/essentialist' and 'historicist/materialist' feminism. The apparent contradiction may turn into a complementary perspective, however, as I seek to combine the strength of each position.

Chapter Five is primarily concerned with the ideological functions of the Renaissance theatre. Here I investigate the critical issue of 'theatrical power and powerless theatre.' By focusing upon the transformation of London into a metropolis, I attempt to revise Steven Mullaney's symbolic topography of 'the place of stage' into a realistic map. I also attend to both the vulnerability and potency of theatre as an emergent cultural practice and institution by relocating it at the interstices between the 'documents of control' and the urban popular culture of London. The focal point is the relation between the institutional status of public theatres and the specific modes of reception that the urban middling sort of people --

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particularly apprentices of London — produced in Shakespeare’s theatre. Thereby, I try a
final account of the competing models of subversion and containment, change and
continuity, elite and popular cultures, or politics and poetics of culture.

One last word in regard to my title, “Negotiating with Shakespeare.” By this phrasing
I acknowledge that no study of the past is totally separated from, or uninformed by, the
present, that the historical distinction between past and present is relative rather than
absolute. The mutual implication of past and present has been recognized and even
emphasized within the movement of contemporary historical criticism itself. Of the
critic’s historical situatedness Louis Montrose states: “Not only the poet but also the
critic exists in history” (1989: 24). Leah Marcus also applies such situatedness both to
past literature and critical discourse on it: “‘localization’ is an idea we need to apply to
ourselves as readers as well as to what we read” (1988: 36). Nevertheless, the historical
criticism as a general movement, and new historicism in particular, has been much
criticized for its “one-way historicism that sheds the present to enter the past” (Erickson
1991: 2). As such, the new historicists are liable to the charge that they are “rewriting the
Renaissance in their own images and from their own anxieties, just as the ‘old’
historicists did before them” (Collins 245). Alternatively, what we need is a new
perspective on history or historical writing that would highlight the interactions between
past and present that we construct and negotiate. Peter Erickson has succinctly expressed
the two-directional concept of the relationship between past and present: “In any critical
endeavor we may be dimly aware of an uncanny double resonance, as though we were
writing two histories at once: the history of the period from which the literature comes
and the history of our own period” (1991: 2). In order to ground a site of a dialogue
between the history of the period we look back to and the history of the period we stand
within, I begin with a reflection upon the historical perspectives deployed in the
scholarship of Renaissance theatre audience.
NOTES

1 Such is the underlying assumption of Harry Berger Jr.’s Imaginary Audition (1989). Although Berger attempts to achieve a more balanced view of the issue, he nonetheless subscribes to the binary conception of literary vs. theatrical meaning, privileging the former. A similar view was expressed earlier in Richard Levin’s “Performance-Critics vs Close Readers” (1986). W. B. Worthen, on the other hand, points out the performance critics’ complicity in the literary critics’ privileging of written texts; see his “Deeper Meanings and Theatrical Techniques” (1989).

2 This tendency was first noted by Richard Levin in New Readings vs. Old Plays (1979). James Holstun, in “Ranting at the New Historicism” (1989), produces a more rigorous critique: “If we bracket new historicist studies focusing on More, Sidney, Spenser, Milton, the Elizabethan and Jacobean lyric poets and playwrights, only a handful of books and articles remains” (p. 190).

3 For more constructive approach to the canon-question, see Jean E. Howard. “Scholarship. Theory, and More New Readings” (1986), in which she argues against Richard Levin’s skepticism about ‘new readings’: “A reading of a Shakespeare play is an occasion for a complex contemporary interaction with a classic text: it is inevitably an occasion for creation by which the critic acknowledges his or her own place in history” (p. 138). In her subsequent article, “The New Historicism in Literary Studies” (1986), Howard continues: “The goal of such a dialogue [between past and present] is not, certainly, the willful reproduction of the present in the mirror of the past, but involves steady acknowledgement that the past is not transparent and that pursuit of history is neither objective nor disinterested” (p. 23). In “Shakespeare (De)Canonized” (1988), Robert Weimann also refuses to “subscribe to either the traditional naturalizing mode of canonization or, for that matter, a deconstructionist position which, beyond all considerations of the cultural uses and values of Shakespeare, presumes to rewrite literary history outside the dialectic of continuity and discontinuity” (p. 67).

4 Sinfield advanced a more sustained assessment of Shakespeare’s ideological function in the British political context in an earlier article, “Give an Account of Shakespeare and Education” (1985). Writing from a deconstructionist position, Howard Felperin (1990) provides a supportive argument: “Without a canon and its record of re-inscription, there would be no ground on which literary studies could oppose the state and its strategies of containment by teaching the curriculum against the grain. Nor would there be any basis without it on which to construct the newer historicism some of us might envision” (p. viii; see also p. 190).

5 The terms come from an analysis of Shakespeare’s Coriolanus in chapter 1 (1992: 1-29) cited above. Sinfield seems to subscribe to the ‘orthodox’ and somehow obsolete Marxist
view of history, recapitulated in Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* (1981). While Jameson's work has been much criticized, by British Marxist critics like Terry Eagleton, for its teleological view of history, Greenblatt’s critique of Jameson in “Towards a Poetics of Culture” (1989) is certainly unwarranted. I shall return to this issue in one of the main chapters.

6 Foucault may have been bewildered at the unexpected ramifications of his work in American literary criticism, although he himself is not entirely free of such ‘slippage.’ A good introduction to Foucault’s impact on the discipline of history is found in Patricia O’Brien’s “Michel Foucault's History of Culture” (1989).


8 Walter Cohen provides a comprehensive account of differences as well as similarities between the two approaches: see his “Political Criticism of Shakespeare” (1987).

9 For the contrasted political and institutional contexts of new historicism and cultural materialism, see Don Wayne, “Power. Politics, and the Shakespearean Text” (1985).

10 In fact, Dollimore acknowledges that “nothing can be intrinsically or essentially subversive” in the sense that, prior to the social or textual event, subversiveness can be no more than potential: “...it cannot be guaranteed a priori, independent of articulation, context and reception. Nor, independently of context, can anything said to be safely contained” (p. 13). See his “Introduction: Shakespeare. Cultural Materialism and the New Historicism” in *The Political Shakespeare*, pp. 2-17.


12 For a balanced review of sociological and historical approaches and their conceptual tools, see Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory* (1992).


15 Carol Thomas Neely provides a good introduction, combining a critique of new historicism and cultural materialism, in “Constructing the Subject” (1988).
For a pair of such opposite views, see Diane E. Dreher, *Domination and Defiance* (1986) and Peter Erickson, *Patriarchal Structures in Shakespeare’s Drama* (1985).

There are numerous works produced within each position. To cite just a few, I would select Carol Thomas Neely’s *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare* (1985) for liberalist viewpoint, Marilyn French’s *Shakespeare’s Division of Experience* (1981) for culturalist work, and Lisa Jardine’s *Still Harping On Daughters* (1983) and Catherine Belsey’s *Subject of Tragedy* (1985) for materialist work.


In addition to Leinwand’s “Negotiation and New Historicism” (1990), another incisive study of middling sort of people has been offered in David Harris Sacks. “Searching for Culture” (1988).

For a similar reading of *Coriolanus*, see Patterson (1989), chapter 6. “‘Speak, speak!’: The Popular Voice and the Jacobean State,” which focuses on the national context rather than the urban context of London that Leinwand highlights.

21. The essay is an expanded version of “*Lear* and Harsnett’s ‘Devil Fiction’” (1982).

22. For the earlier articulation of the issue, see Greenblatt’s “Introduction” to *Power of Forms* (1984).

23. Such tendency was noted by R. A. Foakes (1992), who writes: “New historicist anecdotal method, in which some minor event or curious happening is described at length in order to reveal some tangential relationship, often a slight or marginal one, to a play” (73).


25. The method is reminiscent of the ‘genetic structuralism’ espoused by Lucien Goldmann, who seeks to find a structural homology between two distinct genres of literature – philosophical writing of Pascal and drama of Racine (*The Hidden God*).

26. As Jean E. Howard (1986) notes, recent critical tendency to construe the Renaissance as “a boundary or liminal space between two more monolithic periods where one can see acted out a clash of paradigms and ideologies” reflects the concerns of late twentieth-century culture and is predicated on “certain contemporary understandings of our own historical moment as the post-humanist epoch” (pp.16-7).
For culturalism, Hall refers to the whole corpus of E. P. Thompson's and Raymond Williams' work, best developed in The Poverty of Theory (1978) and Marxism and Literature (1977), respectively. For structuralism, Louis Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" in Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays (1977) and other works by Althusser are discussed.

Hall's articles to which I specifically refer are: "Some Problems with the Ideology/Subject Couplet" (1978); "Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates" (1985); "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall" (1986); "The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism among the Theorists" (1988).

Williams argues that ideology is too formal and narrow to take in the experiential subtleties. His alternative concept is that of "structure of feeling": "'Feeling' is chosen to emphasize the distinction from the more formal concepts of 'world-view' or 'ideology'" (Marxism and Literature, p. 132). His generally negative stance toward 'ideology' continues in his Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society (1976), pp. 153-57.

Hall's incorporation of Gramsci's view into a discussion of 'ideology' is attempted in "Gramsci's Relevance" (1986). For Gramsci's influence on British Marxism, see David Forgacs, "Gramsci and Marxism in Britain" (1989).

For such an insight, and my title as well, I am indebted to Lee Patterson, Negotiating the Past (1987).

See also Montrose's earlier article, "Renaissance Literary Studies and the Subject of History" (1986).
CHAPTER 2
RESURRECTING THE LONDON PLAYGOERS 1567-1642

I
RECONSTRUCTION OF SHAKESPEARE’S AUDIENCE

Studies of the theatre audience necessarily suppose the existence of links, revealing various degrees of intimacy, between not only what is written in the playscript and what is enacted on the stage, but also what is performed and what is perceived by the spectators. My approach does not add an exception to the rule. The questions that frame the present study are who went to the public playhouses of early modern London, what did they see, how did they respond to what they saw, and how were they affected by the dramaturgy and stage production of the English Renaissance drama. To these quite conventional questions, I am also adding a set of more pressing questions: why do we desire a knowledge of Shakespeare’s original audience, what is the use of such knowledge, and how, above all, do we know what we know about the theatre audiences of a past age?

We are not in a safe position to say that “the dead” — London playgoers of Shakespeare’s time in our case — did “contrive to leave textual traces of themselves,” except for a few notable cases (Greenblatt 1988: 1). For the most part, contemporary evidences — variously adduced by modern interpreters to different, sometimes incompatible representations of “the Elizabethan audience” — are themselves textual constructions of this ephemeral and indeed elusive collective, mostly generated by the playscripts, the antitheatrical literature of the period, and various legislations ordained to regulate the operation of professional theatres. With their respective and often conflicting interests and
biases, these documents can hardly be construed as a transparent representation of the contemporary playgoers. Neither are they of sufficient amount or range to develop a comparably consistent and convincing picture of the historical audiences. With scanty and often contradictory evidence, the best or perhaps the only option for us is an 'informed speculation.'

Many documents survive and have often been analysed, but it is harder to know what the [Elizabethan] audiences thought of the theatres - why they went, what they thought they were watching, how they perceived the theatre's relationship with the rest of their lives; most work here is guesswork, and it is worth the reader remembering that when I (or anyone else) assert that a particular text is radical or whatever, there are very few grounds for knowing if any or all of the audience saw it that way (which doesn't mean that they didn't either) (Shepherd xiv-xv).

As Simon Shepherd suggests, critical issues such as subversion-containment debate fulminated by recent historical criticism are premised on a very shaky ground. With a significant lack of reference to contemporary reception of the plays they discuss and without an acknowledgement of the inherent limitations in our access to the past, many -- but not all -- historicist critics eschewed the vexed question of historical subjects who are long dead and silent. Dubbing the "silence of the dead" with "the voices of the living," some of these critics uneasily adopt the role of "salaried, middle class shaman" (Greenblatt 1988: 1); others with a more vigorous political commitment that of "dissident critic" (Sinfield 1992: 4). Strongly visible in the context of their respective theoretical and political orientations and resulting interpretations of English Renaissance drama, the differences between new historicists and cultural materialists collapse in their possessively appropriative if not evidently condescending stance towards the historical subjects of the past (Cartelli 38).

Such and other critical stance towards the past constitute a distinct problem in generations of scholarly work devoted to "Shakespeare's audience." At one extreme, Robert Bridges (1927) deplores "Shakespeare's desire to please a part of his audience with whom we have little sympathy" (2). In a strained effort to salvage "the genius" from "a public of iron nerves," Bridges attributes the so-called Shakespearean anomalies, such as inconsistency in character, onstage representation of violence, and the lack of poetic justice,
to the playwright's "concession to the most vulgar stratum of his audience." Thus, "If, out of veneration for his genius, we admire such things, we are not conforming ourselves to him but only degrading ourselves to the level of his audience" (Bridges 28). While Bridges' condescension was obviously informed by a latent Victorian morality, his rhetoric is quite familiar. Indeed, his metaphor of "separating thorns from flowers" — which perhaps echoes A. C. Bradley's "the body and the soul of Shakespearean drama" (Bradley 367) — recapitulates the neo-classical bafflement at, and critical excision of Shakespeare's "monstrosity." Purging the parochially conceived 'universal' of whatever does not conform to the contemporary critical dogma, the prescriptive criticism of both kinds — formalist and moralist — eliminates the historical contingencies and displaces the historical subjects in favor of the critic's and his contemporaries' 'universal mind.'

On such critical premise, a knowledge of Shakespeare's audience is subsidiary at best, delegated to the undertakings of "antiquarians" to whom Bradley gestures with a condescending sympathy (Bradley 361). At its worst, as in Bridges and others, it becomes a pretext for its own cancellation, used to explain away the inessentials of Shakespearean drama and then jettisoned altogether. Andrew Gurr summarizes the place of the audience in this tradition: "Audiences are from one perspective an irrelevant nuisance, the ancients who, because they were different from us, wanted different things form the Shakespearean poets and therefore got in the way of what we would like them to have written. They are dead and gone and it is pointless to try resurrecting them" (1987: xiv. emphasis added).

It may be unfair to situate Alfred Harbage's Shakespeare's Audience (1941), the first full exploration of the subject in the present century, at the other extreme of the critical stance posed toward the past. To say the least, Harbage takes up the humble role of 'antiquarian.' His study takes a decisively sociological turn to approach the historical audience in their own right, refusing to use it as a toolkit for mending Shakespeare. In his promulgation of the Elizabethan populism, however, he tilts toward a sentimentalizing if not schematically idealizing — as in the Romantic criticism of Shakespeare — view of the past. Certainly, Harbage does not share Hazlitt's patriotism leveled against wielding the 'foreign' measure of neo-classicism to the 'native' genius of Shakespeare (Prior 110-2). Instead, he replaces the national ideology by a somewhat vaguely conceived class ideology, construing the Elizabethan working class as the largest constituency of the public theatre.
audience and Shakespeare as a determinedly ‘popular’ playwright. By transforming Bridges’ ‘those wretched beings’ into the ‘gay crowd,’ Harbage succeeds in turning the earlier arguments with the neo-classical and the latent Victorian biases on their heads, but not in dismantling their, and his own, assumption of ‘ideal vs. local audiences’ — the assumption that the plays, in their best, are meant for and thus can be only adequately judged by the ideal auditory.

Earlier critics established — but rarely articulated — this ideal auditory in the critical or interpretive activity itself by apprehending, and pointing their accusing fingers at, the local auditors in the Elizabethan playhouses. At the sacrifice of the historical audience, the critics attempted to legitimize their critical agendas — to sanction against ‘bad Shakespeare’ and defense of ‘good Shakespeare.’ Harbage’s may appear different, in that he consciously refuses to use Shakespeare’s plays as evidence for the audience, in that his “Shakespeare’s Audience” is less an a priori theoretical construct than an empirically tested hypothesis by way of sociological analysis of the audience, and further in that he acknowledges the fundamental heterogeneity of its composition. Nevertheless, this heterogeneity is eventually distilled into the binary construction of ideal and local audience. The ‘essential Shakespeare’ becomes again a grinding axis, when Harbage privileges the audience in public theatres “nurtured by Shakespeare” over those in private theatres, which “begat no second Shakespeare” (1941: 65).

More rigorously formulated in his subsequent book, Shakespeare and The Rival Traditions (1953), the division and implied antagonism between the two kinds of audiences continued to prevail in the following studies of the subject, and was established as something of an orthodox interpretation. Predictably, the development after Harbage was a double-edged one, creating two stereotypes of audiences in opposition to each other: those of public theatres as ‘robust’ and ‘popular,’ and those in private theatre as ‘decadent’ and ‘cavalier.’

This tendential view was finally hardened into a ‘fact,’ by the time that Glynne Wickham and G. E. Bentley published their massively conglomerative works, Early English Stage (1963) and The Jacobean and Caroline Stage (1941-1968), which endorsed the distinction between public and private theatre audiences in a less argumentative and more matter-of-fact manner.
However, far more interesting in the present context is Harbage’s ambiguous stance towards the past. Curiously, the exuberant celebration of Shakespeare’s theatre and its audience as “a democratic institution in an intensely undemocratic age” often slips into and intermingles with a nostalgic sentiment on the lost and irrecoverable past: “... it baffles us still - that stream of men and women melted long ago into the lengthening shadows of Southwark” (Harbage 1941: 11, 18). The confusion is telling of the problem we are considering here, that is, the conceptual framework of past-present relationship in historical inquiries. Substituting an idealized image of the past for its irrecoverability, Harbage fills in the gap with an image of the present – his own “belief in democracy and common man” (Cartwright 21). As a result, the possibility of a healthy skepticism is pre-empted by an obscuring nostalgia. The historical subjects are once again displaced, though not in their ‘culpability’ but in the blinding aura cast by the present. In that effect, veneration or idealization of the past is on the same plane with, and even a corollary to, condescension, which translates posterity into superiority. whose rhetoric of differentiation or discrimination is not incommensurate with the latter’s rhetoric of identification. Both kinds of rhetoric cancel out the possibility of channeling a dialogue between past and present, of looking to the past for its dynamics and complexities. Instead, they flatten the image of the past to the view of conveniently using it to reinforce the present assumptions and interests.

Within such a purview, one cannot but concede to Ann Jeannalie Cook’s self-avowed challenge to Harbage’s authority in *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare’s London* (1981): “Modern accounts of the audience suffers from the bias of the writer fully as much as did the contemporary accounts. As often as not, an interpretation reveals more about the interpreter’s mind than it does about the mysteries of the past” (3). For the sake of justice, however, it must also be noted that Harbage himself was not unaware of the need to “clear our minds of preconception” and to “take a long draft of the purgative of doubt,” describing the historian’s job as “a scaffolding of fact for the building of conjecture,” particularly in view of the fragmentary and biased nature of the contemporary witnesses (Harbage 1941: 4). Especially when he presents a long catalogue of contemporary descriptions of audiences “without comment,” asking the reader to “let [the documents] altogether form the synthesis” (Harbage 1941: 83), he takes pains to claim a value-neutral scholarship on his part. Whether such synthesis comes near to the truth is less important in the present
context, and will be discussed separately later in this chapter in comparison with Cook's quite opposite synthesis.

Of primary concern here is a set of assumptions underlying the claim that an unbiased presentation of evidences will lead to the knowledge of a fact. Such claim assumes, first, that a pure, uncontaminated evidence exists prior to an act of interpretation and speaks in and of itself; all we have to do is 'listen attentively.' Secondly, and consequent upon the first, that the interpreter should and could remain a detached observer doing nothing but 'present' the relevant evidence in a more or less intelligent manner; postulation of any kind on the interpreter's part is apt to warp the view. Essentially, these are the assumptions that buttress the tenet of positivist historiography of the 19th century, which presupposes that the truths are 'out there' in the empirical reality and posits an ideal role of the interpreter as vanishing mediator.4

These are also the assumptions that, ironically, Harbage identified in E. K. Chambers’ massive compilation of historical documents — *The Elizabethan Stage* (1923). Harbage is right to observe that the latter’s seemingly value-free collection of evidences has its own agenda and subtly reveals it in the particular set of arrangements by which evidences are classified, grouped and ordered. For instance, Chambers’ perambulation of the route from the royal court to the public theatre through various gradations of political hierarchy will not fail to create the impression — and is actually generated by the preconception — that “the drama of the age was an appendage of the court.” (Chambers qtd. in Harbage 1941: 141). Accordingly, Harbage questions the validity of Chambers' claim to pertaining sections of Middlesex County Records as “independent evidence.” from which he ‘deduces’ -- so claims Chambers -- that Elizabethan public theatres harbored numerous criminal activities. Harbage argues, rightly, that documents are never ‘independent.’ that there are always preceding “consideration that determined the choice of documents” (Harbage 1941: 94). In brief, what Harbage points to in his critique is precisely the problematic relationship between a body of evidence and the historian who frames and uses it for a certain purpose.5 Why, then, does Harbage himself fall back into the same positivist approach by presenting a selection of contemporary witnesses ‘without comment’? The answer may lie in the fact that, for Harbage, what is objectionable in Chambers’ work is less the methodology per se than the specific postulation, or
preconception, that the methodology is deployed to verify: that is, the court-centered view of dramatic activities and disreputable nature of the theatre audience -- the case Harbage wished to argue against. Hence his emphasis on the need to 'clear our minds of preconception' and his lack of interest in reexamining the methodological assumptions themselves.

"Preconception," indeed, is a chameleon-like word around which debates within the positivist tradition constantly revolve. Yesterday’s “fact” is today’s preconception; “their” preconception leads to falsity, ours to truth; or better still, they are infected and we are immune. The rhetoric and its underlying assumptions are hard to avoid. It is no less visible in Cook’s alternative study of the subject that, notwithstanding rigorous critiques from various quarters, the positivist tenet still holds its informative force in theatre historiography. Apart from, or rather because of, the antithetical nature of its propositions, Cook’s study is enmeshed with Harbage’s in the same assumptions, as her statement on her own research process reveals:

Admittedly, the analysis reverses the process used to arrive at the conclusion that the privileged were the chief patrons of the playhouses. The research itself actually began with a consideration of the commoners, those sensible citizens whom Harbage had always seen as the mainstay of Shakespeare’s audience. When it became impossible to square either the life style of such folk or the direct evidence with Harbage’s conclusions, a fresh look at all the specific references to the playgoers seemed justified. These references alone pointed overwhelmingly to the privileged as principal theatregoers (Cook 9-10).

Together with the implicit indictment, cited earlier, of the modern interpreters who bring their own baggage to ‘the mysteries of the past,’ Cook here reinstates the positivist notion of objectivity and presumes an attitude of rigor toward her resources. To demonstrate the dispassionate nature of her inquiry, she suggests that she initially started with Harbage’s hypothesis, only to disclaim it in the light of the “evidence.” In a quick spin, “a fresh look” was taken, under which the same evidence “alone pointed to” a fact hitherto unknown.

First of all, one may as well question whether such ‘a fresh look’ is not without its own agenda, free of any preconception that, for Cook, earlier studies and not hers are imbued. She emphasizes that a strictly inductive method was used; thus, no preconceived
conclusion was made prior to the investigation, that is, to the 'second look' at the evidence. Even if one would accept this claim at its face value, more questions arise as to the first part of her research. Why, above all, did she "consider" -- which is to say, re-consider -- Harbage's conclusions? To what purpose? To approve or disapprove would be a harsh and simplistic question to ask. Nevertheless, it may not be unreasonable to guess that such reconsideration was initiated by a speck of doubt, which loomed large in the process of testing the hypothesis against evidence. It would have been far more useful and instructive if Cook had presented this process in her book -- if she had not 'reversed the process used to arrive at [her] conclusion.' Instead, the resulting disapproval of Harbage's hypothesis on one kind of audience leads to another hypothesis, or the so-called 'fresh look.' on the opposite kind: the privileged as opposed to the common playgoers. All the precautions against "preconception" are rescinded. What follows throughout her study is an ill-fitted deductive method with which all the evidences are pressed into the firmly established hypothesis -- if not the preconception.

Out of the question, then, is the claim that the evidence of itself points to something; it is always made to speak the hypothesis the historian wishes to construe. Furthermore, we must seriously doubt that Cook, as she claims, presented "all" the available resources. For Chambers, the "fact" that Elizabethan playhouses were meeting-places of unruly people is evidenced by a few selected documents from a modern edition of judicial records of Middlesex County. The same evidence, in the hands of Harbage, tells neither more nor less than of contingent happenings in a large crowd, which would not have been necessarily the theatre audiences. Especially in consideration of the modern editor's interest in "peculiar information," Harbage cautions that such happenings might not be a fair indicator of the typical crowd behavior in the playhouses (Harbage 1941: 94). So far so good. One cannot expect, after all, the defender of the common people to restrain from adapting sources to his own agenda. In establishing the relative infrequency of such criminal activities in the theatre, as compared to those recorded to have happened outside of it, Harbage presses his argument: "At least some attempt at statistical method should precede generalization. In the limited degree to which statistical method is possible in the present case, it argues for the law-abiding nature of Elizabethan audiences" (Harbage 1941: 95, emphasis added). So.
who argues? Depending on its use and the particular context within which it is framed, the evidence tells different things to different inquirers.

Yet another case is Cook’s use, or rather disuse, of the same evidence, which has been crucial — if only partially — in determining the audience behavior. Together with the incidents of riots around playhouses figured in a series of letters between the City and the Privy Council, the criminal records are discarded as “untrustworthy as evidence” (Cook 245). For they suggest the presence of plebeians who find no legitimate place within Cook’s thesis of the privileged playgoers. The ‘fact’ that “the true patrons” were the socially privileged bars any evidence regarding the unprivileged in the audience from the picture, except in the margin. When pressed by a bulk of such evidence, Cook ghettoizes it to her final chapter on “Plebeian Playgoers,” a chapter more resembling an appendix, in which she acknowledges the plebeian presence but effectively reduces it to “no regular playgoers.” who were “far more interested in violence than in any subtleties of performance.” whose riotous behavior often led to “sheer vandalism” (Cook 228). This interpretation is a latter-day recapitulation of Chambers’ implicit argument, though a difference also emerges: the hierarchical order of things is transformed into an image of two social groups living worlds apart. Of these emerging pictures, together with Harbage’s “democratic institution,” which is the historical fact that this same body of evidence ‘points to’?

Perhaps neither. Or both, depending on where one stands in relation to ‘the mysteries of the past’ and what one looks for in the past that one looks at. The dictum that the standpoint of the historian is always the present may sound redundant. Probably that is why it is not sufficiently heeded. Far less attended is its implications for an appropriate mode of historical inquiry, which holds the distance and relativity between past and present, thus acknowledges the impossibility of an absolute knowledge. In a way or another, both Harbage and Cook make concession that the question of the past audience cannot be answered with certainty; it ‘still baffles us’ and ‘no one can be certain,’ so that speculations must be made. But in both cases it takes no more than a moment’s thought to sweep away the historical distance and pluck out the mysteries of the ancients’ hearts. So, with an astounding certitude. Cook presses her speculation into a hard fact: “In that world now vanished, it could not have been otherwise” (Cook 10). Individual attitudes may vary.
While Cook posits a definite closure to her search for the past reality by the peripheral chapter on plebeian playgoers, Harbage's concluding chapter on "Our Shakespeare and Our Audience" relocates the 'fact' in the context of the present cultural values accorded to Shakespeare -- though in an attempt to establish "the universal audience" as an unproblematic link between past and present. Both assume, in the final instance, that the realities of the past are somehow fixed and unchangeable, thus retrievable as they actually happened, provided that the historian works inductively, from specific to general, with no or minimal personal bias, that is, within the positivist tenet.

To the historians of positivist orientation, it is both impermissible and unthinkable that such working process itself is often initiated, and circumscribed to a significant extent, by an extraneous starter - extraneous, that is, to the past realities under investigation. In point of fact, however, Cook and Harbage reveal in their critique of previous studies that they did not start with 'facts,' but with the present knowledge of the field and their own -- often unarticulated -- position within it. This positionality of the historian in the present not only informs the critical agenda adopted toward the state of the present knowledge -- either to reinforce or to challenge it -- but also determines what to look for in what one looks at. This directed concern entails that the past and its realities as represented by the historian are themselves positional: only such aspects are known that come into the oblique light. so to speak. that the historian casts out on the evidence. The positivist concern with personal bias is predicated on the belief that any subjective intervention of the historian into the 'raw' material necessarily distorts the truth. But quite the opposite may be true; without a directed concern, the notorious 'preconception' or 'prejudice.' there is no possibility of knowledge (McConachie 468). For it is only when a body of records, documents or any other traces of the past are bent to a certain direction, to constitute an evidence for something, that a knowledge is yielded. In that sense, evidence does not exist prior to interpretation. For selection of 'relevant' evidence already involves an act of interpretation. Use of selective body of evidence to substantiate one's argument cannot necessarily be a blemish on the scholarly work. Rather, privileging certain evidence over other evidence is inevitable and even an indispensable part of any historical interpretation, provided that the assumptions and theses behind the choice are articulated convincingly. Not only is the historian's preconception unavoidable; more rigorously used, it can be productive.
To break away from the positivist assumptions, we should abandon the notion that historical inquiry can be free of subjective bias; instead, we should acknowledge that any historical writing inevitably involves the presence of the writer. This acknowledgement is a necessary but not sufficient condition on which to begin a productive historical inquiry. We should conceptualize, in terms of positionality, our relations to the historical realities that we investigate, making our preconceptions explicit. If, as many post-positivist historians would agree, writing history is writing ourselves, the ultimate significance of any historical inquiry lies neither in the inert historical facts sealed off in a frozen moment of the past nor in the unquestioned assumption, scholarly and cultural, of the present. Writing history is an act of mediation. As such it situates both past and present in the domain of possibility and probability rather than that of facts and certainties, opening up various options of interpretation instead of closing down to a single orthodoxy. To Cook's "It could not have been otherwise" (Cook 10), we reply, 'It may have been otherwise.'
II
SOCIAL HISTORY IN AUDIENCE STUDIES

So far I have examined the juncture between Harbage and Cook within the continuity of positivist tradition, which might look relatively insignificant in the light of their different interpretations or constructions of the historical reality they attempted to construe - that is, the kind of audiences who frequented the suburban playhouses of early modern London. That Harbage’s earlier formulation has survived the formidable criticism by Cook is ascertained by the fact that much has been written in disapproval of the latter’s counter-formulation. For Walter Cohen, “the hypothesis of primary elite spectator” is “an abstract possibility... fraught with logical and empirical problems” (1985:168). Instead, he recapitulates Harbage’s thesis: “This popular clientele, concentrated in the pit, was probably the heart of the Elizabethan public theatre audiences... that seems to have determined the financial success or failure of a play” (168). On a more theoretical ground, Michael Bristol rejects Cook’s “view of theatre as a manifestation of cultural domination,” arguing that Cook has shifted her argument from sociological description to “advocacy for a particular etiquette of reception and for a particular definition of the political and social function of the theatre” (1985:109). Perhaps the most thorough critique comes from Martin Butler, who observes that “the size and ratio between population and theatre capacity seems to point very strongly in the opposite direction from Cook’s conclusion, towards inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness” (Theatre and Crisis 298). Butler supports Harbage’s theses on “cross-section of the society” and “rival tradition” with a significant qualification that “within this broad polarity there were all sorts of subtle shadings and fine tunings which have to be observed” (304). However, these critics did not justly assess the major impact of Cook’s work in the field of audience studies; that is, a serious, if not sufficiently critical, contact with the discipline of social history. Nor did they question the theoretical premises of the social model Cook adopted to envisage “the privileged” as primary, even exclusive, constituency of the theatre audiences.

When Cook raised her voice against “the myopic preoccupation with plays and playgoers that divorces the spectators from the wider social milieu of their day and turn
them into stereotypes” (Cook 9), she clearly pointed to a generation of scholars who followed Harbage’s lead in their conception of the Elizabethan audience and, unlike Harbage, used the kind of plays as an explanation for the kind of playgoers, or vice versa. Cook’s objection is understandable, given that use of plays and playgoers as a mutually reinforcing evidence tends to create a circular argument, often to the effect that the historical audiences become interchangeable with the ‘ideal auditor’ imagined by or embodied in the literary critic. However, as I will argue later, this circularity is not necessary, provided that a conceptual mediation between literary analysis and historical interpretation of the social conditions that shaped original receptions of the plays is made. The point of interest here is Cook’s enjoinder that we should view the audience “not merely as a disembodied figure important only when he appears in a theatre but rather as part of a total milieu existing in both England as a whole and, more significantly, in the unique society of London” (Cook 10). Accordingly, her aim was to introduce social history into the area of audience studies.

Undoubtedly, Harbage aspired to the same purpose when he shifted from literary analysis to sociological description as a legitimate method for constructing historical audiences. But his was, if any, quite a limited contextualization, drawing mostly on Henslowe’s receipts and a handful of demographers. His primary purpose was to estimate the size of the audience in order to argue that the large working-class population in London constituted the main body of theatre audiences. In configuring the social structure of Elizabethan England, Harbage only refers to R. H. Tawney’s study on the census of a provincial town. He even dismissed W. B. Wright’s plentiful resources -- which might have substantially corroborated his own hypothesis -- on the ground that the latter’s was a “Marxian exegesis” (Harbage 1941: 162). Eventually, such limited resources narrowed the scope of Harbage’s work as ‘sociological description.’ What emerged as a result is the view of the theatre as an isolated pool within the wasteland of ‘Philistines,’ as “a democratic institution in an intensely undemocratic age” (Harbage 1941: 11). Apart from the validity of such claim, the first part of the assertion – theatre as a democratic institution -- may not be without supporting arguments; throughout his study, however, there is simply no ground, references, or arguments to establish the latter hypothesis – Elizabethan era as an undemocratic age. In regard to the lack of serious contact with social history, then, Cook’s
enjoinder to relate the theatre audience "to the wider context of the dramatic enterprise, the City of London, and the society of Renaissance England" (Cook 10) was more than timely, announcing the need for and advent of interdisciplinary work in the heretofore secluded field of audience studies.

However, Cook's contributions are severely limited by the ways in which the sources from social history are gathered, presented and, if ever, reinterpreted. Also we must seriously doubt that these sources are brought into a viable interaction with theatre history. First of all, they are used as circumstantial evidence -- what Cook calls "indirect evidence" -- to supplement "oblique, incomplete, biased direct evidence," which alone cannot support Cook's thesis, and only with the added weight of indirect evidence "clearly indicates the dominance of one sort of playgoer over all the others: he was the privileged playgoer" (Cook 8). This explains Cook's highly selective reliance on a particular group of historians who were mostly associated with gentry-centered historiography in the 1960s -- the so-called "the storm over gentry. Lawrence Stone best summarizes the working assumptions of this trend: "The rise of the gentry... is politically the single most important social development of the age" (1972: 75). Again, selectiveness itself is not necessarily a debilitating element in the interdisciplinary work, provided that an adequate account of 'selected among what and why' were given. Indeed, Cook names other major scholars in an acknowledgement of ongoing debates within the discipline of social history, but she then dismisses their scholarship as irrelevant or unmanageable to a theatre historian. So, after enumerating some of the critical issues in a footnote, Cook writes: "These issues may never be settled, and they certainly cannot be settled by researchers in other fields, such as theatre history. But the treasure of data built up in the course of the debates stands ready to be plundered by those who would use it for different purposes" (Cook 11). Not surprisingly, little effort is made to relate these issues to one another, far less to investigate the premises on which they are debated. Among them, only the theme of 'the rise of gentry' is selected to serve as a sole, stable ground of reference. As a result, selectiveness becomes exclusiveness, which eventually reduces the interdisciplinary work to an uncontextualized extrapolation of a segment from another discipline. Recuperating the positivist approach is Cook's assertion that "the treasure of data" -- the 'raw' material as she assumes -- is readily available, regardless of the context that has generated it.
Even on her own ground, Cook separates the data from its context within a particular scholarly argument. Lawrence Stone is the leading authority of Cook's 'social history.' For a configuration of the social structure of the Elizabethan-Jacobean England, Cook borrows Stone's model of "a narrow skyscraper set upon an immense base or a series of towers built atop a great, low hill" as "more accurate" portrayal of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century England than "the pyramid model" which suggests "a gradual, even sloping in the ranks of society, including a substantial middle level" (Stone 1966: 16-8). By emphasizing, however, the exclusivity of "the privileged minority at the top of the social scale" (Cook 12), Cook misrepresents the essential thesis of Stone's article in which these models were proposed. What Stone argues for is the transition -- therefore the difference -- between the two models as an effect of the phenomenal social mobility during the Elizabethan and Stuart era. The 'skyscraper model' refers only to the social structure prior to the change; while the 'towers model' to that of post-transitional, i.e., Restoration, era. In turn, two consecutive phases within the transition are identified and characterized as "rise of the gentry" and "rise of pseudo-gentry," respectively (Stone 1966: 17, 54). These differences are completely ignored by Cook, and the two models are conflated to the point that the whole era is presented more or less as a static pattern of social hierarchy. This misrepresentation of the 'source' was obviously results from Cook's tendential view that supposes a wide gap between the privileged and the commonality. Such a view is not. after all. Stone's influence but that of Peter Laslett, whose thesis of "one-class society," with its precepts of "crucial divide between the ruling minority and ruled majority." provides both the basic premise and the maximum parameter of Cook's study. It is a strong probability, too, that the term "the privileged" was borrowed -- without acknowledgement - - from Laslett (Laslett 1983: esp. 29-40).

Together with the Laslett-inspired model of society, perhaps the most interesting issue Cook brings into her social history is the terms of social stratification and their use in configuring the social structure of a historical period. In her rejection of "modern concepts of a class structure" as "inappropriate for Renaissance England," Cook contends: "Terms such as 'working class' or 'middle class' or 'upper class' tend to mislead because they suggest twentieth century realities not truly consistent with past realities. Terms such as 'artisan,' 'yeoman' and 'gentleman' convey Renaissance life far more accurately" (Cook
15). In support of this argument Cook cites J. H. Hexter, who takes a stand, as Laslett does, against class-interpretations of the English Revolution and its causes, on the ground that nineteenth century terminology such as “class,” together with the historical phenomenon of “rise of the middle class,” cannot be pushed backwards to seventeenth century (Hexter 1950, rev. 1961: 71-116). Such use is a “misapplication” that promotes an anachronistic view of historical realities. Minor differences exist between the two historians. While Hexter demands a greater precision in using a terminology and insists on “maintaining a fairly consistent definition of the group of men that comprised the middle class” (1961: 112), Laslett promotes “scepticism about terms drawn from outmoded historical criticism... to the point of dispensing with class altogether” (1983: xvi). Both seem to agree, however, that historians must “set out to give its proper weight to what the [contemporaries] themselves said they were quarrelling about” (Laslett 1983: xv). What is at stake here is the kind of social model through which historians perceive, organize and represent the historical realities. Laslett and Hexter argue that in order to avoid anachronism engendered by the ‘outmoded historical criticism’ (i.e., Marxism, and its misuse of ‘class’) historians have to accept, take over, and incorporate into their account of a given society the model of it offered by contemporaries in their own words -- the folk model or the insiders’ model (Holy and Stuchlik 1-12). Thus, to recover “the world we have lost.” Laslett draws on the authenticity, if not authority, of Thomas Smith and William Harrison, the Elizabethans who wrote on their society in terms of “degrees,” “estates” and “sorts,” the contemporary terminology of social taxonomy.

The benefit gained from employing the insiders’ model is more than modest. Given that, as recent sociological and anthropological theory stresses, languages, images, or models are not a mere reflection of social reality but play a significant role in constituting the social order they purport to describe, the contemporary paradigms of social structure provide an access to ‘native’s point of view,’ a blueprint, as it were. without which the action of the historical subjects will remain unintelligible. A careful examination of the social vocabulary deployed by the contemporaries would bring to light much of their social consciousness that structured and was structured by the immediate social relations they lived.
However, problems and limitations in working with contemporary terms and model are also apparent. First of all, it is usually the case that more than one social model operates in any historical period; each model claims exactitude and objectivity, let alone legitimacy. As many historians have pointed out, when we examine the social vocabulary in detail, we need to remember that we are not reading objective accounts of the social structure, that contemporary terminology and models tend to be normative rather than purely descriptive, and that the social structure looks very different according to one's place in it. Even in one individual account, there are quirks and gaps, subdivisions and oversimplification, suggesting both that each perspective is imbued with the writer's 'preconceptions' and that the clarity of social order is somewhat blurred by ongoing changes within it, which is the case with the Elizabethan writers. When a historian adduces different, and more often than not competing, versions of contemporary descriptions to a composite whole indicative of a dominant trend of thought, or when she or he privileges a particular version over others, the danger becomes manifest, as is the case with Laslett and consequently with Cook.

Beyond a customary acknowledgement of the differences among contemporary writers, Cook and Laslett choose to recast certain insiders' models as the representative version. Laslett, on the one hand, refers to the Elizabethan writers' conceptions of social hierarchy as "the status system" -- that is, "estate society" as opposed to "class society" -- consisting of "graduated ladder from top to bottom of social scale." On the other hand, he reorganizes the insiders' models of a four-tiered structure into what he terms, with an ironic twist of class-interpretations, a "one-class society." Laslett defines 'class' as a "politically effective group with a horizontal tie on national scale" and thus ascribes the term to "the privileged community" or "the privileged order" of peerage and gentry (Laslett 36, 40). But peerage and gentry were two distinct estates that Thomas Smith took care to distinguish with much elaboration (De Republica Anglorum 1583). Accordingly, Laslett plays down Smith's categorization in order to confer more weight on Harrison, who saw the ruling minority as one estate of "gentlemen" (The Historical Description 1577). Nonetheless, Harrison falls far short of being the representative case, because of his greater attention to the middle strata, the estates of "citizens or burgesses" and "yeomen." In particular, Harrison grants a political function to the citizenry, which shuns off Laslett's approach for its implication for
the rise of the middle class. In the last instance, therefore, it is Smith who reasserts legitimacy in the historian’s insider’s model, for Smith’s elaborate and confident description of the aristocracy provides a much more secure ground on which to establish the prominence of Laslett’s “one-class.”

That this one-class society is fundamentally a binary model becomes apparent, when Laslett divides off “this little society of the privileged” from the rest of the society as “a different order from the whole mass of the people” (Laslett 29, 40). Cook follows the historian’s lead ad verbatim in her conception of the social hierarchy as fundamentally divisive. “From the moment of his fortunate birth to his final rest beneath a stone monument,” or “In their prerogatives and pleasures - including theatre,” she asserts, “the privileged were set above and apart from their fellow Englishmen” (Cook 29). Cook supports the argument with a number of impressive comments from contemporaries, all of whom tend to stress — “entertained no doubt” in Cook’s words -- such binary conception. That most of these comments appeared in contexts more casual than that of Smith or Harrison, who were making more or less official statement, does not lessen the reliability of their comments. Rather, without the regulatory tone of official statement they may better capture the contemporary perception. The problem lies, however, in the ways that all these witnesses are aligned to the single statement in point the historian wishes to make. One famous name among them is Richard Mulcaster, the first headmaster of Merchant Taylor’s School, who is cited by Cook for his simple and straightforward distinction of “either gentlemen or of the commonality” (Cook 16-7). But in the same volume from which this statement comes, Mulcaster also wrote of “The middle sort of parentes which neither welter in to much wealth, nor wrastle with to much want.”

Even one and the same person has different perceptions. Then, which is the insiders’ model, the binary one, the triadic one, or four-tiered one? There seems to be no solid ground for the historian to determine the real insiders’ model, to privilege one over the others, simply because the particular version befits the historian’s thesis better.

I do not mean to nullify the claims made in favor of insiders’ model to surreptitiously recuperate the “outsiders’ model” of class-society. Nor do I suggest that models should be abandoned altogether. Indeed, such contentions were made by those who repudiate any model or theory in favor of empirical research (e.g., Speck “Social Status”). But as
we have seen in the previous section, it is impossible to 'start with facts.' Models or metaphors are indispensable to think about social structure, and the very phrase social structure is a metaphor. The question at hand is, as Peter Burke rightly observes, “not whether to use models but which models to use.” Burke’s own solution is to use both insiders’ and outsiders’ models for different analytical purposes, “looking at the early modern society both as a system of classes and as a system of orders [estates]” (1992: 12). I concur with this proposition, though I do have some reservation about his postulation that the outsiders’ model (Marxian) better explains “contrasts and changes [which] contemporaries were not normally concerned,” while the insiders’ model (Durkeimian) necessarily reduces them (Burke 1992: 13). Instead, I shall argue that there are no inherent values or particular functions in either kind of model, that insiders’ models are registered, however obliquely, with such changes and contrasts, which, within the long-term parameter – “from the eleventh-century on,” as Hexter puts it -- of outsiders’ model, may look insignificant or even unintelligible. We should now step forward from ‘not whether to use models but which models to use’ to ‘how to use the models that we choose to use.’

As a small step toward such a goal, and as a conclusion to the assessment of Cook’s social history, I want to consider her following statement concerning the taunting issue of social mobility in early modern England.

What occurred was not a denial of rank or even a blurring of rank within the hierarchies: rather, it was an enlargement of the privileged levels at the top of the social order. What occurred was not the rise or decline of any group en masse: rather, it was the emergence of a great many individuals who could “bear the Port, charge, and countenance of a Gentleman.” ... it would be misleading to suppose that there was a wholesale destruction or dilution of the upper ranks by its new members. The prosperous and ambitious yeoman and merchants became true gentlemen, quite abandoning their former stations, if not in the first generation, then in the second. The fundamental structure of degree, priority, and place remained unchanged (Cook 30).14

The two basic arguments of Cook’s study are, firstly, that the theatre was the domain predominantly or even exclusively of the privileged minority and, secondly, that this ‘minority’ was numerically sufficient to fill the huge galleries and even part of yards in the
playhouses. In order to bridge these two hypotheses, not necessarily incompatible but scarcely convincing, Cook heavily relies heavily on statistics, on the one hand, which, as Martin Butler pointed out, are arbitrary. On the other hand, the issue of social mobility is introduced into the predetermined frame, that is, the model of social hierarchy that she has simplified as a dyadic one -- binary is the likelier term, for it is divided into A and non-A (privileged and unprivileged) rather than A and B. Whether using the four-tiered insiders' model or her interpretive dyadic model for specific arguments, Cook tends to think of social structure as physical structure, as a set of hypostasized social relations invariably conforming to the normative, even inviolable, social boundaries.

On such premises, quite inconceivable is the notion of social structure as a theoretical construct of ongoing process only for heuristic purposes (Williams 1977: 89). Again, social structure is itself a metaphor, and like all other metaphors, it highlights certain features by suppressing others. Above all, it obscures the processes that have produced it: ‘social structure is always already established.’ It also diverts our attention from the processes that are going beyond or gradually changing the structure to the processes that work to maintain it: ‘the social structure contains all.’ Such is the premise on which Cook’s analysis of social mobility is conducted. Two instances may suffice to prove the point: of land acquisition by “nouveaux riches” and of intermarriage between gentry and the upper level of “the commonality,” both of which, of course, were originated in Laslett and Hexter.

Hexter, in particular, emphasized what he termed “the circulatory process” by which aspirants to gentry -- successful merchants, prosperous yeomen, professionals, and self-made younger sons of gentry -- purchased land at the height of their career and retired to the countryside so that the traditional manor house life-style and its social values -- let alone the social structure - remained intact. These aspirants, whom Laslett casually designated as “middling sort of people,” did not form nonetheless a distinct social category of their own; as Hexter’s theory goes, they were in “a transitional state,” invariably moving upward and eventually absorbed into the legitimate category of the gentry. So, the social mobility of this group of people -- “a great many individuals” in Cook’s and Laslett’s words -- contributed only to reinforcing the existing structure of social relations and not to restructuring them.
At a closer examination, however, this contention quickly loses credibility. Above all, it fails to consider the fact that most of these people spent a greater part of their lives on the borderline between upper and lower strata before their entry to the 'little society' of the privileged, and were in a daily contact with the commonality or 'unprivileged' through various institutional apparatuses and more variegated informal relations, which might have affected their social attitude and consciousness. It would be more than insensitive, then, to suppose that this formative influence was completely abandoned with the acquisition of the desired status. Purchase of land may also be viewed in a different light. Instead of endorsing the existing social structure and values accorded to it (sign of containment of social mobility), the new owners of land might have had different purposes in their acquisition of the property that dissociated it from its traditional associations (Barry "Introduction." 7). In brief, Hexter's circulatory model of social process does not account for the process at all. It tends to capitalize only the end-product of the process, which is buttressed by a highly speculative, or rather unimaginative, interpretation.

Cook's analysis of intermarriage between merchant class and gentry adopts this static and compartmentalized view of social process with its exclusive focus on the achieved status and its lack of attention to the dynamic and multi-layered process that entails such consequence. For Laslett, there can be no doubt that the young generation of gentry often married to its counterpart in the merchant class "for as much money in the way of dowry as they could possibly get" (Laslett 48. 46-50. 215-216). The material exchange of status and wealth did not affect either ideological outlook of both parties or the physical structure of the society. For Cook, the consequence of these actions was a mere reinforcement of existing hierarchy. Particularly interesting is Cook's analysis of an event clearly indicating the multi-layered nature of marital transactions within the process of social mobility but simplified by Cook's overall interpretation of the social structure.

As Cook reports, in 1591, a peer, Lord Stafford, wanting to marry his son to a merchant's daughter, asked "Lord Burghley to pressure 'a riche citizen for his only dowghter and heire to be maryed unto my sonne.'" "Though Burghley would never have approved such a match," she adds, "these alliances were common enough at the fringes of privilege to occasion contemporary notice." After citing a gentleman's letter mentioning this particular event in a derogatory term and a satirical comment on such marriages *sui
generi from Marston's play, Cook turns to argue that, despite the conservative critics, "the unions continued nonetheless, cementing the new wealth firmly into the established structure of privilege" (Cook 48-9).

The faultline of this interpretation is obvious at one point in the form of a suppressed question. Why did Lord Stafford have to ask Burghley's help to "pressure" the merchant in this unquestionably favorable situation? Because he was unwilling to accept the proposal, which would ensure the elevated status of his daughter and his association with the very top rank of aristocracy? Why this unwillingness? For various reasons we do not surely know, among which we may include the possibility that the merchant thought such a quantum leap of social pretensions was too much for his sort. Would it be over-stretching to speculate that this merchant must have had some sense of his place - if not an unyielding class-identity. Suppressing the question and focusing on the eventually accepted proposal, Cook completely fails to consider what, under the pressure of social mobility on the one hand and established social structure on the other, regulated or mobilized the attitude and consciousness of the social actors, in favor of visible consequences of their action. As a result, the event is not viewed in its process but as already determined by and contained into the structure.

Another question should be what the implications of so many criticisms by "conservatives" -- including Lord Burghley as Cook supposes, though we do not know the role of his intervention into the matter, if he intervened at all -- drawn to such events are. Cook is not ignorant of the contemporary concern over blurring social boundaries; nonetheless she discounts, if not totally dismisses, it as evidence for the social structure itself. Cook's assumption is that social structures are objective realities that can only be described by an "astute contemporary observer" such as Harrison or Smith who provided "an accurate picture of Renaissance England" (Cook 14), and that cannot be affected by any quotidian "conservatives." In privileging the structural description of social reality over immediate responses to it, Cook suppresses the uniqueness of an event, its complex network of social relations, the social actors' consciousness involved in it, and most debilitatingly, its multi-faceted relation to the structure. An event may maintain or even reinforce the structure; it may also change or even transform the structure. I do not mean to emphasize the latter at the cost of the former. I do not assume, in other words, that an event
maintains or changes the structure; rather, it does both at the same time. Cook's study as a whole points in only one direction. In fact, her social history is a history of structure -- and, as I have attempted to show, a misconstrued one -- rendering events relatively insignificant if not invisible. It was somewhat predictable, then, that the subsequent studies of the subject would develop into two directions: writing history of the audience with more emphasis on specific events and writing history of the social structure as processes in which these events collide with one another, modifying and being modified by what Althusser called 'structure in dominance.'
As I have noted, Cook's thesis of privileged playgoers has been much criticized by a number of critics. But there is a significant difference among these critics, and the difference is indicative of the diverging conceptions of historical writing. On the one hand, we have Cook's critics whose commitment has activated the political criticism of 1980s. For these critics the alternative lies in the conception of a more politically volatile theatre and a more heterogeneous audience. Yet, both Michael Bristol's 'patrician and plebeian cultures' and Walter Cohen's 'drama of a nation' in their respective emphasis on cultural divide and inclusiveness hearken back to Harbage's earlier formulations, and do not substantially differ from Cook's counter-thesis in the continued positivistic attitude. On the other hand, there have emerged what might be termed revisionary perspectives, and these views mark a point of departure from the traditional mode of historical inquiry. What the revisionist approaches have in common is an awareness of the problems inherent in historical perspective, including event-structure relationship, change continuity paradigms, and the nature of historical writing itself. For the rest of the chapter I will review some of these studies in an attempt to clarify the potential impact the new directions in theatre historiography would release to the literary historicism, and to ground the theoretical parameter of the main chapters of this study.

While, in the first place, the traditional theatre historiography assumes the existence of objective realities and the retrievability of the facts from the past, the revisionists tend to stress the constructedness, and consequently alterability, of historical narratives, and to point out the tangential relationship between the evidence and the narrative constructed upon it. Thus, by either recontextualizing the customary evidences or uncovering new ones, they engage in the deconstructing of 'fact' or the demythologizing of 'myth' and in turn provide an alternative narrative. A much frequented site of such reconstruction is the nature of the Caroline plays and audiences. Since Harbage's formulation of "Cavalier Drama" (1964), the Caroline theatre audiences were continually seen as exclusively aristocratic in composition and decadent in disposition—"shallow," "inattentive," and "frivolous"
audience," as Clifford Leech once definitively declared (1950: 161, 168). This tendential view had been mildly challenged earlier by Michael Neill, who qualifies the derogatory and condescending conception of the Caroline audience by looking more closely at the same evidence taken up by Leech and other earlier critics — prologues and epilogues of Caroline plays (Neill, "Wits Most Accomplished Senate"). Questioning the ways the evidence was previously handled, Neill reformulates the prologues and epilogues not as playwrights' flattery to the audience but as a critical engagement with the changing taste of audience. Accordingly, the audience is not deprecated as ‘frivolous’ or ‘inattentive’ but regarded as increasingly sophisticated and critically demanding.

While Neill’s emphasis on the audience’s concern with decorum and manners and their critical bias to the aesthetics of form makes a significant breakthrough in envisaging an alternative portrait of the Caroline audience, his conclusion seems to fall back on the traditional narrative. At the level of generalization, that is, when he further relates the shift in taste to social phenomena and argues the shift was made at the expense of moral and political issues, he fundamentally reaffirms the established distinction of the two period styles: Elizabethan theatre is didactic and robust, Caroline is of sensitivity, wit, stylish elegance, emotional delicacy, which surreptitiously reinstates Harbage’s binary conception of ‘theatre of nation vs. theatre of coterie.’ The unbroken assumption in Neill’s revision is that politics and aesthetics are two separate domains, which in effect perpetuates the pervasive impression that Elizabethans were gripped with serious moral and political problems and the Carolines played frivolously with artistic question.

A major revision on the Caroline theatre as ‘an enclave for art recessed from open public space’ was made by Martin Butler’s Theatre and Crisis 1632-1642 (1984). His main argument is that the best plays of the period were vehicles of criticism rather than compliment and, both in terms of social differentiation and political leanings, the theatre embraced a collection of spectators much broader and more varied than the traditional view allows. Furthermore, Butler observes that the Caroline theatre had “many significant and non-Cavalier strands” brought by a number of Members of Parliament from which the political challenge to King Charles in 1640 would come (1984: 119). Butler’s study is evidently a revisionary project. He insists on the necessity to “explode the myth of the ‘Cavalier audience’” (100), which “simply will not square with the facts and often obscures
them" and to "call these certainties [misleading suppositions about their historical context] into question" (1-2). While his own alternative narrative tilts toward an overt politicization of the theatrical scenes in 1630s, he convincingly shows how inadequate is the description of the private theatre audience simply as an aristocratic and courtly coterie.

The strength of Butler's argument comes in part from the fact that, instead of relying upon and re-reading the stock evidence tendered by earlier critics, it is based upon newly generated evidence — i.e., the presence of MPs in the audiences — which was occasionally acknowledged but scarcely registered in the traditional narratives. As I noted earlier, privileging certain evidence over other evidence is not in itself a blemish for historical inquiry but a vital part of its necessary procedure; that is, provided the selected evidence is not forced to tell the definitive version of the story without an adequate contextualization, or, if the range of evidence is sufficient enough to allow for other interpretive possibilities. In his turn, indeed, Butler restrains himself from bending the evidence to replace the 'myth' of cavalier audience with the 'fact' of political opposition engendered in the theatre. Though he decisively refutes the notion of 'cavalier audience' by observing the persistent presence of radical MPs and instead asserts that "theatres were a prime medium through which the group consciousness of parliamentary classes was established" (135), he also notes the shoulder-to-shoulder coexistence in the audience of the firm supporters for the king as well as other MPs in moderated positions. Thus, the emerging picture does include both cavalier and non-cavalier audience and, more significantly, a wide spectrum — in terms of political orientation — between the two kinds of audiences.

The significance of generating new evidence is also demonstrated in Butler's subsequent article on the closing of the London theatres in 1642 ("Two Playgoers"). The parliamentary suppression of the theatres has been viewed as an act of Puritan aggression against an institution irremediably associated with 'royalism.' However, the uncovering of new evidence — a memorabilia reporting the death of an MP who was killed in a quarrel that happened in one of the public theatres and family letters of the theatre-going MP — coupled with a careful reading of the 1642 parliamentary order of closure reveals that the decision neither contained anything doctrinally 'puritan' nor passed unanimously. As such, the closure can be seen less as a manifestation of Puritan antagonism towards the theatre than as "typically precautionary measures taken at times of crisis or instability when
government wished to disperse the people and maintain a tight rein on law and order” (98).

While Butler’s work on new evidence directs our attention to the inadequacy of the historical narratives based upon limited resources and circumscribed by presuppositions about the historical context, A. R. Braunmuller’s similar project shows how misleading the ‘history’ built upon second-hand information can be, and, as its corollary, how precarious literary criticism predicated on such history can be (“To the Globe I Rowed”). As Braunmuller points out, eyewitness accounts of any Elizabethan and Jacobean play are rare; the few surviving accounts of the performance of a play are too brief and often difficult to contextualize. A John Middleton play, A Game at Chess, seems to outwit the circumstance. Probably because of its extraordinary popularity, this political allegory about the pro-Spanish policy represented by Duke of Buckingham attracted unusual amount of contemporary commentaries, which are, however, mostly fragmentary. Something like a composite whole of the public opinion is portrayed in a collection of letters by John Chamberlain, the famous diarist and epistlian, who identifies the political figure that each character of the play supposedly represents. Modern commentators have in turn argued over the question of whether the play is a criticism against Buckingham’s policy or a valorization of the aristocratic figures involved in it, since, in spite of its confidence about the identity of the dramatic characters, Chamberlain’s account is tantalizingly vague on the ‘crucial’ point.17

Chamberlain’s vagueness may be attributed to the fact that his is a second-hand report based on hearsay and a general impression of how the London public responded to the pro-Spanish policy, that is, not to the play itself. In contrast, the new evidence uncovered by Braunmuller — a letter by John Holles who attended the play at the Globe — provides a detailed description and interpretation of a particular performance of the play. As Braunmuller notes, Holles, like most twentieth-century readers, is mainly interested in the allegory of contemporary politics and political figures. But Holles’ interpretation does not entirely comply with what critics construe to be Middleton’s intention nor with the general response of the London public drawn from Chamberlain’s account. The evidence indicates that at least one member of the original audience did not view the English royal or aristocratic figures as uncriticized heroes or frivolous ruffians, nor did he find in the play “an unequivocal statement about current English foreign policy” (Braunmuller 349). More
often than not, Holles' interpretation sides with a minority in modern scholarly opinion. This 'idiosyncratic' spectator sometimes responds to 'minor' issues - that is, to the modern critical point of view - with much enthusiasm and sometimes remains completely silent to 'major' issues. Beyond its divergences from modern interpretations of the play, Holles' account is remarkable in another aspect; its specifically theatrical comments make it clear that Holles responded to the performed text, not the written text. The letter shows that Holles often relied on the actor's gestures in determining the identity of the character, which not infrequently occasioned confusion on his part. For Braunmuller, the ultimate significance of the new evidence lies less in an alternative narrative it suggests than in "a salutary lesson in the volatility of theatrical signs and the error of our supposing that any interpretation, "early modern." "post-modern." or any other, may claim exclusive authority" (351). Such is the lesson to be incorporated into the historical criticism of Renaissance drama in the last decade, which in its own ideological assumptions and political orientation tends to posit a definite meaning to the dramatic text. As Braunmuller concludes, Holles' letter urges us "to interpret Middleton's allegorical meanings cautiously, to respect the variety and the indefinability that performances and audiences' responses necessarily (everyday, every performance) lend to any dramatic text" (356).

In their stress on variousness and shifting perspective both Butler's and Braunmuller's studies point to another, though related, contribution brought by the revisionist perspective to the audience study: an awareness of the problems inherent in categorization or critical terminology we habitually and often unquestioningly use to describe the kind of plays, audiences, or playhouses. Carefully used, the critical language helps to constitute the object of inquiry more precisely and delineate the issue at hand more effectively. However, it is often the case that terminology carries an aura of unnecessary and unproved associations, a set of preconceived ideas about the reality it purports to describe. As a consequence, the terms we use tend to predetermine the parameter of our discussion and, more often than not, flatten and simplify our understanding of what must have been a complex phenomenon. Without an adequate reconceptualization, the obsolete terms will only retrieve a hypostatized structure, losing sight of a complicated process.
A case in point is the terms adopted to classify the two different theatrical venues in the Elizabethan and Jacobean era. Ever since, if not before, Harbage’s distinction of ‘rival traditions,’ the terms ‘public’ and ‘private’ theatre have been identified with ‘national’ and ‘coterie’ theatre and thus invested with the implication that the public theatre was open to ‘common’ men and therefore ‘democratic,’ whereas the private theatre only admitted specially invited and somehow privileged — ‘aristocratic’ — spectators. In order to avoid such interpretations, theatre historians have recently adopted terms like ‘indoor’ and ‘outdoor’ — or ‘open-air’ — playhouses as more preferable, and more realistic, description of the difference with a shifted emphasis on building structure and conditions of performance.¹⁸ However, the proposition does not remove the accumulated associational meanings, and may even serve to confuse the vexed question of the relationship between two types of theatre which distinguish themselves not only by the architectural factors but also by admission price and repertoire. Indeed, one particular problem Cook’s study entails is its unreasoned conflation, if not a total dismissal, of the ‘two traditions.’ Little difference, if any, existed: the privileged playgoers were entertained in and possessed both types of theatre.

Neither Harbage’s binary conception nor Cook’s simple collapse of it could capture what Martin Butler calls ‘de facto relationship’ between the two traditions (Theatre and Crisis 303). As Butler points out, it would be misleading to only highlight the difference, as it would be distorting to entirely disregard it. Although it remains a bit questionable whether his alternative terms — “popular” and “elite” — effectively replace the unwarranted associations accrued to ‘public’ and ‘private’ theatres (132), more than worthy of note is his statement that “within this broad polarity there were all sorts of subtle shadings and fine tunings which have to be observed” (304). To this proposition Andrew Gurr adds a voice, who prefers another set of architectural terms — amphitheatre (‘indoor’) and hall (‘outdoor’) playhouses — but certainly does not ignore, nor overemphasize, the difference between two types of theatre and their clientele. While acknowledging the existence of two distinct theatrical venues, catering to an elegant audience and to ‘citizens, and the meaner sort of people’ respectively, Gurr suggests that the two ‘traditions’ they inspired, nonetheless, cannot be absolutely distinguished. For, as a notable instance, the King’s Men alternated between their indoor and outdoor playhouses
according to season and, since its opening in 1608 until the final closure of 1642, the Blackfriars audience seem to have followed them to the Globe quite readily (Gurr 1987: 190).

Another issue involved in categorization is that of periodization, which constitutes another blind spot of Cook’s thesis on the predominant constituency of the privileged playgoers and its continuation throughout the years 1567-1642, that is, since the operation of the first commercial theatre until the closure of all London theatres. Committed to a simplified view of the entire period as one stable social structure, Cook ignores the changes and shifts in audience formation as well as varying theatrical interests and tastes during a time span of over 70 years. The same ‘little society’ of the privileged continued to prevail in the London playhouses, regardless of economic and social changes, not to mention the dynastic transference and successions, which might have affected the pattern of playgoing as well as themes and styles of drama. Cook’s complete dismissal of even the customary distinction by monarchical rule (Elizabethan-Jacobean-Caroline) may seem opposite to Clifford Leech’s rigid adherence to such a periodization. Nonetheless, Cook’s view is little different from Leech’s assertion that “Caroline plays were written for an entirely different public from the popular Elizabethan one” (161). Leech’s is certainly a Shakespeare-centered historiography. For the radical discontinuity is merely attributed to “the dissolution of Shakespearean tradition.” (Leech 161). Though Cook’s ‘social history’ brings a much wider perspective, her stress on the formidable stability of the period – thus no sub-periodization at all - is as naïve as, and no less implausible than, Leech’s brutally simple division. Different in emphasis, both are embedded in the problematic of change-or-continuity paradigm.

Cook’s fundamentally static view based upon the binary social model of privileged and un-privileged has been already undermined by Butler, whose period (1632-42) is, however, only the last decade of London’s theatrical operation. A major correction comes with Andrew Gurr’s Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London (1987). Particularly in his chapter on “The evolution of taste” (115-190), Gurr does something unusual. Overturning Cook’s single identity for the entire period, Gurr presents a series of what might be called petits narratives about the old and new theatrical venues in shifting and intersecting patterns and tastes from decade to decade and even from year to year. Although these little stories and
their organizing principle are not entirely free of unexamined assumptions – for instance, the ‘evolutionary’ perspective, they clearly show, nonetheless, how complex the audience formation could have been. They also tell us, more significantly, how easily we could lose sight of subtle changes and varying relations of the past when we apply categories that will not fit, that are forged according to our own preconceptions.

Probably the most significant contribution Gurr’s study has brought into the field is a reconfiguration of the audience composition in terms of social differentiation. As portraits of the Elizabethan audience have shifted from Harbage’s middle- and working-class spectators to Cook’s privileged playgoers, Gurr now demarcates a middle position that views the audience as representative of Elizabethan social classes yet also characteristic of London’s, not England’s, population (54). On the one hand, he observes that social spectrum of the urban society was much more various than the simple privileged/unprivileged polarization allows for; on the other, he spins Harbage’s stress on inclusiveness into an alternate emphasis upon diversity. Gurr’s interest lies less in a definitive conception of the kind of audience than in its distinct constituencies. Objecting to the conventional image of the Elizabethan audience as “the amorphous middle class which provides the great bulk of modern theatre audiences,” Gurr thus lays his focus on the ‘different kinds of playgoer’ who came from different sections in the middle stratum of the mobilized society:

Within the broad social process which Louis B. Wright identified as a rising middle class in Elizabethan England there were distinct individual growths: a large urban artisan class, chiefly in London; a citizen class of merchants and manufacturers in the major cities and ports; an increasingly literate class of schoolmasters, scriveners and clergy. Such growths imply a fairly high level of social mobility. But each class was distinct from the others in education, occupation, dress and income, and would have been shocked to find itself lumped in with any of the others. Almost all of these distinct classes in the middle stratum can be found amongst Shakespearean playgoers. Their composition broadly defines the composition of a majority in the London playhouse audiences, though the complete social range goes all the way from earls and even a queen to penniless rogues and the unemployed (49).

Gurr’s final emphasis falls on the citizens and their lesser neighbors the prosperous artisan class as “a kind of silent majority in the playhouses”(64) – at least of amphitheatre
audiences – throughout the period. As he notes, contemporary reference to citizens’ presence in playhouses are not abundant; nonetheless, the number of citizens in London, their relative affluence, and their proximity to all the playhouse venues all point to the probability that this larger body of urban population, not the little society of the privileged, was the staple constituency that characterized the overall make-up of the London theatre audiences. Simultaneously, in order to forestall a reinstatement of Harbage’s ‘single collective,’ and to go beyond the perfunctory rhetoric on its internal heterogeneity, Gurr takes great care to delineate each distinct component of the ‘middle class’ spectators, according to occupational hierarchy within citizenry, literacy level, and gender division (72-80). Thus, ‘the meeting ground of common people’ is finally substantiated; in some way Gurr puts faces on those anonymous people who “melted long ago into the lengthening shadows of Southwark” (Harbage 1941: 18).

Although Gurr’s preference for petits narratives and a new stress on distinctiveness of various constituencies of the audience have yielded more than a modest contribution to the subject, one lasting impression his study has left is that the individual pictures do not always hold together to create a sense of the whole, that sometimes the hyper-realistic descriptions of the past tend to slip into sheer diversity. I do not here insist on the necessity of a grand narrative that would subsume all the diverse trends and processes of the past society under one rubric of, let’s say, the middle class. Nor do I attempt to nullify Gurr’s undeniably significant contribution to our understanding. Rather, I am drawing attention to the heuristic benefits we can get from an understanding of the general movement, or structure, that the diversity uncovered by Gurr points to. It would be certainly exaggerating and even distorting to say Gurr’s portraits of sub-sections in the audience fly apart; it is nonetheless true that for the most part they remain merely juxtaposed, separate, and scarcely related to each other. In fact, while Cook’s history is decidedly and detrimentally structural, Gurr’s is a history of events and, more often than not, events only, which is no less inadequate on some occasions.

For instance, his conception of social classes is as compartmental as Cook’s. While acknowledging more class divisions and the higher rate of social mobility, Gurr reinstates Cook’s thesis somewhat unwittingly: “…these examples of social mobility did not really blur the distinctions between classes. They were transfers from one distinct class to
another" (51-2). What is missing is, again, the transactions involved in the process of such transference. This inconsideration of social process looms large, particularly in the penultimate chapter on 'the evolution of tastes,' where each generation or each section of the audience is seen only to respond to its favorite theatrical venues. Little, if any, tension and conflict—inter-generational and intra-generational—via theatrical interests is envisioned. The shifting patterns of playgoing are there, only to suggest the shifts are due to the already-established social or generational divisions, not to the interactions transpiring along the divisive lines.

The weakness of Gurr's study comes in fact from a lack of conceptual frameworks in which the little narratives are to be appropriately situated and in which the distinct constituencies of playhouse audience are to be related to one another. Even as his revised emphasis on the middle stratum of the society as "staple" constituent of theatre audiences marks a point of departure from both Harbage and Cook, it does not, in and of itself, capture the complexity of the historical reality in its very process. What we need is obviously a more complicated model to explain social process and a more adequate conception of historical change, which is to supercede both Gurr's portrait of trees and Cook's of woods. In my view, such a breakthrough is initiated by Theodore Leinwand, who has introduced "middling sort" as a more precise term to indicate both diversities and related-ness within the middle stratum of the Elizabethan society (Leinwand 1993). In my Introduction, I already discussed the contributions and limitations of Leinwand's work, which has in fact stimulated the present study. Before turning to the main chapters, I wish to offer a brief assessment of the importance of "middling sort of people" both as a social formation of early modern England and as a conceptual tool for historical inquiry, as it figures in the field of historical scholarship.

To designate the portion of urban population uneasily located between the poor and the rich, the socially privileged and the unprivileged, historians and literary critics have heretofore used the term "middle-class," which did not exist in the Elizabethan vocabulary of social classification, and which has been used as a blanket term that conceals large social and economic differences within the emergent formation. Recently, an alternative term, "middling sort of people" — a contemporary terminology of social classification in Elizabethan-Jacobean England — has been uncovered and used by social historians. In fact,
the introduction of this concept points toward the critical issues in current thinking on ‘writing history,’ some of which I hope to clarify in the following pages. First of all, why do the recent historians take up the formation of “middling sort” for an access to the period in question? On what theoretical basis does this particular social formation constitute a privileged perspective on the whole spectrum of the society and its culture? What vantage points does the “history from the middle” offer in competition or conjunction with “history from above” (gentry-centered historiography) on the one hand, and “history from below” (the “grassroot” historiography), on the other? What differences, if any, could the ‘middling’ historiography bring to the present scholarship of the English Renaissance theatre and literature? Or is it merely another pigeonhole for a social totality, constructed on a partial ground, to be fitted in? Briefly addressing some of the theoretical and historiographical issues, I hope to clarify my theoretical interest in middle-class culture in early modern England, as this particular cultural formation becomes the crucial motif to the present study of Shakespeare’s audiences and their resurrection in historical criticism of our own time.

Recently, social historians have re-emphasized the emergent middle-class formation as a shaping force of the historical developments of the English society since early modern period. Looking back critically to the earlier formulation of the subject by such scholars as L. B. Wright (The Middle-Class Culture [1934]), these historians questioned the assumptions that, in late Tudor and Stuart period, class-identity of the middling social group was already in place, that the society as a whole can be characterized by its upward mobility, and that the middle-class culture began either to form a unified counter-hegemonic position or to create a new hegemony to the extent that it grew to be coterminous with the “national culture.” On the other hand, they refuse to accept the counter-proposition — most strongly articulated by J. H. Hexter — that the middle-class culture in Elizabethan England is a “myth” forged by Marxist historians in their need to emphasize the revolutionary moment of the bourgeoisie and to fit it into their schematized interpretation of history (1961: esp. 71-3). Hexter and other scholars argue that Marxist historians’ application of “class,” a nineteenth-century invention, to the earlier period is an anachronism. In brief, Hexter contends that the “middle-class” people, despite their distinct economic position, did not enter into the political arena where class-identity was to be
tested, and that, in their alignment with and imitation of those above, these people effaced themselves and had little impact on the change of social structure.

Such an alternative proposition shares with what it attempts to replace the unquestioned assumption that upward social mobility was a ubiquitous phenomenon in Elizabethan-Jacobean England, and consequently imposes a homogenizing view of class identity and action. Both this and the earlier Marxist interpretations are hindered by an inadequate, fundamentally binary conception of historical process. In emphasizing either change or continuity as the constitutive paradigm of historical narrative, they fail to consider the complex relationship between change and continuity in any historical moment. Furthermore, each position deploys a different theoretical model to explain the nature of the social hierarchy of the period. According to the scholars who posit the continuity-paradigm, the social hierarchy of early modern England was built upon consensus, and had an ideological effect of *binding* the various “degrees” into a unified body politic. By contrast, according to the scholars who advocate the change-paradigm, the social hierarchy, though once upon a time (in the medieval period) showing a consensus, now in the late Tudor - early Stuart era reveals a series of divisions: magistrates and subjects, rich and poor, learned and vulgar -- all began to drift toward a bloody conflict in the Civil War. At first glance, it seems that what is at stake here is the claims of two competing models of social totality -- another binarism of consensus and conflict, of community and divided class. At a closer look, however, each of these models highlights and explains a different moment within the same evolutionary narrative that tells of the Fall of a golden age, whether in optimistic or pessimistic terms.

Aware of the partiality or, indeed, the binarism of these theoretical models that generates such a traditional narrative, some scholars who have promoted new concerns over the controversial “middle-class” of early modern period have produced a new set of questions. (1) If the middle-class was largely incorporated into the upper social strata by accepting the values and aping the behavior of the gentry, did the incorporation not entail a re-structuration if not a radical transformation of existing social structure, no matter how imperceptive the ongoing changes may have been at the moment? In other words, what were the long-term, if not shorthandedly visible, effects of such social process? (2) If upward social mobility was ubiquitous, did it preclude the possibilities of downward
mobility? If, in fact, there was a small portion of gentry stepping down the social ladder and changing places with ‘upstart crows,’ in what ways did this counter-movement contribute to the redrawing of social boundaries?\(^\text{21}\) (3) If, notwithstanding the two-way traffic in social mobility, the middling class remained largely homogeneous, should it be assumed that all the subgroups within the class shared a common ideological outlook?\(^\text{22}\) Certainly such an assumption does not account for the differences -- not to mention contradictions and conflicts -- within the class and is thus unable to explain a social class as a formation with diverse trends and movements. By complicating the questions traditionally asked of the subject and adding new questions designed to account for both change and stability, conflict and consensus, recent historians have enabled a reconsideration of both the social structure and political process in the early modern England and the ways in which historians tell the story about it.\(^\text{23}\)

Receptive to Hexter’s contention that 19th-century terminology of class cannot be applied accurately to the earlier period, recent historians have made a significant breakthrough by rediscovering the contemporary terminology of social taxonomy, that is, “sorts of people” in general and “middling sort of people” in particular.\(^\text{24}\) The immediate advantages in adopting the contemporary terminology to describe and analyze the social structure of Elizabethan-Jacobean England are obvious. First of all, the language of “sorts of people” developed and began to distinguish itself from the traditional and still dominant language of “degrees and estates.” As such it not only points to the change the society was then undergoing but also gives access to the ways in which such change was perceived and accommodated by the contemporaries, thus enabling us to achieve an approximation of “the native’s point of view.” Secondly, the inexact idea of “sort” suggests a lack of a binding center, thus drawing our attention to the existence of heterogeneous subgroups and their diverse interests within a formation. It also implies a less compartmentalized conception of social grouping than the concept of “class,” suggesting a site for interactions and negotiations between different sectors of the society that, in their struggle to create a consensus, mutually re-define the social boundaries. Thirdly, it must be noted that the conceptual transition from “estates and degrees” to “sorts” produced a unique term, that is, “middling sort of people.” Unsettling the language of degrees but not hardened into the language of class, “sorts of people” reflects the difficulty of social categorization in the
early modern period. And the concept of “the middling sort” in particular constitutes the
nucleus of the social change that mobilized the traditional social boundaries. To say so is
not to reiterate the change-paradigm of historical narrative but to revise it in order to retain
its strength and overcome its limitations. And the begging question at this point is what
theoretical and methodological innovations can be advanced in writing the history of the
middling sort of people? To place this question within the immediate context of the present
study, I now turn to the literary field of English Renaissance studies.
NOTES

1 See, for a useful survey of neo-classical and romantic criticism on 'Shakespeare's audience,' Moody E. Prior, "The Elizabethan Audience and the Plays of Shakespeare" (1951).


4 For a useful critique of positivist historiography, see Bruce McConachie. "Towards A Postpositivist Theatre History" (1985).

5 A recent critique of Chambers' positivist orientation is found in William Ingram. The Business of Playing (1992), esp. pp. 3-10, 40-50.

6 Cook's earlier critique of Harbage is "The Audience of Shakespeare's plays: A Reconsideration" (1974).

7 Harbage's own conception of an 'ideal theatre' in the modern time is doubtlessly populist. His defense of the theatre against cultural snobbery is best articulated in his concluding chapter, where he valorizes "genius of Shakespeare" and "genius of men by and large" (1941: 159).

8 Though Cook heavily draws on Stone for historical references, the substantial force behind her social history, as I shall argue, is Peter Laslett. On the problems in literary critics' limited use, or misuse, of historians' work, see David Cressy. "Foucault, Stone, Shakespeare and Social History" (1991).

9 It is interesting to observe this firmly divided line often lifted arbitrarily, whenever the need to enlarge the size of "the few at the top" enough to "fill huge playhouses like the Globe" (Cook 10) presses hard. Martin Butler questions Cook's use of statistics in particular: "There is an elasticity in the use of the term which is functional for Cook's argument: it tends to carry an inclusive meaning when the size of the body is in question, and an exclusive meaning when habits of playgoing are at stake" (Theatre and Crisis 295).
The concept is developed by Clifford Geertz in "From the Native's Point of View: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding," *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (1983), chapter 3.


Laslett's static view has been gradually replaced by more dynamic view advanced by a number of recent historians. See, for instance, Keith Wrightson, "The Social Order of Early Modern England: Three Approaches" in Lloyd Bonfield, Richard Smith and Keith Wrightson (ed) *The World We Have Gained* (1986), pp. 177-202; David Cressy, "Describing the Social Order of Elizabethan and Stuart England" (1986).


A similar argument is made in Laslett, *The World We Have Lost* (1983), p. 36.


In "Professions, Ideology and the Middling Sort in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries" (eds. Barry and Brooks, *The Middling Sort of People* [1994], pp. 113-140), Christopher Brooks suggests that such gradual change took place as the urban professional class began to develop an ideological formation of their own. See also Peter Earle, "The Middling Sort in London" in the same volume (pp. 141-158), for the transformation brought by the middling sort of London to the city's socio-political life and the urban economy throughout sixteenth and seventeenth-century.


The question solicits a negative response in Jonathan Barry's essay, "Bourgeois Collectivism? Urban Association and the Middling Sort" (*The Middling Sort of People*, pp. 84-112), where he argues that the complex formation of urban middling sort did not allow for a consensual agenda, although the prosperous merchant class exercised a political leadership through various forms of associations as well as the City government, in order to secure such stability.

Apart from the historians who focus on the early modern middle class, the so-called 'revisionist' historians have contributed to the new approach. In particular, they have propounded a view of Tudor and early Stuart politics very different from earlier accounts, which had emphasized the imminent breakdown and revolutionary potential of the social system. Instead, the revisionists have tended to stress the continuities and pragmatic accommodations within the system that helped to stabilize the 'crisis.' For a number of 'revisionist' approaches, see Sharpe and Zwicker (eds) *Politics of Discourse* (1987); Sharpe and Lake (eds), *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (1993). A new mode of historical inquiry based upon the notion of history as narrative has been formulated by Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse* (1978). White makes it clear that "history" is not a realm of facts but a narrative constructed according to "a plot structure" the historian as a storyteller chooses - consciously or unconsciously - to take up. He also stresses that such narratives are historically-conditioned constructs. For his critique of the nineteenth-century construct of Renaissance, see *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (1973).

CHAPTER 3
RETRIEVING THE CIVIC VOICE:
CITIZENS IN HISTORY AND IN SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORIES

INTRODUCTION
THE CITIZEN SPECTATOR

Much has been said of the performance of Richard II by the Chamberlain's Men and the Essex Rebellion (1601) in terms of volatile nexus between the theatre and the politics of Renaissance England. One version of the story goes that, apart from its nominal patronage by Lord Burghley, Shakespeare's company was intimately associated with the Essex faction and thus ventured the stage propaganda. The antagonism among the aristocracy is also replicated in theatre business; Lord Admiral's Men, the only competitive rival to Chamberlain's Men, was under the patronage of the Cecil faction. This narrative emphasizes the connection between theatre companies and aristocratic culture, often implicated with E. K. Chambers' view that theatrical activities in the Renaissance England were the appendage to the court. In fact, the narrative was generated by the nineteenth-century scholarship, which, in its ideological complicity with the British Empire, sought to raise Shakespeare to the status of confidant with the peerage, establishing him thereby as national bard.

Such bardolatry has become the object of much critical attack in recent historical criticism. Alternately, new historicists and cultural materialists retell the story with a shifted focus on the politically subversive function of the theatre. Both Greenblatt and Dollimore highlight Queen Elizabeth's anxious acknowledgement of the implied
identification between her and Richard II (Greenblatt 1982: 4, Dollimore 1985: 8). The Queen's complaint that 'this tragedy was played 40 times in open streets and houses' is attentively listened to by these critics, who refuse to subscribe to the familiar idea of the Renaissance theatre as a privileged site of aristocratic ideology or as an enclosed space for aesthetic questions. Instead, the critics assert that the theatre was an open space where representation of seditious matters tended to be highly charged with the real social tensions and political conflicts.²

More recently, this political version of the story has come under attack. Leeds Barroll has pointed out the tendency of new historicism to accept 'old' historical explanations without questioning the underlying assumptions, to build a narrative upon an extremely narrow set of documents and to promulgate an analytical model premised upon elementary concepts of political process (Barroll "A New History"). Undeniably, Barroll brings to the 'time-honored and traditionally tendered narrative' about the theatre-politics connection a number of significant correctives and insights, which are informed by recent re-thinking of historical writing.³ In particular, he suggests that the new historicist emphasis on the subversive function of the theatre resulted from an insufficient, if not inadequate, contextualization, and that the limited focus on 'what happened' tended to ignore the consequences of the event, or of the actions involved in it.

Thus, Barroll's alternate account proceeds by including evidences regarding the Crown's disposition toward the theatrical company and those of Essex conspirators who sponsored and/or attended the performance. The relatively minor penalties for the sponsors/spectators -- compared to execution and life-imprisonment for the more prestigious conspirators -- and virtually none for the players suggest that the Crown did not view the performance of Richard II on the eve of the rebellion as a real threat, or even a provocation to be severely dealt with. Accordingly, 'the power to subvert' is effectively undermined. In turn, Barroll brings in new evidence that seems to point toward the real threat -- interrogation and punishment of John Hayward, the author of The first part of the life and raign of king Henrie the IIII, a prose history published in 1599, in which the deposition of Richard II is described at length.⁴ Because the evidence indicates that the government authority regarded the seditious matters on 'page' was more dangerous than those on 'stage,' Barroll concludes that the emerging print culture assumed the political
effectivity and cultural force which the historicist critics mistakenly confer upon the theatre.

Although Barroll's critique of new historicist narrative is most appropriate and insightful, I do have some reservations about his 'wider' contextualization, especially in regard of the shift from theatre to print. It is certainly informative, and more than necessary, to configure different cultural fields in order to relate them to one another. To do so, however, the configuration of a particular field must be thoroughly examined. What is left behind, and simultaneously circumscribes the parameter of, Barroll's shift into another cultural field is the same binarism of subversion and containment. As the theatre is seen to be politically ineffective, it is implicitly argued that the subversive aspect of drama on discursive level was contained on the institutional level. In turn, an instance of seditious intention of a printed matter is construed to be representative of the subversiveness of the entire print culture. The cultural process, whether mediated through theatre or print, continues to be thought dichotomous. Then, an appropriate contextualization must not be a simple question of extending the narrative frame but applying a closer look at the present frame and complicating it with what remains at its margin. In other words, before shifting to the following frames, we need to be alert to what is missing from the new historicist picture itself, in which we have the rebels and the government authorities as well as dramatist, players, and sponsors of the performance who constituted an interested audience. But where are the rest of the audience?

There are questions, of course, to be asked of those interested spectators, too. Not all the sponsors appeared in the playhouse to see the performance, some of those present came late, others left before the performance ended. What did they come to see, the stage or the response of the ordinary audience? Was it a symbolic act to exhort themselves or a sheer propaganda to agitate the people of London against the regime? And, more importantly, how did the ordinary audience respond to Richard's 'tyranny'? Was the deposition of Richard by Bolingbroke justified in their view? Were the intentions of the sponsors satisfied by the performance or by a desired response from the rest of the spectators? There is simply no evidence regarding the audience responses in the interrogation records from which different versions of the story were constructed. This lacuna cannot be filled out;
actual responses in the playhouse cannot be known. Nonetheless, it is one thing to point out the lack of evidence: it is quite another to dismiss these questions entirely.

At the least, we know the consequences of the event, that the rebellion failed, and that, instead of seizing the court in Whitehall, the Earl of Essex rallied through the London streets for the City’s support on his cause. The earl or some of his followers might have imagined that the stage event of Bolingbroke’s triumphant return to London could be reenacted in the realm of reality. Furthermore, we also know the audience responses to this 'real' stage of history. London citizens, including those few hundreds who had seen the performance of Richard II on the previous day, were not agitated; their response was a muted silence. With the citizens’ support, would Essex have succeeded? We cannot tell with any certainty, though it is not unreasonable to postulate that the City’s rebellion would have left a much deeper scar on the political nation. My question at this point is how to interpret the silence on the part of citizens: a refusal of the Earl in favor of the Queen or an expression of their non-interventionist position to the factional war of aristocracy? More urgently, how should we relate the mute response to the historical moment with the kind of responses the citizen might have shown to the stage representations of their national history?

From various options of interpretation, there may not emerge a definite answer. And it is not my aim to seek an indisputable version of the story. Rather, I maintain that the interpretive options were also historical options that existed for the Londoners to choose from, according to, or even against, their ideological outlook and political allegiance, let alone theatrical taste. What I attempt to establish in the following two chapters is a minimal denominator that governed responses of citizens to the Essex rebellion, or any 'matter of state' put on the stage of London streets or on the stage of the commercial theatres. I will explore the city-crown relationship, both real and imaginary, looking closely at their socio-economic, political, and symbolic exchange. Hence my leading question: is there a demarcated space for citizens in Shakespeare’s history plays (First Tetralogy, King John, and Richard II) as well as in the Elizabethan political -- and theatrically staged -- events such as the Queen’s Coronation Entry into London? My primary concern is to retrieve the voice of citizens inscribed in such political and theatrical events and to distinguish their corporate identity from that of the ruling aristocracy on the one hand and ‘the popular
voice' on the other, both of which have been much entertained in recent historical criticism— that is, at the price of the civic voice.
I

WHO SPEAKS?: ROYAL ENTRY AND CIVIC DRAMATURGY

i. City and Crown

To a greater or lesser degree, almost all the Elizabethan writers on the English polity or social hierarchy acknowledged the importance of 'citizens or burgesses' for the proper functioning of the commonwealth, granting them a distinct category of status among the social orders. Some of the writers even stress their political autonomy. For William Harrison, himself a citizen of London by patrimony, citizens were those men who had "next place to gentlemen" and were not only "free within the cities," but "of some likely substance to bear office in the same." "Citizen," Sir Thomas Smith said, "were next after gentlemen" in political matters, but they served the commonwealth only in towns, for "generally in the shires they be of none account." Thomas Wilson endorsed their political autonomy, stating "everyone being, as it were, a common Wealth among themselves." In 1607 William Camden added that citizens were "those who hold offices in their respective cities, and are elected to sit in parliaments."^7

Given that these writers' primary concern was to distinguish rather than relate social groups, we should be careful to accept their assumed or matter-of-fact distinction between the civic political autonomy only locally effective and their social superiors' nationally wielded. Though not incorporated into the political structure of the city, the adjacent areas were obviously affected by the trade and traffic of the town, as best exemplified in London's jurisdiction over Surrey and Middlesex. Furthermore, if local interests of the urban community were represented in parliament, how could it not affect the national politics?^8 Beyond such caveats, these descriptions of social order do not account for, and even conceal, the more intimate, or engaged, relationship between the Crown and the City of London in particular. In that relationship was something that eschewed the formal, hierarchical structure that characterized the relationship between any provincial city and the Crown.
To risk a generalization, the City-Crown relationship in the Capital had been precarious throughout medieval era; so it fundamentally was in Elizabethan London. Historians of medieval London show that the favor of the Crown was crucial in maintaining London's autonomy. The formative period for London's constitution was the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, following the establishment of the commune in 1190. By 1200 London could ensure its privileges and customs, including election of mayor, by royal charters. That these written charters could be nullified at the monarch's will and the City's 'freedom' could disappear overnight was the lesson Londoners had to learn through the turbulent relationship with the Crown. Meanwhile, the royal encroachment of civic privileges did not pass without resistance from the citizens. In 1258 London joined the dissident barons who forced Henry II to accept the Provisions of Oxford, several articles of which confirmed the jurisdictional independence of London. Again in 1265 the City supported the rebellion of Simon de Montfort. This time, the result was detrimental; after the suppression of the rebels. London was deprived of its liberties and ruled for the next five years by a royal warden. The civic rights were again deprived during the reign of Edward I for 14 years. In restoring London's privileges the Crown managed to extract some money in the process, which was usually the case. During the reign of Edward II, however, the City-Crown relationship was more or less stabilized. The City took advantage of the king's weakness and baronial opposition to him to extract privileges as well as recognition of its autonomous administration. Although the city was to be taken briefly into the king's hand again by Richard II, the time of blatant interference was over.

In its causes and consequences, this last instance reveals much about the fundamental precariousness on which City-Crown relationship was predicated. Richard II demanded of the City a thousand-pound loan that he deemed his by feudal right. When it was denied, he not only deprived the City of its ancient rights and liberties, as his predecessors used to do, but also took a further step to depose the mayor and the sheriffs of their offices and imprisoned them. Furthermore, he removed his court to York, a rival city to London in size of population and commerce, threatening London's status as Capital. In the view of the king, citizens of London were no better than 'tenants' of royal estates, obliged to obey the demand of their sovereign lord. Shakespeare's Richard surmises the attitude: 'I was born to order not to ask'. Most appropriate, then, is the dying John of Gaunt's reproach: 'You are
landlord of England, not a king.' If, indeed, Richard was one such landlord, all his predecessors had been in their willful revocation and violation of the charters they themselves granted to the city.

For the following reigns of Lancastrians, Yorkists, and even early Tudors, the City-Crown relationship was significantly modified, though not to the effect that the fundamentally feudal obligations might be entirely cancelled. Engaged in the Hundred Years' War, threatened by baronial revolts and open civil wars, the monarchy depended more and more on London as its principal power-base. Much impoverished and unsure of their own legitimacy, the monarchs could not risk alienating the largest and wealthiest city in the realm. Their main concern was to keep London loyal and meanwhile to extract financial support from the city. Ultimate authority over London still rested in the Crown's hand, but the City's autonomy was no longer in dispute or in danger.

That these developments were not merely contingent upon the rise and fall of kings or dynasties becomes obvious, when we turn to the changes in the city politics, which had its own dynamics. These internal changes are generally characterized as consolidation of oligarchic rule (Foster 9-11). Edward II's reign saw the rise of a new merchant group who accumulated their wealth by developing new lines of foreign trade and gradually replaced older generation of merchants at the top rank of civic hierarchy. While the rulers of London had always been wealthy aldermen who inherited landed property in London and who gained admission to civic life through patrimony, the new generation gained the franchise through redemption (purchase) or apprenticeship, and few inherited much landed property. They initiated a series of reforms in political structure of the city, among which the most important is the establishment of the Common Council, a sizable assembly of citizens which was to have the essential political powers and responsibilities in London. This lower echelon of civic government was to broaden the base of participatory politics. Yet it eventually contributed to the reinforcement of aldermanic rule, when the election of councilmen transferred from the guilds or crafts to the wards over which aldermen took much control. In turn, the Court of Aldermen took over the election of its own members and left the wards with only the right of formally nominating the candidates.

For the councilmen and political elites of the city, the consequence of these reforms was an elevating one; not only were they seated at the top of the civic hierarchy but also,
with much diversified sources of wealth and on a broader power-base supported by the Common Council, they also gained a more confident position in relation to the Crown. There emerged then the group of the outspoken mayors and aldermen, recorded in Tudor chronicles, who raised their voice during the civil war, against the 'crown-mongers' in defense of the City's privileges and citizen's safety. One of whom, depicted by Shakespeare, was confident or even blatant enough to intervene into the feud between the Bishop of Winchester, the great uncle of king, and Humphrey of Gloucester, uncle of king and Lord Protector: "Fie, lords! That you, being supreme magistrates,/ Thus contumelously should break the peace!" (1 Henry VI 1.3.57-58)¹⁰ That the Lord Mayor's confidence in rebuking these mighty lords derives not only from the few officers accompanying him on stage but from the entire city itself he represents becomes obvious, when he threatens to call out the apprentices from their shops to assist the city officers if the combatants in this disturbance do not disperse immediately. Here and elsewhere in Shakespeare's history plays, mayors speak in full authority of the City. Moreover, this particular disturbance and the mayor's intervention occur out of city's jurisdiction, that is, the Tower of London governed by a royal warden, the Lieutenant of Tower. In the Elizabethan London, it was not great noblemen but this royal officer who enraged the citizens by his abusive power and thereby drew disputes over the extent of the Tower Liberties.

In 1585 the City challenged the issue of grants of protection to debtors by the Tower authorities, turning a blind eye to the arrest of those with protections within the Liberty of the Tower (Archer 36-7). In retaliation, the Lieutenant of the Tower arrested citizens at random. While these and other disputes obviously resulted from the efforts of some of crown's leading office-holders to maintain their dignity and enhance the profits of their offices, their abuse of authority were not the crown's deliberate assault on the city's franchises. In fact, the Privy Council and its judicial branch ruled against the Lieutenant on the issue of protections. In general, the correspondences Privy Council sent out to Mayoral, Sherivial, and Aldermanic courts tell of something beyond the institutional relationship. Except the occasional complaint and rebuke for the lax enforcement of rules regarding, for instance, the observation of Lent, control of vagabonds and beggars, and regulation for the plagues, the Councillors maintained a tone of respect and cooperation toward the city authorities. As to the major concerns of the Crown, such as borrowing money, raising
troops for the queen's army, provisioning their supplies, the Council's orders came more as a reminder of duty than a demand. Above all, the Council was strongly in favor of maintaining the ruling oligarchy of the city and its traditional practice of government, for they perfectly understood that the disposition of London was vital to the general welfare of the realm.

In modern historical accounts, the intimate relationship between the City and the Crown has often been characterized by the notion of "Tudor paternalism," one of whose assumptions is that the Crown indisputably takes the upper-hand in the exchange.\textsuperscript{11} Legally, that may have been the case; in practice, there were boundary-crossing exchange contests such notion. First of all, London's contribution of men and arms to the queen's service surpassed all other counties in total numbers supplied. Secondly, the city's financial support was crucial for the effective operation of the central government. Huge amount of grants and loans, both institutional and personal, poured into the crown's officers, and London merchants further helped in soliciting foreign loans to the Queen and her councillors. It becomes apparent that the two basic obligations were not conducted within the paternalistic relationship. When in August 1600 the Privy Council wrote complaining that troops recently sent by the City to Ireland were not raised by a proper levy at all, but by a search for rogues and vagabonds. Loans and grants of money were not without extraneous premiums: patents of monopoly on a new line of business and entry into royal offices were the usual rewards. Briefly, what in the view of the Crown was the loyal subject's duty turned out to be a profitable negotiation on the part of the City and its leading merchant-citizens. And the negotiations occurred not only in the economic and political transactions but also in the symbolic exchanges of legitimation and recognition between the sovereign and the subjects.
ii. Power on Display: Royal Entry and Modern Interpretations

The interdependence between the City and the Crown and the negotiated position of the citizens are strongly figured on the terrain of London's symbolic economy. A single most important event frequently visited by a number of cultural historians and literary scholars was, of course, Elizabeth I's coronation entry into London (1559), probably the initiating occasion in which the Queen turned to London merchants to advance loans and grants - this time with additional provisions of clothes for the thousands of ceremonial robes and gowns (Foster 144). Modern scholars have drawn attention to this event, and royal processions on other occasions, as an exemplification of "royal cults" or of "symbolics of power." Most scholars have focused attention on the symbolism of the pageants, invariably viewed as events staged in order to mystify and empower the royal sovereign. For David Bergeron the binding theme of the pageants was "the celebration of Elizabeth's power, spiritual, mystical, transforming power"; in the same manner, later Elizabethan pageantry offered "an apotheosis of Elizabeth" (1971: 11). Perhaps this approach is best encapsulated by Clifford Geertz, who argued the royal procession expressed the ruler's "royal charisma" through the allegories of the pageant, which operated within "a concept of royal authority as a projection of abstract ideals of piety and justice" (125-9). A cursory look at the ostensible message of the pageants may corroborate — or help to question — such a view.

On 14 January 1559, as Elizabeth arrives at a scaffold erected at Fenchurch street, a child speaker welcomed her on behalf of the City, pledging that the town would offer her its "blessing tongues" and "true hertes." This prologue was followed by five main pageants deployed along the processional routes; each scenic device was accompanied by explicatory verses delivered by a child speaker. The first one at Gracious street depicted the genealogy of Elizabeth under the title of "The uniting of the two howses of Lancastre and Yorke." The central arch consisted of three stages, each of which, fully decorated with red and white roses, was occupied by personages representing Henry VII and his wife Elizabeth of York, Henry VIII and Anne Bolyen, and Elizabeth herself, respectively. An emblematic version of 'Tudor myth,' so to speak. Entitled "Seate of worthie governance," the second pageant encapsulated a morality tradition; four Virtues - "Pure religion, Love of
subjects, Wisdom, and Justice" - stood triumphantly over eight Vices - "Superstition and Ignorance, Rebellion and Insolence, Folly and Vainglory, and Adulation and Bribery." The Virtues were in turn headed by a person representing, again, Elizabeth sitting at the apex of the arch. The third at Soper Lane set on the main arch figures representing "Eight Beatitude," each of which the child speaker "applied to our soveraine ladye quene Elizabeth." The most elaborate and costly pageant was set at the Little Conduit in Cheapside. On a square stage were built two hills or gardens. One, titled "Ruinosa Respublica (a decayed commonwealth)," was cast in a dreary landscape with a withered tree at its center; the other, "Respublica bene instituta (well-built commonwealth)," had a flourishing tree as its centerpiece, with rich decorations that filled in the scene. In between the two hills was located a cave, out of which, on the arrival of Elizabeth, came Time and Truth carrying an English Bible, which was dedicated to the Queen. The final pageant on Fleet street set a stage upon which "Debora the judge and restorer of the howse of Israel" sat in a royal seat, surrounded by six persons, each two representing "The nobilitie, the clergy, and the Comonalitie." An epilogue came at Temple Bar, where two mythical giants of England, Corineus and Gotmagot, who were customarily identified with the City of London, bore tablets that contained verses summarizing the five main pageants, thus recapitulating the messages already displayed and explained. The very endpiece was, again, a speech by a child echoing the opening dedication of the City's "blessing tongues" and "true herites."

As Clifford Geertz notes, the political imagination of Elizabethan England was "allegorical, Protestant, didactic, and pictorial"; it fed on "moral abstractions cast into emblems" (128). The pageant, by appropriating such imagination, helped to "transform [Elizabeth's whole public life - or, more exactly, the part of her life the public saw] into a kind of philosophical masque in which everything stood for some vast idea and nothing took place unburdened with parable" (129). Similarly, David Bergeron argues that in its transformation of the monarch into a moral idea, "the pageant insists on the powerful presence of the sovereign for its completeness" (1988: 319). Roy Strong remarks of the event that, being "the most legendary and successful of all its exponents," the pageant was "the means by which the cult of the imperial virgin was systematically promoted" (1973: 84), thus endorsing Geertz's view of the whole event as "statecraft." All in all, these
scholars assume that the unravelling of the symbolism of the pageant entirely depended on the presence of the sovereign, the honored guest, for whom it was devised and presented, that its allegorical meaning emanated from or was constituted around what Geertz termed "center of the center" (136), or simply that through the statecraft of 'power on display' monarchs sought to influence the public. There are number of reasons to question these assumptions, however.

Although Platonic ideals and allegorical modes of thought certainly shaped Elizabethan political culture, one cannot simply posit a definite manner according to which an allegory warranted its interpretation. In their more functional, transformative notion of allegory, Geertz and others have failed to recognize that, though allegory is meant to displace historical contingencies in pursuit of the universal and eternal, it is often the case that such displacement rather tends to recall rather than remove what lies beneath the whole project of allegorization. By this return of the suppressed, circumstantial meanings prompted by historical reality compete with, if not subvert, the stable meanings allegory seeks to institute. Through the allegories offered by the pageant, the ideas of kingship may be securely instituted. However, it would be careless and misleading to assert that "Elizabeth was Chastity, Wisdom, Peace, and Pure religion" (Geertz 129) - the incarnation of the moral entities. Seen from the 'native's point of view,' a full awareness of the distance between moral ideas and historical realities, as well as the desire to close the gap between them, governed the overall design and the particular devices of these pageants.

Take for instance the 'genealogy' or 'Tudor myth' pageant. Its whole purpose seems to confirm Elizabeth's indisputable claim to the throne by virtue of her being the only heir of the ruling house which brought an end to the civil war and restore unity and peace to England. Such purpose was served by the visual impact of the pageant which, in fact, employed two distinct visual devices: the color symbolism of red and white roses, and the five royal personages framed by the roses and connected vertically by a rose branch into a single, uninterrupted line. Combined into a whole, these two devices are forced to utter a single story, though each has its own story to tell, namely, the dynastic legitimacy of the Tudors and the personal claim of Elizabeth to the crown. Richard Mulcaster's official account of the pageant reveals this process of conflation:  

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Thys Pageant was grounded upon the Quenes Majesties name. For like as the long warre betwene the two Houses of Yorke and Lancastre then ended, when Elizabeth daughter to Edward the Fourth matched in marriage with Henry the Seventhe, heyre to the Howse of Lancastre; so since that the Quenes Majesties name was Elizabeth, and forsomuch as she is the onelye heire of Herye the Eighth, which came of bothe the howses, as the knitting up of the concorde, it was devised, that like as Elizabeth was the first occasion of concorde, so, she, another Elizabeth, myght maintaine the same among her subjectes, so that unitie was the ende whereat the whole devise shotte....(42)

Mulcaster's strained effort to collate two stories under the theme of "unitie" are forceful at one point and vulnerable at another. Using the story of "the uniting of the two howses" as a frame of Tudor legitimacy may have been persuasive and effective with a relatively solid ground, given that a large number of Tudor chronicles - including Edward Hall's - were in wide circulation. But using the dynastic legitimacy as a ground for a personal rule may have been no less problematic than the Yorkist claims over the Lancastrian as noticed, to a greater or lesser degree, by the chroniclers. The trouble was, for pageant makers as well as chroniclers. there had been and were more than one claimants for the crown in almost every succession. even within a secured dynasty. Elizabeth was not an exception; her claim had been already contested and then muted during the reigns of her half-siblings. The assertion that "she is the onelye heire of Henrye the Eighth" speaks only half the truth. if not an implacable perjury; the only favorable condition for Elizabeth was that the stronger claimants are now dead and dumb. leaving no voice for or against her succession. Aware of this lack of inherent legitimacy. Mulcaster shifts "ground" from the unsettling historical realities to a more convenient domain of literary devices. where metaphor and analogy. and most of all a kind of pun - the coincidental name Elizabeth of York and of Tudor - work to displace, once and for all, the uncertain legitimacy by transplanting the established and 'unquestionable' Tudor myth.

Seen in this light, one may now realize that the principle of the pageant allegory - the "unitie" - was achieved not merely by abstraction but by subtraction. The single branch of roses that connects Elizabeth to her father - with only one of his wives whose life as a queen was the shortest of all and much contested - was the effect of aura cast by Tudor myth through the device of color symbolism; the roses that "filled all the voide" on the
pageant rendered two other branches - Edward VI and Mary - invisible. David Bergeron is surely right to observe that representation (of legitimacy) "seeks to fill empty places," but not "to make manifest what may have only been implied" (1988: 323); it does so in order to conceal the thorny voices from the past, to yoke those of the present and prevent those of the future, too.

Some common spectators of the pageant might have recalled the similar device in Queen Mary's coronation entry, which in turn refreshed the memory of the turbulent years of her reign. A contemporary, indeed, gives witness to the strong probability that the elision of historical realities in the pageant's allegorical schemes also swerved to historical allusions. The "grounde" of the second pageant, Mulcaster explains, was:

that like as by Vertues (whych doe abundantly appere in her Grace) the Qenes Majestie was established in the seate of Govermement; so she should sette fast in the same so long as she embraced Vertue and helde Vice under foote. Fir if Vice once gotte up the head, it would put the seate of Govermement in peryll of falling (46, emphasis added).

Following Mulcaster's lead, Bergeron reads the pageant as "an allegory of state" in which the pageant-makers portrayed Virtues' battle with "Vices," who, in his own words, "would undermine the state" (324). Both Mulcaster and Bergeron tend to regard the battle in abstract terms, fought in the realm of ideas. But II Schifanoya, the Venetian ambassador who reported the event to his government, saw the matter rather differently. Of the Vices, in particular, he says that they hint of the recent past entrenched in rebellions and civil wars; that they not only "would" but also 'did' put the state at peril. For the ambassador the allegory obviously did not work to transform reality into eternity, nor to bring a higher moral principle to "the objective reality," which in Bergeron's view was "already present in the streets," namely, the presence of the sovereign. Rather, in the foreigner's view, probably shared with many other spectators, the allegory of the state pointed to the past and the much-hoped-for future: "...that hitherto religion had been misunderstood and misdirected, and that now it will proceed on a better footing..."16 Implicitly referring to Mary's reign, II Schifanoya's account replaces the present-eternity equation of the allegory by a historical consciousness promoted by, and indeed having informed, the device. In the unsettled
condition, the present existed not as a fact nor as a fulfillment, but as a lacunae, which, of course, should be filled out with hopes, wishes, prayers, and trust, all permeating the speeches that accompanied each pageant.

iii. "The hole meaning": Pageant and the Accompanying Speech

The significance of these speeches, which, in Mulcaster's words, "declared unto her Majestie the hole meaning of the said Pageant" (41), has been largely ignored by modern scholars who assigned them to a secondary place by arguing that the verses merely reiterated what the visual allegory itself already established before the eyes and presence of the sovereign (Bergeron 1971: 11). In this view, the verses are redundant and, at best, explanatory. One such term - "expowned" - is indeed found but only once in Mulcaster's description of the ways in which the verses were supposed to function. More frequently, he uses other terms: "interpret and applye," "have the matter opened," "open the meaning of," and "interpret," all implying a distance between what the pageant shows and what it actually - or intentionally - signifies, thus emphasizing the role of speech - and the speaker by extension - as mediating between the spectator and spectacle. He further distinguishes "the hole meaning" or "meaning at large" from the device of the pageant itself. And these speeches were listened to by the honored guest with utmost care. In addition to "geving most attentive care, and requiring that the Peoples noyse might be stayde," the Queen does something unusual:

And ere the Quenes Majestie came wythin hearing of thys Pageant, she sent certaine, as also at all the other Pageautes, to require the People to be silent. For her Majestie was disposed to heare all that shoulde be sayde unto her (44).

The implications of such particular attention to the speech are many. But let us draw, first of all, on what was there in the speeches themselves.
All five speeches are invested with the purpose of bridging the gap between ostensible and implied meanings of the pageant. The first two stanzas of the speech that accompanied the "genealogy" pageant seem to merely verbalize or reenact what is already manifest in visual terms, describing how a unity was brought to the realm by the marriage of Henry VII of Lancaster and Elizabeth of York, by the incontestable succession of Henry VIII, "In whose seat, his true heire, thou Quene Elisabeth doth sit." It is the third, last stanza that turns the redundancy into a new premise:

Therefore as civill warre, and feude of blood did cease
When these two Houses were united into one.
So now that jarrs shall stint, and quietnes encrease.
We trust, O noble Queene, thou wilt be cause alone (43).

Characteristic of all the following speeches as well, is the swift and emphatic transition from a somewhat remote past to the present moment heavily invested with hope and "trust." What lies in between, that is, what is omitted, is the recent past which was no less spotted with "civill warre and feude of blood," and which still cast its ominous shadow upon the present - the fear that "jarrs" may erupt and "quietness" be disturbed at any moment. The uncertainty of the moment prevails at the transitory moment in the speech; fulfillment, as it was 'devoutly wished,' is yet to come. Transition also occurs from a domain of ideas to the 'objective reality,' namely, the Queen herself. Yet it is not a seamless translation, as Geertz and others have suggested, that governs the mode of transition. Neither the Four Virtues nor the Eight Beatitudes are identified with, but "applyed unto her Highnes." Of the "emport" of the 'Beatitude' pageant Mulcaster writes:

Whereof every one, upon just consideracions, was applyed unto her Highnes; and that the People therby put her Grace in mind, that as her good doinges before had given just occasion why that these blessinges might fall upon her; that so, if her Grace did continue in her goodnes as she had entered, she should hope for the fruit of these promises due unto them that doe exercise themselves in the blessinges (47).

Clearly, Elizabeth was not seen as the embodiment of moral ideas but as one who should subject herself to them. It is not the identity but the proximity that she bears in relation to
the ideal form represented on the pageant stage: a proximity, the distance, or lacunae, of which she has to and is expected to fill out. Likewise, Deborah of the fifth pageant is not Elizabeth, but an image she should take care to resemble:

A worthie President, O worthie Quene, thou hast,
A worthie woman judge, a woman sent for staie.
And that the like to us endure alway thou maist,
Thy loving subjectes will with true hearts and tongues praie (54).

That such a reminder of both resemblance and distance - registered in "the like" - appears again in the last stanza draws our attention to the structural similarity of the speech: the first part re-presents the visual device of the pageant (ostensible meanings), while the latter part presents the message unarticulated by the visual aspect (implied meanings, or Mulcaster's "hole meaning"). Of the five speeches, three have the same three-stanza structure, with the last stanza characteristically beginning with emphatic appellatives - O noble Quene/ O Prince of pereles fame/ O worthie Quene - and heavily phrased with "trust." "wishe." "hope." and "praie." thus serving to address the Queen with implied meanings of the pageant. Of the remaining two speeches, one has two stanzas, and the last two lines of the second stanza have the same function: in the other, two of the all four stanzas are devoted to "open" its implied meanings.

Even the first part of the speech does not merely reiterate the ostensible meaning. More often than not, as in the second speech, it frames the visual with an awareness of conditionality upon which the pictorial representation is predicated:

Whyle that Religion true shall Ignorance Suppresse,
And, with her weightye foote, breake Superstition's head:
Whyle Love of Subjectes shall Rebellion distresse,
And, with zeale to the Prince, Insolency down treade:

While Justice can Flattering Tonges and Bribery deface,
While Follie and Vaynglorie to Wisdome yeld their handes:
So long shal Government not swerve from her right race,
But Wrong decayeth still, and Rightwisenes up standes (45).
Mixing admonition with celebration, this and the other speeches serve to instill the moral imperatives the Queen has to abide in order to be "A wise Prince." Even when they seem to fulminate a rhetoric of identification or a tone of supplication, the speeches do not fail to set an example to be followed by "Learned Rulers."

iv. Who Speaks?

Because of their primary concern over the symbolism of the pageant, modern scholars have failed to recognize the significance - let alone the structural pattern or the admonitory function - of the speeches that accompanied the presentation of the pageants. In their view, these speeches are only subsidiary to the centerpiece, that is, the visual allegory of the pageant. Bergeron assumes that there was nothing that stands in the "perpendicular relationship" of the royal spectator and the spectacle (1988: 320). Similarly, Geertz finds little interruption between "center of the center" (i.e., the monarch) and the centerpiece of the event (136). Consequently, they failed to consider the whole configuration of the scene except in terms of uninterrupted flow of energy — what Geertz have termed "royal charisma" — from the spectacle to the Queen or vice versa. In this view, the royal sovereign and her re-presentation on the pageant speak of each other, whose sublimating voice commands 'blessings tonges and true hertes' of the subjects.

As a matter of fact, however, there was a child speaker who stood on "a convenient standing cast out in the forefront of [thys] Pageant" (46), and who 'spoke in between' - Mulcaster's "enterpret" - the 'centers.' The Queen's own response to both the pageant and each speech suggests a rather different relationship from the perpendicular one:

...after her Grace had understode the meaning thereof, she tanked the Citie, prayed the fairnes of the worke, and promised that she would doe her whole endeavour for the continuall preservation of concorde, as the Pageant did emport (42).
The Quenes Majestie, when she had heard the childe, and understode the Pageant at full, gave the Citie also thankes there, and most graciouslie promised her good endeavore for the maintenaunce of the sayde Vertues, and suppression of Vyces (46).

In her response, Elizabeth clearly distinguishes "the worke" and "the meaning thereof"; furthermore, her "promise" is responsive not to the visual allegory but to its implied messages. Finally, she is well aware of 'who speaks,' or on whose behalf the child orator addresses her with the messages. In contrast, modern scholars have chosen to focus on what or who is represented at the cost of what or who represents. They do not, in other words, give due regard to the subject of the speech, of the enunciation. namely, the citizens of London, whose implied voice in the pageant's allegorical schemes is articulated by the child who "spoke on the Cities behalfe." Accordingly, the symbolic exchange that lies at the heart of the whole event has eluded their attention. The transaction between the sovereign and the subjects is reduced to a one-way traffic, of the center-to-margin transmission of royal charisma.

It is not, either, that the subjects of the speech do not appear on the pageant stage; they are there as actors representing ideas and royal personages. They also appear sometimes on the representational level. For example, in fourth and fifth pageants, the subjects find their way into the prestigious domain of allegory. In the 'Deborah' pageant, the purpose of which was "put [her Highnes] in remembrance to consult for the worthy Government of her People" (54), the "counsell" includes two persons representing "commynalitie," along with persons representing nobility and clergy. The 'Respublica' or 'Time and Truth' pageant, is quite extraordinary. Not only does it represent the subjects of the speech as "Common weales" but also reveals what, in other pageants and speeches, remained in the lacunae between past and present or between idea and reality. Perhaps, its most remarkable device is the presentation of a gift from a pageant character, Truth. At the moment, the Queen was expected to respond in action, not in words as she had done so far:

This olde man with the sythe, olde Father Tyme they call,
And her his daughter Truth, which holdeth yonder boke;
Whom he out of his rocke hath brought forth to us all,
From whence for many yeres she durst not once out loke.

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The ruthless wight that sitteth under the barren tree,
Resembleth to us the fowme, when Common weales decay;
But when they be in state triumphant, you may see
By him in freshe attyre that sitteth under the baye.

Now since that Time again his daughter Truth hath brought,
We trust, O worthy Quene, thou wilt this Truth embrace;
And since thou understandst the good estate and nought,
We trust wealth thou wilt plant, and barrennes displace.

But for to heale the sore, and cure that is not seene,
Which thing the boke of Truth doth teache in writing playn;
She doth present to thess the same, O worthy Quene,
For that, that wordes do flye, but wryting doth remayn (50).

On the final line of the speech, the "boke of Truth" was delivered to the Queen, who
"kissed it, and with both her handes held up the same, and so laid it upon her brest, with
great thankes to the citie therefore" (51).

It is this single dramatic moment that has captured the attention of modern scholars who
invariably stress the theatricality governing this particular moment, the whole event of the
procession, and the political culture of Renaissance England in general. Statecraft becomes
inseparable from stagecraft. Indeed, it is not only modern interpreters who commend on the
theatricality of the event. Mulcaster himself described the event in an obviously theatrical
metaphor:

So that if a man should say well, he could not better terme the citie of
London that time, than a stage wherein was shewed the wonderfull
spectacle, of a noble hearted Princesse toward her most loving People, and
Peoples exceeding comfort in beholding so worthy a sovereign... (39)

From this account, which suggests the double presence of the Queen as spectacle/actor on
the streets of London, stems the modern approach that focuses on the royal or 'supreme'
actor. According to Bergeron, Elizabeth "rises triumphantly to the dramatic occasion"
(1971: 20) and, as an "unscheduled actor," "adds immeasurably to the whole experience as
theatre" (1988: 320). Highlighted is Elizabeth's superb theatrical sense; enhanced is the
improvisational power of the sovereign actor, who is seen to dominate the entire event.\textsuperscript{20} In this imperial theatre the citizens and the rest of the commonality standing along the processional routes are relegated to a minor, at best supporting role of mute spectators, subjected to the power on display. Just as an exclusive focus on the visual aspect of pageant has blurred the civic voice that crucially informed the whole event as well as each device, an enchanted eye on the royal actor marginalizes the multitude of common spectators on the London streets.\textsuperscript{21}

v. The Civic Dramaturgy

This inequality in power, both theatrical and social, might have been accepted as unquestionable by some contemporaries as well as the modern interpreters. However, some evidences point towards other possibilities as well. Even Mulcaster himself could watch the scene from a different angle: "the People on eche side joyously beholdying the viewe of so gracious a Ladye theyr Quene, and her Grace no less gladly notying and observing the same" (39). Obviously, there were exchanges of sights. If, as modern interpretation goes, the gaze of common spectators upon the sovereign worked to empower the latter, how did the sovereign's gaze upon the citizens work? If the Queen fashioned herself not only with an impressive entourage of "Gentlemen, Barons, and other Nobilitie of this Realme," but also with "a notable trayne of goodly and beawtifiill Ladies" - all "richely furnished" and "richly appoynted" (Bergeron 1971: 14), how did the City fashion itself before the eyes of the sovereign? What in fact did the Queen see in the streets of London and find out about its citizens standing along the processional route?

Not unlike modern scholars, Mulcaster did not pay as much attention to the City's self-fashioning as to the sovereign's. From the moment the Queen set foot on the city, he reports, the streets were filled with "nothing but gladnes, nothing but prayer, nothing but comfort" (38). In their assigned role of adulation and praise, the city and its people dwindled into a faceless multitude. At one point in Mulcaster's account, however, the face of the city becomes recognizable by its own order, its own color, and its own stagecraft. In
between the third and the fourth pageants, the royal procession draws to a halt before a group of leading citizens headed by the Lord Mayor and the Aldermen. It is at this encounter that Mulcaster looks back at what, apart from the series of pageants, the Queen had seen along the routes:

... she came agaynste the Aldermen in the hyghe ende of Cheape to fore the Little Conduite, where the companies of the Citie ended, whiche beganne at Fanchurche, and stoode along the streets, one by another, enclosed with rayles, hanged with clothes, and themselves well appareled with many riche furres, and their livery whodes upon their shoulders, in comely and semely maner, having before them sondry persones well appareled in silkes and chaines of golde, as wyflers and garders of the sayd companies, beside a number of riche hanginges, as well of trpistrie, arras, clothes of golde, silver, velvet, damaske, sattin, and other silkes, plentifullye hanged all the way as the Quenes Highnes passed from the Towre through the Citie. Out at the windowes and pent-houses of every house did hand a number of ryche and costlye banners and streamers, tyll her Grace came to the upper ende of Cheape (48).

The account is significant for several reasons. Most apparently, it shows the streets of London costumed in "clothes of golde, silver, velvet..." as rich as those donned by the royal entourage. While the majesty of kingship found its most vivid expression in the sight of hundreds of brilliantly dressed men and women, walking or riding with solemn dignity before and after an even more resplendent monarch, the affluence of the city was displayed in the spectacle it made of itself. Thus, in a sense, city and court compete for recognition and admiration from each other.

But as far as the contrast between the two is concerned, Mulcaster is less reliable; he does not take note of it except in terms of 'richely furnished' aristocrats and 'comely and semely maner' in which the members of the livery companies wore their apparel. More resourceful is the Venetian ambassador, who again provides an insight into the whole configuration of the event and who now makes a distinction of two different colors that paint the event. The "whole court so sparkled with jewels and gold colors that they cleared the air, though it snowed a little," he wrote, while "on both sides of the street...the merchants and artisans of every trade leant [on barricades] in long black gowns lined with
hoods of red and black cloth, ...with all their ensigns, banners, and standards, which were innumerable, and made a very fine show" (Bergeron 1971: 14). An unmistakable impression is that the sober color and uniform appearance of the liverymen's robes made a striking contrast to the far more colorful and individualized clothes of the court. Apparently, the liverymen displayed a corporate dignity, differing from the more individualistic and assertive ethos of the great noblemen around the monarch.22

It should be also noted that the livery companies occupied a place of honor at the front of the audience, standing as a symbolic boundary between the royal court and the mass of ordinary spectators watching from windows, rooftops and other vantage-points further back. This position emphasized the liveries' role as a responsible urban elite, on whom the ruler depended for maintenance of order. The presence of whifflers with staffs of authority at the front of the companies further underlined this role. Then, not only the people's enthusiasm and the city's affluence but also the civic order, symbolically displayed and practically guarding the royal procession, must have loomed large in the Queen's view. She must have noted, too, that she was proceeding along the civic hierarchy from the low to the high.

Though Mulcaster only says that the alignment of livery companies began at Fenchurch and ended at Little Conduit of Cheapside, accounts of other Elizabethan and pre-Elizabethan royal entries give an ample witness to the typical arrangement of the companies along the streets. Edward Hall observed of Henry VIII's coronation entry: "...every occupation stood, in their liveries in order, beginning with base occupations, and so ascending to the most worshipful crafts; highest and lastly stood the Mayor, with the Aldermen" at the end of West Cheap (qtd. Smuts 74). It is the same "highe ende of Cheape," where Elizabeth meets the London magistracy in full regalia -- robes of crimson and scarlet in distinction to liverymen's dark robes with hoods trimmed in red. The civic magistrates' reception of the monarch marks the end of her journey through the panorama of civic hierarchy reflecting the relative inferiority of some crafts and superiority of others. Such was the stagecraft of the city, whose climax comes when the Recorder of the city stepped forward to present the queen with a gift of a purse containing a thousand marks in gold, and a speech expressing the citizens' loyalty and asking her to be a good and gracious
sovereign. Both Mulcaster and the Queen — or one of them, at the least — were keenly aware of the moment as the climax:

The Quenes Majestie, with both her handes, tooke the purse, and aunswered to hym againe merveylous pithilie; and so pithilie, that the standers by, as they embraced entirely her gracious aunswer, so they merveiled at the cowching thereof; which was in wordes truely reported these: "I thanke my Lord Maior, his Brethren, and you all...." (49).

This moment has also been taken by modern scholars to demonstrate Elizabeth's theatrical sense, but it is considered more "histrionic" than "dramatic" or "theatrical" (Bergeron 1971:13) — terms, as we noted, reserved for her action in response to the gift of the English Bible. Accordingly, most scholars locate the culmination of the whole event in the 'dramatic' — not merely 'histrionic' — moment. "Something of a dramatic climax... in plotless drama" takes place in the fourth pageant, in Bergeron's view: "How striking and meaningful it must have been to the spectators to see Truth in visible union with their new sovereign" (1971:21, emphasis added). So it might have been. But his conjecture on the spectators' experience is not supported in the least by Mulcaster whose minimal description of the Queen's 'action' in this scene - and nothing of the spectators' response - strikes a marked difference from the enthusiastic response, his own and the spectators', to the Queen's speech addressed to the London dignitaries and their lesser brethren.

Such enthusiasm, which marked the exchange of speech between the City and the monarch as the climax of the whole event, cannot be understood without referring to the notion of popular acclamatio essential to the making of English kings (Smuts 78, Manley 1995:47). In fact, royal processions, and coronation entries in particular, belong to a family of civic rites that serve to reaffirm the vitality of the idea of mutual recognition between the ruler and the ruled. If these ceremonies legitimated and empowered the new monarch, they did so not solely through the assertion of the royal prerogatives but through popular consent. Entries into London were not "penetration" into, or subjection of, the civic body by the sovereign (Marcus 1988:114); they were acts of orientation - in the fundamental sense of the word - of the monarch, along the contour of the city, both physical and mental, topographical and institutional. As John Stow observed in Survey of London, the main axis
of coronation route corresponded exactly with one of the main civic processional routes, frequently traversed by City officials in observance of rites and also followed for London mayor's inaugural shows (Manley 43). Located along this route were not only the pageant stations but also important civic sites; to name a few, St. Paul's and Christ Hospital where Elizabeth stopped to hear their representatives' speech.

Another dimension of the monarch's orientation lay in the institutional structure of the city and the tradition of its components - guilds and livery companies. As noted above, the elaborate arrangement of the streets with stratified civic order and with impressive ensigns, banners, and standards (charters), was meant both as a pronouncement of loyalty and as a reminder of the city's privileges, of the idea that London is itself a 'commonweale.' The royal person and her entourage proceed through the civic sites and institutional hierarchy until they reach the symbolic center of the city - the "hyghe ende of Cheape," where, according to Stow, "diverse justings were made" between the city and the crown during the reign of Edward III, where the same monarch built "the fair building of stone" still used in his own day. from which monarch and ambassadors are accustomed "to behold the shows of this city, passing through West Cheap" (Stow I. 257, 268: Manley 46). In the same elevated and privileged place now stood the London dignitaries, beholding their new sovereign approach, probably with mixed feelings of expectation. From the civic point of view, the center-stage was set for the new monarch to prove whether she deserved a popular acclamation. To the citizens' 'rejoice.' Elizabeth satisfied the expectation with her "marveylous," if not histrionic, speech.

David Bergeron quite rightly observes that, as Mulcaster himself suggests (51), the series of pageants were woven into a 'dramatic unity' and that the fourth pageant constituted its "thematic culmination of all that has preceded it" (1971: 21). It should be noted, however, that "all" includes only the pageants and the drama they have enacted. For, in Mulcaster's account of the entire event there emerges a second drama authored and staged by the civic voice, less spectacular but nonetheless articulate, perhaps less structured than structuring. The civic voice or dramaturgy structures the whole event -- including the pageant drama -- by framing it with opening and ending orations and clarifying its meaning with 'interpretation' of the pageants. It also marks the culmination of the entire event with the structural centerpiece of the city-crown encounter - not of course in the sense of
confrontation nor of communion, but of exchange both symbolic and political at once. In this dramaturgy the sovereign was less an 'unscheduled actor' who appropriates the dramatic potentiality of the occasions than one who performs according to her 'scripted' role. The superbly theatrical moment of receiving the English Bible, and her response to other pageants and speech as well, was in fact calculated:

Sone after that her Grace passed the Crosse, she had espyed the Pageant erected at the Little Conduit in Cheape, and incontinem required to know what it might signifie... And so forth the hole matter was opened to her Grace;... But in the opening, when her Grace understood that the Byble in Englyse should be delivered unto her by Trueth... she thanked the citye for that gyft... commanding Sir John Parrat... to goe before, and to receive the booke. But learning that it should be delivered unto her Grace downe by a silken lace, she caused him to stave (48).

Assuredly, Elizabeth was a willing actor intent to know in advance what role she would have to perform. By whom she was informed of the "hole matter." we never know with any certainty. What can be reasonably guessed. nonetheless, is that there was a 'prompter,' probably of gentle origin. with the script - obviously of civic origin - in hand or mind. directing the royal actor for appropriate lines and actions. The civic voice, in fact. dictates a role for the sovereign. Three decades later. and concurrently with the Queen's continued practice of processions. the common players would script the innumerable roles of regality and great aristocracy in national history plays, and enact the roles themselves. It is the civic voice represented in the stage spectacle of power that I now turn to.
II.

“ENTER ABOVE”:
THE PLACE OF CITIZENS IN SHAKESPEARE’S HISTORIES

i. Theatre of Nationhood?: The Rise of English Chronicle Plays

A myth regarding the rise of history plays in the 1590s is that the vogue was generated by the sudden wave of nationalism and patriotism that is said to have followed the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. Although it is now commonly agreed that “to suppose that the passion for history plays stemmed exclusively from national euphoria following defeat of the Spanish Armada would be absurd” (Smallwood 147), the idea that this victory was fundamental to the rise of the history plays has been slow to lose its spell. In part, that spell was cast by a contemporary eyewitness on the enthusiastic audience response to a performance of what was presumably Shakespeare’s Henry VI (Part I). In 1592 Thomas Nashe celebrated the national history plays for the sense of unity and patriotic feelings they brought to the thousands of people in the playhouse:

... for the subject of them (for the most part) it is borrowed out of our English Chronicles, wherein our forefathers’ valiant acts (that have lain long buried in rusty brass and worm-eaten books) are revived, and they themselves raised from the Grave of Oblivion, and brought to plead their aged honours in open presence: than which, what can be a sharper reproof to these degenerate effeminate days of ours? How would it have rejoiced brave Talbot (the terror of the French) to think that after he had lain two hundred years in his tomb, he should triumph again on the stage, and have his bones newly enbalméd with the tears of ten thousand spectators at least (at several times) who, in the Tragedian that represents his person, imagine they behold him freshly bleeding? (Thomas Nashe, Pierce Penilesse his Supplication to the Diuell [1592], qtd. Chambers vol. 4: 238-9).
As many critics have recently observed, Nashe’s comment seems to have been dictated principally by the need to defend playwrights and plays. Some critics further assert that such a need was in turn informed by the playwrights’ awareness and/or the audience’s perception of the potentially subversive nature of stage representation of historical subject matter. This is, no doubt, an important insight. Nashe’s nationalist rhetoric may, indeed, have concealed the social dissidences within the nation. Nonetheless, the critical focus on the ideological function of the theatre often results in an invariable stress on ‘the power to subvert’ engendered by the theatrical medium or a theorization of conflicting ideological positions among the spectators. The causal logic used to explain the Armada event and the theatrical genre has been questioned. But little explanation about the assumed foundation of Nashe’s rhetoric of unity has been offered; the ‘unquestionable’ victory over the Armada has remained unquestioned.

For social historians, the myth of the English victory itself has now become a suspect. After examining the fragments of letters and diaries by individual soldiers as well as the official correspondences between the leading officers of the English fleet and the Privy Council, R. B. Wernham concludes that the outcome of the battle was anything but a ‘glorious achievement.’ Instead, he suggests that those who had fought the battle realized that their efforts only produced a partial victory: “Most of the English sailors were disappointed … part of the trouble was that all were a little dispirited, and more than a little surprised, at their failure to destroy the Armada in battle” (Wernham 2). According to D. Howarth, another cause of trouble was that many of the English ‘heroes’ were sick and destitute, angrily pleading for supplies of food and money to compensate for the ‘victory’ they earned (239). How was the ambiguous consequence of the battle transformed into a ‘glorious victory’ and transmitted as such to the English population? The general enthusiasm of the people, David Cressy notes, was the effect of a carefully prepared propaganda. Even before the battle, the government entrusted to the parish churches an official prayer for God’s assistance to ‘the elect nation.’ Immediately when the news of the English victory was first heard, the ‘enthusiasm’ was again officially induced by thanksgiving services aimed to “marshal opinion and interpret God’s blessings as an overwhelming endorsement of the Elizabethan regime” (Cressy 1990: 161). What these historians suggest is that the regime was beleaguered by internal problems as well as
foreign threats. The Queen was aging and the issue of succession was uncertain, which propitiated the conflict among aristocratic factions. The steady expansion of foreign trade came to a sudden stop and even began to decline, which affected London’s leading merchant group’s financial contribution to the Crown. The general economy began to show some signs of inflation, including the rise in the price of grains. Thus, the exceptional importance that the government attributed to the victory over the enemy from without was a part of the attempt to divert the inner tensions and conflicts that would feed the enemies within.

Lest this generalization of the internal crisis in the late Elizabethan England should be folded back into the binarism of subversion and containment, or the rulers vs. the ruled, it is necessary not to over-emphasize the idea of a political ‘crisis.’ As some other historians point out, ‘the crisis in 1590s’ was real but never reached the point of any major coup d'état until Essex rebellion in 1601. And, as we know, the rebellious effort did not succeed in raising the sense of crisis to the level of action on the part of London citizens. Historians differ in explaining this relative stability of the last years of Elizabethan rule. Urban historians focused on the nation’s Capital, in particular, seem to advance two different accounts. One locates the stable structure of the civic hierarchy headed by the City government at the center of gravity, emphasizing on the role of oligarchic rule. The other, which is more convincing, explains that the crisis was intersected by various interests and unpredictable developments; in consequence, it could not produce a core of dissension and form a united front against the regime. Whichever may be the case, the idea that the national euphoria generated by the Armada event – or better, orchestrated by the Armada rhetoric – dispelled all the social conflicts in the following decade proves naïve and incorrect. So does Nashe’s rhetoric of national unity, which imagines one single collective mind in the playhouse.

As recent historicist critics persuasively argued, such rhetoric conceals the social relations and class divisions that were represented in the drama and existed among the spectators. Given the heterogeneity of audience composition, however, it would be still oversimplifying to suppose the existence of only two ideological positions appropriated by the playwrights and/or available to the spectators. The ‘grand history’ of the powerful has been modified in recent years, in part by ‘voices of the marginalized’ or ‘female subtext of 107
the male history’ (Holderness 1992: 73-88, Rackin 146-200, Hodgdon 212-234). More recent work on Shakespeare’s history plays seems to move beyond the binarism. But the ‘third, fourth, or more possibilities’ remains nonetheless unconceptualized except in terms of ideological ambiguity or indefiniteness (e.g., Jackson “Topical Ideology”). A more positive conception of another history is yet to come, which negotiates between the two definite histories, which is capable of explaining both the popularity of national history plays and the peculiar political stability in the last decade of the Elizabethan London. Such a history may put an emphasis on the City oligarchy as a stabilizing core or alternatively on the non-centeredness of the middling sort of people in the urban society. In either case, the category of ‘citizen’ is indispensable, to which Andrew Gurr attributes the staple constituency of the theatre audiences. Social differences within the formation and the cultural process they may have complicated are the concerns that I shall explore in Chapter Four of this study. To clear the ground for writing a history of the middle, I concentrate in the present chapter on the dramatic representations of ‘citizens.’ which might have better appealed to the corporate identity of the London citizenry and, most likely, helped them to discern an alternative position, that is, between the powerful and the powerless.

ii. Royal Actors and Common Spectators: Richard II

The royal entry either as a powerhouse of royal charisma or as springboard of civic voice does not markedly figure in Shakespeare’s history plays. Indeed, symptomatic of the first tetralogy is the absence and impossibility of such a happy union of sovereign and subjects as Elizabeth’s coronation entry seems to point to. Ceremonies, royal or civic, are ripped apart only to reveal the intractability of the political realities that they are designed to mystify and reinforce (Watson 50). In the de-ritualized space of Shakespeare’s Histories, the traces of royal entry are nonetheless registered, that is, in inverted or even disfigured forms. Unceremonial and deformed as the procession may be, the claimants of the throne have to step up, in order to win the popular approval, on the stage of London
on their way to Westminster and the royal palace further ahead. For the Lancastrian and
Yorkist monarchs, the central question is indeed who enters the city - London or otherwise.

The question emanates from the site of their 'original sin.' For the Duke of York in
Richard II, London is a stage on which "[the story]...Of our two cousins' coming into
London" (Richard II 5.2.2-3) is enacted. The common spectators are both enthusiastic and
contemptuous, for they have at once the supreme actor and a poor player on the stage. To
Bolingbroke, who "from one side to the other turning./ Bare-headed, lower than his proud
steed's neck./ Bespake them thus, 'I thank you, countrymen,'" the popular acclaim is made
in a unanimous voice - "all tongues cried 'God save thee!'" - with "desiring eyes/ Upon his
visage" (11-20). The walls along the streets are decorated "with painted imagery" (15), as
in a royal procession. Richard, the waning star, steps down from the theatre of the state for
an early retirement:

As in a theatre the eyes of men.
After a well-grac'd actor leaves the stage.
Are idly bent on him that enters next.
Thinking his prattle to be tedious:
Even so. or with much more contempt. men's eyes
Did scowl on Richard (23-28).

On the poor player's head, moreover, dust and rubbish are thrown by "rude misgovern'd
hands" (5-6) of the spectators, as cruel. or perhaps. as honest as the playhouse audiences in
Elizabethan London.

For a sympathetic audience like York, the authorship of this street drama belongs to the
divine hands: "...heaven hath a hand in these events/ To whose will we bound our calm
contents" (37-38). Northumberland, one of the human hands that staged the event, knows
better. For more than "calm contents" to be won from the common spectators, more than
sheer spectacle must be provided. Thus, he is intent to underwrite 'the ground' of the woeful
pageant, when he presses Richard's signature on the resignation: "The commons will not
then be satisfi'd" (4.1.272). Earlier, the decision of the alienated nobles to join Bolingbroke
is made in complaint and fear of Richard's abrogation of their rights, titles, and properties.
They do not neglect, however, to justify their revolt by observing that Richard has alienated
the commons, too: "The commons hath he pill'd with grievous taxes,/ And quite lost their hearts" (2.1.246-47).

Bolingbroke, whom these nobles decide to follow, certainly knows how to win the commons' hearts. Richard speaks contemptuously and perhaps jealously of Bolingbroke's "courtship to the common people," of his "wooing poor craftsmen with the craft of smiles," of his doffing his bonnet to oyster-wenches and a brace of draymen, who "had the tribute of his supple knee" (1.4.24-34). On his banishment as well as on his victorious return, Bolingbroke does not fail "to dive into their hearts/ With humble and familiar courtesy" (25-6). Whether the Earl of Essex emulated Bolingbroke's behaviour or Shakespeare's Bolingbroke is projected with Essex's strategic display of humility to the commoners cannot be determined. If the Earl's followers, who sponsored the performance at the eve of the rebellion, were insinuating an analogy between the unpopular Richard II and Elizabeth, they were surely miscalculating. For, in 'courtship to the common people,' the Queen equalled if not surpassed both Bolingbroke and Essex.39

Bolingbroke's popularity may not be the cause but a symptom of many failures of Richard's reign. One such failure, probably the most fatal, is noted by both Shakespeare and the Tudor chroniclers. The rebellious barons already talked of heavy taxations. London in particular was under frequent impressment for loans and grants. In addition to the lease of royal estates - "We are inforc'd to farm our royal realm" - as Richard himself acknowledges. "blank charters" are continually issued. "Whereto, when they shall know what men are rich,/ They shall subscribe them for large sums of gold/ And send them after to supply our wants" (1.4.43-51). The kingship is reduced, as John of Gaunt warns the King, to mere landlordship, and further to the ignonimous role of tax collector. One such instance had brought about a severe confrontation between the crown and the city, a residual product of which was probably the first royal entry with 'sumptuous pageant.'30

In 1392 there was a conflict over the Londoners' refusal to lend Richard II a thousand pounds. The confrontation was resolved with the city's subjugation to the sovereign. In addition to offering the sum of money they had been asked of, the city also staged a royal procession unprecedented in grandeur and cost, which marks an inflammatory irony of history. The sumptuous pageant depicted the return of the king to London as Christ's resurrection, his second-coming for Judgement, quite correctly encapsulating the occasion.
Neither the Londoners nor the King foresaw, however, that, in less than a decade, the sumptuous pageant would turn into a 'woeful pageant,' and that the Judgement would lie in the 'commons' hearts,' which was to be suffered by the King and his favorites:

Green. Besides, our nearness to the King in love
is near the hate of those love not the king.
Bagot. And that's the wavering commons, for their love
Lies in their purses, and whose empties them,
By so much fills their hearts with deadly hate.
Bushy. Wherein the King stands generally condemn'd.
Bagot. If judgement lie in them, then so do we,
Because we ever have been near the King.
Bushy. ...; for little office
The hateful commons will perform for us,
Except like curs to tear us all to pieces (2.2.123-138).

But on Richard's last entry to London the common spectators do not bite; they even restrain from using their tongues -- hissing at the poor player -- as York observes. "Scowling eyes" and a few "misgovern'd hands" (5.2.27) that return the contempt they received from the resurrected Christ are their only weapon. The "curs" had to wait until the stage of Caroline London is set for the "performance of the office" of beheading the sovereign.

Bagot's "wavering commons" might best express the roles assigned to citizens and the rest of the commonality in the 'drama of nationhood.'  In the view, at least, of the crown and the aristocracy, the statement seems to win a unanimous approval. How, then, did the common spectators in the Elizabethan playhouses respond to it? Reference to William Harrison et al may corroborate the 'view from above': citizens are only accountable to their respective cities, and the rest of the commonality have no voice or authority in government; they naturally have no initiative in national affairs, except giving out their supportive hands when asked. On the other hand, 'internal evidence' may qualify such a tendential view; that the statement was made by an upstart courtier, of whom Elizabethans are said to have a strong distrust, may lessen its persuasive force. But the view is so pervasive, implicitly as well as explicitly, throughout the history plays that the refutation of an instance does not suffice to forestall it. It is particularly difficult to maintain an opposite view in the face of
similar remarks made by a speaker depicted in a neutral if not entirely favorable light, such as the last Henry of Lancaster.

iii. "The Wavering Commons"? : Henry VI

"Such is the lightness of you common men," says King Henry VI, invoking the image of a feather "commanded always by the greater gust" (3 Henry VI 3.1.81-88). He addresses the foresters who arrested him in the name of their new sovereign, King Edward. In the scene, the 'saintly' king speaks with a full authority of religion, disguised as a monk with a prayer-book in his hand. The commoners' shifted allegiance is viewed as a violation not only of the secular bond between sovereign and subjects but also of divine authority which anointed its secular deputy. The authority Henry assumes is 'gentle and meek'; the entire speech is more of resignation than accusation, while the same rhetoric figures even stronger in Jack Cade's condemnation of his fellow rebels who just yielded to their enemies: "Was ever feather so lightly blown to and from as this multitude?" (2 Henry VI 4.8.54).

The actor who plays Cade may have two if not more interpretative options for the role; an authentic rebel or a puppet whose string lies in York's hands.32 Accordingly, the speech could be intoned either with genuine bitterness or with a grotesque-comical attitude. Both options, however, create a distance from which the spectators view the representation of the 'inveterate' commoners. In such a distance may lie the critical consciousness Brecht speaks of by which they 'sit back'- stand back in the yard - and 'reflect' on the possibility that it might not be necessarily so. To the contrary, Henry's speech acquires a sense of inevitability through the actor's quasi-tragic pose of detachment and transcendence. Spoken from 'above,' the dictum on the "lightness" of the commons imposes itself as unalterable or even fateful, bearing the weight of truth. The spectators in the theatre might have been persuaded that it could not and cannot be otherwise.

If such was the case, the spectators may also have been bewildered at the next moment:
Henry. Go where you will, the King shall be commanded; And be you kings; command, and I'll obey.
1 Keeper. We are true subjects to the king, King Edward.
Henry. So would you be again to Henry, If he were seated as King Edward is.
1 Keeper. Therefore we charge you, in God's name, and the king's, To go with us unto the officers (3 Henry VI 3.1.91-97, emphasis added)

The disjointed dialogue is predicated on the commoner's "therefore." Henry's humility -- "command, I'll obey" -- serves to both dignify his powerlessness and underline the subjects' insolence. To which the forester responds with an insistence on his 'proper' place -- no better nor less than true subjects. Now Henry puts blame on the helpless tendentiality of subject-ness, displacing their identity and denying their agency in kingly affairs. "Therefore," says the forester -- instead of 'nonetheless' or 'howsoever' -- as if he heard nothing between his insistence on being a subject and his performance as agent of God and King. The disjunction in the semantic flow may work to confirm what Henry suggests -- the commoners' simple, mindless trust in de facto kingship. Or it may indicate that Henry's "lightness" was not simply registered; whatever the deposed king may have to say, it is said to deaf ears. Intentionally put on, deaf ears turn what is spoken on its head, leaving the voice of authority without a sounding board to take effect. While Henry inveighs against the credulity of commons, they in turn embrace this credulity as their strategy -- one for survival. What in the view of the crown seems to be 'wavering, credulous, light' turns out to be the commons' pull toward a solid noninterventionist gravity.

It is tempting to push the argument back to its origin, by contending that "such," indeed, "is the lightness of the common people." It should be reminded, then, that no less than Warwick the kingmaker notes a more or less decisive role of the commoners in the struggle of rival houses, when he himself switched from Edward of York to Henry of Lancaster: "Trust me, my lord, all hitherto goes well;/ The common people by numbers swarm to us" (3 Henry VI 4.2.1-2). Certainly Warwick's betrayal was motivated by other than his 'purse,' with which, according to Bagot, the commons are primarily concerned. Can it be construed then that Warwick's unyielding sense of honor, with which he himself shifted his allegiance, weighed more than the lightness of commons? If Falstaff's playful rejection of
“honor” (1 Henry IV 5.1.127-41) is yet to come, Shakespeare nonetheless registers the erosion of the aristocratic value and empowers the voice of citizens in a pageant-like scene, which recalls the Venetian ambassador's report of the color-contrast in Elizabeth's coronation entry.

Before the Tower of London, "Enter Gloucester, with his servingmen" all dressed in blue coats. In a moment, "Enter to the Protector at the Tower gates Winchester and his men in tawny coats." "In the hurly-burly" of blue fighting with tawny, "Enter the Mayor of London and his officers" (1 Henry VI 1.3.S.D.). The folio text does not specify what color the civic officers are invested with. It may not be wildly wrong, however, to assume that a third color, probably more sober than blue or tawny, was introduced to distinguish the peacekeepers from the breakers of the law. The playhouse audience would not have been surprised to see the stage-officers in such garments as worn by the London Sheriffs, their deputies, or the whifflers of livery companies in a royal procession.

For the moment, the 'honorable' lords seem to know how to manipulate the 'wavering commons' to their own benefit. The Bishop of Winchester, the great uncle of Henry VI, seeks to incite the Mayor of London against Humphrey of Gloucester, uncle of the king and Protector of the realm: "Here's Gloucester, a foe to citizens/ One that still motions war and never peace/ O'erchargeing your free purses with large fines" (62-64). The mayor's response is far from that of a feather "blown to and fro by the greater gust." His attitude towards these mighty overlords is rather dauntless: "Fie, lords! that you, being supreme magistrates,/ Thus contumelously should break the peace!" (57-58) The aristocratic sense of honor only entails more violence; the nobles do not know better than answering the enemy "not with words, but blows" (69). Words belong to the commons: "Nought rests for me in this tumultuous strife," says the Mayor, "But to make open proclamation" (70-71). He orders one of his officers to proclaim that all those who have engaged in the disturbance must disperse immediately and henceforth not wear weapon.

Words are not the sign of the weaker breed, however. The proclamation is made in full authority; moreover, it is not without a real back-up force: "I'll call for clubs if you will not away" (83). The Mayor threatens to call out apprentices from their shops to assist the city officers, if the supreme magistrates and their tumultuous servingmen do not leave the scene. By invoking the presence of the London apprentices, the most notorious group of
rioters in the realm, as a civilian army of law-enforcement, the mayor not only adds a momentum to the proclamation but also reveals a surer sense of self-confidence which was gained from the corporate identity of the civic body. In the view of the citizens, the aristocratic value of honor is quite misdirected, only invested in the envious rivalry which brings about disasters to the state. Quite detrimental is the 'honor' of York and Somerset, bought at the cost of England's French territory and the defeat of Talbot, probably the only ideal aristocrat throughout the first tetralogy. Honor becomes literally debased in the mayor's resentment at the noble lords: "Good God, these nobles should such stomachs bear!"(89). Succinctly, 'nobles' stomach' constitutes a counter-statement to Bagot's disparagement of the 'commons' hearts.'

iv. The Silent Discourse: Richard III

Before the Tower of London besieged by factions of nobility, true service to the state remains in the hands, and indeed mouths, of citizens. On occasion, silence may become a stronger weapon than an open proclamation. A sequence of scenes (3.5. - 3.7.) in the middle of Richard III suggest the crucial role of citizens in the matter of the state. For Richard the supreme actor, these scenes are just another stage on which to display his superbly theatrical sense, or to establish the “bonding of the audience” within a complicity to his stratagems deployed on his aspiring way to the throne. Citizens on this stage are but pawns for Richard's self-legitimation. Wherever their hearts may lie, it is only their applauding hands and acclamation voices that count and should be manipulated.

Thus, at the beginning of the sequence, Richard and Buckingham who "counterfeit the deep tragedian" (3.5.5) invite the Mayor of London to give witness to the re-staged event of Lord Hastings' treason. The mayor is in turn asked to speak to an assembly of citizens in Guildhall "to avoid the censures of the carping world" (67). Richard's vigilant pursuit of an explicit civic approval of his action makes it clear that the open expression of consensus emerges as a necessary condition for furthering his project of seizing power. Furthermore,
it points to the difficulty that these 'tragedians' face in persuading the common spectators, namely, "the wavering commons." Thus, Buckingham is sent after the Mayor to "Infer the bastardy of Edward's children:/ Tell them how Edward put to death a citizen/ Only for saying he would make his son/ Heir to the Crown - meaning indeed his house,/ Which by the sign thereof was termed so" (74-78). Obviously, Richard takes a step further than the Bishop of Winchester. Not only does he mean to instigate citizens' hostility toward his rivals by referring to the ill-doings of his brother. In addition, and in a fine subtlety, Richard suggests a willingness on his part to endorse the empowerment of the head of a common household - that is, comparable to a royal house - which was misconstrued and condemned by the former king.

In response to such bold and subtle stratagem, Buckingham is earnest to "play the orator," and bids Richard to "Look for the news that the Guildhall affords"(101). But the ill news he brings back from the citizens is partly due to the misconceived role he plays with too much zeal, and consequently in excess of the civic decorum. When he returns in Scene 7, his reply to Richard's impatient question, indeed a desperate quest for the civic voice -- "How now, how now? What say the citizens?" -- is a perplexed one: "The citizens are mum, say not a word" (3.7.3). He continues:

:they spake not a word.
But like dumb statues or breathing stones
Star'd each on the other, and look'd deadly pale.
Which when I saw, I reprehended them,
And ask'd the Mayor what meant this wilful silence.
His answer was the people were not us'd
To be spoke to but by the Recorder (24-30).

Evidently, Buckingham overstepped the rules of Guildhall proceedings - the rules, in other words, governing the civic discourses. That the civic discourse is impenetrable, if not self-consciously resistant, to the discourse of the powerful is further suggested in Buckingham's report of the Recorder's speech: "Then he was urg'd to tell my tale again: 'Thus saith the Duke; thus hath the Duke inferred' -/ But nothing spake in warrant from himself" (31-33). The recorder makes it clear that the Duke's "tale" told in violation of the civic custom is not
identical with the city's interpretation of it, and that, as the city officials maintain a distance from the Duke's version of the story, nor does it warrant a commitment on the citizens' part.

The reticent civic discourse in short undermines Buckingham's "oratory" by circumscribing the latter with its own non-commitant silence. Though the Recorder's speech is followed by "score ten voices" that "cried 'God save King Richard'" (36), it is from Buckingham's serving men planted among the citizens in the Guildhall. And, though Buckingham takes "the vantage of those few," construing it as "general applause," the citizens have in fact articulated their denial of consensus in their silent speech. On their part, Richard and Buckingham are well aware that the citizens' mute response is not a mere lack of reaction but the only weapon they can use to manifest their disapproval. They know they are on a brittle glass, even though they temporarily succeed in manipulating the silence to their advantage, extracting just one word of consent from the insistently mute citizens - the unwilling 'Amen' to Buckingham's pressing call, "Long live Richard. England's worthy king!"(239-40)\(^35\)

v. "Enter Richard Aloft": Uses of the Upper-Stage

Seemingly, the moment the civic voice is reluctantly given to Richard does not bear the slightest resemblance to the Londoners' heart-felt 'Amen' that marked a satisfactory coda to Elizabeth's appreciative response to the Eight Beatitude pageant, as she promised that she shall be a good sovereign, serving the Christian virtues recommended through the allegory of the pageant. At a closer look, however, it reveals that Richard's self-conscious staging of the scene on the wall of Baynard's Castle not only rehearses the Elizabethan moment of civic consent but also reformulates the device of pageant in the former's entry. After much delay, calculated to arouse the spectator's impatience, "Enter Richard aloft, between two Bishops"(3.7.S.D.).

At the moment, Richard is transformed into a living emblem of piety. Again Buckingham plays the orator, interpreting the meaning of the pageant: "Two props of virtue
for a Christian Prince. To stay him from the fall of vanity: And see, a book of prayer in his hand - / True ornaments to know a holy man" (3.7.95-98). If the Elizabethan Londoners saw the perpendicular relationship between the sovereign and the pageant, looking at both the physical presence of the monarch on the street and her representation in the idealistic domain of the pageant allegory, the citizens before Baynard's Castle are not allowed a split gaze, and consequently, a perception of the split between presence and its representation. They only have to look up to the spectacle carefully staged before "the City's eye" (111). Perpendicular relationship is here replaced by a sheer vertical one.

Richard 'the tragedian' knows how to take advantage of not only such spatial relationship between spectacle and spectator but also the power of the religious allegory, invested in the tableaux vivant he sets up and inserts himself into. By offering himself as a spectacle in the city's eye, he indeed takes the ambiguous position that Elizabeth - and later James I - was much concerned about. Exposed to "censure of the carping world," Richard too becomes vulnerable and empowered at once. Elizabeth's solution is to appropriate both aspects: more exactly, to convert her vulnerability into a more heightened sense of power. Guarded by her own entourage and further distanced by an additional boundary the city provides, the whiffers of livery companies, she nonetheless allows an access by the common people, even reaching for their hands that offered her gifts of flowers. Such horizontal relationship, or intimacy, Elizabeth seeks to establish with the commons, is inconceivable to Richard the usurper: his much more doubted legitimacy should be redeemed by an inviolable distance and inaccessibility which is only to keep the spectator in awe.

This is made possible, on the stage of Elizabethan playhouses, by a particular part of the stage structure, which in stage directions is variously termed as Above, Aloft, Balcony, and so forth, and more casually called the Lords' Room. Much attention has been given by stage historians to the use of the upper-stage; few accounts, however, have been offered in terms of its structural function in envisioning the power relations figured in dramatic narrative. Certainly, it cannot be ascertained that the occupants of the Above necessarily takes a superior position to those Below. More often than not, the opposite is true: Brabantio, awakened by noise from outside, looks down from his window to the street only to be subjected to Iago's plot, revealing the vulnerability of those above. Juliet, on the other hand,
takes the upper hand when she appears on the balcony to Romeo's adoring eyes, who assumes a more vulnerable, however temporarily, position of the male lover in conventional love plot. In brief, the implication of the spatial relationship between above and below may vary according to the dramatic situation. Nonetheless, a sense of inequality or unbalance ineluctably exists between the two distinct acting areas in their vertical relationship.

It is this sense of inequality, tilted for the moment toward an empowerment of the Above, that Richard aims to appropriate when he takes the central position -- between two bishops, props of virtue -- on the wall of Baynard Castle. Probably, he learned the lesson on the stagecraft from earlier days when he and his brother, King Edward, then temporarily driven out of power by the counterforce of Henry VI and Warwick, were roaming over the realm and just arrived before the closed gate of City of York:

The gates made fast! Brother, I like not his;
For many men that stumble at the threshold
Are well foretold that danger lurks within (3 Henry VI 4. 7. 10-2).

Indeed, the Yorkists are on the threshold of a city which denies their claim to the throne by refusing their entry to it. In a moment, the 'danger within' manifests itself over the heads of the embarrassed lords: "Enter, on the wall, the Mayor of York and his Bretheren." The leading citizens of York are empowered by their place on stage by drawing an upward gaze from the warring nobility. Before the city's eye, Richard and Edward have to play their humility, claiming that "Edward, at the least, is Duke of York"(21) and thus "challenge nothing but my dukedom" (23). Despite his advantageous position, the Mayor of York proves vulnerable and subject to this much more modest claim, which is after all a deception. "He descends," lifting the bar that has blocked the entry: "Ay, say you so? The gates shall then be opened" (25). That the consequence is a deprivation of the city's 'keys' along with its liberties and customs, is rigorously learned by the citizens of Angiers, who, less credulous and more shrewd, make the rival claimants of the royal title yield to the civic voice.
vi. The Common Spectators in the Lords' Room: *King John*

As *King John* reopens the central question of the first tetralogy, namely, the legitimacy crisis of the English monarchy since the deposition of Richard II, the siege of Angiers rehearses the civic voice intermittently heard throughout the earlier plays, in order to determine where the citizens should stand amidst the contestations of the powerful. The gates of Angiers are shut fast, at first, to the joined forces of France and Austria who advances for the right of Prince Arthur. A forced entry is the only option for Philip, King of France: "Our cannon shall be bent/ Against the brows of this resisting town" (*King John* 2.1.57-58). For the moment the citizens seem to carry out their duty as sworn subjects of the English king. On their sovereign's arrival, however, the city still resists. To John's embarrassment, "our just and lineal entrance to our town" (85) is barred before the 'winking gates' and "those sleeping stones/ that as a waist doth girdle" the city (215-17). Though a long array of debates between the two forces cannot solve the problem of legitimacy, France suggests a hearing of the civic voice as a judge: "Some trumpet summon hither to the walls/ These men of Angiers: let us hear them speak/ Whose title they admit. Arthur's or John's" (198-200). To the summon to a 'seat of judgement,' men of Angiers "Enter above."

Neither at John's subtle reminder of their duty as his subjects nor at Philip's threat to send "messengers of war" are the citizens 'wavering' to an inch. To all persuasions in elaborate rhetoric of authority and power, their response is simple, and as abrupt as that of the Forester to Henry's indictment: "In brief, we are the king of England's subjects:/ For him, and in his right, we hold this town" (267-68). Echoing the Forester's "therefore," "in brief" repudiates the logistics in which both de facto and de jure kingship are couched; in the view of the citizens neither the possession of the crown nor the right by succession warrants their subjection and loyalty. 'In brief,' they refuse to acknowledge any absolute right either in John or in Arthur; thus, "...he that proves the king./ To him will we prove loyal" (270-1). John's claim - "Doth not the crown of England prove the king" (273) - is as
weak as Arthur’s, which is based on genealogical linearity but also has to be supported by foreign powers.

When consensus is not granted, the right to hold the sovereign power reveals itself not as an abstract and inviolable principle but something that should be proven physically and won in the field. A trial by combat is set to determine "whose right is worthiest"; for whom "we[citizens] hold the right from both" (281-82). It is in fact suggested by John himself, when he attempts to supplement his claim of de facto kingship with the pawn of "Twice fifteen thousand hearts of England's breed - To verify our title with their lives" (275). The trial by combat, however, proves ineffective. The French and the English heralds alternately report their victory to the citizens on the wall, whose spectatorship favors none:

Citizen. Heralds, from off our towers we might behold.  
From first to last, the onset and retire  
Of both your armies: whose equality  
By our best eyes cannot be censured: (325-28) 
....  
Both are alike, and both alike we like.  
One must prove greatest; while they weigh so even  
We hole our town for neither, yet for both (331-33).

On their return from the battlefield. John and Philip reiterate their earlier claims and again attend the civic judgement on "who's your king?" (362) And the citizen is compelled to repeat his argument again and again: "The king of England. when we know the king" (363). Meanwhile, adds the citizen, they are to serve their own king:

A greater power then denies all this;  
And till it be undoubted, we do look  
Our former scruple in our strong-barr'd gates:  
Kings of our fear, until our fears, resolv'd,  
Be by some certain king purg'd and depos'd (368-372).

What the citizen says in fact is that, until it is decided who is to be recognized as worthy to be their ruler, they are dominated by a higher authority which is more compelling than de facto or de jure kingship, that is, their own uncertainty and fear. Until the fear is dispelled, they will keep themselves inside the gates of their town (Arden ed. n. 371 [p. 42]). Though
the rhetoric is couched in an apparent humility, the speech nonetheless voices a sense of intractable self-assertion, pitching the two "we" and the four "ours" in a short breath - not the royal but the common "we."

This unfailing sense of identity and assertiveness seems to pass unnoticed by the Majesties who are too busy seeking the commoners' consent at whatever cost. To the Bastard, however, it becomes apparent that both kings are vulnerably exposed to the censure of social inferiors. In consequence, their authority is abased only to contribute to the empowerment of the commoners. The Bastard compares the situation, most appropriately, to that of theatrical performance:

Bastard. By heaven, these scroyles of Angiers flout you. Kings,
And stand securely on their battlements.
As in a theatre, whence they gape and point
At your industrious scenes and acts of death (373-6).

Stooping over 'a stage for a kingdom' which unfolds the spectacle of monarchs and nobles contending with each other. the citizens of Angier reverse the vertical relationship that Richard III staged to his advantage. Scabby scoundrels -"scroyles" in the Bastard's word - flout the kings; the 'busi-ness' of royal actors on the stage - "industrious scenes and acts" - is performed for the idleness and pleasure of the common spectators in Lords' Room. If with the colorful military ensigns of the two opposing camps, the stage of royal contention recalls the blues and tawnies before the London Tower. the place of citizen bears no less resemblance to 'the hyghe ende of Cheape.' where the leading citizens of London were watching Elizabeth approach to complete her pursuit of the popular acclamation.

Certainly, there is an insurmountable gap between the Elizabethan civic ritual and the stage representation of John's 'troublesome reign.' To the misfortune of Angiers citizens, there are not one but two alleged sovereigns marching toward them, demanding an entry to and recognition from the city. They have no such consensus to grant as the Londoners seem to have held for Elizabeth whose 'indisputable' right allowed no contestant, at least for the moment. Nonetheless, as the Londoners voiced the conditions of consensus in every corner of the royal procession, so do the Angiers citizens in their much more insecure state.
Furthermore, they create a consensus by setting in motion a negotiative term between the rival claimants.

Incited by the Bastard's enjoinder to "be friends awhile" and to turn their joined forces against "the flinty ribs of this contemptuous city" (384), the humiliated kings decide to "send destruction/ Into this city's bosom" (409-10). It is at this moment the 'peevish town' seems to be irrevocably endangered that the citizen speak up: "Hear us, great kings: vouchsafe awhile to stay;/ And I shall show you peace and fair-fac'd league" (416-17).

After commending Blanche of Spain, niece to John, and Louis the Dauphin, Philip's son, he proceeds to suggest their marriage, at which "With swifter spleen than powder can enforce/ The mouth of passage shall we fling wide ope/ And give you entrance" (447-49). That this suggestion is made out of more than a will to self-preservation has already been articulated in the citizen's earlier concern to "Rescue those breathing lives to die in beds,/ That here come sacrifices for the field" (419-20). More to the point the citizens are determined to risk their own lives, if "this friendly treaty of out threatened town" is not accepted:

.... but without this match
The sea enraged is not half so deaf,
Lions more confident, mountains and rocks
More free from motion, no, not death himself
In mortal fury half so peremptory,
As we to keep this city (450-4).

"A large mouth," indeed, to the Bastard's astonishment. Nonetheless, it is a voice that hits the heart of the matter; the citizens know what is at stake beneath the seemingly incompatible claims to the royal title of England. For John, his "unsur'd assurance to the crown" (471) will be amended with the recognition from the France; for Philip, the marriage will gain him the English territories in France, for which he raised his army in pretense of Arthur's deputy. With the Bastard's contempt on their backs, both kings subject themselves to the civic voice that "speaks plain cannon, fire, and smoke, and bounce" (462) to back up the "friendly treaty," that the Bastard himself "was never so bethump'd with" (466). Words, not blows — the counterstatement of the London Mayor, before the Tower, to Gloucester's "blows not words" — is the means and ends of civic voice, which transforms a
battlefield into a negotiation table for peace and offers the city as the site in which "the rites of marriage shall be solemniz'd" (539).

The Bastard has one last word; for his contempt of and ultimate subscription to "commodity," "the same purpose-changer, that sly divel,/ That broker, that still breaks the pate of faith,/ That daily break-vow, he that wins of all,/ Of kings, of beggars, old men, young men, maid..." (567-70). The list of subscribers to the "tickling commodity" continues to the inclusion of "smooth-fac'd gentleman", but not of citizens or commons, who seem to be its champions, who in fact play the broker between the kings and draws them "From a resolv'd and honourable war,/ To a most base and vile-concluded peace" (585-86). The question - why are they not there - may be insignificant. Maybe the citizens are irretrievably displaced into that universal "men." Whether the question constitutes a significant lack telling of the special relationship between the Bastard and the common spectators in the playhouse, or only indicates the inquirer's penchant for triviality, it serves to point toward another absence in critical readings of this much frequented speech.

Invariably, the term "commodity" has been read as 'self-interest' or 'gain'; thus, the speech as a whole has been construed as a critique of middle-class value. Such a view only reinforces Bagot's disparagement of "the wavering commons," whose love "lies in their purse." Such a view is made possible by the absence or rather exclusion of another contemporary meaning of the word. 'Commodity' meant for Elizabethans the things that men of trade or craft make or sell for their living, which comes closer to its modern meaning. Couched in this sense of the word is the social process of exchange and negotiation by which a commodity is put into circulation. Such a process involves the agency of producer, trader, and consumer, catalyzed in the form of contracts and payment of cash. In brief, this latter meaning of commodity implies 'mutual interest' rather than self-interest. It is not, either, that the Bastard himself is unaware of the second meaning. For his opening line acknowledges the reciprocity achieved in the peace treaty, though in a railing against those who seek to satisfy their self-interest from it: "Mad world! Mad kings! Mad composition!" (561) — "composition" reads in OED as contract on equal terms.

For modern detractors of 'commodity' and of the middle-class values enveloped in the word, it is little important to whom and for whom the Bastard address the speech; much less so is at whom the critique of commodity is levelled. Most of the common spectators
in the playhouse as well as those in the Lords' Room, i.e., Angiers citizens, are men of craft or trade who deal in commodity for their living. In their view, the commodities they produce and circulate are the material basis of the Commonwealth, creating and satisfying the pursuit of mutual interest and wealth. Commodity, in their view and Bastard's, is debased to self-interest, when the kings seek to appropriate it, as the France reveals by a slip of tongue: "In [Arthur's] right we came;/ Which we, God knows, have turn'd another way,/ To our own advantage" (547-9). The consequence of kings' subscription to and indeed mis-appropriation of the commoners' value is a degradation of their degree, which is exposed to "the censures of the carping world." To reverse the angle, the citizens of Angiers have succeeded in trading with their values and their commodity, namely, peace, which sets the terms of exchange and negotiation between the rulers, creating consensus where there was none.

vii. Negotiation and Citizens in Holinshed

So far I have dealt with the scenes relevant to my discussion of the citizens in the history plays as if there were nothing that hinders the transparent relationship between the dramatic representations and my readership which is constructed under the category of citizen. Considering the current critical debates on what Walter Cohen has called "structural limits of the genre," this is certainly unjustifiable (1985:218-9). Thus, I feel I am obliged to defend my own assumption. What Cohen means by "structural limits" of national history plays is that the representational frame of these plays does not allow an insertion of a perspective other than that of the hegemonic aristocracy. Based on a distinction between "drama of a nation" and "drama of a class," Cohen writes:

In national drama, peasants, artisans, and common soldiers often take an active part in the destiny of the state or, at least, register the impact of the deeds of their rulers. The advantages of this more encompassing dramaturgy of the public theatre should not be underestimated. But such plays, precisely
because of their focus on the nation, cannot depict the fundamental social mediations of their political concerns... If the central category is not nation but class, however, then the national history play loses its raison d'être. Thus, the most profound explorations of these class issues occur in those later works where the national perspective, though still apparent, is sufficiently muted to allow alternative emphases to emerge (220-1).

On the one hand, Cohen reiterates David Bevington's earlier view that the history plays minimize the impact on national affairs of social relations between the aristocracy and other classes, and that the genre is consistently if not exclusively interested in the changing relations between nobility and monarchy (1968:301). Contextualized within the long-term transition of feudalism into capitalism, the plays are seen to embody the battle between "absolutist consolidation and feudal resistance" (Cohen 223). On the other hand, it is apparently impossible, for Cohen, to lay the 'alternative emphases' on other than the lower classes of 'peasants, artisans, and common soldiers.' Even as he acknowledges the 'encompassing dramaturgy of public theatres,' the representational frame of a history play is said to have admitted "nationalist perspective" at its center and "popular perspective" on its margin. This certainly induces a reenactment of the subversion-containment debate. And it is predictable that Cohen, who cherishes "the possibility of radical critique," chooses to take up the subversive issue sprung from the popular perspective. In particular, he argues that the public theatres entertained "the right of the populace to judge the ruling class's exercise of state power": consequently, "the national history play in the public theatre inherently subverts aristocratic ideology" (221). Thus, "the central category of nation" operating at the level of dramatic representation is effectively dissolved by the intrusion of the spectatorial perspective of "the populace" in the playhouse. A hegemonic text is entrusted to an oppositional reading.

Two questions, at least, are to be asked. Firstly, who are the 'populace'? "Peasants, artisans, and common soldiers." posits Cohen, who simultaneously attributes "the treatment, mistreatment, or simple lack of treatment of the lower classes in the genre" to the "inability of any one of these underclasses to produce a hegemonic class consciousness" (224). Then, on what premise could a class without a class consciousness ground the oppositional set of meanings they are said to have constructed? Secondly, if the 'subversion' of, or subscription to, the hegemonic signification was
determined by the positionality of reading subjects, that is, the spectators, how can one assume the centrality of ‘a central category’ or the marginality of ‘marginal perspective’? What I am trying to point out is, of course, a significant lack of attention to the distinct category of citizens and of an intermediate reading position in Cohen’s and other critics’ argument for an essentially two-class structure of the public theatre audience and of the social formation of Elizabethan England. Not all the critics have failed to consider the presence of citizen class in the playhouse and/or in the history plays. Nonetheless, categorical fuzziness characterizes most critical treatments of the ‘middle class,’ which is invariably displaced into either ‘the populace’ or ‘the upper-class’ and, accordingly, granted no spectatorial positionality of its own.40

Representative of such a view is Richard Helgerson’s statement that “between the extremes of high and low, noble and base, there was only semiotic vacancy, a no-place without meaning” (206), which is strongly reminiscent of J. H. Hexter’s argument against ‘the rise of middle class.’ As we noted earlier, the objective of Hexter’s revisionist argument was to dispose of the ‘myth’ of an unprecedentedly solid and successful middle class in early modern England, a group who encroached upon the aristocracy and were particularly favored by the Tudor monarchy. In its place he constructed an image of a rather meek group, still utterly committed to the medieval vision of an hierarchically ordered society, whose group solidarity was constantly undermined by the transfer of mercantile capital to land in search of prestige and by the failure of class royalty in those absorbed into the upper social stratum. “The Tudor middle class,” Hexter concludes, “is no threat to aristocracy or monarchy because it has no ideology of class war or even of class rivalry. It does not seize on More’s Utopia and the propaganda of the ‘commonwealth’ group of social critics, as the man of 1789 seizes on the writings of Rousseau and the philosophes” (1961: 113).

It might, or might not, have been the case that the early modern middle class did not develop into a hegemonic formation, but there is simply no evidence indicative of the social and ideological inconsequence of the middle class writings in the Tudor era. Quite to the contrary, the urban culture of the mid-century in particular was characterized by the rapid growth of public discussions generated by the so-called ‘commonwealth literature’ and other forms of writing by “middle-class” authors.41 Among various reading materials,
English chronicles were probably one of the most popular genres of the time. It has been a predominant assumption that the historical writing in Tudor era was strictly subject to the governmental censorship and thus tended to produce the invariably ‘official’ accounts of the historical past, whether they were directly commissioned by the Crown or not. But recent researches have shown that authors of chronicles had different motivations and agendas, often according to the source of the institutional support that enabled their project. In particular, Holinshed’s Chronicles was a collaborative work by a number of writers, who were in one way or another connected to the high officials in the London city government. As Annabel Patterson points out, such institutional nexus brought something like a civic point of view into the work, especially when the issue concerns the City-Crown relationship (1994: 17). In fact, one of the most conspicuous features of the Chronicles is its constant shift of focus from ‘the deeds of kings and nobles’ to the actions taken on the part of citizens.

Among numerous stories of confrontation between the City and the Crown in the Chronicles, an event of 1552 is particularly interesting, suggestive of the ways in which citizens negotiated for a viable alternative when they found themselves between the conflicting claims of the aristocratic factions. A cruel dilemma was waiting for the citizens when they were called to the Guildhall for a meeting of Common Council. The issue was the indictment of Edward, Duke of Somerset, for treason. A number of high officials in the court who had signed the proclamation against Somerset came to the Guildhall and requested the Londoners’ support for themselves. Apparently, the citizens were sympathetically inclined toward the accused, who was the leading force in the Edwardian Reformation that they partly understood as a movement toward social reforms as well as a theological and liturgical move toward a purer Protestantism. However, the citizens could not voice their opposition to the ‘mighty lords’ who were present at the meeting. They had to find a way to circumvent the pressure of the moment. “At the last,” wrote Holinshed, “stepped up a wise and good citizen, named George Stadlow, and said thus”:

In this case it is good for us to thinke of things past to avoid the danger of things to come. I remember in a storie written in Fabians chronicle, of the warre between the king and his barons, which was in the time of king Henrie the third, and the same time the barons as (our lords do now)
commanded aid of the mayor and citie of London, and that in a rightfull cause for the commonweale, which was for the execution of diverse good lawes, whereunto the king before had given his consent, and after would not suffer them to take place, and the citie did aid the lords.

The barons defeated the king, and among the conditions of the resulting peace treaty was a pardon not only for themselves but for the London citizens, ratified by act of Parliament.

"But what followed?" asked Stadlow quite dramatically:

Was it forgotten? No, surelie, nor yet forgiven during the kings life. The liberties of the citie were taken awaie, strangers appointed to be our heads and governours, the citizens given awaie bodie and goods, and from one persecution to another were most miserablie afflicted: such it is to enter into the wrath of a prince, as Solomon saith. The wrath and indignation of a prince is death. Wherefore forsomuch as this aid is required of the kings majestie, whose voice we ought to hearken unto (for he is our high shepard) rather than unto the lords: and yet I would not wish the lords to be clearlie shaken off, but that they with us and we with them may joine in sute, and make our most humble petition to the kings majestie, that it would please his highnesse to heare such complaint against government of the lord protector as may be justlie alleged and proved. And I doubt not but this matter will be so pacified that neither shall the king nor the lords have cause to seeke for further aid, neither we to offend anie of them both (Holinshed vol. 3: 1018).

J. H. Hexter, or the literary critics who accept the historian’s view, would construe this anecdote as an indication that the urban middle class was low in morale and underdeveloped as a hegemonic formation. I rather agree, however, with Annabel Patterson that Stadlow’s rhetoric is paradigmatic of the civic values, upon whose premise the Chronicles was written, and that, I contend, are also articulated in Shakespeare’s history plays.

While Patterson’s emphasis rests on ‘the historiographical memory’ that the story thematizes and on ‘the value of the English chronicles in developing civic prudence’ (1994: 19), it would not be entirely unreasonable to imagine such thematics operating at another cultural site, that is, London’s commercial theatres and Shakespeare’s history plays in particular. As I attempted to show in the preceding discussions of the role of citizens in the history plays, a commitment to settling disputes by words rather than swords and to setting
a negotiation at work in the place of potential confrontation, is a common feature of civic discourse in both historical writing and dramatic representation. I disagree, on the other hand, with Phyllis Rackin’s view that “the univocal form of history writing” was appropriated by “the polyphonic form of theatrical performance” (25), not only because the chronicles were not invariably in service of those in power, but also because the critic’s conception of the multivocality of theatre does not allow a substantial third position figured both on print and on stage. Many of the citizen readers and playgoers, too, could have taken up this intermediary position by recognizing as their own the prudently negotiative rhetoric and attitude represented in history and theatre.

viii. The Popular Voice: Cade’s Rebellion and the London Citizens

So far I have attempted to demarcate the civic voice from the voice of the powerful. Before concluding the present chapter, I should say a word about the popular voice that, in Donald Watson’s words, dictated ‘a subversive subplot’ into the dominant discourse of ruling class (Watson 68). Much critical attention has been given to Shakespeare’s representation of the underclasses in the national histor> plays, but only in contradistinction to the powerful, and rarely, if ever, with those slightly above the class division. In this subdrama of ‘the people’ Jack Cade and his fellow rebels take the center-stage.

The dominant trope into which Cade’s rebellion is continually formulated is of course carnival and carnivalesque misrule. Indeed, Shakespeare himself provided the clue. For the first words we hear concerning Jack Cade associate him with popular culture: “I have seen/ Him caper upright like a wild Morisco,/ Shaking the bloody darts as he his bells” (3.1.364-66), says duke of York. A ‘Morisco’ is a Morris dancer, the most popular form of dance, and, according to one critic, “the centerpiece of Elizabethan folk culture” (Wiles 44). As David Wiles remarks, in the 1590s Morris dancing was the specialty of the theatre’s most celebrated clown. Will Kemp, who most likely played Cade’s role. As the character himself compares the revolt to a struggle between Carnival and Lent (4.3.3-7), Cade’s identification
as lord of misrule is completed both theatrically and dramatically. Cade's motto, "then are we in order when we are most out of order" (4.2.189-90), could be taken as the rallying cry for all carnival, where systematic inversion is the unruly rule, clowns take the place of kings, ignorance substitutes for learning, unbridled festivity proclaims a reign of plenty: "There shall be in England seven halfpenny loaves sold for a penny; the three-hooped pot shall have ten hoops, and I will make it a felony to drink small beer" (4.2.65-68).

It is also important to note that the sack of London was seen in terms of mock-procession: Jack Cade, who "vows to crown himself in Westminster" (4.4.30), proclaims that "I do come to London, where we will have the mayor's sword borne before us" (4.3.12-3). Cade's mockery of royal procession becomes more poignant, as he replaces the emblem of civic authority by aristocrats' severed heads: "Soldiers, defer the spoil of the city until night; for with these [Lord Say's and his son-in-law's heads] borne before us, instead of maces, will we ride through the streets: and at every corner have them kiss. Away!" (4.7.127-130). Shocked at the idea of impinging upon the privilege of mutual recognition between the City and the Crown, Shakespeare's London audience is not very likely to have sympathized with Cade's plans, especially when he strikes his staff on London Stone, demanding that "of the city's cost, the pissing-conduit run nothing but claret wine this first year of our reign" (4.6.2-4). Furthermore, Cade threatens to destroy the city's famous monuments: "First go and set London Bridge on fire, and if you can, burn down the Tower too ... Now go some and pull down the Savoy; others to the Inns of Court: down with them all" (4.6.14-15, 4.7.1-2). When Cade promises that "all the realm shall be in common, and in Cheapside shall my palfrey go to grass" (4.2.68-69), he not only opposes the process of enclosure that devastates the rural poor, but also threatens to transform the chief commercial street of London into a common pasture. As Alexander Leggatt pointed out, "the first London audiences must have felt the threat more sharply as it crept toward familiar places" (1988: 17).

It is warranted, then, that "The Lord Mayor craves aid of your Honour from the Tower to defend the city from the rebels" (4.5.4-5). The lawlessness and brutality of the rebels compel the law-abiding London citizens to form a united front with "all scholars, lawyers, courtiers, gentlemen" whom the "ragged multitude of hinds and peasants, rude and merciless" (4.4.31-2, 35) threaten to kill. On top of an initial enmity toward this prosperous
capital, the Londoners’ opposition may inflame the Kentish rebels’ belligerence. Cade’s last battle call thus comes in a frenzy of destruction: “Up Fish Street! Down with Saint Magnus’ Corner! Kill and knock down! Throw them into Thames!”(4.8.1-2). However, it would be far from the truth to assert that all, even the majority of, the Londoners stand against the rebels. A messenger’s report to the king points toward another direction: “Jack Cade hath almost gotten London Bridge/ The citizens fly and forsake their houses;/ The rascal people, thirsting after prey/ Join with the traitor; and they jointly swear/ To spoil the city and your royal court”(4.4.48-52). Surprisingly, the Kentish rebels do find their ally in the city of London. Who are these “rascal people”?

The somewhat derogatory term – “rascal” – is precisely the word Thomas Smith used in referring to the ‘fourth sort or classe amongst us’ which consists of ‘day labourers, poore husbandmen, yea marchantes or retailers which have no free lands, copi-holders, and all artificers’ (Smith, De Republica Anglorum 29, 31, 33). In Smith’s social taxonomy, dependent persons, servants, and apprentices were considered as being in some sense outside the social order, while the vagrant poor are not even considered. Within the urban context of London, then, the ‘rascal’ people who joined the Kentish ‘peasants’ may include a wide variety of people from domestic servants and apprentices of lesser means to unskilled labourers and small tradesmen without franchise, not to mention the significant number of the urban poor, all of whom had in one way or another a reason to demolish the established economic and political order of the urban society. To look at the other side, the Kentish ‘peasants’ are not a single collective that can be simply characterized as such. As the text itself makes clear. Cade is a clothier by occupation. and his staff includes a tanner, a butcher, a weaver, and a sawyer. In fact, the ‘peasants’ are mostly of artisanal class, whose urban equivalents were found alongside with the better-off citizens in the public playhouses of Shakespeare’s London. As Theodore Leinwand points out, while this artisanal class constituted the lower half of the ‘middling sort,’ its less secure section was liable to poverty, according to life-cycle variables, economic slumps, bad harvests, or plagues. Thus, “classifying anyone between the extremes of royalty and the most impotent poor remains an uncertain business” (Leinwand 1993: 286).

It is to this complex formation of the urban middling sort and the potentially conflicting responses of the London audience that Shakespeare’s representation of the Cade rebellion...
both as 'peasant revolt' and 'carnivalesque misrule' should be attributed. Critics have observed that the face of ludicrousness the playwright dresses on the rebels conceals the present reality of the grievances that Cade's rebellion expresses — the inequities of the law, the asymmetry of resources, and the exploitation of the poor. The 'misrepresentation' of genuine social protest as a savage violence has been invariably viewed either as Shakespeare's 'ideological confusion' or his unproblematic complicity in maintaining the hegemony of the ruling class. In either case, Shakespeare is said to have betrayed the lower class in order to serve the interests of the propertied class. Alternatively, I suggest that the playwright was performing an 'uncertain business' of simultaneously discerning the differences and creating a negotiative consensus among the London audience whose internal complexity demanded of a subtler, and largely inconclusive, treatment of the revolt. The trope of carnival could have been deployed so as to effectively contain the 'real' subversiveness of the popular protest: equally, it may have functioned as a disguised reminder of the real grievances that informed the aggressive aspect of the festive form. It should be noted in this context that the episode of the Cade rebellion comes after a series of sympathetic representations of popular concerns over the repeal of enclosures and the support for the poor — the episodes of petitioners (1.3.) and the blind Symcox (2.1.). Similarly, the sentiments of anti-civilization unleashed in the 'savage' violence could have been not only repulsive but also approvingly felt, as they registered the social injustices that the process of civilization entailed in its wake. The rebels' violence, in other words, releases the socially dissident and destructive energy through its festive and thus alleviative form. Their defeat is certainly warranted but in an equally modified manner; the 'rabblement' are converted into submissive subjects by a few rousing speeches from the aristocrats and the killing of Jack Cade is deferred.

The rebel leader must be destroyed, but not in London. The Londoners' hands should be kept as clean as Pilate's. For Cade is still a popular hero, whose followers could be found at any moment in the London of 1590s that was beleaguered with the problem of riots and disturbances (Fletcher and Stevenson 1-15, 26-30). This is why the scene of killing is removed to Alexander Iden's garden in Kent. This is also why, only at this moment, Shakespeare removes the clownish face from Cade and returns a human face to him, that is, the face of a starving poor. For Stephen Greenblatt, the encounter between
Cade and Iden represents the conflict between the traditional right of the starving poor to be fed and the emergent ethos of private property that gave the rich an absolute right to enclose and defend their own land, even by force. What is enacted in ‘murdering the peasant’ is the transformation of status relations into property relations: “Iden perceives Cade not as a social rebel but as a belligerent thief who has tried to steal a salad; theirs is a contest not between an aristocrat and a churl but between a well-fed owner of property and ‘a poor famished man’...The aristocrat has given way to the man of property” (“Murdering Peasants” 25). Widely acceptable as it may be, Greenblatt’s interpretation seems to imply that such transformation of social relations was taken for granted by the contemporaries and that Shakespeare valorized the well-fed owner of property’ as ‘man’ of the new age. Phyllis Rackin is more explicit on this point, contending that Iden’s character as a virtuous, hospitable country gentleman, content with his small patrimony and disdainful of worldly ambition, anticipates the construction and ideological functions of the ideal of civic humanism. Shakespeare is in turn seen to champion the ‘harsh new ideology of private property’: “Shakespeare contrives his representation of the incident to vindicate Iden’s act and obscure the novelty of the ethos it represents” (Rackin 215). by invoking “the stereotypes of murdering thief and comic villain, the first to project and the second to defuse the anxieties of privileged property owners who could find a flattering portrait of themselves in Alexander Iden, the virtuous country gentleman” (216-17).

Two problems – dramaturgical and sociological -- are located in these formulations. Firstly, both Rackin and Greenblatt base their account of Iden’s character on his self-characterization. The playwright’s viewpoint is left aside or conflated with the character’s, while there is obviously a discrepancy between the two. Iden’s pastoral contentment expressed in the elegant Virgilian rhetoric (4.10.16-23) is drastically undermined by his glib acceptance of the good fortune in the accident that has sent him Cade (65-70). As he bears Cade’s head “in triumph to the King” (81), he is knighted and rewarded with a “thousand marks” and a place in the court he despised earlier (5.1.78-80). The character of Iden, therefore, is presented with a self-contradiction, and in a way far from being sympathetic. What pressures were there to render the hero of ‘property owners’ quite unsympathetic in his opportunism? The second problem arises at this point. The concept of ‘propertied class’ is as much inclusive and undefinable as that of ‘populace,’ although
Rackin's qualification -- 'privileged' -- is likely to designate those above lesser gentry or better sort of citizen class. In fact, historians have pointed out that, once the amount of property and income replaces inherited status as criteria of social classification, distinction among the middling sort of people becomes more difficult because of their fluctuating financial status (Sharpe, *Early Modern England* 202). Rackin and Greenblatt fail to consider this taxonomic problem and merely assume a simplified view of social relations, namely, the propertied vs. the unpropertied class. Consequently, the potentially divergent playhouse responses are reduced to a unanimous one held by the hegemonic class, "who could find," as Rackin conjectures, "a flattering portrait of themselves in Alexander Iden."

Given the complexity of the urban middling sort and their probably ambiguous if not straightforwardly reactionary attitude toward the Kentish property owner, the case cannot have been as simple as that. I rather maintain that Shakespeare's solution is much more complicated than has been supposed. An alternative scenario may be that, even in this 'national' history play, Shakespeare was keenly aware of the possible conflicts and tensions within the social formation that provided the majority of his audience; his negotiation with the heterogeneous audience, therefore, resulted in a double-edged strategy which dictated both killing the rebel and denouncing his executioner. In order to ground a more secure conjecture about the London audience's response to the 'popular' revolt, it may be instructive, again, to refer to *Holinshed's Chronicles*, where the following summation concludes the representation of Cade's rebellion:

To declare the occasion whie such mischeefes happened thus in the realme. we leave to the judgement of those that may conjecture a truth thereof. by conferring the manners of that age & behaviour of all states then, sith they that wrote in those daies, may happilie in that behalfe misse the trueth, in constructing things according to their affections. But truelie it is to be thought, that the faults, as well in one degree as another. speciallie the sinnes of the whole nation, procured such vengeance to rise, whereby they might be warned of their evill dooings. and seeke to reforme the same in time convenient (vol. 2: 751).

There are moments of sympathy and admiration for the rebels as well as more obvious passages of rejection and repulsion in Holinshed's description of the event. Overall, the impression is that the history writer restrains himself from making explicit judgements
between "the lords" and "the misgoverned people" (vol. 2: 738), negotiating with his readers for a separate, unknowable "truth." If, as Annabel Patterson believes, the Chronicles represented a civic point of view, we may safely infer from the chronicler's attitude that the relationship between the more affluent citizen class and their lesser neighbors was intimate enough to produce a common perspective on their society in the present as well as in the past. On the other hand, the relationship might have been precarious enough to warrant Shakespeare's cautious dramaturgy. I shall further explore this conflictual aspect of the middling sort in Chapter Four. Suffice it to say here that the corporate identity of citizens articulated in the English chronicle plays was not established at the exclusion of the 'popular voice.
NOTES

1 Although such an implication has been largely rejected, the story itself continues even in recent scholarship of theatre history. See Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (1987), pp. 113-14; Peter Thomson, *Shakespeare's Professional Career* (1992), pp. 134-41.


3 Although Foucault is the decisive influence, Barroll seems to draw upon historians such as Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra, too.

4 For an earlier account of the use of John Hayward's history of Henry IV as evidence at the Essex conspiracy trial, see Lily B. Campbell, *Shakespeare's "Histories"* (1968), pp. 182-92. For more recent account, see Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation* (1990), pp. 44-48.


6 Historians invariably tend to downplay, if not entirely disregard, the role of citizens in the event. Mervyn James's most thorough account of the event figures 'the value of bourgeoisie' as a significant component in the changing concept of honor, but citizens as a distinct social category is not located in that process. See his "At a Crossroads of the Political Culture: The Essex Revolt, 1601," *Society, Politics and Culture* (1986), pp. 416-65.

7 Cited in David Cressy, "Describing the Social Order of Elizabethan and Stuart England" (1986); Peter Clark and Paul Slack (eds) *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700* (1972), p. 6.


Shakespeare's source is Edward Hall, although the playwright seems to draw on Fabian's *Chronicle*, too. See 1 Henry VI, Arden edition, p. 21, n. 1, and the excerpts from the chronicles in the Appendices of the same volume, pp. 136-37.


Richard Mulcaster, "The Passage of our most drad Soveraigne Lady Quene ELYZABETH through the Cité of LONDON to WESTERMINSTER, the daye before her Coronation, Anno 1558-9," John Nichols (ed) *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth* vol. 1 (1823, rep. 1966), pp. 38-60. All subsequent quotations are from this edition.

The Privy Council requested that the City should provide the record of the event. The City officials in turn commissioned Mulcaster to write a pamphlet recounting the entire event. See David Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry* (1971), pp. 12-3.

Similarities in pageant devices between Mary's and Elizabeth's entry have been often noted. See, for instance, Roy Strong (1977), p. 73.


For the instances of rebellion in the Elizabethan period, see Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1642* (1979), pp. 250-56.

David Bergeron remarks that the Elizabethan citizen actors give away the pageant stage to Jacobean professional players (1971: 66).


In *Puzzling Shakespeare* (1988), Leah Marcus notes the difference of attitude between Elizabeth and James in their coronation procession, and characterizes the latter as 'unwilling actor,' who rather fashioned himself as the 'author' of the pageantry (pp. 110-16).
In his 1988 article, Bergeron takes note of the competition between the City and the Sovereign but his revision remains partial without foregrounding such competition (p. 321).

See R. M. Smuts, “Public Ceremony and Royal Charisma” in Beier, Cannadine and Rosenheim (eds) The First Modern Society (1989), pp. 65-94. In its balanced account of royal and civic point of view, Smuts’ work is the most striking and original departure from the foregoing approaches.

Such a view was first articulated in the present century by F. E. Schelling. In The English Chronicle Plays (1902) he writes: “The English Chronicle play began with the tide of patriotism which united all England to repel the threatened invasion of Philip of Spain. It ebbed and lost its national character with the succession of James, an un-English prince, to the throne of Elizabeth” (pp. 1-2). Similarly, C. Tucker Brook stated that the national history plays resulted from the “triumphant exhilaration” which followed the victory (The Tudor Drama [1911], p. 299). E. M. W. Tillyard endorses and modifies the view at once by arguing that the Armada “at most...encouraged a process already in full working.” (Shakespeare’s History Plays [1944], p. 101).

Phyllis Rackin, Stages of History (1990), pp. 113-4; Donald G. Watson, Shakespeare’s Early History Plays (1990), p. 54. A similar account of Thomas Heywood’s “Apology for Actors” appears in Barbara Hodgdon, The End Crowns All (1991), p. 4. All these critics also put stress on the subversiveness of theatrical representation of the historical past.

On this point, see R. B. Outhwaite, “Dearth, the English Crown and the ‘Crisis of the 1590s,’” Peter Clark (ed) The European Crisis of the 1590s (1985), pp. 23-43. See also Peter Clark’s “Introduction” in the same volume (pp. 3-22) for the complex matrix, both national and international, of the ‘crisis.’

Frank F. Foster. The Politics of Stability (1977); Stephen Rappaport advances the same view in regard of earlier years (1550-80). See his Worlds within Worlds (1989).


For comparative perspectives on the ‘real’ and theatrical use of pageantry, see a number of essays in David Bergeron (ed) Pageantry in the Shakespearean Theatre (1985).

See Richard II, Arden edition, n. 29, 31 (pp. 41-2) for an argument that Essex emulated the historical Bolingbroke’s humility to the common people.

Curiously, critics have been quick to accept the dramatized view as accountable for the entire genre of national history plays and to downplay the role of 'commoners.' See Walter Cohen's somewhat arbitrary distinction between drama of nation and of class in Drama of a Nation (1985), p. 219.

Shakespeare apparently inserted lines that suggest Duke of York's manipulation of Jack Cade, which is not found in any of his source material: "And, for a minister of my intent,/ I have seduc'd a headstrong Kentishman/ John Cade of Ashford./ To make a commotion, as full well he can./ Under the title of John Mortimer" (3.1.355-59). From this clue, it is often asserted that Cade acts as York's substitute and the peasant revolt parodies the aristocratic rebellion in the play. On this point, see Barbara Hodgdon The End Crowns All, pp. 63-66.

David Underdown characterizes the popular politics before and during the Civil War as independent of the parliamentary politics and significantly "noninterventionist." See his Revel, Riot, and Rebellion (1985), esp. pp. 1-8, 146-82.

For Richard's theatricality and the role's special relationship with the audience, see Ralph Barry, "Richard III: Bonding the Audience," in his Shakespeare and the Awareness of the Audience (1985), pp. 16-29.

In Quarto the speech prefix is "Mayor," while Folio gives the speech to the entire cast, "All." Arden editor says Folio is right, but on what ground? See Leah Marcus, Puzzling Shakespeare (1988), for a discussion of the way in which the 1623 folio presents Shakespeare as an author independent of the conditions under which his plays were first written and produced (esp. pp. 1-50).


The unique position that the play occupies within the context of history plays is discussed in Phyllis Rackin, The Stage of History, pp. 52-55. However, Rackin considers this scene only in terms of "the relationship between power and legitimacy," dismissing the significance of the citizens' role in determining the legitimacy.

For an account of degradation of the aristocratic value, see Virginia M. Vaughan, "King John: A Study of Subversion and Containment," Deborah T. Curren-Aquino (ed) King John: New Perspectives (1989), pp. 62-75; on the Bastard's multiple subject position, see Barbara Hodgdon, The End Crowns All, p. 28.

Annabel Patterson acknowledges that "'the people' or 'populace' were and are blanket
terms that conceal large social and economic differences”; nonetheless, she posits a “clear line” that separated “the landed aristocracy or gentry” from “the commons.” Shakespeare and the Popular Voice (1989), pp. 2-3.

40 Cohen’s terminology for middle class is ‘bourgeoisie,’ which is functional in his analysis of domestic tragedies; nonetheless, the term disappears when he deals with the theatre audience. For Phyllis Rackin, early modern England was populated by a privileged elite and unlettered masses (Stages of History 202-3, 232-33). Barbara Hodgdon’s ‘multiple subjectivity’ is operative in the audience reception, but is not anchored to the citizen class. An exception is Paul Siegel, who writes: “…Shakespeare was unaware of the economic movement that had altered the relationship between the monarchy, the aristocracy, and the rising middle class, affecting the evolution of each, he was very much aware of this evolution, however much he simplified and foreshortened it. In history plays it is seen in process.” Shakespeare’s English and Roman History Plays (1986), p. 49.

41 For the significance and impact of the middle-class literature to the formation of urban middle class, see Arthur B. Ferguson, The Articulate Citizen and The English Renaissance (1965).

42 In her recent work, Reading Holinshed’s Chronicles (1994), Patterson comes closer to what I have termed a negotiated position; see especially pp. 3-21, 22-31, 264-276.


44 Richard Helgerson points out that other rebellions of urban origin represented in the English Renaissance drama are not at all clownish. In Sir Thomas More, for instance, the rebels’ ‘grievances are well founded, the expression of them is cogent and even literate, and their strategy is carefully formulated’: “The difference is that these rebels are Londoners. Whether because of the sensibilities of London audience, their uprising cannot be easily assimilated to the conventional pattern of peasant revolt. In associating rebellion with carnival, the authors label this kind of festive rebellion as not urban and not upper class. They stigmatize and compartmentalize in such a way as to constitute an alien social formation that will centuries later be recovered as ‘the folk’” (Forms of Nationhood 221).


46 Arthur Freeman notes this discrepancy: “Shakespeare has also introduced the otherwise gratuitous episode of Iden’s garden, a scene which may well bear cutting in a modern
production. Iden himself remains an annoyingly loose end among disparate new faces in the last act: the man who announces himself loath to 'live turmoiled in the court' when he "may enjoy such quiet walks as these" in Kent ... seems within a few lines overjoyed to attend henceforth upon King Henry at court: "May Iden live to merit such a bounty!" See his "Introduction," Signet edition of Henry VI: Part Two (1967), xxxiii.
The strained critical debate between Kathleen McLuskie and Richard Levin is intriguing enough to open a chapter on the roles of women as characters and spectators in Shakespeare's theatre. In her critique of 'essentialist' or 'liberal' feminist critics of Shakespeare, McLuskie rejects their search for the author's sympathetic treatment of the female characters, partially on the premise that the characters as well as the plays themselves are "the products of an entertainment industry which, as far as we know, had no women shareholders, actors, writers, or stagehands" ("Patriarchal Bard" 91). Correct, though strategically exaggerated, is Levin's rejoinder that McLuskie has omitted a crucial group of people who exercised "the greatest influence in determining the nature of those products - the customers," among whom "there were many women" ("Women" 165). The question at stake seems to be "who influenced whom?:" a tug of war between productionist and receptionist aesthetics. There are of course a whole array of conflicting ideological assumptions that turns the seemingly simple and even complementary statements of historical facts into a pair of counter-statements, that is, about the critics' own critical positions.
Unless some evidence to the contrary is made available, few would be unwilling to accept Andrew Gurr's conclusion that, although the extant evidence does not allow for an estimation of their number, there was a "high proportion of women at the playhouses" throughout the period from 1567-1642, and that they were recruited "from every section of society," from aristocratic ladies through "city madams" down to "apple-wives," "fishwives" and prostitutes (Gurr 1985: 55-63). And yet, it is one thing to suggest that the literary critics of the English Renaissance drama should incorporate Gurr's important contribution on the Shakespearean playgoer; it is another to assert, as Levin does, that the presence of women spectators automatically exerted a profound impact on Shakespeare's dramaturgy. Levin rightly suggests that the playwrights and the acting companies must have been concerned to please the distinct constituency of women in their audience. Furthermore, he is as astute to warn that one should be cautious in interpreting the evidence regarding the reactions of women spectators because "all the comments about them come from men" and in most cases involve "some stereotyping of women" (167).

However, Levin attributes the stereotypical construction of women spectators only to the moralist commentators who tend to condemn both women and the theatre, and therefore could be "wrong" in their biased depiction of the behavior and 'nature' of the women in the theatre. In turn, he gives credit to the playwrights and their associates for their greater objectivity; for "at least, it was in their own interest to be right" (167). But his own evidence -- Prologues and Epilogues to some plays and commendatory poems included in the printed dramatic works -- indicates that the professional views do not differ in substance from the quotidian ones. The same stereotyping marks the playwrights' effort to mold 'the gentler Sex' in their audience according to their not only commercial but also male interest, the latter of which Levin fails to consider. Aligned to the playwright's point of view, Levin's subsequent account of women's spectatorial reactions only reproduces the male construct of female spectatorship. Consequently, it surreptitiously reinforces the male definitions of femininity.

No less problematic is his discussion of what he calls "the gender loyalty" of women spectators that the playwrights exploited in their presentation of 'the battle of the sexes.' Citing Shakespeare's Love's Labour Lost and Merry Wives of Windsor as "obvious
examples" and The Woman's Prize: or, The Tamer Tamed as Fletcher's "answer" to The Taming of the Shrew. Levin maintains that some comedies of the period "clearly take the woman's side in the battle," and "aimed, at least in part, at gratifying women spectators" (171). In this he postulates somewhat tautologically that women tend to identify themselves with female characters. The problem, however, is less a tautology than an unstated assumption that there exists an unproblematically transparent relationship between what the play represents and what the spectator makes out of it. Such an assumption clearly posits a single, coherent spectatorial position from which to view the play's fable and characters, and further places the position within the representational frame of the play. The female spectator, in other words, finds a place within the male narrative about women in order to participate in the 'gratifying' pleasure the play offers. Accordingly, Levin concludes - to the effect of recuperating the earlier positions in feminist criticism - that it is not unreasonable to search for sympathetic treatment of the nature of women and of the woman's side in conflict between the sexes, even within the products of male, commercial industry.

What remains unquestioned is where, then, the female spectator stands in relation to The Taming of the Shrew and other comedies entrenched in apparent denigration of women, let alone those plays that belong to the 'high' - masculine - genre of tragedy, of which McLuskie makes a case for the Renaissance sexual politics, the plays in which women are seen to have no place to enter but in silence or as a victim of patriarchal oppression. Levin is indeed mute on this point and relays the baton to the feminist critic. Despite many vantage-points she advances, McLuskie in turn relegates the women spectators of Shakespeare's plays to the opposite pole of theatrical experience, namely, "resistance" to the pleasure the plays offer, for which the essentialist feminist reader is indicted. In fact, McLuskie's counter-construction of the female spectatorship (readership) is concerned less with the historical women of English Renaissance than with her contemporary "readers which feminist criticism implies" (91).

McLuskie's main objection to the "mimetic, essentialist model" is the latter's primary attention to the world of play and its attempts to reconstruct Shakespeare's vision of the real nature of women. Such an approach establishes a subjective identification with the author's attitudes by privileging and pleading on behalf of the female characters and
ignoring, in McLuskie's view, the masculine perspective embedded within and generated by his plays. The essentialist feminist reader comes unwantedly and unavoidably into an ideological complicity with Shakespeare's patriarchal misogyny. That complicity is a ramification of the reader's figurative inclusion within the dramaturgical maneuvers of the plays, which present 'positive portrayal of female characters' and thereby invite the less rigorous reader to feed on and rest content with its gratifying pleasure. McLuskie's essentialist reader finds a place in the male narrative about women and is condemned for it, while Levin's women spectators do the same and are given recognition for it.

The distance between the female spectator and the feminist reader may be only historical, subsumed anyway by their cohabitation in and vulnerability to Shakespeare's theatrical power, against which McLuskie prescribes an antidote. To be a feminist in McLuskie's term one has to move "outside the text" to the critique of ideological and representational systems rather than the analysis of character relationship enmeshed within the text. "When a feminist accepts the narrative, theatrical and intellectual pleasures" offered by Shakespearean drama, "she does so in male terms and not as a part of the locus of feminist critical activity." By contrast, the rigorous feminist refuses to take up a position inside the text or merely to reconstruct the textual meanings circumscribed by the narrative and theatrical strategies of the author's patriarchalism. She shall instead deconstruct such strategies and their coordinate construction of the feminine in order to expose the feminist's - or all the women's - "exclusion from the text." In turn she shall assert "the power of resistance, subverting rather than co-opting the domination of the patriarchal bard" (107).

The rigorous feminist completely renounces one's pleasure in Shakespeare, while the female spectator of Renaissance England and their latter-day essentialist sisters inveterately subscribe to the alluring power of his theatre.

McLuskie's argument certainly has its force particularly within the context of the feminist critical debates. Quite persuasive is her discussion of the essentialist preoccupation with and valorization of the female characters, which in some sense duplicate the 'male terms' on which they are constructed. Also convincing is the alternative mode of criticism she proposes, by which the critic is enabled to stand outside the text and to view it not as a reflection of the real world or real people but as an interpellative process that calls the
reading subject into a coherent position encoded in the text. The problem arises, however, when she postulates that this coherent reading position necessarily corresponds to the one privileged by the text or authorized by 'the patriarchal bard.' Although she acknowledges the multiplicity of positions within the text and the contradictions they generate, she forecloses the possibility that an individual female subject could take up one of the 'unauthorized' position. She denies, in brief, an access to the revealing contradictions except for the 'out-standing' feminist critic.

I wish not to misconstrue McLuskie's emphasis on a resolute break from an inadequate mode of criticism for a critical condescension. Nevertheless, when she asserts the contradictions of contemporary ideology and practice are reproduced in the text in a suppressed form, that is, only legible to the rigorous critic, her own inadequacies are exposed. In locating the social contradictions in those of narrative strategies and "realism" of some scenes (Measure for Measure), she slips back into the mimetic model she has repudiated - however complicated the model has become and in whatever way 'realism' is redefined. McLuskie's is essentially the same text-centered approach, though it might be termed a centrifugal one, in contradistinction to a centripetal one that she opposes. She assumes, in other words, that the text constitutes the origin of meanings, whether reaffirmative or subversive, and lends itself as the object for critic's investigation. In this exclusive traffic of text and critic there is little or no room for the Renaissance women spectators.

McLuskie's relative lack of concern for those 'real' women in Shakespeare's theatre is explained partly by her text-centered approach, and partly by her view that the male and commercial institution of early modern London theatres left no significant record of women spectators, much less of how they responded to the plays they went to see. In her implicit rebuttal of Levin's 'corrective,' 'McLuskie goes over the same evidence that Levin drew upon to assert women's 'influence' in Shakespeare's theatre, only to arrive at a gloomy picture of the scene (McLuskie 1989: 87-99). She maintains for instance that the "new leisure industry" of the commercial theatres "militated against women having direct access to it" (95). The assertion comes from her reading on the contemporary discussions of women playgoers that, for the most part, warn them away from the unsettling public place.
Taken at their face value, these sources seem to reveal that "women were not consumers but part of what was consumed," while "men were not the only consumers of theatre but they were the targeted audience" (93). On this point McLuskie's argument in fact duplicates the male terms in which the female spectatorship - or rather the female spectacle - was constructed. Her replicative reading of the 'marginal texts' makes a striking contrast to her 'resistant' reading of the 'main text' of Shakespearean drama.

Though her argument recovers its strength when she observes that the prologues and epilogues present less the actual behavior of women spectators than the prevailing cultural assumptions on proper decorums of women in general, its impact is at large subsumed under her tendential view of women's absence as subjects - or their presence merely as "object of male pleasure" - in the predominantly male and incorrigibly masculine institution. She concludes somewhat ruefully:

It is impossible at this distance in time to know how women saw themselves on stage or what pleasures they gained from the theatre. All that we observe is the powerful images and the scope for both laughter and moral anxiety which was produced by the explosive intertwining of the discourses of theatre and the discourses of sex (99).

Then, are we to subscribe to the debilitating lack of evidence and abandon our efforts to retrieve the women's experience of Shakespeare's theatre? Does the alternative only reside in the commitment to either the feminist construct or the male construct of female spectatorship? Isn't there any other mode of being a woman spectator in a theatre dominated by men than an inveterate subjection to pleasure or an absolute resistance? It is my goal in the following pages to explore the possibilities between the two poles of theatrical experience and between the opposite critical assertions. I want to build a dialogue between the 'out-standing' and 'in-standing' readers of Shakespeare, and situate the historical women of English Renaissance within the dialogue.

In the following two sections I want to suggest the possible and hopefully probable ways in which the women spectators in Shakespeare's theatre responded to the specific aspects, fables, and characters of his plays. Whether or not the dramatic text provided the women in the audience with a coherent interpretive position is not the central question,
however. Nor do I intend to prove the author's 'proto-feminism' or virulent 'misogyny,' by testing the plays against the society's dominant cultural assumptions on gender. I am rather interested in exploring women's experience of the male representations than male representation of women's experience, though they are in some respects inseparable.

In the first section, I want to attend to different social conditions in which women spectators found themselves outside the theatre, and to the different perspectives they may have brought into their experience of the fictional world. I do not assume, in other words, that women in the early modern societies were of a kind, situated within the same parameter of patriarchal order. Such a view was established by some historians, and seems to underlie the work of many literary scholars. To question such an assumption and to spell out the conflicting viewpoints among different sorts of women spectators, I review the "women's counsel" scenes —  a favored locus of essentialist feminist critical activity —  in the light of social contexts in which these vignettes acquired their variegated meanings.

In the following section, I take a different approach, concentrating on a play —  All's Well That Ends Well. Having revised the formulations on women's common bond, I now turn my attention to the role of Shakespeare's heroines in recent feminist debates and two different critical configurations of the issue. I shall argue that neither the notion of unitary subject assumed in liberal, essentialist model nor that of subject as entirely constructed by culture (i.e., the post-structuralist subject) deployed in the historicist/materialist position is sufficient. For an alternative, I suggest a reading of All's Well through the concepts of the split and the collective subjectivity.
I
THE FEMALE SOLIDARITY AND DIFFERENCE

i. Female Counter-Universe? : Women’s Counsel

The significance of intimate conversations between women in Shakespeare’s plays has often been noted. As the editors of The Woman’s Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare, the first significant collection of feminist essays, observed, feminist critical attention to female characters has helped to delineate from the male text a "counter-universe" or "matriarchal subtext," in which women’s shared conversation, mutual affection, and extraordinary intimacy create a kind of female subculture, "a repository for styles, attitudes, and values sharply contrasting with those of the dominant male order" (Lenz, Greene, and Neely 5). Understandably, the emphasis on the solidarity of women was a necessity at the inception of feminist criticism of Shakespeare, consistent with the attempts to establish women as "a distinct sociological group." However, a typically domestic scene in Much Ado about Nothing raises doubts about the idea of female solidarity. Contending over the choice of an ornamental part for her wedding gown, the 'sweet' Hero abruptly plunges into a nervous outburst, reproaching both her witty cousin and her maidservant who will soon prove Wittier.

Margaret. Troth, I think your other rebato were better.
Hero. No, pray thee good Meg, I'll wear this.
Margaret. By my troth 's not so good, and I warrant your cousin will say so.
Hero. My cousin's a fool, and thou art another; I'll wear none but this. (3.4.6-11)
In a critical survey of women's counsel scenes in Shakespeare, Carole McKewin notes the strained mood of the scene and explains the failure of intimacy among the women of Messina in two unrelated terms ("Counsels" 124-7). Through a psychological reading, based upon the belief in "Shakespeare's enduring mimetic skill in creating the sound of women's voices placing themselves in a man's world" (117), McKewin constructs the 'realistic' motivation for the characters. Hero's heart is heavy with prenuptial fears, possibly with premonition. Beatrice is sick, suffering from a cold, a symptom of her intellectual and emotional crisis at the intrusion of an unexpected love. Margaret, who has more than half of the entire lines in the scene, is drastically under-represented in this reading; consigned to a maidservant's conventional role of 'troublemaker;' she is said to be insensible and even malicious in ignoring and nagging at the other women's malaise of heart and body.

The lack of communication among these women is likened to the play's dramatic trope of eavesdropping that in McKewin's view serves to dissolve the private world of women and reduce their intimate talks to public property. Thus, the scene is inscribed in the play's overall theme that structures a patriarchal containment of the female counter-universe. In turn, the psychological and dramaturgical reading is geared toward a formulaic reading of 'Shakespeare's development.' Placed right at the center of the Shakespearean canon, Much Ado marks the turning point of the author's view in regard to the significance of women's solidarity and the use of representing it. Situated between the liberating zone of 'green world' comedies and the total eclipse or minimal survival of it in tragedies and later comedies, the fissure of the female bonding in Much Ado is attributed to the author's changing perception of the restrictions imposed upon the women in his society.

To say the least, McKewin's explanation contradicts itself as she locates the most powerful 'counter-universe' in the canonical tragedy of Othello, articulated by Emilia's "counsel of gall and grace," which in her view expands from the enclosed space of feminine intimacy to the larger world of the play. More problematically, it is the critic's search for Shakespeare's vision of women or his sympathetic treatment of them that poses an obstacle to the attempt of locating the origin of the fragmentation of the counter-universe. Insofar as critics are concerned to reconstruct the author's vision, they tend to lay stress on a unity articulated -- or hidden, in the case of psychoanalytic readings -- in his
work. Within the parameter of the cohering artistic, moral, or psychological principles, differences are forced to be made sense of in terms of variations on a fundamental unity. Accordingly, the fragmentation of the female counter-universe only points back to the pristine moment of 'women's league' which is supposed to have previously existed in the author's vision, if not anywhere else. Or did it exist in Shakespeare's time? Indeed, the early modern English society seems to have held such a view, and the feminist critics have drawn at least in part their critical formulation of female bonding from it.

ii. 'Women's League' in Renaissance England

None of the Elizabethan social taxonomists place women along the same dividing lines of status used for menfolks - the estates, degrees, or sorts. They seem to assume women are attachments or extensions of their husbands' or fathers' property. Women are seen as dependent on the 'head' of the household and never allowed to enter into active membership of the men's commonwealth. Suggestively, William Harrison makes his only acknowledgement of the shadowy, female half of his commonwealth in a chapter on the poor including the lowest and the endangering stratum of a variety of criminals (Cressy 1986: 30). On top of the 'objective' social descriptions, the conduct books, household manuals, sermons and treatises on the matrimonial life all emphasize authority of men and the subjection of women, and tend to define women of all sorts invariably in their subordinate relationship to their menfolks. In early modern England, as Linda Woodbridge concludes in her wide survey of literature on women, men were viewed primarily as individuals or as members of a group — a profession, a social class, or an ethnic group — but women, when subjected to a written scrutiny, were repeatedly generalized into the basic concept of Woman.

A more specific context seems to corroborate such a view. Both the attacks and defenses in the debates about women — the so-called pamphlet war on the "women question" — were
conducted in such a way that establishes women as 'a distinct sociological group.' Detractors as well as defenders of women recognize the differences in status among women but maintain, for different strategic purposes, that the common bond as women overrides all other social, economic, or class distinctions. The author of Hic Mulier (c. 1620), a misogynist tract, groups together women from all social classes in his condemnation of women in masculine attire:

> It is an infection that emulates the plague and throws itself amongst women of all degrees, all deserts, and all ages; from the Capitol to the Cottage are some spots or swellings of this disease...Not only such as will not work to get bread will find time to weave herself points to truss her loose Breeches...But such as are able to buy all at their own charges, they swim in the excess of these vanities (Half-Humankind 269).

In defense of women, Mary Tattlewell, the alleged author of The Woman's Sharp Revenge (c. 1640) claims that they should be judged not by some "censorious and supercilious cynics" but by their "peers" whose united front includes:

> Sovereigns and Subjects, Court, City, Camp, and Country,... the Virgins, the Vestals, the Wives, the Widows, the Country wench, the Countess, the Laundress, the Lady, the Maid-Marion, the Matron, even from the Shepherdess to the Scepter (Half-Humankind 321).

All of these women across class boundaries, the author continues, stand ready to "exonerate women" and form a united front against their common enemy, the anti-feminist writers. Not surprisingly, all the other participants in the controversy tend to ground the main axis of their arguments on gender division.

The tendential view that this cursory look at the contemporary discourse on women reveals is also confirmed by social historians' unanimous emphasis on the growing restrictions imposed upon the women throughout the period. Alice Clark's thesis that the early modern period saw a more or less linear decline in the status of women from the late medieval period, when they enjoyed a good deal of economic independence, to the close of the eighteenth century, when they had virtually lost it, has been continually supported. Lawrence Stone explains the transition by proposing two distinct models of family
paradigm - open lineage family and restricted patriarchal family - and relating them to their ideological matrixes, feudal society and the modern state. While Stone's account chiefly concerns the elite household, middle-to-lower classes are covered by Roberta Hamilton's study, in which the onslaught of capitalism figures as the crucial causal element in reducing women's economic power and legal rights. The emerging picture is that both economically and ideologically early modern women were bound even more completely into a redefined patriarchal order.*

Seen in this light, Renaissance women of all classes are said to have shared a common bond - or rather, bondage - under the increasingly oppressive patriarchy. The Renaissance societies, in Ruth Kelso's words, "did not divide women into two groups, the rulers and the ruled, and prescribe to each a different set of laws on the basis of that relationship"; they simply said that "all women must be ruled (Kelso 1956: 3). Though she acknowledges the possible disparity between "theory" and "practice," Kelso privileges the 'theoretical' paradigm of gender division over the 'practical' class distinctions. Both in Renaissance societies and in modern accounts the gender paradigm figures predominantly - the paradigm which the London's commercial theatres, too, seem to have entertained.

iii. "The Good Women" in the Theatre

Few playwrights of the period give witness to their awareness of social distinctions among the women spectators, while they often remarked the differences in male audience by vocation or class. A commendatory poem in the Beaumont and Fletcher's First Folio offers a striking example by suggesting that the plays may have different effects on "The severe States-man," "The Luke-warme Religious," "The hot braine-sicke Illuminate," "The Sot," "The Souldier," "The Court," "The Plebs", "Gallants," "Poets," "the Usurer," and "Women" (The Works vol. 1: xxix). Although these are social types, they are also stereotypes conventionally and conveniently assigned to their typical reactions to a specific
aspect of the plays. Unlike the others, however, the role of women spectators, as a distinct constituency, is modulated along the line of gender division.

For the most part, women are appealed to their sympathetic judgment of the play. In the Epilogue of The Court Beggar (c. 1639), Richard Brome seeks the applause from the "Ladyes" whose "suffrages I chiefly crave/ For th'humble Poet. Tis in you to save/ Him, from the rigorous censure of the rest." Characteristically, Brome studiously distinguishes among "the rest" (i.e., male spectators) "Cavaliers and Gentry," "City friend" and "Counrey folkes," while he lumps together the women in his audience, who in his and many other playwrights' view will help to win the men's approval of the play (The Dramatic Works vol 1:270). Which is to say that, contained within the single collective identity of "The gentler Sex," the women spectators are only defined in their relation to the male counterparts in the theatre, in their "soft influence" upon men.  

On the other hand, the pursuit of women's approval is based upon the conventional view that women spectators are more charitable and more easily pleased - in other words, less 'censorious' and less 'rigorous' - than male spectators. In the form of commendation, the playwrights' supplications to women duplicate one of the terms on which the women debates were set, namely, the intellectual as well as physical incapacity of 'the Weaker Vessel.' However, the commercial playwrights knew better than to take a decisive position in the debate and thus risk the potential loss of favor — and income — from their female customers. The maneuver between the two op-positions of gender in the audience was essential to the commercial success of the playhouse business, and often resulted in a characteristically paternalistic attitude toward women, with an unmistakable touch of male prerogatives as imprinted in "rigorous censure" of men.

Women as arbiters between the ultimate authority of male spectators and the authorship of male play-makers is the gender paradigm deployed in London commercial theatres, from which Shakespeare is by no means exempted. The epilogues of As You Like It and 2 Henry IV are imbedded in the same rhetoric that fashions women spectators as benevolent mediators of the male transactions in the theatre.  

The Epilogue to Henry VIII is not an exception, but gives us a pause.
All the expected good w' are like to hear
For this play at this time, is only in
The merciful construction of good women,
For such a one we show'd them. If they smile,
And say 'twill do, I know within a while
All the best men are ours; for 'tis ill hap
If they hold when their ladies bid 'em clap. (Epilogue 8-14)

The presupposition or rather the enjoinder that "good women" should give a favorable interpretation of the play and help to win "the best men"'s acclaim to it is more or less normative. Questionable is who is the good woman -- "such a one" -- that the play represents. Or, if indeed the play's meanings reside in the spectators' "construction," i.e., interpretation, rather than in the playwright's construction, in its second and modern sense, who among the three principal female characters -- Queen Katherine, Anne Bullen, and the Old Lady -- would be chosen by the women spectators for commendation? But, first of all, could there be a consensus among them?

Creating one such consensus is supposedly the playwright's task. And it may be ascertained that Shakespeare presents the deposed Queen as the good woman. Eulogy for Queen Katherine has in fact a long history among the critics. Even a recent critic, who stresses Shakespeare's "multiple sympathetic perspective" and the play's "moral relativism," notes the author's exceptionally sympathetic treatment of the "innocent" character. If, however, the character of Katherine is the good woman, it is largely because she is untouched by the ambiguity surrounding virtually every character in the play. the ambiguity which in fact energizes the play. Despite all the tribulations she undergoes, Katherine remains unassiduously static, adhering to a system of absolute values and in a sense embodying them. In effect she becomes an emblem of feminine virtue, which might have claimed a unanimous commendation among women spectators. Her downfall, then, would have drawn an unreserved sympathy from the same, as the Prologue seems to encourage: "Those that can pity, here/ May let fall a tear/ The subject will deserve it."

Although edification of women through the stage exemplar is one of the conventional formula the defenders of the stage often deployed against the charge of women's corruptibility in the theatre, that doesn't make it unreasonable to suppose that some women -- even many -- in the audience were inclined to take the play's moral import seriously.
At the same time, however, it is also entertainable that such was not the only or even dominant mode of reception. We can reasonably postulate that not all the women resorted to the pernicious place — to women, of course — chiefly for moral edification. If, as Thomas Cartelli theorizes, the theatrical pleasure in the Elizabethan playhouses is maximized by the risky cross-over between transgression and normalization (29-37), the woman's part Katherine represents fails to generate such pleasure in its full intensity, refusing to go further than the safe zone of established cultural values, namely, the male construct of virtuous womanhood. At least in some spectators' view, a different kind of virtue - or what may be termed the female virtuosity - may belong not to the waning star but to the rising one in the play, who capitalizes on the pleasurable dynamics of boundary-crossing.

In her radically ambiguous character, Anne Bullen, a relatively minor figure compared with Queen Katherine whom she deposes both from the State and the viewers' eyes, provides a counter-position to the Queen's static integrity. At one point she is ostensibly flirtatious (with Lord Sands: 1.4.); at another she is unbelievably virtuous in her concern about her rival's fate and ostentatiously modest in her sexuality. The contradiction in Anne's character may be attributed to Shakespeare's cautious dramaturgy that intends not to impinge upon the popular memory of the late Queen Elizabeth. That doesn't explain, however, some of the ways in which the problematic character of Anne Bullen was perceived by the women spectators; or, to reverse the angle, how the spectators turn the contradiction into a source of pleasure.

A woman spectator aligned to the hegemonic male perspective — that is, a "good woman" in the audience — is most likely to view Anne's sexual prowess as undoubtedly condemnable. But the spectator's initial response may be modified by Anne's expressed sympathy toward the good woman in the play and her abnegation of the female sexuality as a means of social advancement. Or the suspicion may be sustained or even reinforced by detecting in Anne's 'modesty' an ostentatious display of virtue. The latter view is in fact articulated in the play by the Old Lady. But the Old Lady’s accusation is based on an independent view, rather in opposition to the conventional one that sanctions women's sexual and social behavior.
Anne. On my troth and maidenhead,  
I would not be a queen.

Old Lady. Beshrew me, I would,  
And venture maidenhead for't, and so would you,  
For all this spice of your hypocrisy. (2.3.22-6)

For the Old Lady, who would 'venture [her] maidenhead' for a preferment, Anne is simply "a very fresh fish" (2.3.86) who capitalizes on her physical attraction and exploits the king's male lust. For her Anne's hypocrisy lies less in the profitable use of one's sexuality for social advancement than in the assumed innocence of any such motives. Her blatantly realistic view may win support from some women spectators, in whose "construction," following their spokeswoman's lead, Anne would be characterized as cunning or shrewd - but not in an entirely negative sense of the words. In particular, those at marriageable age and those who, to the Old Lady's envy, "have fair parts of women" (2.3.27) may be emboldened to fantasize their own future according to the model of the phenomenal 'rise of Anne Bullen.' While rejecting the Old Lady's sarcasm, they might nonetheless embrace her advice on women's "soft cheveril conscience," whose "capacity" would receive the gifts of "eminence, wealth, sovereignty," if they "might please to stretch it" (2.3.29-34).

So has Anne already done, it seems. Both Old Lady and the Lord Chamberlain, who breaks the news of the king's "strange" favor, suggest that she may be pregnant. What a scandal! For which Anne is set either beyond reproach or beyond admiration; or, in between the two oppositions. The third position may be the one the playwright decidedly exploits to reach the widest public by striking the cultural nerve connected to the social norms of women's sexuality -- both its pleasurable transgression and reassuring containment. The spectatorial construction of that position, in turn, must be ranging as wide as the gap opened in the contradictory character, the gap which the women spectators in particular are invited to fill in with their own desires and according to their own predispositions.

We should note at this point that the textual locus of the diverse spectatorial construction is another scene of women's counsel, which is named as such but dismissed as "sly conference" by Carole McKewin (117). The thwarted relationship between Anne and the Old Lady is as devastating as the strained dialogue in Hero's dressing-room to the critical
formulation of female bonding. If one is not inclined to dismiss these scenes as exceptions, one may come to the recognition that the fragmentation of the female counter-universe has less to do with the author's vision than with differences among spectatorial positions in regard to the differences among the female characters in the play. As this brief, and purely conjectural, reconstruction of spectatorial positions indicates, one of the ways in which such differences are figured is women's varied positions in social hierarchy. And social differences in women audience did not pass entirely unnoticed by the contemporaries.

iv. From Woman to Women: Differences

Although the majority of commentators on women both in and outside the theatre lay emphasis on their gender identity, at least two kinds of other comments draw attention to the social differences among women spectators. One is predicated on the distinction between public and private playhouses and their established hierarchy, at least in the decades following the adult companies' take-over of the private houses in London's theatre business. The playwright Thomas Dekker mentions whole audiences of the poorer "apell-wyfes" and penny-paying "Fish wives" at the more popular venue of the Fortune, while many others noted the presence of wealthier "City madams" and "Ladyes" at more prestigious houses such as the Blackfriars (Gurr 1987: Appendix II, 93). The other kind of comments are more concerned with internal dynamics of the play's reception than with the social prestige that distinguished the two venues of playgoing. In his typically fastidious distinction of tastes, coupled with the conceit of his play's capacity to subsume them, Ben Jonson is representative. In the Prologue to Epicoene, he elaborates on Shakespearean trope of 'As You Like It' by drawing on a cooking analogy, promising that "his cates" will "Be fit for ladies; some for lords, knights, squires,/ Some for your waiting wench, and citie-wires/ Some for your men, and daughters of white-friars" (Partridge ed., 23-4). Certainly it is another stereotyping parallel to that of male spectators according to their class or vocation.
Nonetheless, it is one of the rare recognition of the differences among women in the theatre and the corresponding effects on their reaction.

To proceed from these distinctions to a definite mode of reception accorded to each category is not a simple matter, however. In the first place, the difficulty lies in the fluidity of the status categories themselves. "Waiting wench" is hardly a social category, though it is most likely to designate the servants. A "whitefriar daughter" - i.e., daughters of gentry and wealthier citizenry - may become a lady or merely another city wife, depending on the status of their marriage partners. A city wife could be anybody in her former status: city daughters who move laterally in their marriage, daughters of lesser gentry or better-off yeomanry, maidservants who substitute for their deceased mistresses, even daughters of peerage who step down the social ladder in their fathers' need. In order to reconstruct the possible range of women's experience of theatre, Jonson's categories should be problematized, rather than accepted as such, particularly in the light of women's social mobility, whose traces in early modern England were largely determined by their marriage.

Lawrence Stone maintains, concomitantly with his model of restricted patriarchal family, that marriage in early modern times was an alliance of families and not individuals, a matter of collective strategy and not personal will. It may be true at least above certain social level, and it is easy to generalize from these patterns to society at large. Although his evidence is mostly from upper-class families, Stone indeed assumes that the patterns observed among social elite extended far down the social scale (Stone 1977: 134-6). More recent research, however, has found little evidence that English youth of the period were pressured into marriages they did not want. On the contrary, the evidence suggests that common people generally chose their own marriage partners, although they were expected and felt an obligation on their part, to obtain parental approval (MacFarlane 154-7, Wrightson 1982: 90-104).

Vivien Brodsky Elliott's focus on the 'London marriage market' in the early seventeenth century is particularly relevant to our present context. She observes two distinct marriage patterns among single women of London, one associated with arranged matches and the other with unions of personal choice. The pattern of arranged marriage was most commonly found among the London-born daughters of gentry, clergy, and wealthy
tradesmen, and characterized by the joining of relatively young brides with men four to seven years - in some cases, more than ten years - their senior. Marriages of personal choice took place lower down the occupational hierarchy, involving women aged 23 to 26 and men of their own age or only a few years older. In determining marriage age, Elliott concludes, "migration was far more important a factor than status" (86). Migrant women, many of whom are orphaned, were nearly always in the position of having to work for their dowry as well as survival. That explains why they married on the average three and one-half years later than the London-born brides.

Although Elliott does not venture into the ideological implications of these marriage patterns, her evidence clearly indicates that the two kinds of single women in London are likely to differ in their ideological outlook too. The pattern of early marriage for London daughters implies arranged marriage and greater patriarchalism within marriage occasioned by the significant age-difference between partners. Probably, William Gouge's advice on matrimony in *Of Domesticall Duties* (c. 1619) fits into this particular pattern rather than claims its universal applicability throughout the social scale when he advocated a disparity of "five to ten or somewhat more years": "...especially if the excess of years be on the husband's part... it is very meet that the husband should be somewhat older than his wife because he is a head, a governor, a protector of his wife" (*Of Domesticall Duties*, qtd. Haller and Haller 248). In the marriage process the London daughter also remains relatively a passive agent, since her father is the decisive figure in the business of his daughter, introducing appropriate suitors and negotiating and providing dowries in the form of land, goods or capital. Being an object of exchange, as it were, in a male transaction, she is more likely to find herself in a subordinate position upon her transferral to a husband.

The migrant bride pattern of a later age at first marriage and of a small age-difference between partners implies that the migrant single women had greater freedom of choice of spouse and that the marriage process for them was one in which they had an active role in initiating their own relationship, in finding suitable partners, and in conducting courtships. They were enabled to do so because they were free from parental authority either by their residence away from home or their parents' early demise (For more than 64 per cent of the 604 cases in Elliott's study patemal death was the main cause of migration). Parental
influence of course could be extended by kin supervision (23 per cent - mostly daughters of
gentry and high-status tradesmen - were residing with London kins), but probably less
effectively maintained. Much less so if the daughter was in service. In fact, domestic
service provided a means of subsistence for a large number of single migrant women
without supportive kin, while Elliott's findings also include "a minuscule percentage" of
migrant women who were known to be self-employed - as shopkeepers, seamstresses, and
even scriveners.

It may not be self-evident that these economically 'independent' women - at least from
parental provision - developed a more egalitarian outlook on marriage, although it is most
likely. Nor certainly should it be overgeneralized, particularly in view of those
maidservants who married their widowed masters and thus may have occupied well-
defined subordinate positions within the household - the price, as it were, they paid for
upward social mobility. Nonetheless, one may not stretch too far to suppose that a broad
contrast existed between the unattached migrant women and the better-off London
daughters in their accessibility to the issues of personal choice, mutual liking and love as a
precondition of marriage. And the postulation is not merely based on a reasoning from the
social conditions. On the one hand, the Elizabethan household manuals and various tracts
on matrimonial life, together with the offensive lines in the popular controversy over
women, are all indicative of the attempts at an indoctrination of women's subordinate
position in household and in society at large, whose corollary was the positioning of
women as passive object in marital transaction between fathers and husbands. On the other
hand, a peculiar piece of evidence points toward an interstice in the massive indoctrination
of the patriarchal codes.
A Letter Sent by the Mavdens in London (c. 1567) is an "exceptional contribution" to the woman debates, as its recent editor has observed. Written as a riposte to Edward Hake's lost The Merry Meeting of Mavdens of London, an "attack on what he perceived as the wantonness and sloth of London's female domestics" (Fehrenbach 31), its exceptionality lies above all in its defense not of women in general but of a particular class of women, namely, London's female domestic servants. Together with its precedent attack, the maidens' defense recognizes social differences among women. Reconstructed from the text of A Letter, Hake's primary concern in his three attacking points is the surveillance on the maidens' alleged loosened sexuality. In particular, he must have strongly inveighed against the practice of "privie contractes" (marriage without parental approval and/or clerical sanction), to which the author of A Letter responds with force:

...surely it is a thing that we do not very well allow, nor yet altogether discommende. Allow it we may not, Condemne it we can not. For as our parentes advise is alwayes to be asked in the choyce of our husbands, so is it not alwaies to be followed, namely when we can not frame our selves to love the partie that our parentes have provided for us... And sith love shold be the principall cause in mariage, why shold we be blamed, for chosing wher we most love and fansie? (42-3)

The uncompromising attitude expressed by the female persona regarding the choice of husband marks a decisive departure from customary sixteenth-century manners. Furthermore, she bases her argument not merely on self-justificatory assertion but on sensuous and practical reasons, too:

... how much more may we refuse such olde doting fools as sometimes are procured by our parentes to be sueters to us, & have a thousand worse impediments, and nothing but their goods and money to marry them, no not so much as any one good propertie or qualitie. Lette us say nothing of their extreme covetousnesse, and diverse other their crooked and crabbed condicions. What great gaine shall a yong mayden have by matching with any of them, when comonly they leave at their death behinde them may yong children, and little or nothing to kepe them with? (43)
As she continues to list the miseries to which young women marrying with an eye on the suitor's wealth may be prone in their marriage and widowhood, she reveals an awareness of women's exclusion from property and other legal rights. The preference for companionate marriage seems to be motivated by practical considerations as well as romantic conceptions of matrimonial union. After all, it is her prudence and realistic view on married life with which she concludes her rebuttal to Hake's indictment of their 'wantonness' in 'privie contractes':

The author of the Dialogue[Hake] seemeth to be unmarried, else surely shold he finde by experience, that all things [material goods] are almost to few to make good agreement to last and continue in married couples. As we are not so wynching wood [i.e., insane] to choose boyes or lads that lacke experience and the trade to live, so loth we to be coupled in mariage with sucy as are lothsom to looke upon; Happy people keep to the middle course (44).

A young woman agreeing to marry a young man, if she loves him, if he can provide for her, and if he is attractive, seems quite natural to us. As the editor R. J. Fehrenbach points out, however, it might appear extremely unconventional, rebellious, and even wicked in the given cultural milieu. To the patriarchs as well as anti-feminists of the period, it may as well have posed a social transgression.

On the other hand, one should reconsider Fehrenbach's statement that "...there is no question that at its center is the controversy over women, the medieval and Renaissance qurelle des femmes" (31). Even though she acknowledges A Letter's uniqueness in its focus on "basic freedom of human beings who happened to be servants and women" (32), her introduction contextualizes it within the woman debates and sets it in the gender paradigm. In other words, Fehrenbach's subject is the London maidservants as women, not the specific category of women who were the city's domestic workers. Accordingly, her introduction minimizes what in the text looms largest, namely the relationships of maids and mistresses, although, when such relationship is foregrounded, it is obvious that the emphasis is laid on a "reciprocity," that is, over the tension and the potential conflict which nonetheless may have called in the first place for the self-defense of maidservants.
In all likelihood, maids and mistresses in *A Letter* are the two types of London brides Elliott has identified, but in their different stages of life cycle. Before they marry and set up their own households, the unattached single migrant women had to serve the better-off London daughters who had now become mistresses in middle to upper class households. Different social conditions were lived out in the same household, and different ideological outlooks were encountered — however schematic it may sound. Such encounters, not the gender relation, provide the main axis of arguments in the pamphlet, as its full title, *A Letter Sent by the Maydens in London, to the virtuous Matrones and Mistresses of the same, in the defense of their lawfull Libertie,* suggests. The maidens' refutation of Hake's accusations is not an end itself but a means of asserting their "libertie" against the possible encroachment upon it, incited among their mistresses by Hake's narrow moralism.

Fehrenbach's overemphasis on reciprocity between mistress and maidservant derives from the failure to detect the ironic twists underlying the statements addressed specifically to the mistresses. Unlike those directed to Hake, which are straightforwardly refutative, blatantly or subtly satiric, and mostly intoned with indignation, the servants' address to their mistresses can be characterized by a set of negotiative strategies. In several places, they certainly emphasize "mutual care" as the desirable relationship between servants and mistresses. To establish the point, however, they draw less on the traditional conception of obligatory bonding among classes - much less on women's 'common bond' - than on the unusual and remarkably modern conception of contractual relationship between employers and workers. Thus, a maidservant owes "no longer service," when "she was overcharged with worke, she had complained and found no amendment, she sought for more easement, she liked not that intertainment [i.e., employment]" (46). Disputes over terms of service were not uncommon during the period, and in most cases servants presented harsh treatment and strained working conditions as evidence to support their cases. In fact, the ideal of mutuality envisaged in *A Letter* obliquely refers to the "straite use" of domestic servants by the employers, which Hake seems to have encouraged in his attack "against our overmuche libertie." In particular, Hake complains about the servants' propensity to attend plays and frequent taverns, where in Hake's view 'privie contractes' were often arranged.
Maidens' defense is both axiomatic and specific. They claim their rights to "enjoye a piece of the holyday, to refresh our spirites, and to rest our wearied bones," by arguing for the same relief from hard work for servants - who are "Christian people and reasonable creatures - that man gives his "beasts, vermins and foules" (38). They contradict Hake's charge on their "greate costes" spent on holidays with much detailed estimation of the sum of money used to buy "a quart of the best beere" or an admission to a playhouse - which only amounts "a peny." Maidens' response to the particular charge on playgoing attracts some attention. First they respond with a conventional formula; they take both "learning and pleasure in a godly play or enterlude" (44). Later on they contend that the actual target of Hake's criticism is not maidservants but their mistresses who, when attending sermons, set their eyes on men rather than hear the sermon, just as the maidservants are alleged to do in playhouses. They suggest, in brief, that Hake is playing "the crafty marchant, by casting that in our teeth, for which he rather mysliketh you that are our mistresses, as who wold say he chastened the Lyon by the whelpe" (44).

The lion and the whelp may have had a strong association in their shared susceptibility to the male criticism. And part of the maidens' strategy in their defense seems to preempt Hake's accusations by establishing a united front against the "base" Gentleman, when they demonstrate their trust in "moste woorthie Matrones & Mistresses": "...we knew ye to be such as are not moved wyth every wynde, nor such as hang upon the blastes of every mans mouth" (36). As they continue, however, the trust seems to be eroded by an ironic twist if not an open threat.

For if at his false surmise and suggestion, upon his bare word and letter, or upon unjust assertion without proofe, ye should have forwith codemn us of such things as he layeth unto our charges (& whereunto we pleade not gilitie) and thereby also should have gone about immediately to abriodge us of our lawful libertie, such an inconvenience might have arisen and growne thereby, that in a verie shorte time and space, ye should have gotten very fewe or no servants at al, when such as are born in the countrey shoulde choose rather to tarie at home, and remaine there to take paines for a small stipend or wages with libertie: and such as are Citizens born, shoulde repaire also to the coutry, or to other Cities where they might be free, than to abide as slaves and bondewomen in London (37).
Whether the mistresses were in fact credulous to "every mans mouth" and even predisposed to condemn the ill-doings of their servants cannot be definitely proved. Nonetheless, it would not be wildly wrong to suppose that the precaution taken on the maidens' part had some grounds. They knew that they "must... replie in defense of our libertie, and eke of our honesty, least our silence yeld us gilty," and in a hurry - "scribled in haste" (47).

What urgencies there were we do not know for sure. Were the restrictions on the servants' recreational behaviors more strictly enforced than ever, on top of their tough working conditions? Did Hake succeed in antagonizing the London domestics and their female employers? Was the strained relationship between them a new social phenomenon, or a pre-existent one? Are we too much straining our ears to grasp harsh realities behind the rhetoric of reciprocity? Or reversely, should one accept the emphatic rhetoric of mutuality as the 'real' relationship? Did Hake's 'false' indictment fail to strike the chord of disagreement among women of different social status and rather reinforced their common bond as women? Was the maiden's attitude toward their mistresses -- in Fehrenbach's words -- "always respectful, ingratiating, and frequently flattering"? The final words in A Letter do not provide a definite answer, but they suggest both the authenticity of the ideal of mutuality and the shadowy reality behind it, and, most important of all, the unmistakable sense of independence on the part of the maidservants:

...we hope that you wil be as good Mistresses unto us as heretofore ye have been. Accept our services as ye finde us. First trie us, then trust us: Faire words and gentle entreating of us shal do more a great deale with us, than a thousand of threattes & stripes, we would not wish you to kepe that servant that serveth you not in a maner as much for your love as for your money...when al is done, friendship is the surest garde. Let us have, we beseech you, our honest accustomed libertie, sith ye know no just cause to the contrary, intreats us as we shall deserve, we will deserve to be swell entreated (46-7).
vi. Fissure in Hero's Dressing-Room

At the risk of reduction, I feel inclined to postulate that the encounters of the two types of London brides with their different social positions and ideological outlooks found their way into Shakespeare's plays. Most of the women's counsel scenes involve women of different status. Even among social equals — Adriana and Luciana in Comedy of Errors and Rosalind and Celia in As You Like It — different views on marriage or gender relation set them apart. Placed in this context, the strained mood of Hero's dressing room acquires an additional level of meanings. Neither is it that Margaret is insensitive to her mistress' anxiety, nor that the 'prenuptial fear' Hero suffers is a universal experience of women as McKewin suggests. Hero's anxiety is better explained by the nature of marital contract that situates her as an object of male exchange between her father and future husband. Although Hero goes through a formal courtship whose main function is supposed to familiarize the partners, the courtship in the play is not conducted by the suitor himself but by a surrogate father to the suitor; Don Pedro woos Hero on behalf of Claudio. The initial confusion about the identity of the suitor finds a settlement in the formal introduction, after the mock wooing, of the real would-be husband. It must be nonetheless quite disruptive for the female 'object' who is tossed around by male hands. Psychologically unsettled and doubly removed from her marriage partner, Hero remains uncertain about who Claudio really is and what will become of her in her married life with the stranger.

All she has to know him by is a pair of gloves that Claudio sent her as a token of the contract: "These gloves the Count sent me, they/ Are an excellent perfume" (3.4.57-8). Quietly breaking into the witty banter between Margaret and Beatrice after a long silence, Hero's abrupt utterance strikes a curious ring, suggesting that she has been set aloof from the dialogue and instead was gazing intently on the only object that may tell her something of their sender. She may also have been contemplating the hands which will take the gloves back and claim her hands in them — the hands in whose grasp her future may lie. To her, then, do the empty gloves stand for her own fate as a passive agent of the male transaction,
as a silent daughter who has no voice or no hands in her own marriage, whose gloved hands are only to be transferred from father's to husband's hands?

If the gloves constitute a site of the unknowing bride's mental fixation, so does the rebato, which becomes the catalyst for Hero's outburst. A rebato is a kind of stiff collar or ruff designed to decoratively frame the face. Why does the usually subdued Hero become so insistent on this ornamental part of the wedding gown? Simply because it must be what she likes. "[She]'ll wear none but this," because this is what she chooses to wear whatever Margaret or Beatrice may have to say about it. In other words, the rebato is the only thing on which Hero, the voiceless and handless bride in her own marriage, is allowed to exert her own will. As Don John sarcastically comments, Hero is "Leonato's Hero, [Claudio's] Hero, every man's Hero" (3.2.95-6) and not her own. Earlier, when Leonato entertains a vapid joke about his being a cuckold and his daughter's suspected legitimacy, Don Pedro concludes the joke with an easy assurance: "...Truly the lady/ Fathers herself. Be happy, lady, for you are like an/ Honourable father" (1.1.101-3). Benedick's counter-statement is more resonant: "If Signior Leonato be her father, she would/ Not have his head on her shoulders for all Messina, as/ Like him as she is" (104-6). As Harry Berger, Jr. points out, the bizarre image of Hero wearing her father's bearded and graying head as a mask has some truth as an emblem (1982: 303). The father's head or father as the head displaces the daughter's head (identity) or daughter as her own head, that is, as a self-determining subject. Symptomatic of such displacement are Hero's anxieties, fears, and fixations, leaving her subjectivity reduced to a pair of gloves and a rebato. However, it would be only half the truth to say that Hero is the "nothing" -- of the resonant title -- but "a blank sheet" on which male desires and anxieties are projected. I shall argue against such assertions in the following section. For now, let us return to Hero's dressing room to see how Margaret, the under-represented maidservant in McKewin's and many others' reading, responds to her young mistress' afflictions.

At Hero's outburst, Margaret takes back her opinion on the choice of rebato. Instead, she offers a compliment on the wedding gown, though her tongue is not checked long enough to relieve Hero's impatience:

Margaret. I like the new tire within excellently...
...; and your gown's a most
rare fashion, i'faith. I saw the Duchess of Milan's
gown that they praise so.

Hero. O. that exceeds, they say.

Margaret. But my troth 's but a night-gown in respect of
yours - ...
But for a fine, quaint, graceful, and excellent
Fashion, yours is worth ten on't.

Hero. God give me joy to wear it, for my heart is
exceeding heavy.

Margaret. 'Twill be heavier soon by the weight of a man.

Hero. Fie upon thee! Are not shamed? (3.5.14-26)

The setback to a compliment may indicate that Margaret knows her place well, that she can
force her opinion by no means into any effect. On the other hand, it may suggest that she is
also well aware of the emotional burdens that the better-off London daughters may have to
suffer before their arranged marriage with the 'strangers,' and that she is trying to, as best as
she can, alleviate Hero's self-absorptive anxiety by diverting it to the beauty of the wedding
gown. Then, Margaret's joke on the carnal aspect of wedding consummation can be better
understood as a light-hearted prompting of her continuing desire to stir up Hero's
'exceedingly heavy heart' rather than as a bawdy insinuation for its own sake.

That Hero is not capable of such light-heartedness and much less of the 'bawdy'
insinuations is suggestive of the gap between the two women, and by extension between
their social equals. Furthermore, Hero's irritation implies an accusation, to which Margaret
responds with assertiveness cancelling the previous defensive compliment:

honourable in a beggar? Is not your lord honourable without marriage? I
think you would have me say, saving your reverence, 'a husband'. And bad
thinking do not wrest true speaking, I'll offend nobody. Is there any harm in
'the heavier for a husband'? None, I think, and it be the right husband, and
the right wife; otherwise 'tis light, and not heavy. Ask my Lady Beatrice
else; here she comes (3.5.27-36).

Margaret's deflections on "honourably" can be seen as a counter-attack that points to the
narrow conception of honor implied in Hero's accusation of her being immodest — both
verbally and sexually. For Hero, to speak of carnal things is irreparably out of female
decorum espoused by the society. For her honor means chastity, the ultimate virtue of women, while Margaret stretches its meaning, making it coextensive with honesty and respectability regardless of social status. Of more significance is the difference in their respective perceptions of marriage. While perfumed gloves and a rebato are the signifiers of matrimony for Hero, the expected "weight of a man" is the essential constituent of the union of "the right husband and the right wife" for Margaret.

For her view on "honourable" marriage as well as her preference for a certain rebato, Margaret seeks an alliance with Beatrice, who, she hopes, would certainly come to her side in curbing Hero's docility and at the same time offering an outlet for her repressions. Beatrice fails to fulfill the expectation, however; when she appears on the scene, she speaks "in the sick tune" (3.5.39). Margaret attempts to revamp her usual 'merry tune' only to be stung by Beatrice's sharp tongue.

Margaret. Clap's into light o' Love'; that goes without a burden. Do you sing it, and I'll dance it.

Beatrice. Ye light o' love with your heels! Then, if your husband have stables enough, you'll see he shall lack no barns (3.5.41-5).

Not only does Beatrice accuse Margaret of wantonness; by her quibble between barns and baime (children) she insinuates that Margaret shall bear illegitimate children — or she shall marry a widower who has children from previous marriage. At this false and malicious accusation, Margaret's wit grows more aggressive to Beatrice' embarrassment.

Beatrice. O, God help me, God help me, how long have you professed apprehension?

Margaret. Ever since you left it. Doth not my wit become me rarely? (62-5)

Since her former ally "tumed Turk (a renegade)," "there's no more sailing by the star" (52-3) for Margaret, who takes the star's place and engages in the 'merry war of wit' with Benedick.

Margaret. Will you then write me a sonnet in praise of my beauty?
Benedick. In so high a style, Margaret, that no man living shall come over it, for in most comely truth thou deservest it.

Margaret. To have no man come over me? Why, shall I always keep below stairs? (5.2.4-10)

While her mistresses are running up and down the stairs to marriage, the maidservant may become impatient to stay in the servants' quarters - "below stairs" - without entertaining such opportunities. While the younger and better-off daughters successfully enter into marital transaction with their fathers' generous provisions, the older and poorer daughters may become exhausted in their service to earn their own small dowries. A Hake or a Gouge might wield a double-edged strategy to inculcate the respectable daughters in their moral conservatism by exposing their inferiors' "wantonness and sloth." Shakespeare may have found such strategy effective in bringing the resolution to this 'much ado about nothing,' as Margaret's unintentional complicity in Don John's plot helps to both precipitate and recover Hero's honor. Margaret the whelp is whipped to tame Hero the lion.

vii. Two Women of Verona: Who Counsels?

However, it would be as untenable to argue that social differences among female characters prevail in the counsel scenes as to maintain that female bonding always surpasses their differences. A more viable argument would be that both intimacy and difference are attributes to the scenes in which a mistress and a maidservant share their secret thoughts, and thereby both establish and are differentiated within the female counter-universe. Probably the most articulate expression of intimacy between two women of social inequality is found in The Two Gentlemen of Verona, when Julia confides her secret to her servant, Lucetta.

Julia. Counsel, Lucetta; gentle girl, assist me,
And ev'n in kind love I do conjure thee,
Who are the table wherein all my thoughts
Are visibly character'd and engrav'd,
To lesson me, and tell me some good mean
How with my honour I may undertake
A journey to my loving Proteus.
Lucetta. Alas, the way is wearisome and long (2.7.1-8).

The mistress' unreserved trust in her maidservant is quite unusual among all the Shakespearean female relationship. Although I agree with McKewin who finds the most powerful counter-universe in the conversation between Desdemona and Emilia, the power of the scene comes not from their companionship but from Emilia's independent view articulated in her speech to the male world of the play. Similarly, in The Winter's Tale Herminone has little to offer in return to Paulina who revives her from 'death.'

The intimacy between Julia and Lucetta is strained even to a point of textual inconsistency: "All that is mine I leave at thy dispose/ My goods, my lands, my reputation" (2.7.86-7), while her father still reigns over the family. However Julia is not exaggerating when she calls Lucetta "the table" on which her own thought is inscribed, insofar as that thought concerns her passion for Proteus; it was Lucetta who encouraged it in the first place. Certainly the maidservant is in the position of being able to give "lesson" on 'privie contractes'; that Julia's father opposes Proteus' proposal is more than once suggested (Arden ed. n. 86). It is curious, then, to see that Julia's inspiration for "the flight" is deflated at once by Lucetta's brief and even more sober comment. This peculiar pattern of exchange is repeated throughout the scene. As Julia inflames herself with "love's hot fire," Lucetta seeks to "quench the fire of love with snow" (20-1). In brief, Lucetta tries to dissuade her mistress from the quest for her beloved: "Better forbear, till Proteus make return" (14).

It is not, however, that Lucetta's attitude has been changed. Lucetta is consistent both in her concern for her mistress and her view on desirable marriage. When she plays "a goodly broker" (1.2.41) for Julia, encouraging her to fall in love, her counsel is in fact to carry out the London maidservants' view that "love should be the principall cause in mariage" (Fehrenbach 43). Her discussion of Julia's suitors places Proteus as "worthiest love" above men of wealth or status. Although Julia seems to resist such an idea and refuses to dislodge herself from maiden's propriety, she soon finds in the idea an avenue for her repressed
desire. In the briefly following encounter with Proteus, she has already cast off the female decorum.

In Lucetta's view, there is a quirk in Julia's transformation. As A Letter suggests, the maidservants' conception of romantic love does not stand apart from practical considerations; nor is it conceived in an ignorance of the social restrictions imposed upon women. Rather, their liberal view is advanced in a full awareness of, if not a conscious opposition to, the patriarchal assumptions and practices concerning the control of the institution of marriage. For women like Lucetta, then, breaking out of the social premises is not the most viable strategy for fulfilling their dream. A more effective one would be to circumvent and negotiate with -- rather than pose a direct challenge to -- the dominant cultural attitudes. Lucetta would not elope, as Julia does, at the risk of losing maiden's honor, especially when such a decision is solely based on an infatuation -- expressed in Julia's hyperbolic images of lovers and flamboyant rhetoric of pilgrimage -- with a lover whose inconstancy was revealed in the preceding scene (2.6).

Julia herself is not unaware of the risky business of elopement: "But tell me, wench, how will the world repute me/ For undertaking so unstaid journey?/ I fear me it will make me scandaliz'd" (2.7.59-61). Lucetta's answer is simple and not an encouraging one: "If you think so, then stay at home, and go not" (62). As she finds her mistress' decision to venture both irreversible and self-tormenting, Lucetta gives her final word of assent, but with an ominous remark: "Then never dream on infamy, but go./ If Proteus like your journey, when you come/ No matter who's displeas'd, when you are gone./ I fear me he will scarce be pleas'd withal" (64-8). For the audience who has witnessed Proteus' infatuation for another woman in the immediately preceding scene, Lucetta's warning is a precise recapitulation of what has already happened. For Julia it is simply "unimaginable": "That is the least, Lucetta, of my fear" (69). The entire idea of elopement is predicated on the presence of and compensation from a devoted lover. What Lucetta suggests in fact is not only that Proteus might be a "deceitful" man, but also that even a devoted lover, as well as "the world," may not accept a woman's resolute action as commendable and may further read it as symptom of her sexual looseness. Julia's conception of romantic love -- love as a pilgrimage marking off and insulating lovers from "the world" -- leaves her blind to the workings of "the
world," where young men are expected to go abroad, as both Valentine and Proteus are, for
learning and social advancement, while young women are constrained to stay home until
transferred to another home through the male transaction of matrimony. It is, therefore, by
Lucetta's prudence that the audience is reminded and become 'mindful' of the double-bind
posed to women who actively seek. Her, as compared to his, pursuit of love is disruptive of
both parental authority and the male lover's prerogatives; a daughter's rebellion is quick to
translate into a wife's immodesty.

Such is Iago's and Othello's interpretation of Desdemona's revolt against parental
authority taken in favor of her lover. Although I agree with McKewin who finds the most
powerful counter-universe in the conversation between Desdemona and Emilia (4.3), it
must be also noted that the same pattern that characterizes Julia-Lucetta relationship recurs.
First of all, it is Desdemona, of the higher social status, who finds herself in a predicament
and seeks counsel from Emilia of the lower station. Her predicament is the double-bind
through which the patriarchal order operates on the rebellious daughters. Desdemona broke
out of her father's household only to find a similar place within her husband's. A daughter's
elopement may be acceptable, even commendable in her lover's eye. But a husband, jealous
and suspicious of her 'breaking loose,' is likelier to condemn it as a revolt, which once
threatened her father and is now emasculating him. Desdemona does not recognize this
double-bind. The more Othello's suspicions grows, the more desperately she adheres to the
patriarchal value of chastity. Even at the moment of her death she remains a 'good woman,'
abjuring her right to speak against the false charge. It is Emilia, after all, who raises an
indignant voice against the patriarchal oppressions, who provides the insight into the ways
in which the male construct of woman's chastity destroys women both from outside and
inside (Stallybrass 1986: esp. 141-2).
In view of the recurrent pattern in women's counsel scenes, we need to reformulate the thesis about a 'seamless' female counter-universe. The social differences among women registered in Shakespeare's plays entail different views on marriage and different degrees of awareness regarding the patriarchal control of that institution. In some cases these differences work complementarily to create a genuine mutuality, and contribute to the reinforcement of women's solidarity. In others, the gap widens and becomes insurmountable, giving witness to the intrinsically heterogeneous, if not debilitatingly fragmented, nature of the female counter-universe. However, a recognition of Shakespearean registers of differences and solidarity among women characters should not be folded back into an admiration of the author's "mimetic skills in creating women's voices" (McKewin 117). I would rather turn the question inside out, speculating on what women spectators would have made of these differences. Would Jonson's "whitefriar daughters" find Margaret's sharp tongue offensive, as some modern critics do? Would they sympathize with Hero the silent bride as they see their own frustration reenacted in the repressions the character goes through? Would they have found much pleasure in Beatrice's assertiveness and her ultimate reintegration into the benign patriarchal order? On the other hand, can we suppose that London's female domestics who found their way into the public theatres reacted quite differently from their superiors?

Reconstruction of audience response solely in regard to social status would be as unprofitable as it is implausible. Equally defective is the same project based on gender division only. This explains, I think, both the limitations and the value of Jean Howard's efforts to formulate the spectatorial position of women in Renaissance theatre. Through a reading of contemporary treatises on women in the playhouses — the same evidence from which McLuskie draws her thesis of women spectators as spectacle and object of male desire — Howard comes to the opposite conclusion that in the public theatres women were not simply victimized by male gaze but empowered by their own gaze at the male
playgoers. The reversal of perspective marks a significant move, enabling the women playgoers to act as desiring subject rather than desired object.

But when Howard makes a bolder assertion that women playgoers, displaced from 'home' where they belonged, threatened the patriarchal economy by their 'waywardness,' the formulation seems to stretch too far to hold. First of all, her particular focus on women of middling sort, that is, Jonson's 'citie-wires,' does not acknowledge the heterogeneous nature of the group. She tends to categorize them in terms of their common interest against, or bondage under, patriarchal oppression, recapitulating the myth of a 'women's league.' More problematic is her emphasis on "the politics of playgoing" as opposed to "politics of playscript." In other words, Howard assumes that the ideological implication of a given play tends to be 'recuperative,' while the ideological consequences of playgoing are necessarily subversive of the patriarchal order. She maintains concurrently that the female characters of the plays are the construct of patriarchal discourses; disproportionately, she confers a full-fledged subjectivity on the women spectators.

Her argument in fact replicates McLuskie's conception of 'resistant reader,' only relegating it to the historical audience. What she fails to see is that neither the playscript nor the spectators are self-contained and predisposed to work or act in such a way that the ideological outcome of the encounter may be predictable. Both the female characters and women spectators have their own gaps and contradictions, at the intersection of which a theatrical transaction -- a transformation of object-subject relationship, that is, other than simple inversion between them -- is most energetically made. In the following section I shall attempt to place that intersection within the feminist debate on the question of the female subjectivity.
As the continental theories have radically transformed the critical methodologies in literary study in the last two decades, Shakespeare’s heroines have undergone a drastic change in their fortune — a dramatic rise and fall, so to speak. The first-wave of feminism, that is, liberal and essentialist, was determined to “liberate Shakespeare’s women from the stereotypes” to which they had too often been confined by male/masculinist critics (The Woman’s Part 3). The interpretive operation followed different paths, intersecting with various legacies of new criticism, psychoanalysis, and even Bradleyan character study. Also, critics differed in their view as to whether Shakespeare’s plays promulgated a misogynist or a feminist outlook. Nonetheless, the shared agenda was to foreground a positive portrayal of female characters.

Once placed at center-stage of critical discussions and imagined as retaining a psychological depth, the women characters began to be seen as independent and autonomous subjects, emancipated from their former status as male property — the object of vituperation or idealization by the male characters. Some critics went as far as to assert that Shakespeare’s women were “well-integrated, thoughtful portraits that have their base in reality”; in the course of dramatic action, they learn “the meaning of self-sovereignty for women in a patriarchal society” (Dash 251, Dreher 170). Others were more cautious, observing that, while Shakespeare’s women can be seen as capable of extensive personal development, few plays make the development of a woman a major theme (e.g., Bandel 170-3). This latter view seems more accurate; in most cases the women’s varied development is not dramatized, but is merely implied through a casual bit of stage business or scrap of conversation. But it is exactly the strength of liberal feminist essays that their
focus on such flickering moments in the text helped to open up the interiority of women characters, which in great measure had theretofore remained unexplored, uncharted, and suppressed. Fundamentally, the critical project was a rewriting of the Shakespearean canon from the women’s point of view, a delineation from the male-authored text of what psychoanalytic critics have termed the ‘maternal subtext.’

Precisely because of its predominant concern with the dramatic text, its focus on the psychological subtext, and its (alleged) disregard of the historical context, liberal feminism was brought under attack by the subsequent trend in feminism, that is, the more rigorously historicist and largely materialist, feminist critiques. This second-wave feminism in Shakespeare criticism surged concurrently with other historical criticisms such as new historicism and cultural materialism, and based its critique of the essentialist position upon the post-structuralist dismantlement of the transcendental or essentialist subject. New theories of subject have revealed that the presumed political neutrality of the transcendental subject is an ideological product of liberal humanism — a mask for self-perpetuation of a white, male, upper-class status quo. Accordingly, the essentialist subjects — free agents of their own action and meaning — were replaced by post-structuralist subjects, who are seen to be shaped by the power of cultures — ideologies, discourses, and practices.

The exposure concomitantly has undermined the liberal feminist valorization of self-determining female characters, who, like their historical sisters, participated in the liberal humanist economy — “the illusion of being autonomous subject,” in Catherine Belsey’s words. The price they had to pay for a ‘proper’ place, that is, home, was their acquiescence in their own exclusion from the social and the political domain (Belsey 1985: esp. ch. 7). Other critics have been more radical in their de-privileging of both the female characters and the liberal feminist project of salvaging them. Lisa Jardine’s early opposition to the analysis of women characters as ‘real’ people anticipated McLuskie’s reformulation of the characters as “part of the theatrical stock” the Renaissance dramatists exploited to offer pleasure to the predominantly male audience (Jardine 1983: 6, McLuskie 1989: 124). As such, Shakespeare’s women, constructed all in male terms, only serve to consolidate the social system that brings them into subordination, even when they gesture against it. Likewise, ‘the liberal feminist dream,’ which imagines a space of liberation within the
masculinist text, is dismissed as the effect of co-optation by the familial ideology that sanctions the inclusion of the feminist critics themselves into the none-the-less patriarchal structure of the contemporary societies.

The critique cuts deep, especially in regard to the ahistorical approach of the earlier trend, of its failure to recognize the historical specificity of psychic and social structures that produce gender and family. The psychoanalytic approach in particular was criticized for grounding feminist analyses upon increasingly questioned notions about the construction of subjectivity. One problem with this approach was its focus on relations within a family model implicitly based on Freud's essentialist propositions of the transhistorical nature of both the family unit and subject formation within it. Although the psychoanalytic critics have identified gender as a social product apart from but strongly associated with biological differences, the 'society' they map in Shakespeare's plays is invariably located inside the given relationship within the patriarchal family. It is somewhat typical of psychoanalytic reading to dissolve the textual representation of social (gender) conflict into a subtextual dynamics of sexual difference.\(^{31}\)

An alternative approach took the opposite route, initiating a shift of critical attention away from the psychological to the historical, from subtext to context. The historicist/materialist project of dissociating the essentialized notion of gender was impelled, as Jean Howard remarks, by "the necessity to historicize the gender constructions if one wishes to escape the oppressive notion of a universal human nature, or worse of an eternal feminine" ("Introduction" 3). Such an imperative demanded that the critics go beyond analyzing character relations within family representations and scrutinize the construction of the family itself. Once its structure was questioned rather than taken as a given, the family as social unit was redefined as 'ideological state apparatus,' as the nexus in which the political state naturalizes and reproduces itself through strategic appropriation, marginalization, and transformation of the family into an instrument of state authority.\(^{22}\)

Although such a formulation helps to place the construction of gender in a larger context and to define its historical specificity, it has also become an increasingly controversial issue in recent feminist debates. Writing from a realigned liberal feminist position -- that is, aware of the impact of new theories -- Carol Thomas Neely objects to the
"slippage between state and family," through which the historicist/materialist discourses remarginalize the gender issue per se in their primary if not exclusive focus on the state or the culture (1988: 5-18). In Neely's and many others' view such critical displacement results in part from the problematic procedure of contextualization. Linda Boose has pointed out that new historicists recurrently select patriarchal, authoritarian, and invariably male discourses as 'the definitive lens' through which to read Shakespeare (731). Disappointingly, the feminist historicist approach does not provide an alternative context. Taking up her evidence from the contemporary views concerning women, Lisa Jardine is only concerned with the early modern "femaleness" as a cultural category by which "the patriarchy's unexpressed worry about the great social change" was conveniently displaced (1983: 8). She further maintains that neither the debates over the 'woman question' nor the drama of the period reflects the 'real' social conditions for women, but merely reenacts the ideological displacement.23

In Jardine's contextualization, something like self-entrapment occurs to the feminist project. While she is well aware that the body of opinion about women in Elizabethan-Jacobean literature records the attempts of men to fashion women's lives — as they like it — rather than describe their actual conditions, she nevertheless accepts the male views as the historical context. While the critical focus on 'male construction of femaleness' unravels the strategic operation of the patriarchal institutions and discourses, the critical discourse itself becomes enmeshed with what it attempts to unravel, telling of exclusively male views of women and leaving women's voices out. The power of the dominant — i.e., male — culture to shape and define women's experiences is deconstructed only to reassert itself as the prime mover. The limits of Jardine's contextual reading are in fact inherent in any historicist feminism that is not conscious of the problematic relationship between women and history. The posited ideal of the historical still retains the notion of history as master-narrative, and as a gendered narrative in which women are represented dismissively on the margin and only as the effect of male inscriptions. Unless the multiplicity of histories is recognized, unless the notion of history is expanded to include a distinctively 'women's history,' historicist project would continually contradict the feminist agenda. Women would
cease to be historical actors or subjects if automatic privileging of history continues to ignore women's different experiential relationship to history.

In the field of historical scholarship, such a history has begun to emerge. Since Natalie Z. Davis's work advanced a more sophisticated set of attitudes towards interpreting women's place in the social and cultural history of early modern France, feminist historians have generated a wealth of new materials to work with, and they have freshly scrutinized more familiar documents, offering vigorous interpretation of the previously overlooked female presence in early modern society. A number of literary critics — including both liberal and historicist feminists — appropriated this rich resource and made a variety of cases for the relationship between the social history of women and the representations of women in Renaissance literature. In most cases, however, the interdisciplinary work did not surpass the adoption of a 'one-way' intertextual reading that privileges either the literary text or the social context. Nor did it 'reengender' — Carol Thomas Neely's word — the canonical Renaissance texts authored by men, although phrases like "Rewriting Renaissance" have become fashionable. For, as Neely remarks, deconstruction of patriarchal use of women gives no hint of how women are to "write their way out" (1988: 11).

A way out of such limitations is suggested, I think, by the literary scholars' own contribution to writing a peculiarly 'women's history.' While many feminist critics have continued to be preoccupied with the canonical male texts, others have turned their attention to the early modern women as writers and readers. The result has been an uncovering — from the Renaissance implicitly understood as all-male phenomenon — of women's voices of extraordinary range and surprising diversity. Not only the works of publishing authors but also occasional writings such as letters and diaries have been analyzed. The significance of the critical concerns over women's texts is difficult to underestimate, particularly in view of the difference they could make from both liberal and historicist theses regarding the relationships between women and patriarchy. Formerly the object of feminist inquiry was either women's view of themselves or the male views of women — that is, either the female subculture as an enclave or the dominant culture which marginalizes it. The encounter with individual women's voices has now enabled a
negotiation between the two mutually exclusive approaches, thus exposing the limits of both and shedding light upon the shadowy terrain of the elusive conditions of female subjectivity, which was simultaneously informed by and resistant to the patriarchal inscriptions. To a greater or lesser degree, all these texts give witness to the existence of oblique -- not entirely complicit or contrary -- perspectives that early modern women brought to the dominant discourse's construction of 'Woman' and gender relations. As such, these texts constitute a body of feminist critiques and help to avoid both historicization -- construction within male narratives -- of women as objects and the liberal feminist projection of women as unproblematically autonomous subjects.26

The importance of the women's texts for Shakespeare study is obvious. Instead of being forced to acknowledge women's absence except as a cultural construct, one could read women's voices into the male text in order to explode it from within and revision it from women's perspective. What is encoded in male terms could be decoded in female terms. A basis of such intertextual and revisionary reading can be based upon a set of possibilities and limitations of the female subjectivity registered in the women's texts, which in my view elides both the materialist/historicist conception of subject entirely as a product of culture/history and the essentialist notion of unitary subject embraced by the liberal feminists.

From the two opposing camps more convincing cases were made, too. Catherine Belsey, whose historicization does not displace "the history of women as subject," acknowledges "advances followed by hesitations and retreats" (1985: 194). Central to the writing of such a history is the formulation of subject as both "limits and pressures"; women as subject, Belsey stresses, "exceed the space allotted to them," and challenge as well as confirm the dominant cultural definition of femininity (224). Carol Thomas Neely's realigned liberal feminist position acquires an unusual strength by incorporating the insights of scholars such as Nancy K. Miller, who dwells upon the changing historicity of women and suggests the inappropriateness of merely deconstructing the female subject for feminist critics.27 However, neither of the critics offers a conceptual tool with which to theorize how to interpret the women's voices or how to read them into a male texts.
A much more viable alternative is found among semiotic theories of the subject. The idea of the ‘split subject’ is particularly appropriate in reading both the women's texts and the voice/silence of the female characters in Shakespeare plays. On the one hand, the concept of split subject forestalls a return to the transcendental subject, which seems scarcely feasible in the light of post-structuralist critique. On the other hand, it enables us to open up a space for agency that was denied to the powerless subject of post-structuralism and helps to imagine a more active subject whose agency derives from the gaps and contradictions within competing ideologies present within any culture. While it does not discount the power of ideologies and cultural practices, the concept of split subject endows the subject with the power to choose between a number of subject positions offered by a number of discontinuous discourses.

For the rest of this chapter I will conduct a reading of All's Well That Ends Well, using the concept of split subject. Also I will introject some of the Renaissance women's texts into the play in an attempt to establish both its psychological subtext and historical context. I choose the play because of the particular problems its heroine poses both to the historical context of patriarchal society and to the critical context of the debates about Shakespeare's women. Whether the play is meant to recuperate the temporarily loosened patriarchal structures -- both social and dramaturgical -- by subordinating Helena, the assertive woman or the 'woman on top' par excellence, to a proper place as a wife is not my primary concern. My attention focuses on the difficulties that the heroine has to face in imagining herself as a subject and on the ways in which she tells a story of a woman as subject, in which the story is co-written by Helena and her sisters -- the early modern women writers and the female spectators in the playhouses.
ii. Helena's Problem, or Helena as Problem: The Split Subject

In a recent article about the 'cultural confusion' in the Renaissance over learned women, Lisa Jardine maintains that Shakespeare presents his learned heroines -- Portia and Helena -- as figures of male wish-fulfillment by redirecting their transgressive assertiveness into final submission to male authority, i.e., their husbands. Of the play in question she writes: "All is well that ends well for the male world of the play in which Helena's initial transgression is redeemed into chaste service" (1987: 17). According to this view, Helena's 'redemption' must have ensured a stabilization of male anxiety provoked by the woman on top as well as a consummation of the male desire titillated by the 'uncomfortably pleasurable' girl. That such is not always the case has been eloquently testified by generations of literary critics whose contrasting assessments of the central female character can be separated into two critical formulations. According to one, Helena is a genuine romantic heroine -- 'loveliest,' 'exquisitely tender,' 'impulsively courageous,' 'resourceful but charmingly modest.' The other tradition asserts that Helena is a master of intrigue in her merciless pursuit of Bertram -- 'predatory,' 'inexonerably ambitious,' 'unashamedly deceitful.' The two accounts of Helena could not be more different. The heroine and the play itself reveal the reader's own predispositions, almost like 'a Rorschach test' as Richard Levin remarks (1980: 131).

In fact, the twentieth-century critical 'predispositions' clearly replicate the early modern views of women as object of idealization or vituperation. Now as then, the two opposing views proceed in two different paths of critical operation but on the same terrain of gender-ideology that discursively constructs the feminine and the masculine. The commendatory view follows the path towards feminization of the female character, who apparently challenges the gender-division. The disparaging one is inclined toward masculinization of Helena, who in fact had to subscribe to her feminized position, at least in the beginning and occasionally throughout her gendered journey. Together, domestication and demonization - - i.e., desexualization -- constitutes a double-edged strategy of the male ideology in critical
practice, by which the problematic character of Helena is objectified and only partially represented.

Let me reverse the viewpoint and say: as a subject Helena encompasses and elides both formulations; as a woman she is both feminine and masculine. She strives towards the cultural ideal of femininity while she takes up the masculine position of actively pursuing the reluctant lover. She remains in the masculine position even at her entry into the theoretically subordinate position within marriage, conditioning it with a possibility of "deadly divorce" (5.3.315).\textsuperscript{32} Helena is unique among Shakespeare's heroines. While the 'bright young girls' of romantic comedies negotiate between the two poles of gender construction with a sense of playfulness, they do not reach beyond the point at which disruption of patriarchal structure is forbidden; their 'play' ends, together with crossdressing, elopement from home, and playful assertiveness, within the secure zone of established gender roles. The critical trope of 'recuperative ending' favored by the materialist/historicist feminists has its validity in this regard. In particular, the parameter within which the female subjectivity is constructed coincides precisely with the feminine-masculine axis of the very gender ideology that these heroines attempt to circumvent but eventually accept as 'natural.'

In a sharp contrast, Helena's subjectivity emerges at a distance from what Parolles in the play calls "the commonwealth of nature" - that is, the patriarchal culture - within which "virginity" circulates as a commodity of male transactions (1.1.111-2, 131). Helena's struggle to be a subject is initiated by a recognition of the real and intractable nature of her own unsubdued sexual desire, defamed and defined by the patriarchal culture as 'against Nature.' Because her struggle is so firmly rooted at the female desire which rejects any compliance with the dominant cultural definitions of femininity, the trajectory of Helena's subjectivity is disjunctive, shimmering with quirks and gaps, and sometimes quite inaccessible. Her subjectivity is split. With the notion of unitary subject, assumed in liberal feminist position as well as both commendatory and detracting views of Helena, her 'problem' or the play as a "problem comedy" cannot be accounted for. And the split cannot be simply dissolved or repaired by a realignment of the female subject to the cultural construct of femininity; the question of female subjectivity survives the recuperative
ending. Throughout the action of the play, the split subject collides repeatedly with repressive forces, develops its own trajectory, and as a consequence, Helena — or Helena's sisters on and off the stage — envisions a different form of subjectivity at the end of the play, as I shall argue at the conclusion of this chapter.

Just like its central character, the text of All's Well is split, has its own gaps, breaks, and disjunctions. As Susan Snyder observes, Shakespeare leaves something unsaid at several places where some connection or explanation is expected (1988: 66-7). One such lacunae — a pivotal one — is located at the very center of the play when at the news of Bertram's defection to Italy Helena steps forward to the audience to reveal her intention to "steal away":

Helena. Poor lord, is't I
That chase thee from thy country, and expose
Those tender limbs of thine to the event
Of the none-sparing war? And is it I
That drive thee from the sportive court, where thou
Was shot at with fair eyes, to be the mark
Of smoky muskets? ...
Whoever shoots at him, I set him there;
Whoever charges on his forward breast,
I am the caitiff that do hold him to't;
And though I kill him not, I am the cause
His death was so effected ...
I will be gone,
That pitiful rumour may report my flight
To console thine ear. Come night, end day!
For with the dark, poor thief, I'll steal away. Exit (3.2.91-121).

Helena's soliloquy is completely saturated with shame and guilt. Even as Bertram's own mother condemns the "rash and unbridled boy," Helena locates all the fault in her own action, equating her pursuit of Bertram with theft and murder. Her decision to remove herself seems to be made as a compensatory act for her earlier assertiveness. Although she departs without any particular destination, soon afterward her letter to the Countess reports that she is "Saint Jacques pilgrim, thither gone" (3.4.4). Has Helena decided for an act of penitence which accords with her sense of guilt? An intriguing question; for immediately after her disappearance Helena 'returns' to Florence where Bertram is stationed. The text
has nothing to offer in response to our curiosity. And this is a phenomenal silence in which
the character’s motivation is blurred at a crucial juncture; a structural break which has
facilitated critics’ neat division of the play into two parts.

The Rorschach test that Richard Levin speaks of takes place at this point; how to fill in
the gap rests on and reveals the reader’s ‘predispositions.’ The question comes down to
taking up an interpretive option, whether predisposed or not. For some critics Helena
deliberately pursues Bertram to Florence in order to fulfill his impossible demand. Others
have argued that Helena rather arrives where he is by chance and acts only on fortuitous
opportunity. Richard Levin, an exemplary masculinist reader, contends that the whole
pilgrimage “scheme” is simply a pretense to cover her pursuit of Bertram. G. K. Hunter,
who attempts to diminish the impact of Helena’s initiative by stressing her personal
submissiveness and her religious reliance on divine agency, takes her pilgrimage as “a
journey of contrition and abnegation” (1959: xxxi). It is also interesting to note that both
masculinist and paternalistic formulations of Helena’s character and her blurred motivation
at this juncture are replicated by feminist critics — obviously for their own purposes.

Although Snyder transforms Levin’s masculinist view and at the same time modifies
Jardine’s historicist thesis on ‘re recuperative ending,’ the parameter she uses to construct
Helena’s subjectivity still lies within — pushed toward one extreme of — the
masculine/feminine axis of gender ideology. While acknowledging Helena’s mixture of
‘aggressive initiative and passivity,’ Snyder tends to stress her move towards the masculine
pole and reduce the significance of her retroactive move towards the other, probably in a
recognition of the impossibility of being a subject — and the inescapability of being an
object — within the feminine position. What in fact Snyder proposes, or assumes, is the
notion of unitary subject, which knows no gaps and breaks, which in her view is only
conceivable within masculine position. What she fails to take into consideration is the
notion of the split subject, and the fact that, by condemning herself as "poor thief,"
transgressor of male prerogatives, Helena submits to the culturally determined role of
women as well as subverts it when she accomplishes, with the help of the Florentine
women, the scheme of "military policy how virgins might blow up men" (1.1.108).

Thus I locate the origin of the textual gap between Helena's decision to steal away and
her return to action in the self-contradiction of the character, in the split within her subject-
formation, and finally in her own way of healing the wound. My alternative scenario is
that, far from being a pure deception, Helena's initial determination to remove herself from
Bertram's paths is genuine. Her 'pilgrimage' is not a disguise for an active pursuit. Nor is it
a passive gesture of contrition, but an act of renunciation of the world which, she finds,
allows nothing better than a life in humiliation and imprints a deep scar on women's self-
estem. She is not rejected; she rejects, abandoning the female desire as constructed in male
terms. In this transformation of the relationship between a female subject and the male
culture, Helena is not alone. In Florence, where Helena is still haunted by the painful
memory of her desire, by the presence of Bertram, she is also helped by a group of women
to engage in an open war with the symbolic order that she has just turned away from in her
trajectory of renunciation. The consequence of the 'war' is not known even at the
conclusion of the play. What is significant, however, is the emergence of a new form of
female subjectivity in the process, which recovers self-esteem for Helena, and other
women too. It is a long way, however, before the split subject arrives at such resolution.
All along the way, Helena finds herself constantly in struggle with the norms of patriarchal
society, and even with herself.

Helena's gendered journey provides the case of a split subject par excellence. The shift
between self-assertion and abnegation is continually registered in Helena's speech and
action, and characterizes the problematic female subject socially and psychologically
constricted in patriarchal culture. The indoctrination of patriarchal discourse within the
female subject is evident in Helena's opening soliloquy in which the poor physician's
daughter deplores her unspeakable love for the young nobleman who cares nothing for her
and is ready to leave for the royal court.
Helena.

... My imagination
Carries no favour in't but Bertram's.
I am undone! There is no living, none,
If Bertram be away. 'Twere all one
That I should love a bright particular star
And think to wed it, he is so above me.
In his bright radiance and collateral light
Must I be comforted, not in his sphere.
Th'ambition in my love thus plagues itself.
The hind that would be mated by the lion
Must die for love (1.1.70-80).

The speech conveys the predicament of a woman not only distanced from her lover by the class difference but also trapped between active and passive modes of desire. The carnal image of 'a hind mated by a lion' clearly expresses Helena's desire to consummate a sexual love; it also reveals her recognition that she cannot mate but can only be "mated," that a woman can only a desired object, forbidden to be a desiring subject.

As many historians point out, Renaissance societies described the female desire as either non-existent or menacingly disruptive. Thomas Wythorne, a sixteenth-century misogynist, states: "Though they can be the weaker vessels, yet they will overcome 2.3. or 4. men in satisfying their carnal appetites" (qtd. Fraser 4). According to historian Ian McLean, the primary means of containing the devouring female desire, of preventing fundamental change in gender-hierarchy, was the institution of marriage. Renaissance treatises on matrimony invariably stress the inadequacy and inappropriateness of women as active agents of their own marriage as well as the wives' duties of compliance and subservience. Even those arguing against enforced marriage considered women incapable of a wise choice and recapitulate the women's suspected sexuality. Robert Burton's statement in The Anatomy of Melancholy (c. 1594) may be representative in this regard: "A woman should give unto her parents the choice of her husband lest she be reputed to be malapert and wanton, if she make upon her to her own choice, for she should rather seem to be desired by a man than to desire a man herself" (qtd. Stone 1977: 199).

It is this representative patriarchal statement that sets the parameter of Helena's opening soliloquy. The female subjectivity is introjected into the gender myth which speaks of the
choice of a wife but never of the choice of a husband. It is the man — the suitor — who desires, seeks, and chooses; the woman must remain a passive object and renounce her 'right' to choose. Helena has internalized the gender myth and acquiesces grievingly in her powerless — i.e., feminized or objectified — position. As it goes on, however, the soliloquy is gradually bent towards the masculine pole at which Helena moves surreptitiously into the position of a desiring subject. She is enabled to do so by portraying the object of her clandestine love: "'Twas pretty, though a plague,/ To see him every hour, to sit and draw/ His arched brows, his hawking eye, his curls,/ In our heart's table - heart too capable/ Of every line and trick of his sweet favor" (1.1.80-84).

According to psychoanalytic theory, the formation of male subjectivity is inaugurated with the Oedipal crisis in which the emergent subject is demanded to relinquish his identification with the female sexuality — i.e., Mother — in order to enter the symbolic order the Father represents. Thus, while gaining access to the symbolic order which authorizes the subjectivity, the male subject distances itself from the engulfing female sexuality by either objectifying it as the Other or transforming it into a compensatory object. Particularly in Lacanian theory, the process of being a subject is defined as one of abandoning the penis (direct expression of male sexuality) for the phallus (the privileges of the patriarchal order). In contrast, the female subject in emergence does not undergo as radical an alienation as does the male subject. The consequence is however not liberating but detrimental; the female subject is not authorized to enter the symbolic order of patriarchal culture. What is denied, in particular, to the female subject is "the condition which guarantees the constitution of any object: object of representation, of discourse, of desire" (Irigary 49).

What Helena does, then, in portraying Bertram in her "heart's table," is illegitimately establish herself as a subject "capable" of constituting the privileged male subject as object of her desire and possession. She reverses, in other words, the symbolic order of patriarchy which underwrites woman's inadequacy of being a subject. Nonetheless, Helena's subversive move must not be overemphasized - at least at this point where it is figured within the process of oscillation or the state of being split rather than as a definitive move towards the subject (masculine) position. As David McCandless points out, Helena
appropriates the masculine privilege of the gaze, submitting her beloved to 'rapturous objectification,' only to affirm 'a feminine helplessness,' lamenting the impossibility of eliciting Bertram's rewarding look (451). Through the imagery of constellation ('the bright star so above') and species of different breeds ('lion and hind'), Helena thus naturalizes the culturally established distinctions of gender and class that make Bertram a forbidden object, believing she must adopt the attitude of powerlessness and passivity in regard to her desire for Bertram.

Then, how in only a few moments does the powerless female subject shift into the resolution to follow Bertram to Paris? What converts her from hopeless assent to "fate" to the contrary proclamation that "Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,/ Which we ascribe to heaven" (1.1.187-88)? On the route to the more active position, Helena engages in a seemingly extraneous bawdy banter with Parolles. But why should a casual and quite careless exchange on the subject of virginity empower the abject female subject into an energetic plan even to reach the farther-off "sphere" of regality? Carolyn Asp explains that the bawdy exchange, conducted through metaphors of warfare, brings Helena into contact with aggressivity and narcissism, thus establishing a contact with unconscious desire. Asp continues: "Desire can be restricted within the bounds of societal gender myths or it can follow its own trajectory and operate independently of them. Helena quickly shifts into resolve rooted in desire and determines upon the cunning, aggressive action."

Although the critics' reading of the sexually charged dialogue as a coded disclosure of Helena's own erotic stirrings is convincing, it should be supplemented with an account for Helena's dissociation of culture ("fortune") and Nature ("fate") -- not merely an immersion into nature (sexual desire) -- that helps to shape not only her "fixed intent" on Bertram but also the particular "project" of healing the king (1.1.193-200). Apparently, the impact of Parolles' ribaldry lies in providing a psychological outlet for the repressed female sexuality. But the released sexual energy would be no more than a narcissistic fantasy without a gap in the patriarchal order through which it could erupt. The fantasy would cease before the female desire shifts into a more active mode, unless a faultline in the patriarchal construction of female sexuality could be detected. What McCandless aptly terms Parolles' "bracing antivirginity jape" (452) could be read simultaneously as a representative
patriarchal discourse which holds the female sexuality, and thus subjectivity, to be 'naturally' inferior and also as a slip of tongue which reveals the constructedness of the gender myths. It is nowhere else than "in the commonwealth of nature" that "Man ... will undermine you and blow you up" (1.1.105-6), and not vice versa. The contradictory combination of culture and nature, which may be only slightly noticeable, looms large in the connected figuration of virginity as "vendible commodity" engrossable with its "principal" and "increase" (128-31). What Parolles suggests in fact -- and beyond his intention -- is that 'nature' is not what it is believed to be and has always already been appropriated by the male commonwealth, and further that a woman can actually act as agent of her own sexuality; the 'commodity' in theory is only to circulate through male transactions but under certain circumstances can be utilized for the benefit of the female subject. Parolles' final words to Helena completes the slip of tongue: "Get thee a good husband, and use him as he uses thee" (185), from which Helena is likely to take the cue for her definitive move into the "fixed intent" and the "project." The possibility of female appropriation of the patriarchal order prompts Helena to a sudden memory of her father's legacy -- as she later explains to the Countess, "a remedy, approve'd, set down./ To cure the desperate languishings whereof/ The king is rendered lost" (1.3.200-3). A remedy, however, to be complemented by the use of her "appliance" (2.1.108) -- her own sexuality -- for the cure.36

However, neither a libidinous touch with nature nor a sober reflection on culture constitutes a sufficient condition for a female subject to act on her own initiative. Partly due to the internalized gender ideology and partly due to the actual social conditions, women are prevented from pursuing their goals, continue to torture themselves with the impossible dream of being active agents, and remain as split subjects. Helena's soliloquy which ends the opening scene in a determined forwardness is belated by the sight of her in "the mystery of [her] loneliness" (1.3.144). As Rinaldo reports to the Countess: "Alone she was, and did communicate to herself her own words to her own ears" (84-5). In a society which suppresses the erotic possibility of a female subject and inculcates her with the transgressivity of any attempt to realize her active sexuality, the female desire is simply unspeakable, tongue-tied. The recognition of such constraints leaves in the female subject
not only silent acquiescence but also a resentment of the constrictions to which she is subjected. Since she has few ways of expressing this residual anger, the frustration prompts an excessive and often unspecified emotional response, which in turn is pathologically defined as 'abnormal,' according to the cultural norms. Rinaldo is obviously alarmed by Helena’s abnormal outbursts of emotion, her defiance at Fortune, Love, and Goddess of virgins, her rage at the social — both gender and class — inequality "delivered in the most bitter touch of sorrow that e'er I heard virgin exclaim in" (91-2). Helena’s hieratic responses to the Countess’ interrogation range from the "pale invention" she has to put on to public views to "the passionate proclamation' of her intention, while all along the interview her eyes are rounded with "this distempered messenger of wet./ The many-coloured Iris" (123-4). She is in brief split between what she desires to speak and what she is allowed to speak, even after the shift from a feminine passivity to a masculine aggressivity impressively figured in her soliloquy. Far from being definitive and irrevocable as some critics assert, Helena’s inclination towards action is almost always momentary and reversible, leaving her in a constant struggle with herself, in a state of something approximate to schizophrenia. And Helena is not alone in suffering such symptom.

While many historians have observed that women in early modern societies tended to suffer mental illness more than men, few accounts of the 'illness' have been made in terms of the crisis in the female subject formation. This is probably so because the documented evidence, in most cases, derives from male writings. Indeed, women's self-diagnostic writings are rare. Nonetheless, some feminist scholars have uncovered women's writings that reveal such symptom suffered by women as split subjects. A case in point is provided by the letters of Arabella Stuart, a ranking member of the royal family, whose life was remarked by the patriarchal state of James I as 'subversive' in marrying against the king's command and attempting to escape to France — in men's clothing just like Shakespearean heroines. Stuart's letters are a curious mixture of self-effacement and assertion, introjected with the cultural ideals of the female subordination and, at the same time, registered with a strong presence of a self-determining female subject. According to Sara Jayne Steen, Stuart’s letters can be classified into three groups, chronologically and according to their varying styles: the 'freewriting' style during the years of custody under Elizabeth I, the...
informal one at her initiation into James' court, and the formal court letter during her imprisonment (Steen 136-153). Steen's focus on the last group brings her to a thesis that emphasizes Stuart's ability to rhetorically "fashion" herself as a submissive female 'subject' to James, her male cousin and king. But an alternative focus on the first group — letters loose in syntactic structure and associational rather than logical in construction of ideas (collected in Bradley, vol. 2, 92-175) — alerts us to the symptom of 'distraughtness' reported of Helena in All's Well. These letters are invariably marked not only by a lack of regard for appropriate style but also by a continual and abrupt shift of voice. Letters that begin quite conventionally and with a clear sense of female decorum are suddenly thwarted into an outpouring of fears, evasions, justifications, recriminations, and anger.

One of these letters, written after the aborted marriage proposal in which Stuart acted as her own agent and which startled Elizabeth's councillors for its potential threat to the state, was confiscated by Robert Cecil and elicited a response similar to — but lacking the sympathy of — Rinaldo's to Helena's hieratic behavior. Cecil, the chief councillor to the Queen and responsible for the surveillance on Arabella, commented: the lady must have had "some strange vapours to her brain" (Durant 109). In this letter Stuart not only lashes out at her enemies at the court but also bemoans her fate, and tries to exonerate herself from the consequence of the Queen's wrath. What is most remarkable about the letter — and, to a greater or lesser degree, others in the group as well — is the emergence of different personas — evasive, arrogant, submissive, and even flamboyant — in conflict with one another, as Stuart repeatedly contradicts what she has just said either apologetically or indignantly. Although one should be cautious in applying the modern psychoanalytic concept of multiple personality to the case, it is nonetheless evident that Stuart in her subjected position experienced herself as a split subject.

The historical analogy of Helena's gendered subjectivity I draw from Arabella Stuart may not be seamlessly corresponding, however. First of all, we need to stretch over the huge class difference between the royal lady and the poor physician's daughter. Secondly and more importantly, Stuart was surrounded by enemies and after all died in isolation, completing her gendered journey in a tragic ending, thus contrasting to Helena's trajectory of "All's well," which is enabled in the first place by her friends. Stuart's enemies included
not only the males offended by her transgressive assertiveness but also the women around
her scandalized by and, to some extent, envious of her talent to ‘fashion an acceptable self.’
While somehow in competition with Elizabeth I – and later with Queen Anne – Stuart
occasionally found herself in a serious tension with Bess of Hardwick, her great-aunt and
Elizabeth’s representative for the custody, from which Stuart attempted to escape more than
once. Such attempts proved futile, as did the last elopement to France in male dressing.

In a remarkable difference, Helena’s ‘elopement’ is permitted and even encouraged with
motherly blessings by her dowager, the Countess of Rossillion: “Why, Helen, thou shalt
have my leave and love,/ Means and attendants, and my loving greetings/ To those of mine
in court. I’ll stay at home/ And pray God’s blessing into thy attempt” (1.3.223-5). Critics
have long noted the significance of the female bonding between the two women that
transcends class (McKewin 120). But a somewhat unbalanced focus on the initiative taken
by Helena tends to discount the role of the Countess, making her merely a ‘functional
character,’ that is, a sounding board for Helena’s passion and plan. Carol Thomas Neely
views the Countess as ‘a kind and caring woman,’ who nonetheless limits her effectiveness
as helper and accepts her dependent position within the patriarchal order, in contrast to
Helena, an assertive woman (1985: 72). Asp recapitulates Neely’s view, when she argues
that as “a validator of Helena’s desire” the mother figure functions as an emotional center
who utters the correct and truly felt sentiments, but who is ineffectual to help Helena in any
way except through verbal support (54). The critics did not in fact hear attentively what the
Countess imparts to Helena; they attended emphatically to her "love" only to underestimate
the weight of her "leave." As a dowager, the Countess has a full authority in regard to her
"gentlewoman," just like the king’s over Bertram. She could even dispose of the poor and
aspiring ward as she chooses to do, as the king actually does to his disobedient ward.
Instead, she lifts the restrictions she could wield to prevent Helena’s goals and further
provides the "means and attendants" to practically as well as emotionally help her achieve
them. The most substantial support is her expedient introduction of Helena to the court --
"my loving greetings to those of mine at court" -- which prompts Lafew’s "special
prologue" for the "Doctor She," and thereby gaining Helena an access to the very center of
the patriarchal order, which, otherwise, would have remained beyond her reach.

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However, the women's conspiracy would not have been conceivable, even less feasible, if the patriarchal system had been seamlessly in perfect order and had known no gaps, conflicts, or loose ends of its own. Characteristically, the women in All's Well — both Rossillionaise and Florentine — are all located in the interstices of patriarchal family network. The opening lines of the play draw attention to the absence of the Father as the prevailing condition for the women who are supposed to depend on a strong presence of a patriarch. The Countess' 'double bereavement' — "In delivering my son from me, I bury a second husband" (1.1.1) — is immediately followed by the recognition of Helena's paternal loss: "This young gentlewoman had a father - O, that 'had', how sad a passage 'tis" (13-4). Far across the geographical boundaries, the widowed mother and fatherless daughter of Florence replicate the same condition. The absence of the 'head' of the family may be debilitating, as the impoverishment of the Florentine women can be partly attributed to it. Death of her father left Helena under custody, though not "evermore in subject" as Bertram is under the king's wardship.

On the other hand, these women stand outside of a direct male control and act with a greater freedom than they could enjoy under a living patriarch, as did the great number of London widows and their children. As Vivien Brodsky observes, the survival of husbands by wives in sixteenth-century London was a more prevailing condition for urban families than was previously supposed, one of whose effect was leaving a gap in the patriarchal economy of marriage market, in which widow acted as their own agents (Brodsky "Widows"). The Countess, in particular, takes over the position of 'head,' exercising her power over the household, i.e., the entire earldom and even over the otherwise exclusively male transactions of marriage, a case of which Lavatch brings to her for authorization. Lavatch's bewilderment is a bit exaggerated but real: "That man should be at woman's command, and yet no hurt done!" (1.3.73-4). In All's Well, briefly, women are empowered by virtue of the absence, however temporarily, of the patriarchal authority within the family.

Obviously, neither the fictional women of All's Well nor the real women in Renaissance England could be entirely independent of the patriarchal social system. The gaps and breaks within the family network were often filled in by a wider networks of
patriarchal economy with its social institutions and ideological discourses. Women as their own agents had to challenge or negotiate with these repressive forces in order to be authorized as a subject. Arabella Stuart failed in such efforts; the female subject was not allowed to enter into the symbolic order constituted in terms of James' patriarchal absolutist discourses that firmly conjoined the patriarchal authority and the domineering presence of the monarch. In *All's Well*, the same discursive construction is undoubtedly established, but the dramatic configuration of gender relation slips through its loose ends or rather its weak points - literally through the king's weakness.

Lafew's response to the double bereavement of the Countess turns attention to the King of France as the center of a patriarchal order, raising high expectations about his capacity to repair breaks in the family network. Lafew adopts the Jacobean metaphor of the state as an extended family: "You shall find of the king a husband, madam; you, sir, a father" (1.1.5). The king will restore the loss of Bertram's father by offering himself as a parental equivalent. While this logic is reinforced later in the first encounter between the king and Bertram (1.2), it is nonetheless undermined at the very outset by the Countess' abrupt leading question about the king's ill health. "What hope is there of his majesty's amendment?" she asks, shifting the emphasis from Lafew's idealized portrayal of the king's "abundance" to his incapacity and "losing of hope by time" as the male head of the family. A fistula that Bertram "heard not of before", was well known in Shakespeare's time as a male symptom of sexual depletion.

The king's debilitated condition is not of course merely a physical problem, but stands for "a more general malaise" of the state, as Peter Erickson points out (1991: 65). Doubts about his leadership as nominal head of government are raised by his contradictory policy of non-involvement in the war between Florence and Sienna. It is contradictory and further self-destructive because the king's endorsement of private actions on the part of young peers sets them apart as enemies, according to their self-enlistment "on either part" at war (1.2.12-4). By any chance, however, can the self-disabling policy be a calculated one? Patronizing as he may be, the aging king is obviously defensive and even antagonistic towards the younger generations. Breaking into his interview with Bertram, the king's invidious comparison between the noble past -- "when thy father and myself in friendship/
First tried our soldieryship" (25-6) — and the unsatisfactory present of the "goers backward" reveals not only his irritation at the prospect of generational replacement but also resistance to yielding control. What if his desire to forestall the inevitable generational succession has found out a solution in turning out the internal tension to foreign matters? Suggestively, one of the king's attendants observes: "It well may serve/ A nursery to our gentry, who are sick/ For breathing and exploit" (15-7). Nursery for chivalric honor, ideally; and nursery for death, undeniably. What is unexpected is the cynicism and perhaps accuracy of the comment regarding the gentry; not only the head of government but also its political body is "sick." Thus, the king's personal ill health signifies "a wider cultural malfunction" (Erickson 65).

It is by virtue of this gap in the male and public domain of the patriarchal system that women's conspiracy finds its way out of the private sphere to which they 'ought' to be confined, that Helena is enabled to insert herself into the (empty) center of the symbolic order, whose listless figurehead is in need of reparation. She succeeds in her "project" of healing the king, and seems to come closer to fulfilling her "fixed intent" but not close enough to get exactly what she wants. While Helena's intervention interrupts and partially relieves the sense of drift prevailing in the French court, it subsequently vitiates the male relations between the king and his male subjects. Prior to the cure, Helena engages the royal honor: "Then shalt thou give me with thy kingly hand/ What husband in thy power I will command" (2.1.189-90). Accordingly, "My [the king's] honor's at stake" (2.3.141) in rewarding her with one of the "youthful parcel of noble bachelors" (46-7), from which she is to choose. Consequently, the king reverses, to the bewilderment and implicit resentment of his male subjects, the very order of patriarchy that he represents and should maintain. Although the king attempts to compose this transgressive act into a properly male transaction by re-presenting Helena as "this good gift" (2.3.151), the occasion doubtlessly subverts the established practice of male traffic in women who serve as the incidental token by which men determine their relations of power to one another (Erickson 64; Asp 54).

The subversive implication of the 'public choosing' is deciphered from the dominant culture's point of view. What then is its significance for the female subject who seeks rather than is sought? In the authorized position of choosing her desired object, Helena
experiences both empowerment and confusion, rehearsing the self-contradiction registered in the earlier scenes. Once again, she appropriates the masculine privilege of gaze which at the present moment is not illicit but formally conferred upon her: "Fair maid, send forth thine eye... Peruse them well" (2.3.46, 55). However, she is abashed by her public exposure as wooer, feels obliged to protest her chastity, and relinquishes her right to choose: "I am a simple maid, and therein wealthiest/ That I protest I simply am a maid./ Please it your majesty, I have done already" (60-62).

Helena's withdrawal, despite her success, may only be a gesture of submission; in McCandless' words, one of "compensatory performances of exemplary chastity to atone for the unchaste boldness of her plan" (453). While critics tend to stress Helena's ability to assume the feminine position and yet to take a forceful control of the situation, I am inclined to consider her recession to be more authentic than self-serving or even self-redemptive -- even less wilfully deceptive or manipulative. Helena does not merely simulate or act out femininity but experiences it from within; the culturally imposed idea of sexual difference is ineradicable internalized within the female subject. Sliding uncertainly through the parade of the young wards with their evasive or indignant looks behind her back, she finally addresses Bertram the forbidden object: "I dare not say I take you, but I give/ Me and my service, even whilst I live,/ Into your guiding power" (2.3.94-6). Taken at its face value, the self-subjugating speech may be read as an unproblematic return to the exemplary femininity of subservience, which is less probable - or as improbable as - a self-conscious deployment of a calculated, disguised rhetoric. As Snyder suggests, the speech may be a product of Helena's 'best' efforts to "deny her role as aggressive, desiring subject and to recast herself properly as object" (1988:74), just as Arabella Stuart in her letters is said to 're-fashion' an acceptable self. But Stuart failed; so does Helena. Yet the difference between the two women should be noted, too.

Stuart's limitations were imposed at the institutional level as well as within the ideological discourse on gender; her imprisonment and subsequent death were the consequence of James' indignation at her disobedience. Quite differently, Helena has obtained the institutional support from the highest hand of the patriarchal state, which nonetheless proves ineffectual before the resisting male subject. At the king's coercion, the
institution of marriage is formally endorsed by both parties but not honored and
consummated with the ultimate object of Helena's desire, the male body of Bertram. As
Carolyn Asp writes, "The letter but not the spirit of the law is fulfilled" (55). This is the
limitation the desiring female subject has to face when she is not desired and when she
believes she must be desired. The contradiction in the female 'desire to be desired' breeds
not only a confusion about gender roles — and, not unlikely, a strategic self-realignment to
the properly feminine position — but also the fear of and the powerlessness at the
possibility of rejection. Thus, if Helena's submissive rhetoric is produced as a consequence
of her conscious negotiations, it is also prompted by the unknowing if not 'unknown' fear,
which after all becomes real by Bertram's initial rejection and following escape. Smoothly
apologetic as it may sound, Helena's speech is embedded in female fear rather than desire,
tremulous with the excruciating possibility of ultimate humiliation to which a woman as
subject of desire is subjected.

iii. From Split to Collective Subject

So far I have focused on the inner and outer conditions on which the split subjectivity is
predicated and observed the shifts in Helena's fate and fortune, nature and culture. Now let
me shift and ask: "Is there any alternative mode of constructing subjectivity other than the
debilitating split one?" The question is dictated by the text itself; in particular, by its major
structural break between Helena's self-effacement — "With the dark, poor thief, I'll steal
away" (3.2.121) — and her return first spotted by the Florentine widow — "Look, here
comes a pilgrim" (3.5.24). As noted earlier, critics have continued to formulate the pivotal
transition in terms of continuity or discontinuity. The discontinuity theory holds that
Helena's exemplary passivity in the play's second half atones for her transgressive
forwardness in the first. The continuity theory contends that Helena is consistent
throughout the play in moderating self-assertion with displays of femininity and that her
seemingly recessed attitude in the play's second half extends her strategy of compensatory self-effacement. Both positions, in brief, tend to stress and attempt to clarify Helena's blurred motivations at the crucial juncture.

Let me adopt a negotiative position, which acknowledges both continuity and discontinuity in Helena's subjectivity — her intentions, if you will — and state that the significance of the transition has less to do with motivations — what Helena has in mind — and more to do with lack of motivations — what she does not have or has lost in her mind. The loss or compensatory abjuration of desire is only apparently obvious. Rather, we need to see clearly what Helena had as her own resources, by means of which she was enabled to gain an almost triumphal access to her loved object. Up to that point Helena could control events less through a direct expression of her own sexuality and desire than through the patriarchal gifts to her: her father's 'male' learning passed on to her as her dowry and the king's authorization of her status as a desiring subject. Even the material support from the Countess is the male property of Rossillion that she is committed to until her son, the legitimate male heir, reclaims it. Among these patriarchal legacies, the most powerful is "the dearest issue" of her father's medical practice, which "He bade me store up, as a triple eye,/ Safer than mine own two, more dear" (2.1.104-5).

Undoubtedly, the triple eye works for Helena, enabling her to complete her project of restoring manly vigor to the king successfully. Less obvious and more speculative is whether the triple eye is at its user's disposal, whether it works only outside of Helena and not within her. At an apparent level, the triple eye is an antidote for "fistula," a prescription for how to resuscitate the depleted male sexuality. The irony at this level is merely that Helena is engaged with another man's sexuality in order to assert her desire on her beloved one. She is determined to do so - or, so it seems. At another level, however, she is 'destined' to do so. For her "dear father's gift" (2.1.107) leaves no other choice for her than binding her to serve male sexuality and thereby to endorse her own submission to male authority. While the king's rhetorical description of Helena as "good gift" proves quite untenable under the strained circumstance, her father's ironical legacy -- the double-entendre of "gift" -- is almost unmistakable. By giving his daughter a remedy of male disease, the father actually gives her up to male desire, offering her as a sexual object to the
male subject, to whom the medical treatment is to be applied. By investing a power to evoke male desire in his daughter, the father leaves her fully inscribed within the sexual economy of patriarchal order. At this level, it is the dead father who determines the terms of exchange in which the daughter is only tentatively figured as an agent.

Seen in this light the triple eye is not merely the father’s benevolent gift to the daughter but an essential legacy of patriarchy itself, through which the centered-ness of male sexuality, along with the passivity of female desire, is inculcated in the female subject. The fundamental irony is that Helena is not only possessed of but also possessed by the triple eye — an umbilical cord, as it were, between father and daughter, prime mover and his figurehead. After all, the image of Helena with a third eye on the forehead is as bizarre as that of Hero with Leonato’s head on her shoulders. The triple eye thus points toward the female subjectivity as an overlapping zone occupied by both the cultural-historical gender constructs and the transhistorical psychic strictures. Particularly in a psychoanalytic context, it represents the problematic father-daughter relationship in the psychic formation of female subject. While the male child’s Oedipal crisis is completed by his successful entry into the symbolic order — through his alienation from maternal sexuality and concomitant identification with the father — the female child who undergoes the same transition is never allowed to the phallic position, because she does not have a penis to exchange with the phallus (Silverman 189-92). When the daughter renounces the mother and turns to the father, she finds the absence of penis in her body and recognizes it as a "lack," which renders her inadequate to solicit the father’s affirmation of the phallus in her. As this "lack" mapped onto the female body is in turn being internalized, "a marked lowering of the active sexual impulses and the rise of the passive ones" take place in the psychic formation of the female subjectivity: "The path of femininity," states Freud, "now lies open to the girl." Negatively rather than positively defined, the female sexuality then shifts from the initial recognition of "lack" to subsequent dependence upon the active male sexuality.

That such transition normally coincides with the young woman’s transference of love from father to her own sexual partner seems to be confirmed by Helena: "What was he[her father] like? I have forgot him. My imagination/ Carries no favor in't but Bertram's" (1.1.69-71). I agree with McCandless who observes that Helena has already made this
transference at the start of the play. In the light of the significance of the triple eye, however, McCandless' further suggestion that Helena has completely resolved her Oedipal tie to her father should be held in check (McCandless 460). For Helena's "imagination" is shot through the triple eye, that is, embedded in the female psychic formation predicated on the father-daughter relationship. It is somewhat axiomatic that her own father dwells no longer in her "imagination"; the father as a primal object of forbidden desire lies (dead) outside the circuit of desire. Nonetheless, the Father still rules over it and dictates her submission to Bertram, another forbidden object. The Father -- or the ghost of the father -- is ever watching the daughter through the triple eye; or she is watching herself and the object of her desire through the father's eye.

At this moment the triple eye is materialized, suggesting that the daughter should seek an authorization of her desire from the Father. And the possession of the material triple eye prompts for Helena the transference from the psychic figure of the Father to its cultural figure, the King of France, a surrogate father. In an extenuated form, Helena's encounter with the king reenacts the daughter's Oedipal crisis. Although the surrogate father endorses the female subject's phallic position, he does so in vain. The male object resists and once again frustrates the daughter's access to a forbidden object; the father is ever receding from the daughter's quest.

At the end of the futile quest, the assertive female subject could set out for another 'project' with the same 'fixed intent,' as Helena is said to do by some critics. Or she could give up altogether, too. Helena's renunciation soliloquy may be a tentative disguise, if not a sheer deception, for her continued efforts; or it could be a heartfelt confession of her final surrender to the patriarchal values, operating within and outside of her, that have defeated her illegitimate pursuit. Of the two propositions I choose to take up the second, not in order to endorse the view of Helena's pilgrimage as an act of atonement or contrition, nor in disregard of her questionable return to action. What I have termed continuity and discontinuity theories regarding Helena's motivation tend to assume that the character's motivations necessarily circumscribe the consequences of her action. Alternately, my assumption is that motivations are often belied, if not downrightly contradicted, by the consequences.
Apparently -- some would say 'deceptively' -- Helena's decision to "steal away" is dictated by and in turn signifies her unconditional submission to the double-edged, i.e., both psychical and cultural, patriarchal rule. Simultaneously, however, this act of self-effacement offers her the possibility of a new trajectory other than that of femininity that she had to follow in her gendered journey to Paris. Since the desire she is now ready to abjure has been circumscribed by the sexual system of patriarchy, that is, within the scope of the triple eye, its renunciation may enable her to leave the Father's territory and step out of the circuit of desire defined by the male culture and accepted by the female subject. By denouncing her earlier efforts to insert herself into the patriarchal order on 'their' terms, the female subject begins to open her own eyes, abandoning the triple eye and giving up the ghost of the Father, as she transforms her gendered journey to 'Paris' -- Bertram and where the Court is -- into a desexualizing pilgrimage to death or celibacy. In this sense, what is taken as an act of penitence becomes an ultimate elopement. The implication of Helena's elopement is more disruptive than merely subversive of the patriarchal order. While the male characters continue to formulate her pilgrimage as a sign of exemplary femininity, the Countess perceives in Helena's letter filled with the sense of self-abnegation that the act of renunciation poses an irrevocable blame on the male world: "Ah, what sharp stings are in her mildest words!" (3.4.18). What seems to be a seamless containment turns out to be a criticism and nullification of the repressive forces that have engendered a split in the female subject. Similarly, the symbolic death "whom I [Helena] myself embrace to set him [Bertam] free" (3.4.16-7) is ambiguous in its effects.

My attempt to fill out the structural break of the play, the gap between the heroine's motivations and the consequences of her action, is purely speculative, just as other propositions are, too -- on whatever circumstantial evidences they are built. The text itself allows for such free-play, and is even meant to entertain the spectators' various 'constructions.' As Ruth Nevo points out, this disjunction constitutes "a psychic space of evocation and resonance shared by both audience and dramatis personae" (1987: 29). Meanwhile, it would be untenable to suppose that there existed a coherent spectatorial position among the women spectators in the playhouse. An Arabella Stuart or a London maidservant may have different view according to their varying relations to Helena's
particular problems, although it may be a much safer speculation that, most likely, they were inclined towards sympathy at Helena's self-abnegation, taking her tearful decision to "steal away" and "embrace death" as authentic or authentically painful. Was the playwright, then, determined to snatch away such sympathy from the spectators, when he staged Helena's questionable if not entirely "unabashed" — in Richard Levin's word — return? Probably not. Then how to solve the problem? The problem is Helena's as well as the playwright's, and eventually the spectators', who share the psychic space with Helena through their figurative inclusion into the play.

A women's league — literally a group of women spectators — appear on the stage, intent on entertaining themselves by gazing at an army of men: "Nay, come, for if they do approach the city, we shall lose all the sight" (3.5.1). Neely has noted that the three Florentine women — maid, widow, and wife — illustrate the marriage paradigm and comprise the socially acceptable roles for women in the period (1985: 73). Nonetheless, the significance of these women lies less in their representative status within the patriarchal order than in their action which elides the patriarchal rule over the propriety of women's behavior, that is, an unbridled look upon the male objects. In the first place, their gaze is radically different from Helena's, whether the illicit one at Rossillion or the authorized one at the French court. Ranting at "all these engines of lust" maneuvered by "the young earl" and "his filthy officer" in pursuit of Diana's "maidenhood," the Florentine women entertain their resistance as well as pleasure at the aggressive male forces marching before — and figuratively speaking, towards — them. They are not possessed by their own rapturous look; they do not, in other words, surreptitiously constitute the males as object of clandestine desire, as Helena does within the trajectory of a split subject — within the parameter of subject-object or masculine-feminine axis — only to confirm the powerlessness of the female subject.

The maid, Diana, may be prone to the enticement of the "amorous count" (3.5.63), as suggested by her half enchanted, half subdued gaze on Bertram: "Is't not a handsome gentleman?" (73). But the dangerous slippage into a self-consuming desire, into the precarious position of a split subject, is forestalled by what can be called a collective wisdom of women. "Well, Diana, take heed of this earl," warns Mariana, the outspoken
neighbor, "The honour of a maid is her name, and no legacy is so rich as honesty" (9-10). Mariana's view of women's chastity, shared with the Widow, may be taken as the effect of patriarchal inscriptions on women's body, which marks a "lack" onto it and ensures the male control of the female body. What in fact Mariana argues for points towards the opposite, however. The stress on the "honour" as a maid's own "name" and her own "legacy" brushes off the patriarchal inscriptions normally accorded to it. In other words, women's honor is authorized not in the name of the Father, nor due to the Father's legacy. This honor comes closer to Margaret's self-authenticating "honour" rather than Hero's which is subject to male authorization — or nullification for that matter. A collateral argument is expressed in Mariana's disenchanted view on the romantic conception of love cherished by "Many a maid [who] hath been seduced by them [Bertram and his deputy Parolles]" as a result, "they are limed with the twigs that threatens them" (18-9). As the London maidservants were well aware of, indulgence in the sheer pleasure of romantic love would turn out to be an entrapment for young women.

Diana is protected by such collective wisdom of women, as her mother assures: "But she is armed for him, and keeps her guard/ In honest defence" (66-7). Diana herself confirms this: "You shall not need to fear me" (23). In the mock-wooing of Bertram, furthermore, the inexperienced maid firmly invests herself in such wisdom. Her wry retort to Bertram's sworn "service" — "Ay, so you serve us/ Till we serve you" (4.2.17-8) — not only guards against the entrapment of women within the patriarchal economy of matrimony and sexuality. Diana also demonstrates women's collectivity by the recurring "we"; throughout the scene, the subject of Diana's speech is not an individual woman but the 'womankind.' Consequently, a private encounter between a sexually aroused male and a recoiling female is expanded into a generic war between sexes. What is at stake becomes apparent, when Diana sets an impossible task for Bertram, demanding the ancestral ring of Rossillion: "Give me that ring" (39). Bertram responds perplexedly and Diana retorts perplexingly:

Bertram. It is an honour 'longing to our house, Bequethed down from many ancestors, Which were the greatest obloquy i'th world

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In me to lose.

Diana.

Mine honour's such ring,
My chastity's the jewel of our house,
Bequethed down from many ancestors,
Which were the greatest obloquy i'th'world
In me to lose. (42-49)

While Bertram invokes the patrilineal inheritance of patriarchal authority, Diana opposes it with matrilineal inheritance of the self-authenticating female body, which in turn is kept "in honest defence" by virtue of the inter-generational collective wisdom of women: "My mother told me just how he would woo, As if she sat in's heart" (69-70). The triple eye is inverted; the Florentine women do not see themselves through the triple eye but see through it with their own eyes, that is, into the heart of patriarchal construction of gender.

It is into this maternal circle that Helena the pilgrim happens to enter. Having left the Father's territory, the female subject who could not but disfigure herself in a self-effacing elopement arrives at an entirely different terrain. Having "embraced death" to the symbolic order of "sick" phallus, she is enabled to reconfigure herself in the powerful womb of the Mother -- an alternative order in which the split subject is transformed into a part of "we," of the collective subjectivity of women. Helena is allowed to enter this symbolic order not through a legacy of the Father but by virtue of her own body. The Florentine women immediately express their compassion for the French earl's rejected wife when they are told of her "reserved honesty" (3.5.55):

Diana.

Alas, poor lady.
'Tis a hard bondage to become the wife
Of a detesting lord.
Widow. I write 'good creature', wheresoe'er she is,
Her heart weighs sadly. (57-60)

The recognition of a woman's "bondage" under male domination quickly evokes a sympathetic response in these women, who, unlike the one they sympathize with, have turned the loose ends of patriarchal family network into their own habitat.

It is a short step from the women's solidarity established here to a formulation of their subsequent transaction on 'bed-trick' either in terms of uncontaminated emotional bond or
of sheer opportunistic contract. According to their contrasting assessments of Helena's character, critics lay their emphasis on one or the other formulation. Neely stresses the women's unconditional commitment to each other, observing the significance of their complementary names — Helena and Diana — role reversals, substitution, or identification involved in the bed-trick (1985: 73). Levin refutes the feminist emphasis by highlighting the "manipulation" of the women by Helena "the master of intrigue" (1980: 140). Each formulation is contradicted by the text, however. While the solidarity thesis ignores the financial transaction between Helena and the impoverished widow, the manipulation thesis dismisses the link provided by the Widow who in fact suggests the bed-trick, if not indeed initiates it: "This young maid might do her/ A shrewd turn, if she pleased" (3.5.60-1). Helena takes the cue and simply activates the suggestion. Undeniably does Helena "buy [the women's] friendly help" with "this purse of gold" (3.7.14-5), but only on the basis of "sworn counsel" and mutual "trust" she asks above all: "First give me trust" (8). On the other hand, it is not until "Now I see/ The bottom of your purpose" (28-9) that the widow consents to render her support for Helena. Thus, when she removes her initial suspicion of "any staining act" in Helena's plan and recognizes it as "this deceit so lawful," she not only participates in but also assiduously elaborates on "our plot" (44), preparing her daughter with details of mock-wooing.

Neither are the Florentine women opportunistic mercenaries, nor is Helena an impersonal, predatory capitalist — as Levin suggest — who is only interested in the profit her purchasing power makes. Rather, Helena is more concerned with the use-value than the exchange-value of her "gold," when, instead of signing away the financial recompense, she specifies its use, which is "To marry her [Diana]" (3.7.35). As a poor widow's daughter and thus without paternal and financial protection, Diana may be liable to her precarious position within the patriarchal society which circulates 'maidenship' as a 'vendible commodity.' Helena's support aims to forestall the forced insertion of the helpless maid into such circulation by providing her with a better position to enter the marriage market. In other words, Helena's "gold" enables Diana to be her own agent, negotiating with the established male traffic in women.
Yet the significance or the consequences of the women's transaction goes further than its impact vis-a-vis the patriarchal economy they attempt to circumvent, when Helena recapitulates the point later: "Doubt not but heaven/ Hath brought me up to be your daughter's dower./ As it hath fated her to be my motive/ And helper to a huzband" (4.4.18-21). The derogatory view of the financial transaction invariously held by critics — manifestly by Levin and implicitly by Neely — is invalidated by the way in which Helena defines the nature of the transaction. Helena here suggests that the "motive" is not mercenary but bodily, and the "help" is not impersonal but inter-personal. Offering herself as Diana's "dower," instead of merely providing her with a dowry, Helena commits herself — her person and body — to the other woman's well-being as "a friend whose thoughts more truly labour/ To recompense your love" (4.4.17-8).

This act of commitment is made in return for Diana's help for the consummation of Helena's marriage — in a full recognition of what is exchanged in the bed-trick: their own bodies. On the one hand, the interchangeability of women's bodies reveals and overturns the anonymity of male desire, as Helena perceives in Bertram's: "But O, strange man,/ That can such sweet use make of what they hate/ When such saucy trusting of the cozened thoughts/ Defiles the pitchy night; so lust doth play/ With what it loathes for that which is away" (4.4.20-25). On the other hand, it generates a reinforced awareness in the women that they are a collective body, in which one is willing to "suffer/ Something in [another's] behalf," in which a woman says to another that "I am yours" (26-8). What seems on one level an exposure of interchangeable, vulnerable female bodies to male desire becomes on another level a female traffic in men, in which each woman figures as subject of exchange, material and spiritual, preconditioned by a reinforcing mutual commitment.

It is at this moment that Helena presses toward "the end": "All's well that ends well; still the fine's the crown./ Whate'er the course, the end is the renown" (35-6). With Bertram's tasks — acquisition of the ancestral ring of Rossillion and a child — fulfilled, Helena launches another journey, this time with other women: "We must away:/ Our wagon is prepared, and time revives us" (33-4). The trajectory of the female subject is once again transformed, from the gendered journey to Paris through the self-effacing pilgrimage, and finally to a collective quest. The deferral of the interview with the King seems a minor
incident in this determined action, as Helena insists on the impending “end” when she finds the King gone to Rossillion: “All’s well that ends well yet;/ Though time seem so adverse and means unfit” (5.1.25-6). At the end of the resumed journey, all these women, and the Countess, too, come into the last moment of the play, where the success or failure of their collective efforts is to be determined.

The problematic conclusion of All’s Well constitutes the last Rorschach test for its readers. While some masculinist critics’ focus on the ‘undoing of Bertram’ has been largely out of fashion, the feminist focus on Helena’s ‘legitimate’ entry into matrimony has not created a critical consensus, partly due to the different views on social history of women in the Renaissance England. Juliet Dusinberre’s earlier emphasis on the liberation of women in the Puritan England deployed a framework of companionate marriage into which both Helena and Bertram – the assertive woman and the recalcitrant male – are harmoniously redeemed as equal beings. The somewhat romantic view was radically revised by Lisa Jardine’s alternate emphasis on the patriarchal oppression operating through the institution of marriage. Jardine’s historical framework is much wider than Dusinberre’s; nonetheless, her argument basically follows Lawrence Stone’s model of patriarchal family in which the dominant position of a husband is inviolable and unquestionable. Placed within this historical and theoretical paradigm, Helena is seen to be fully reinscribed into a properly subordinate social and sexual relationship with her ‘doubly won’ husband.

Both Dusinberre and Jardine assume that the play’s ending constitutes a definite closure, while it is in fact deliberately inconclusive:

Helena. ... There is your ring,
And look you, here’s your letter. This it says:
‘When from my finger you can get this ring,
And are by me with child, etc.’ This is done.
Will you be mine now you are doubly won?
Bertram. If she, my liege, can make me know this clearly,
I’ll love her dearly, ever, ever dearly.
Helena. If it appear not plain and prove untrue,
Deadly divorce step between me and you!
O my dear mother, do I see you living? (5.3.300-9)
It is evident that there is little romance, still less submission, in Helena's attitude toward Bertram. As she reclaims him, she merely makes known her fulfillment of his conditions. On his part, Bertram evades facing—accepting?—the 'rightful' wife, turning instead to the King. At this further evasion and questioning, Helena's final words to the reluctant husband are resolute and almost foreboding. In a sharp contrast, her greeting to the Countess—her last words in the play—is more than warm and affectionate, almost tearful, although it is Lafew who actually weeps.\(^45\) As Carolyn Asp suggests, Helena's 'return' to the surrogate mother and as a mother seems to "indicate that she has re-adjusted the focus of her desire" and gained "a new awareness of and desire for the maternal body" (58-9). Indeed, the final embrace is made not in the pursuit or accomplishment of heterosexual relationship but in a powerful recognition of female bonding. A maternal circle, so to speak, looms into the last tableau of the play, featuring a group of women different in status and varying in their lifecycle.

Nonetheless, we cannot simply privilege the 'female counter-universe' and dismiss the persistence of patriarchal pressure operating even at this point. The last tableau of the play contains a group of males as well as the maternal circle, and the final words are indeed entrusted with the King of France, a patriarch par excellence, however ineffective he may have proved throughout the play: "All yet seems well, and if it end so meet. The bitter past, more welcome is the sweet" (5.3.322-3). In its subtle qualification of the title proverb, the King's concluding remark may reveal the male unease generated by Helena's 'success'; yet, in its benediction on the 'sweet' future, it obviously attempts to posit a reaffirmative closure to the 'subversive' story of the female subject of desire. As such, the King's salutary statement may be representative of the 'benevolent' patriarchy, which allows women's autonomy but contains it through the institution of marriage. The 'recuperative ending' thus seems to assert itself.

Insofar as one is committed to the view that the early Modern English women automatically entered into a subordinate position in their matrimonial life, it is difficult to imagine other possibilities, which are in fact explored by recent historians. Alan Macfarlane finds 'stereotypes of marital relations' in Lawrence Stone's somewhat rigid formulation of 'patriarchal family.' He instead suggests that the evidence of diaries and
other admittedly sparse documentary evidence are indicative of the coexistence of a strong complementary and even egalitarian ethos with theoretical adherence to the doctrine of male authority and public female subordination (MacFarlane 154-7). Similarly, Keith Wrightson states:

Of marital relations in late sixteenth and seventeenth century England, much remains obscure ... In the present state of knowledge it would seem unwise to make too sharp a dichotomy between the 'patriarchal' and the 'companionate' marriage, and to erect these qualities into a typology of successive stages of family development ... [These are] poles of an enduring continuum in marital relations in a society which accepted both the primacy of male authority and the idea of marriage or a practical and emotional partnership. Most people established their roles within marriage somewhere between the two (1982: 103-4).

These revisions of the historical context seem to be confirmed by the ending of All’s Well in its refusal to dissipate its tensions or to substantiate its tentative resolutions. I thus find Neely’s recognition of both potential resolution and possibility of disruption in the last moment of the play more convincing than Dusinberre’s or Jardine’s one-sided contextualization. As Neely points out, the ending suggests itself “not as a happy ending but as a precarious beginning” (1985: 65). The outcome of the marriage, in other words, is to be determined beyond the limits of the play, where the women spectators in the public playhouse entertain their ‘construction’ of the play’s indeterminate significations, according to or even athwart their own life experience.

iv. The Female Solidarity Revisited: Anne Clifford’s Maternal Circle

Let me conclude the discussion of All’s Well That Ends Well with my own construction of what would happen beyond its representational frame. Although the ebullient prospect of ‘reconciliation’ between Bertram and Helena cannot be entirely excluded, I am inclined to participate, as Lafew does, in the tearfully powerful moment of
the women's embrace. Of the dual focus in the last tableau — the maternal circle and the male world or the prospect of tenuous heterosexual relations — I thus choose to emphasize
the former as a self-sustaining force within, or a substantial corrective to, the latter, that is, the institution of marriage in the early modern society. In this, I may be seen to contradict
my thesis in the previous chapter where I stressed the social differences among the English Renaissance women. I can only hope that the contradictoriness, put in a wider perspective,
will turn into a vision of complementarity; solidarity and difference are in some aspects confluent.

Such a perspective can be grounded, if only partially, on the numerous testimonies to
the existence of a female subculture among early modern women. For instance, historian
Carroll Camden, has identified many treatises which lead us to believe that women spent a
great deal of time together (The Elizabethan Woman). More often than not, however, these
testimonies — from the mouths of men — are trivializing if not hostile. In his satirical
pamphlet, The Gossips Greeting, Henry Parrot inveighs against talkative and outgoing
women. Robert Burton also refers to gossiping among women as "their merrie meetings
and frequent visitations, mutual invitations in good towns ... which are so in use" (Camden
160). A presumably 'neutral' observation comes from a Dutch traveler named Van
Meteren, who found this mode of entertainment a notable one among Elizabethan women:
"all the rest of their time they employ in walking and riding, in playing cards or otherwise,
in visiting their friends and keeping company, conversing with their equals and their
neighbors and making merry" (Camden 162). As a whole, the male view of gregarious
women testifies no more than the emotional segregation of women from the male world
and a compensatory development of bonding within the female circle. Little hint of the
possible interaction between the 'worlds apart' is made; nor is any potential impact of
female solidarity upon matrimonial life suggested.

While historians have represented various cases of early modern marital relations with
emphasis either on patriarchal doctrine or practical ethos of companionship, the
documentary evidence is rarely derived from female writing.46 On the other hand, the
majority of women's writing in the period was devoted to imaginative or polemical
literature — poems, romances, plays, or the treatises involved in the 'women controversy.'
As a result, it is hard to gain access to what women had to tell of their personal, and particularly their own matrimonial, lives. Yet a handful of women's writings on their real-life experience as a wife exist in the form of letters or diaries. Among them, Anne Clifford's diaries provide a glimpse into the kind of potential conflicts and resolutions that may precipitate and/or stabilize the marital relationship, into which Helena of All's Well is seen to enter at the end of the play. Arabella Stuart's letters, as we have seen, provide an analogy to Helena's dilemma as a split subject; they do not, however, illustrate the full trajectory of a female subject, which in All's Well is recast into the collective subjectivity of women. It is exactly the completion of the maternal circle that Anne Clifford's case presents as a source of energy for continued struggle against patriarchal oppression and empowerment of the female subject.

As an inheritor of ancestral lands and a wife to Earl of Dorset and subsequently to Earl of Pembroke, Clifford continually found herself between two contradictory obligations, which were internalized as two conflicting subject positions. The traditionally male role of a landed aristocrat came into direct conflict with her role as wife, subject to her husband's will. As such, her marital relationship moved on a trajectory of repeated collisions with both of her husbands, who pressured Clifford to give up portions of land for their own financial benefit. Many entries in her diary show that her sense of self was divided according to the unresolved conflict between her claim to her land and her husband's authority.

Sometimes I had fair words from him, and sometimes foul, but I took all patiently, and did strive to give him as much content and assurance of my love as I could possibly, yet I told him that I would never part with Westmoreland upon any condition whatsoever (Williamson 62).

Clifford's noncompliance with her husband's demands cost her great emotional distress, although she nonetheless held on to her rights. Both her humility and resoluteness are common experience to her sisters in real life and fiction - Arabella Stuart and Helena - as split subjects. As in Helena's speeches and Stuart's letters, an equally startling shift of voice is continually registered in Clifford's diaries. Her response captures such shifts succinctly when her husband cancelled her jointure in revenge of her refusal to sign away
the rights to her lands: "I wrote a letter to my Lord to let him know how ill I took his cancelling my jointure, but yet told him I was content to bear it with patience, whatsoever he thought fit" (Williamson 69). In a single sentence she registers both protest and acquiescence, representing herself simultaneously angry and content; she has clearly internalized her position as a divided subject.

As recent readers of Clifford’s diaries point out, Clifford’s insistence on her rights also brought her into conflict with the larger cultural discourses which tended to reinforce the male prerogatives in both marital and property relations. Royal and other institutional intervention were made in favor of the ‘head’ of the family, to which Clifford again refused to yield. She never did convince, but rather infuriated, her husband and King James, yet she did succeed in continuing to insist upon her rights to inherit the lands in dispute. The question at hand is what enabled her persistent struggle against the patriarchal society, which condemned her as an assertive woman, one who appropriated the male subject position of a landholder. Briefly, Anne Clifford constructed an alternative community of female relatives that endorsed her action as an heiress and transformed the split female subject into a part of the larger collective subject.

Among many women who influenced Clifford’s life, her own mother, Margaret Clifford, Countess of Cumberland, was a decisively formative force. In the first place, it was her mother who began a huge compilation of family history upon which Clifford could establish herself as legitimate ‘heir’ and continue her claim to the lands. The Countess herself vigorously defended her daughter’s rights, mitigating the pressure from the formidable male opponents of her daughter’s by writing petitions as well as private letters to those influential in the Court – including Queen Anne, who evidently showed a favorable concern. As the dispute moved into legal suits, the Countess continued to represent her daughter until her death in 1616. The mother and daughter often had to take trips to the estates in the province, because the law required of the contestants for the legal possession of estate a physical possession of the estate in dispute and loyalty of the tenants. Clifford describes one such incident in a way that reminds us of the women’s collective quest in All’s Well and the deferred ending of the journey.
...by reason of those great suits in law my mother and I were in a manner forced for our own good to go together from London down into Westmoreland ... [on the same trip] my mother and I would have gone into the Castle of Skipton to have seen it, but were not permitted so to do, the doors thereof being shut against us by my uncle of Cumberland's officers in an uncivil and disdainfull manner (Acheson 4).

As in All's Well's Marseille, where Helena and the Florentine women find the king gone, the Clifford women found their purpose elided before the Castle gate. Either group of women, however, did not lose hope, and continued to pursue on their respective trajectories, until, with the support from other women, they rewrote the ending into 'all's well that ends well.' Her mother’s influence remained powerful even after her death, as Clifford recollected her memory: “I was in the country...where that blessed mother of mine was born; so powerfull an influence had her goodness over the destinie of her posteritie” (Williamson 53). After the final settlement of the dispute, which recovered her all the estates, she often attributed the flourishing of her posterity to “the heavenly goodness of my dear mother, whose fervent prayers were offered up in great zeal” (Williamson 610).

Clifford was also surrounded with many caring female relatives. Her aunt, Lady Anne Russell, for example, was praised for her affection to the children of her brothers and sisters. “especially to the Lady Anne Clifford” (Williamson 492). And it was through her intimate relationship with Queen Anne that Margaret and Anne Cliddords advanced their suits. Particularly interesting is Clifford’s inclusion of the dead into this maternal circle. In an entry written immediately after her restoration of Pendragon Castle, she derived her rights to that estate not only from male ancestors but from a female heir as well by describing the estate as “chief and beloved habitation” of “Idonea, the younger daughter and coheir of Robert Veteripont, my ancestor ... to whom I am heir by a lineal descent” (Williamson 97). The generational linkage as well as interpersonal relationship among women sustained and validated Clifford’s efforts to keep her place and rights as an heiress, and most importantly, nourished and stabilized her sense of self amidst a hostile environment. Split and precarious as the female subject remained within the immediate context of conflict with her spouses and by the larger cultural discourses on gender, she must have found a much secure and invigorating ground in the solidarity - real and
imagined — of women, on which she successfully restored all the disputed lands. Apart from the context of her struggle for the claimed lands, Clifford tells of intense female friendship. When she was exposed to the plague, her cousin, Frances Bourchier, risked her life to show her love for the debilitated cousin: “my mother commanded I shou’d lie in a Chamber alone, which I cou’d not endure, but my Coz. Frances got the Key of my Chamber & lay with me which was the first time I loved her so very well” (Williamson 359).

The parallel between Clifford’s construction of the female community and Helena’s insertion into the maternal circle of supportive women suggests itself, and further confirmed by a comparison of the last tableau of All’s Well and family portraits commissioned by Anne Clifford. Jonathan Goldberg has offered a brilliant analysis of Jacobean family portraits, in which he asserts that the ‘painterly discourse’ of patriarchal family was inscribed onto the portraits through a characteristic structural composition, that is, the centrality of the male head of the family and the concomitant marginality of the females in the family (“Fatherely Authority”). He further suggests that this particular cultural production performed the same ideological function that the Renaissance theatre is said to have enact. Both, in Goldberg’s view, participated in disseminating the ideological discourse of patriarchal values and assumptions. Indeed, a number of family portraits reprinted in Goldberg’s article seem to share the characteristic spatial relationship that points to the dominant position of a patriarch and the subordinate position of his ‘female’ dependent. However, Carol Thomas Neely’s contention that the new historicist selection of evidence is arbitrary, partial, and thus unknowingly biased is certainly justified, especially in view of the Clifford family portraits.

The Appleby Castle Tryptych (reprinted in Williamson 344) was composed in about 1646, some time after Clifford’s attainment of her lands. The central panel, painted in about 1589, that is, before Anne was born, portrays her parents and two elder brothers who did not survive their early childhood. Goldberg would find a way to read a ‘patriarchal discourse’ into the frame, although it is not Anne’s father but her mother who takes the central position of the portrait. Margaret Clifford’s prominent position is further emphasized by her gesture presenting her eldest son to the observer. Standing between her
husband and sons, the mother is effectively represented as the generational link between male progenitor and male heirs. The image is only apparently subject to the 'patriarchal' interpretation, which is in fact forestalled not only by the fact that Anne, the invisible female heir, eventually succeeded the baronial title as well as the estates of the family, but more palpably by her sole, conspicuous presence in the surrounding side-panels of the triptych. As Mary Ellen Lamb suggests, the contrast between the portrait of young Anne on the left and of the old Anne on the right creates 'a chronological narrative' of her life-long struggle to restore her inheritance rights as the sole heir of the family (Lamb 361). A further significance of the peculiar structure of the triptych may be that, turned toward the middle panel in both her portraits with her hand in each of the portraits directing a sight line toward the center, Anne is represented as presenting the representation of the 'patriarchal' family.

If the centrality of Anne's mother in the middle portrait introduces an alarming disruption of the conventions of the Renaissance family portraits and, consequentially, of the conventional gender ideology of patriarchy, Anne's 'marginal' but obviously framing positions re-articulate her as the subject of enunciation, who tells a story of the 'patriarchal' family from her point of view. It is not, however, Anne by herself who, in the word of Carol Thomas Neely, 'reengender' the portraits as a whole. The transformation of gender ideology is reinforced by the implied, almost visible connection between the two Annes in the side-panels and her mother at the center, on the one hand. On the other hand, another highly unconventional feature in the central portrait completes such transformation; all of the four portraits hung on the back wall are those of female ancestors. Created thus is the unmistakable impression that Margaret Clifford's position as the center of the family is confirmed by these female figures, whose collective presence represents the generational link among women and suggests a strong sense of female community and solidarity. Related to the side-panels, the female community in the central frame constitutes itself as a source of power from which Anne Clifford derived her identity as well as her rights to inheritance. Young Anne on the right-hand portrait and old Anne on the left-hand one in their posture turning toward the center simultaneously participate in and are empowered by this 'matriarchal society.'
We may not be allowed to imagine a final moment of Shakespearean dramaturgy or staging of a ‘romantic’ comedy that dispenses with ‘coupling’ — spatially as well as narratively — one or two groups of heterosexual partners, or locates the male group representing the patriarchal social order at the margin of the stage. It may be the case as well for the ‘problem’ comedies. Nonetheless, it would not be wildly wrong to envision the last tableau of All’s Well That Ends Well via the Clifford portraits. With her last word to the Countess, Helena embraces the caring mother and remains with her to the last moment before they make final exit; the Florentine widow stands fast to her daughter who is offered the king’s dowagership but, as we heard, swore she would never marry at all (4.2.76). As the king takes the center-stage with his (male) followers including Bertram, the two female groups could find their location on each side of probably down-stage. As we know, the king is only nominally in the presumably controlling position in his reiterated offer to the maid ‘in question,’ as he was with Helena’s case. Consequently, the center-stage he occupies is likely to lose its ‘centrality.’ The visual focus of audience response is then directed alternately to the margins, where women, in their conspicuously framing positions, are seen to ‘present a representation of the somewhat evacuated patriarchal order.’ The scene, briefly, visually reconstitutes gender ideology to signify solidarity of women rather than their subordination to male authorities, king or husband — and may continue to do so as it recurs in its post-performance reconstructions by the women spectators.
NOTES


2 Consider, for instance, Levin’s interpretation of the references to women weeping in the theatre, which constitute “more significant” evidence than others: “Yet there seems to be an idea that women had a special sensitivity to, and perhaps a special preference for, pathetic plots and situations, which is not surprising since the idea is still with us; and this is something that playwrights may have taken into account” (“Women” 171).


4 McLuskie seems to be indebted to some British Marxist critics whose theory of readership is influenced by Louis Althusser’s notion of “interpellation” and “ideology,” or “scientific knowledge.” See, for instance, Terry Eagleton, “Towards a Science of the Text,” in his *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory* (1978 [1975]), pp. 64-101; Catherine Belsey, “Addressing the Subject,” in her *Critical Practice* (1980), 56-84.

5 See historian Hilda Smith, who defines “feminism as a view of women as a distinct sociological group for which there are established patterns of behavior, special legal and legislative restrictions, and customarily defined roles” (“Feminism and Methodology of Women’s History,” in Berenice A. Carroll (ed) *Liberating Women’s History: Theoretical and Critical Essays* [1976], p. 370).


The quotations, cited in Richard Levin ("Women" 169), are from Lodowick Carlell’s Epilogue to Part I of Arviragus and Philicia (1636) and James Shirley’s Prologue to The Coronation (1635), respectively.

In the Epilogue of As You Like It, Rosalind says she will “conjure you, and I’ll begin with the women. I charge you, O women, for the love you bear to men, to like as much of this play as please you; and I charge you, O men, for the love you bear to women…that between you and the women the play may please.” The Epilogue of 2 Henry IV entreats the audience “to acquit me”: “All the gentlewomen here have forgiven me; if the gentlemen will not, then the gentlemen do not agree with the gentlewomen, which was never seen in such an assembly.”


See R. A. Foakes’ “Introduction” to the Arden edition, p. xlvii. As Foakes points out, the indeterminacy of viewpoints is characteristic of the play as a whole. Traces of both sympathy and antipathy or suspicion to a same character exist in the play for the spectator to choose to follow. The typical maneuver on the part of the playwright is not to privilege one over the other. Which path to follow is relegated to the spectator’s viewpoint, that is, his or her own construction. The alternate title of the play, “All Is True,” rings the same note as that of “As You Like It.” Because of her ‘unquestionable’ virtue, Katherine is removed out of this general economy of the drama.

Representative of the innumerable references to women edified in the theatre is Thomas Heywood’s assertion in An Apology for Actors (c. 1612) that chaste women in the audience are “encouraged in their vertues” by the examples of noble heroines, and “The unchaste are by us shewed their errors” in the persons of various fallen women, whose stories “print modesty in the soules of the wanton” by “discovering unto them the monstrousnesse of their sin” (An Apology for Actors [1941]). See Catherine Belsey (1985: 135-37) for a brilliant discussion of these passages as a means of patriarchal regulation over female sexuality.


Elliot Krieger’s somewhat schematic ‘class’ reading presents Margaret as one of the lower class figures who ‘encroach upon the aristocratic privileges’ through verbal appropriation of the aristocratic decorum of speech (“Social Relations and the Social Order in Much Ado About Nothing”’ [1979], esp. 55-6).

Jean E. Howard, The Stage and the Social Struggle (1994), esp. ch. 4, which is an expanded version of her earlier article, "Script and/versus Playhouses: Ideological Productions and the Renaissance Public Stage" (1989).

Within the essentialist criticism, Juliet Dusinberre’s Shakespeare and the Nature of Women (1975) represents the feminist Shakespeare, while Marilyn French’s Shakespeare’s Division of Experience (1981) highlights the misogynist Shakespeare. The somewhat dichotomous view recurs in later developments of feminist criticism of Shakespeare; see Diane E. Dreher, Domination and Defiance (1986) in contradistinction with Peter Erickson, Patriarchal Structures in Shakespeare’s Drama (1985).

In the Renaissance literary scholarship, Stephen Greenblatt’s Renaissance Self-Fashioning (1980) and Jonathan Dollimore’s Radical Tragedy (1984) still remain the major work on the subject.

Janet Adelman, for instance, contextualizes Coriolanus with the Midlands food riots of 1607, only to arrive at ‘the crisis of male sexual identity’ of the protagonist: “Thrust prematurely from dependence on his mother, forced to feed himself on his own anger, Coriolanus refuses to acknowledge any neediness or dependency: for his entire sense of himself depends on his being able to see himself as a self-sufficient creature” (“Anger’s my meat: Feeding, Dependency, and Aggression in Coriolanus” in Schwartz and Kahn (eds) Representing Shakespeare [1980], p. 132).

In this aspect, Louis Althusser’s influence has been decisive among the materialist feminist critics, but most tangibly felt in Catherine Belsey (1985) and Jean E. Howard (1994). Similar formulation of the Renaissance family as a micropolitical unit is also prominent feature of new historicism. See, in particular, Jonathan Goldberg, James I and the Politics of Literature (1983) and Leonard Tennenhouse, Power on Display (1986).

A similar conclusion has been reached by feminist historians such as Sarah J. Eaton, who suggests that the many praises and disproasures of women in the period were fashioned according to established rhetorical principles of praise and blame, not to everyday realities.


26 There have been remarkably different assessments of the significance of the Renaissance women’s writings. According to Joan Kelly, although the early female writers lacked “a vision of social movement to change events,” they did create “not only a new body of ideas but also the first feminist theory” (“Early Feminist Theory and the Querelle des Femmes, 1400-1789” [1982], p. 6). On the other hand, Linda Woodbridge maintains that the Renaissance women writers’ concentration on moral and religious issues rather than social and economic ones “may in fact have actively prevented the development of true feminist debate” (Women and the English Renaissance [1986], p. 133). A more balanced view is found in Katherine U. Henderson and Barbara F. McManus, who suggest that the early modern female writers paved the way for a fuller feminism by demonstrating the worth and capabilities of women: “Women had to find a sense of self-esteem within established value systems and to play the game by men’s rules before they could challenge the old values and create their own rules” (Half-Humankind [1985], p. 45).

27 See Neely, “Constructing the Subject,” p. 13. Miller’s work that Neely refers to is “Arachnologies: The Woman, The Text, and The Critic,” in Nancy K. Miller (ed) The Poetics of Gender (1986). Miller writes: “Only the subject who is self-possessed and possesses access to the library of the already read has the luxury of flirting with the escape from identity...promised by an aesthetics of the decentered (decapitated, really) body” (p. 274).

Paul Smith, *Discerning the Subject* (1988), esp. 24-6. Catherine Belsey finds that for women these contradictory subject positions can create confusion and paralysis (1985: 149-60).


All the quotations of the play are from the New Cambridge edition (ed. Russell Fraser, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

David McCandless supports Snyder’s view in “Helena’s Bed-Trick: Gender and Performance in All’s Well That Ends Well” (1994).


Carolyn Asp, “Subjectivity, Desire and Female Friendship” (1986: 53); David McCandless agrees with Asp, adding that Helena “channels her unspeakable desire into the discourse of male bawdry, seeking a kind of release through the sublimated pleasure of naughty talk” (451).

Critics have paid much attention to the ‘erotic subdrama’ — the sexual connotations — of the healing scene (2.2) and the undramatized bed-trick scene. See, for example, Barbara Hogdon, “The Making of Virgins and Mothers” (1987); Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers* (1992), esp. pp. 84-86. These critics subscribe to the view that Shakespeare idealizes and mystifies the sexual arousal that empowers Helena’s cure of the king.


The strained relationship between the two cousins derived not merely from James’ nominal insistence upon male prerogatives, which Arabella was seen to threaten by her
contemporaries. At the root of James’ ‘impatience’ with Arabella is the fact that his accession to the Scottish throne was earlier contested by Arabella’s equal claim. For James’ ‘unease’ about the relationship, see P. M. Handover, Arabella Stuart, pp. 281-295.

39 Earlier biographers represent the relationship between Stuart and Bess of Harwick as ‘severe’ and mutually ‘contemptuous’ (Cooper vol. 1: pp. 17-34; Bradley vol. 1: pp. 117-137). This view is recapitulated by Handover, who finds much ‘hostility’ between the two women (pp. 137-53), while Durant (pp. 50-57) provides a more complicated view of the relationship with a sympathetic portrayal of Bess of Hardwick. Interestingly, in Durant’s account, not only Stuart but her custodian as well appears to present a case of split subject.


42 I agree with Kirby Farrell, who observes that in many of the Shakespearean plays a crisis of autonomy leads to self-effacement, which takes the form of playing dead, elopement from the hierarchical or patriarchal order, or submissive gestures. Farrell writes: “… by effacing himself, an individual may indirectly fulfill himself. By nullifying or appearing to nullify his will, he may free himself to act with greater personal autonomy” (“Self-Effacement and Autonomy in Shakespeare” [1983], p. 75). In Helena’s case, however, not merely a self-effacement but a reconfiguration of the self within different discursive possibilities brings the protagonist ‘greater personal autonomy.’

43 Not only is the political nation malfunctioning, as suggested in the King’s weakness and the “sick” gentry (1.2.16); Bertram’s desire for Diana is also termed “sick” (4.2.35).

44 In her Lacanian reading of the play, Susan Snyder finds the deferral as characteristic of the play’s overall structure and symptomatic of the ever-receding fulfillment of sexual desire (“‘The King’s not here’” [1992]). Her argument is convincing, although it does not account for the larger framework that has transformed Helena’s pursuit of ‘desire’ into a collective quest, which I think has a greater significance at this point of the dramatic action.

45 Lafew’s role as commentator on the dramatic action and mediator of audience response has been noted by many critics. For recent discussion on this aspect of the character, see David Scott Kastan, “All’s Well That Ends Well and the Limits of Comedy” (1985).

46 Apart from innumerable ‘doctrinal’ treatises on matrimony, Ralph Josselin’s diaries, for instance, from which Alan MacFarlane draws the thesis on companionate marriage, were written by the husband, in whose view the marital relationship and the ‘image’ of his wife...
is represented. See the editor’s introduction in Alan MacFarlane (ed) The Diary of Ralph Josselin 1616-1683 (1976).


48 George C. Williamson, Lady Anne Clifford, Countess of Dorset, Pembroke and Montgomery, 1590-1676 (1922, rpt. 1967), pp. 87-95. Unless otherwise indicated, following quotations of entries in Clifford’s diary are from this volume.

49 For more diary entries concerning such interventions and Clifford’s response to them, see Mary Ellen Lamb, “The Agency,” pp. 352-3.

50 For a description of Margaret Clifford’s disrupted marital relationship with her husband George, see Acheson, “Introduction,” p. 2. On her husband’s death, Margaret recovered her jointure, which was among her ‘rights’; nonetheless, she chose to fight on behalf of her daughter against George Clifford’s will, by which he left his entire estates to his brother Francis, instead of his daughter Anne.

51 Katherine O. Acheson notes the similarity between the figure of Anne and that of her mother in the portraits in terms of posture, attitude, and the way in which they use jeweleries on their costume in order to ‘fashion’ themselves as ‘strong woman’ (“Introduction,” p. 33).

52 The ending of Measure For Measure, for instance, parallels that of All’s Well in its ‘inconclusiveness.’ Mariana may be seen to enter into matrimony, although we do not hear any of her own word of consent. Isabella’s case is much more obscure; the proposing hand of Duke Vincentio – functionally similar to the King of France’s offer to Diana – may be turned down by Isabella’s ‘evasive silence,’ in Carol Thomas Neely’s words (1985:102). It is somewhat predictable that Kathleen McLuskie’s reading of the play forecloses any possibility of Isabella’s rejection (“The Patriarchal Bard” [1985], pp. 88-108). For a similar argument that stresses the play’s ‘containment-strategy,’ see Jonathan Dollimore, “Transgression and Surveillance in Measure for Measure” (1985).
CHAPTER 5
THEATRICAL POWER AND POWERLESS THEATRE

INTRODUCTION
PLAYING ON THE MARGIN

During its burgeoning period in the 1980s, the political criticism of Shakespeare promulgated the idea that the English Renaissance drama had a still wider impact, and in a much subtler way, on the social and political lives of the contemporaries than was previously supposed within formalist or 'old historicist' tenet. Both new historicist and cultural materialist critics maintained that the political consequences or ideological functions of dramatic representation were shaped by, and did in turn shape, the cultural landscape of the period and even the historical course that the English society would take toward the Civil War. The historicist critics, in other words, invariably assumed that the drama enacted in the playhouses of Elizabethan and early Stuart London played a crucial — if not central, by definition — role and exercised the real power in determining the outcome of other levels or instances of social practice. The issue, accordingly, was whether the power was appropriated in order to articulate the political and religious orthodoxy of the era or to dis-articulate it into an abyss of dissidence; to subvert or to contain, that was the question.

At the turn of the fervent decade of 1980s, there came a reaction to this prevailing idea of the powerful theatre. For instance, Paul Yachnin asserted that the theatre was powerless, and indeed irrelevant to the system of power.
...in response to the conflicting pressures of censorship and commercialism, and in the relative political stability of the period 1590-1625, the players promulgated the idea of the disinterestedness of art ... and advertised that plays were separate from the operations of power. As a result of both the vigor of Elizabethan government censorship and the compliance of the players with that censorship, the theatre of the late Elizabethan and early Stuart period came to be viewed as powerless, unable to influence its audience in any purposeful and determinate way. The dramatic companies won from the government precisely what the government was most willing to give: a privileged, profitable, and powerless marginality (Yachnin 1991: 50).

There are more losses than gains in such a proposition. As a disclaimer to the earlier critics’ overt, and partly over-stretched, politicization of the English Renaissance drama, Yachnin’s argument may strike a thought-provoking chord, demanding a more balanced view on the ‘politics’ of the stage. As an alternative formulation of the relationship between the government and the theatre, however, it quickly loses ground. In the first place, the massive documentary evidence -- regarding the governmental attempt to control the theatrical activities in London and the fermenting criticism of the theatrical institution itself and its ‘immoral’ practice from the guardians of political and religious orthodoxy -- barely allows a view that confines the London theatres in a trivial and inconsequent ‘marginality.’ Whether it was the theatre per se or the enormous social change symptomatized in and by the theatre that the moral authority was primarily concerned with, the conspicuously negative position of the theatre in the moral economy of early modern London seems undeniable.

More problematic is Yachnin’s conception of power and the ensuing territorialization of politics and aesthetics. The power of the theatre, in Yachnin’s view, is to influence the audience “in any purposeful or determinate way,” that is, as a propaganda, which aims to incite an action on the part of the audience. Accordingly, the notorious performance of Richard II on the eve of the Essex rebellion, from which Greenblatt and Dollimore have earlier advanced their theory of ‘powerful theatre’ (Greenblatt 1982: 4, Dollimore 1985: 8), is cited rather as an illustration of the powerlessness of the theatre. Power, in such a
formulation, is only commensurate with the political effectiveness of intentions and motives that underlie a dramatic representation or a stage performance. But isn’t it this narrowly political conception of power that has been irreparably undermined by the new historical criticism, which, instead, deploys the Foucauldian conception of power as permeating throughout social relations? Isn’t it, then, the much-questioned, if not completely depleted, boundary between politics and aesthetics, or between literary text and historical context, that Yachnin’s distinction of the political “power” and the “freedom” of artistic disinterestedness surreptitiously reinstates? The answer suggests itself, as Yachnin further argues that, although the stage represented the topical issues, these representations were seen to operate “in a field of discourse isolated from the real world,” thus incapable of intervening in the political arena. Unwarrantedly, he takes for granted “the Elizabethan-Jacobean separation of literary and non-literary discourses” (51).³

The policing of the discursive boundary was effectively carried out. Yachnin continues, by the government agency of censorship on the one hand, and by the self-regulating players, on the other hand, who were willing to give up their political ‘partisanship’ in pursuit of artistic freedom and financial profit. In view of the current debates on the issue of censorship, however, one cannot simply construe the “vigor” of the government agency; nor can it be automatically supposed that the approved playscript was the actualized performance text on the stage. Richard Dutton is not the only one who, while not denying the existence and power of a censorship apparatus, has nonetheless stressed the inefficiencies and variability of its operation, especially in regard to the censorship of stage plays (1991: 1-13). Philip Finkelpearl, in particular, locates one of “many loopholes in the system” in the post-approval, and occasionally on-stage, alterations of the script by the players (125). Probably the most influential study on the subject is Annabel Patterson’s exploration in what she terms the “hermeneutics of censorship.” On the one hand, the concept acknowledges the complicated relationship between censorship and interpretation; for instance, a mere excision of a problematic passage in the text or even an entire scene from a playscript cannot ensure a ‘dominant’ interpretation. On the other hand, Patterson’s concept points toward and leaves open the beleaguering question of textual authority. The official authorization of a text was obviously in the hands of the government agents; still,
the actual authorship lay in those of writers', commercial or otherwise, who, in their
negotiation with the strictures of censorship, developed strategies of indeterminacy, that is,

For Yachnin, such indeterminacy -- achieved through "bifurcation of political point of
view" (66) -- was both the trademark of the London commercial playwrights and an
indication of their powerlessness as social agents. In fact, the impact of commercialism on
the ideological valence of the drama in the period looms larger, in Yachnin's account, as
the primary cause of the powerlessness of the theatre. The establishment of the permanent
venue of theatrical entertainment with the opening of the Red Lion in 1567, the Theatre in
1576, and the Curtain in 1577 is seen to have signaled a drastic change in the nature of
playing.

The theatre of the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward, Mary, and the young
Elizabeth had been dependent upon the patronage of a group of politically
active aristocratic sponsors. The players were often employed to perform
polemical plays, intended to influence the audience toward one political or
doctrinal viewpoint or another. The advent of commercialism required that
players please their audiences, both public and courtly. The players were no
longer expected to promulgate a particular view of political affairs; on the
contrary, the players were now only constrained to stay within the
changeable bounds of the permissible. The acquisition of their own theatres
had the peculiar effect, therefore, of liberating the players from their
dependence upon aristocratic sponsors and so freeing them to address a
variety of topics in an objective spirit, and, at the same time, of diminishing
the power of the theatre to influence the political issues about which it was
now free to speak (Yachnin 59-60).

To say the least, the neat formulation of the shift from "polemical theatre" of the early and
middle Tudor period to the Elizabethan "recreational theatre" is founded upon an
assumption that the latter was developed exclusively from the former, while many scholars
have affirmed that the Elizabethan theatre practice and its drama incorporated various
legacies of narrative, dramatic, and theatrical traditions. Furthermore, the assertion on the
players' overnight independence from aristocratic patronage scarcely bears the weight of
evidence that attests to the continuing importance of traditional relationship of patronage
for a successful operation -- both legal and financial -- of the professional theatre
companies. It is, after all, upon King James' grant of royal patronage that the former
Chamberlain’s Men — Shakespeare’s company — became the King’s Men and benefited from their heightened status and more frequent command performances at the royal palaces.

Similarly ill-grounded is Yachnin’s postulation that the players’ greater responsiveness to the demands of the public audience necessarily depoliticized the stage representation of topical issues and finally forced the ‘mercenary’ theatricals to move into ‘a privileged, profitable, and powerless marginality.’ The underlying assumption is that, in providing dramatic commodities for public consumption, the London theatres invited their own commodification and functioned as an institutionalized, profitable market, which in Yachnin’s view, constituted a world apart from that of politics. Divorced from the political power, the artistic freedom is now seen to have espoused the theatre to the apolitical market force of entertainment industry. But, as Louis Montrose points out in his thoughtful critique of Yachnin’s article, the venture undertaken by the theatrical entertainment industry was hardly ‘disinterested’ or ‘neutral’ in its ideological consequences. “The consequences of such a change (from itinerant playing to acting in fixed playing spaces).” Montrose writes, “must surely have been to complicate the ideological positioning of the professional theatre and its repertoire. not to neutralize it” (1996: 87).

In sharp contrast to Yachnin’s conception of powerless marginality. Steven Mullaney argues that the Renaissance theatre was both ‘marginal’ and ‘powerful.’ Mullaney’s account locates the ideologically heterogeneous qualities in the texts of Renaissance drama in the symbolic topography of London’s Liberties.

When popular drama moved out into the Liberties to appropriate their ambivalent terrain for its own purposes, it was able to do so only because the traditions that had shaped and maintained those Liberties were on the wane. A gap had opened in the social fabric, a temporary rift in the cultural landscape that provided the stage with a place on the ideological horizon. a marginal and anamorphic perspective on the cultural dynamics of its own time (136).

The ‘ambivalent terrain’ of London’s Liberties, in Mullaney’s view, provided the Renaissance stage with a vantage point from which it explored the cultural milieu of Elizabethan and Jacobean England — a “liberty that was at once moral, ideological, and
topological - a freedom to experiment with a wide range of available ideological perspectives and to realize, in dramatic form, the cultural contradictions of its age” (ix-x). What was a “problematic exchange of power for freedom” to Yachnin turns into an acquisition of power through freedom in Mullaney’s formulation: “the place of the stage was a marginal one, and in the world of early modern culture such marginality was in itself significant” (9).

For the most part, Mullaney does not address the question of the commercialism of the stage, but when he does, he takes up the conjunction of market and theatre in terms of their ambivalent status and the discomfiture and anxiety they brought to the early modern culture. Indeed, Jean-Christophe Agnew’s full-length study on the subject, Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750, supports the view of the English Renaissance theatre as constituting, as well as being located in, a ‘powerful marginality.’ Built upon “the limbo of London’s liberties,” the public playhouses enjoyed “a deliberate, if delicate, extraterritorial status: a marginal existence in which the potent possibilities of marginality were explored in an unprecedented depth and with extraordinary imagination” (Agnew 11). The power of the geographically marginal theatre derived from its formal figuration of the new contractual, increasingly fugitive and abstract, social relations of a burgeoning market society. Agnew also remarks that the theatre not only “mimed new social relations,” but at the same time participated in that market economy as a commercial institution: contractual social relations were the precondition for a successful operation of the stage as well as the predominant object of its representation. According to this account, commercialism is not a debilitating factor that revoked the cultural potency, if not political power, of the Renaissance theatre but what in fact empowered it as an efficient agent of changing social relations — “the vanguard,” in Louis Montrose’s words. “of emergent ideology, that of entrepreneurial capitalism” (Montrose 1996: 87).

Douglas Bruster’s Drama and the Market in the Age of Shakespeare, another full-length study of the commercial nature of the English Renaissance theatre and its relations to the emergence of nascent capitalism, seems to underwrite the view of the London theatres as a powerful agent of market forces that were transforming the early modern English society.
There is, however, a seemingly inconsequential difference in Bruster's argument that
distinguishes it from Agnew's earlier formulation. While Agnew occasionally admits that
"the theatre was itself a market" (116), his overall thesis rests on the assumption that the
theatre and market were "worlds apart," as the title of his book suggests. The two discrete,
if related, domains are seen to overlap more frequently in dramatic representations than in
the practical strategies of the 'business of playing.' By contrast, Bruster stresses that "the
theatre was, a priori, a market, that it was, primarily, a place of business – and, as a
business, part of a complex of centralizing institutions" (10). Bruster thus confers more
weight upon the market's extensive cultural implications than on the drama's imaginative,
mediated reflexivity upon the nascent market society. What looks like a difference in
emphasis results in fact from two different historical, and conceptual, understandings of the
early modern social process under the pressures of emergent capitalism.

Agnew's view is more or less structural in that it maintains both conjunctures and
specificities of material and symbolic exchange, market relations and theatrical transaction,
or legal representation and dramatic representation. To Agnew, sixteenth-century England
was located at the characteristically transitional stage within the historical unfolding of the
market system, whose full-fledged operation was yet to come. He thus argues that the
"moral economy of market" in the period "resisted both ref feudalization and entrepreneurial
pressures toward capitalism" (39). Such a resistance was most highly visible in the outskirts
of London, where traditional fairs took place and masterless artificers subsisted apart from
the institutional structure of the City's corporational industry. And it is this "liminal
market" that coexisted, on the same ideological horizon, with the public playhouses. To
Bruster, however, the traditional market-place had already been disrupted by the time that
the Royal Exchange opened as a new center of commerce in 1567, the year the first public
playhouse, Red Lion, was built. The process of centralization, in both domains of politics
and economics, was far-advanced, penetrating the social fabric with "the fluidity of
existence and exchange in the early modern city" that entered into a fully-grown "consumer
society" (10-11). In consequence, "the theatre as place of commercial exchange" was
deeply implicated in the institutional development, which transcended cultural categories as
well as geographical boundaries. Market and theatre were thus related not by marginality

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but by institutionalization and centrality. The power of theatre thus came not from its association with the residual, marginal cultural sphere, but from its participation in the new market relations that were disseminated from and/or converging into the center, that ultimately collapsed the traditional social and cultural boundaries between the marginal and the central.

It is made clear by now, I hope, that our current understanding of the English Renaissance theatre and drama still moves along the critical trajectory followed by the new historicism and the cultural materialism. While Yachnin’s ‘powerless theatre’ may be seen to provide a useful corrective to the earlier view of the ‘powerful theatre,’ it remains insubstantial and quite inadequate as an alternative perspective. Rather, the attempt to recuperate the divisive line between politics and poetics is no less problematic than its sweeping erasure by the Foucauldian notion of all-subsuming discursive formation. And, it is in this totalizing view of social process, best encapsulated in Stephen Greenblatt’s concept of ‘circulation of social energy,’ that Bruster participates with a stress upon the pervasive idea of market and the centralized social relations through market economy. Agnew’s and Mullaney’s contrastive account of the social process in terms of relative autonomy of a particular cultural practice allows for discursive disjunctions within a culture, to which Jonathan Dollimore has referred as a site of ‘appropriation.’ However, as Dollimore’s formulation of mutual appropriation between the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic often slips into an unwarranted emphasis on ideological dissension and struggle at the exclusion of ‘mutuality,’ Mullaney’s structural distinction between center and margin is liable to a rigid categorization.

The terms used in these recent critical debates – power and powerless, political and artistic, center and margin – clearly indicates that we still have not dispensed with binary constructs, even as negotiative efforts are being continually made. The difficulty stems mainly from two distinct yet related problematics, which I shall attempt to uncover and redress in the following two sections. The first problematic is a historical one, that is, the predication of literary historicism upon a view of the social structure of early modern England in terms of Peter Laslett’s ‘one-class society’ and/or E. P. Thompson’s ‘patrician vs. plebeian culture.’ For Stephen Greenblatt, the Renaissance England was inhabited by

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"the few who were rich and powerful" and "the overwhelming majority of men and women [who] had next to nothing" (1988: 54). Phyllis Rackin finds an unalterably structured gap between "a privileged elite" and "unlettered masses" (202-3). Annabel Patterson's focus on the lower social stratum leads to an acknowledgement that "the people" or 'populace' were and are blanket terms that conceal large social and economic differences; nonetheless, she abides to a "clear line" that separated "the landed aristocracy or gentry" from "the commons" (1989: 2-3). Of the numerous similar assertions I take up Richard Helgerson's comment as a point of departure: "Between the extremes of high and low, noble and base, there was only semiotic vacancy, a noplace without meaning" (206).

One of the objectives I pursue in the following sections is precisely to fill in such 'vacancy' -- with the 'middling sort of people' in early modern England. This objective, however, is different from the one I sought to achieve in Chapter 2, where the greater emphasis lay on the corporate identity of the middling sort articulated by Shakespeare's citizens. Alternatively, in this final chapter, my aim is to locate tensions and conflicts as well as the sense of community among the complex formation of London's middling sort. I repeat: complex. For, although Theodore Leinwand has already explored the significance of this urban social formation, his account tends to create a picture of a rather cohesive social group. Even as he acknowledges the complexity of the group in his "historical sociology," his supportive analysis of "dramatic representation" of Roman citizens in Coriolanus results in a modified, if not reiterated, binarism of 'patricians vs. plebeians' (1993: 295-300). In order to avoid such a relapse, it is necessary to ground literary analysis on more rigorous interpretive strategies. This need in turn relates to the second problematic, which is a theoretical one.

The critical language we use in describing a cultural process often simplifies and obliterates the complicated realities that were actually taking place in a historical situation. Speaking of social structure, formation, institution, ideology, or even culture, we fail, more often than not, to consider that any of these 'entities' consists of irreducibly diverse trends and movements perpetually modifying and modified by one another in a continual state of flux or dialectic. More frequently, we forget that such a process involves individuals as agents, whose behaviors and attitudes cannot be totally explained away in terms of the
social group or the ideology that they are embedded in. By this I do not intend to reinstate the ‘subject/ideology couplet’ (Hall 1978). Rather, I suggest that in order to understand a society in its full complexity we should problematize the relations of individuals to a particular social group and of the group to the social formation as a whole. Furthermore, such relations are subject to change as they issue into the experience of time. Too often, we tend to posit a more or less definite position that an individual or a group of individuals occupies within a social structure, where there are only ongoing processes and variegated relations.

This is what Leinwand’s concession to the “frustrating complexity” of the middling sort acknowledges but fails to “relay” into literary interpretation (285, 291). The “subtle distinctions [established] at every rung of socioeconomic ladder” (286) are obscured by a hardened focus upon the structured relationship between upper and lower echelons of middling sort. The problem lies not only in the literary analysis itself but in his ‘historical sociology’ as well. Leinwand’s primary concern is to dissolve the prevailing binarism with an introduction of a third category, which is in itself heterogeneous. Thus he tries to maintain a “metadefinition” of the middling sort at the same time that he carefully makes the ‘subtle distinctions’ among those “between the extremes of royalty and the most impotent poor” (286-7). The dual objective turns out to be contradictory, since the middling sort is represented either as a cohesive social group at the ‘metadefinitional’ level, or as a sheer heterogeneity in the taxonomical perspective. In the taxonomy, the metadefinitional “criteria” of “amount of property, income, and voice [i.e., political participation]” give way to “greater specificity.” only to produce a picture of a conglomeration of distinct groups that are not related to one another – except in their common “middling sorted-ness” (289).

In my view, the missing link is found when Leinwand mentions the groups aligned to the occupational hierarchy: “merchants,” “independent craftsmen,” “hired laborers,” and “apprentices” (291-2). Leinwand, though maintaining that “the middling sort was a most heterogeneous lot” (292), does not situate these groups in an institutional context where the complicated social relations within the middling sort might be best observed. For a particular institution constitutes a site of not only incorporation but also contestation (Williams 1977: 116-7). In an effort to understand the internal dynamic of the middling sort
as well as its contribution to the restructuration of the urban society of early modern London, I thus take up the institution of apprenticeship – "one of the central institutions of the preindustrial world" (Brooks “Apprenticeship,” 54) – for an entry to the urban culture of which Shakespeare’s theatre was a part. In particular, I shall attend to the social and cultural process whereby the London apprentices grew into the formation of the middling sort, and then explore their relationship to the "marginal" institution of public theatres. A reading of 

*Julius Caesar* will be offered in order to imagine the perspectives that the apprentices may have brought to the stage, and thereby configure a set of different articulations within the middling sort of people in the early modern London.
London, Apprentices, and Theatres

Whether the public theatres were (dis-)located on the city's margin or absorbed into the center of the capitalist culture, their significance cannot be discussed apart from the urban development of the city, of which they were a part. London was changing, of course. Although other capital cities of the provinces were expanding in size and in the amount of trade, their relatively modest development was by far exceeded by London's transformation from a medieval town to a pre-modern metropolis (Clark and Slack 1972:8). The most spectacular aspect of the metropolitan growth was demographic. The number of inhabitants within the city walls and in the suburbs under city control rose from about 40,000 at the beginning of sixteenth century to 350,000 at the start of the Civil War. According to demographic historians, the period 1580-1640, when the professional theatres were in operation, saw "the sharpest increase" in the capital's population (Beier and Finlay 11). Amidst such an explosive growth, Giovanni Botero, an Italian visitor, declared in 1588 that London was the only city in England that "deserves to be called great" (Clark and Slack 1976: 62). Little of London's demographic growth was due to the natural increase, however. Mortality rate surpassed birth rate. In particular, the bubonic plagues regularly reduced the city's population. In 1603 alone more than 40,000 people died, perhaps a fifth of the inhabitants, while the lesser plague of 1593 had taken 10,000 lives (Slack 66-7, 151-2).

The population growth was thus fueled in fact by migration. Although the long distance migration to the capital was already well established in the earlier centuries, the principal change in the sixteenth and seventeenth century was in type and scale of immigration. Two types of immigration have been identified as most conspicuous: vagrancy and apprenticeship. There were those who ventured a move to London as a means of bettering themselves. These more traditional immigrants came to take up apprenticeships, hoping to rise to be freemen, masters, and even guild wardens. Prosperous countryfolks sought
entrance to great companies; the multitude of smaller crafts provided a reasonable hope of success for those with lesser backgrounds. Side by side with such a trend of upward mobility, there were also those who were driven to the capital by the poverty in the countryside caused by the growth of capitalist agriculture and surplus labor force. Admittedly, the enormous influx of the impoverished immigrants posed an acute social problem, as the Vagrancy Act of 1572 eloquently testifies.® Whether as the effect of London’s magnetism or of the deprivation in the rural areas, one in eight of the survivors of the nation’s births would have been destined to have direct experience of life in the capital (Finlay 9). People were pushed to London as well as pulled.

It is a commonplace to describe London’s phenomenal growth as consequences of political and economic centralization. The presence of the court for the greater part of every year alone created a magnetism which drew peerage and ambitious gentlemen in search of office and preferment, together with those who followed them -- their families and servants. The number of resident gentlemen at the Inns of Court significantly increased as indicated by the five-fold rise in admissions between 1550-1650; the Parliamentary sessions also contributed to “the landed classes’ invasion of London” (Beier and Finlay 11-3). Political centralization, combined with more quotidian kinds of immigration, entailed a booming effect on the capital’s economy, especially through the rapidly growing building industry and food supply. London’s increasing demand of agricultural products was a significant factor in the development of an integrated national market. “an agent promoting regional agricultural specialization and commercial farming for the metropolitan markets” (Wrigley 1967: 44). The more or less completed process of economic centralization is well reflected by the fact that London paid as much in the subsidy as all the provincial towns put together. In describing the late sixteenth and the seventeenth-century London as “engine of economic change,” historians do not seem to exaggerate London’s impact on the national economy. With its consumers influencing local economies throughout most of southern England, its merchant increasingly dominating international trade, and its fashions and culture dictating provincial norms, London exemplifies most clearly the enormous hold which capital cities were able to exert over centralized states.

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It seems apparent, on the one hand, that the centralization was being achieved at the cost of other regions, and especially of provincial urban centers. In fact by the 1540s, as the author of the *Discourse of the Commonweal* deplored, decay afflicted "the most part of all the towns in England, London excepted" (Clark and Slack 1972: 9). King James also remarked at the start of the seventeenth century that "London would soon devour all England"; at about the same time a contemporary chronicler claimed that London "is going to eat up all England" (Clark and Slack 1976: 12, 62). The predatory image of the capital preying upon the rest of England prevails in a number of contemporary comments on London's prosperity. Apart from the negative implications of London's rise on national scale, it is no less clear that the capital itself was subject to internal problems, including a drastic restructuring of the urban topography. The native Londoners' bewildered response to the transformation of the relatively self-contained late medieval community to an anomalous and anonymous space of modern city was best encapsulated in the changing tropes with which they envisaged their home, that is, from 'matron' to 'monster.' One of the most recalcitrant aspects of the urban development was the mushrooming of suburbs that was felt to disrupt the traditional boundaries — not only topographically but also socially, economically, and ideologically.

The glittering picture of London's growth into a metropolis often conceals the fact that the transformation was hardly an unimpeded progress; the enormous change also created quirks and gaps in the traditional social structure of London. Centralization was no doubt in process, but its effects were variegated. While population grew continually, London's expansion was by no means uniform. The population grew at different rates in different areas of the capital. The rate of increase was greatest outside the city walls. Apparently, new immigrants to London generally settled first in the suburbs, which in turn formed highly variegated communities. The expansion of the eastern suburbs was particularly remarkable for both rapidity and size of the growth. In 1550 the districts east of the city were still mostly rural with only pockets of industrial and urban development. By the end of following two decades, the area became the highest in population density in and around London, surpassing that of the walled city. The primary cause of expansion was concentration of lower-class housing and also important textile and shipbuilding activity.
As the poor and the artisan classes increasingly concentrated in the eastern suburbs, the wealthy pushed to the west, encouraged by the fashionable proximity to the Court. Construction boomed with a wave of splendid squares and mansions for the landed elite, city financiers, and the courtiers. Luxury traders like goldsmiths, anxious to keep their clientele, dutifully followed them west, where the locus of legal profession had already been in place. The development of the West End for the nation's ruling elite and of the East End for the migrant laborers and seamen living on a few shillings thus tends to create another picture of London, now consisting of impoverished margin and affluent center.

It is all too easy to make a sharp distinction between the city proper and its suburban areas, the center and the margin, or the rich and the poor, or alternately to collapse the distinction in terms of ever-expanding center under the rubric of all-subsuming national and capitalist developments. In view of the concurrence of the social changes of London and the building of professional theatres in its suburbs, it is therefore somewhat axiomatic to describe the expansion in population as the material basis of the operation of public playhouses and to view the London theatres as centralized entertainment industry — as "parts of the extended market itself" (Bruster 22). Similarly, a contrary focus on the social polarization unfolded in the centralization process would highlight the physical location of the professional theatres at the outskirts of the capital whereby an emphasis on their social marginality could be no less convincingly advanced. If, as both positions seem to agree, the influx of people into London from other areas of England and the city's restructuration under such pressures assumed a signal role in the construction of Elizabethan-Jacobean drama, more specific cultural consequences of the urban growth are yet to be clarified. The ideological flux contemporaneous with the changes in the physical contour of the urban society should be also considered, although a customary look at it barely allows a path-breaking view of London's cultural-ideological map other than the dyadic model or the totalized if not a 'simple' one.

Indeed, it is E. A. Wrigley who, in his influential article, "a Simple Model of London's Importance 1650-1750," advanced the idea that London life was qualitatively as well as quantitatively different from that of the rest of England. The experience of London life was, in the historian's view, a force promoting the modernization of English society, "a
powerful solvent of the customs, prejudices and modes of action of traditional rural England (Wrigley 50). A higher proportion of daily contacts were thus casual and associated with a particular transaction rather than with custom and tradition, promoted ‘rational’ rather than ‘traditional’ patterns of behavior. According to this view, there was little contact, even less conflict, between the modernizing force of London and the late medieval heritage still much cherished by Londoners and reinforced to a certain extent by the rural population absorbed into the city. However, it is crucial to note that in many ways England was still very much a rural nation. Thus, despite some historians’ emphasis on the uniqueness of the capital’s social life, London was part and parcel of a society where “nearly 80 percent of the population still lived outside towns” (Clark and Slack 1976: 54).

Most likely, then, immigrants to London brought to the ‘rational’ urban society based on contractual social relations many of the traditions of ‘authority and deference’ into which they had been born in their villages. It would be certainly a mistake to suppose that the residual culture based upon social relations of traditional rural society was radically and completely displaced by the capitalist culture of urban origin. No less arguable, however, is the dichotomous view that posits an insurmountable gap between the two adversary cultural formations. Although such a formulation seems to approximate closer to the social realities of sixteenth-century England. Christopher Hill states: “two modes of life, with their different needs and standards. are in conflict as England moves out of the agricultural Middle Ages into the modern industrial world” (Hill 1986: 163). At the level of generalization. the collision between popular culture and the emergent ethos of pre-modern industrialism. frequently figured in the trope of Carnival vs. Lent. seems more acceptable than the magical dissolution of popular culture by ‘a powerful solvent’ of the metropolitan life. 10

However, both the ‘simple’ model and the dyadic model tend to simplify the cultural processes to which the London immigrants were exposed on their entry to the metropolitan society. Furthermore, both models seem incapable of capturing the variety of ways in which these newcomers accommodated themselves and in turn contributed to the formation of the urban culture, which may have also involved a restructuration of the existing social structure. By postulating, ipso facto, either a point of no return or an already doomed
contestation, both models of historical explanation obliterate an adequate understanding of the transitional state *per se*. In other words, they fill up what might have been a lack or vacuum – in the sense of indeterminacy and unknowability for the historical subjects themselves – with either a full-blown ‘rationalism’ or an intractably resistant ‘traditionalism.’ Useful as they may be in discerning the larger cultural pattern, these definitions must not be seen as fixed norms of sensibility or behavior which every individual conformed to or averted from. Nor should they be used to posit a cultural divide, which prescribes a polarized pair of ideological outlooks cast into an exhaustive conflict – to imagine, in brief, mutually exclusive counter-cultures. Rather, they should be conceived as constituting the parameter of cultural possibilities, in which the opposed tensions and tendencies within society still continued to overlap and interact, and in which the individual subjects sought to resolve the cultural contradiction by incorporating into or dissociating from one or the other tendency, or by negotiating between the two in their more variegated relations to the claims of the hegemonic culture.

It is these contradictory claims of cultural hegemony that the large number of youth who came to London to take up apprenticeship had to confront as they were initiated into the urban culture. In some respects apprenticeship was an obvious institution, performing an obvious set of social and economic functions. Above all, it was a key institution both in acculturating newcomers from the countryside and bringing up the next generation of journeymen and masters to the realities of responsible economic and civic life. From the time a youth began his apprenticeship, through the completion of his service, and into his adult life, he became a part of a culture which subjected him to an indoctrination about standards of behavior. It was, in other words, the primary means by which the urban social structure reproduced itself, and hence “the focus of some of the most characteristic social and cultural values of the middling sort” (Brooks “Apprenticeship,” 54). As such, this time-honored institution was by no means insulated from the ongoing social changes, which in the first place brought about an unprecedented expansion in the number of apprentices employed in London. Then, there must have been a critical point at which the increase placed a strain upon the system, preventing its smooth operation.
In fact, the gaps and quirks created in the interstices of urban growth manifested themselves not only in London's topography but also in its 'central' institution. That this backbone of the urban society was severely under strain is apparent, especially in view of the surprisingly low percentage of apprentices who successfully completed the normally seven-year-term service and subsequently entered to the company's or city's freedom. According to Steven Rappaport, "approximately three-fifths" of those apprenticed in sixteenth-century London to the fifteen companies, for which records survive, never finished their apprenticeship (312). It seems that the traditional objective of apprenticeship as the initiative move towards the goal of self-employed mastership was more or less in crisis if not in irrevocable decline. Although the increasing pressure of surplus labor force was largely responsible for such a crisis, it cannot be solely attributed to the external factors. For those who came to a premature termination of the apprenticeship were those who could find an employment, in the first place, in London's competing labor market. The cause, then, should be also located within the institution itself, which amalgamated 'the two modes of life' – traditionalism and rationalism – into its very nature.

On the one hand, apprenticeship was a highly formalized institution whose rules, privileges, and obligations were spelled out in a contractual arrangement specified in the indentures. The apprentice was named first, together with his father's or guardian's name, his occupation or social status and home town, and then the master was identified. The length of the term was then given, "During which term the said apprentice his said master well and truly shall serve, his secrets keep close, his commandments lawful and honest everywhere he shall willingly do: hurt nor damage to his said master he shall none do" (Smith 1973:150). The master obligated himself to teach the apprentice his trade and to provide him with food, drink, lodging and clothing. After the signing of the indentures, the names of the apprentice and his master were entered in the company records and then again in the city's records at the Guildhall. On the other hand, it was also a highly personal relationship that involved the apprentice for seven years or more in the life of his master's family. Such a relationship proved fundamentally precarious because an apprentice was subject to the patriarchal authority of his master who could turn out to be either benign or rather repressive, or somewhere between the extremes. The individual variables
notwithstanding, the personal relationship of apprenticeship was founded upon the traditional and hierarchical social relations of authority and deference, that is, subordination of man to master, whereas the formal arrangement of employment was embedded in contractual social relations.

How these two aspects—the contractual and the personal, the rational and the traditional, or the emergent and the dominant—were reconciled in practice is not readily apparent. Most likely, there was a certain amount of tension intrinsic to this central urban institution, a tension, if not outright conflict, generated by “the difference between youth and age, servant and master, discipline and freedom, ambitions postponed and ambitions realized” (Seaver 134). There were obviously some successful cases, in which masters helped apprentices, after the completion of service, to raise capital to enter into business for themselves, and some masters actually passed on their business. These positive developments are nonetheless offset by the greater number of failed apprenticeships, as reflected by the much lower rate of successful completions of the term of service. There must have been, of course, many exploitative masters who “ruled their households with the full force of absolute patriarchal authority” (Brooks 74), thus occasioning the many court cases alleging the maltreatment of apprentices. In fact, legal records of the City courts reveal a steady stream of cases, which attests to the frequent breakdowns of master-apprentice relationship.

In these litigations, the plaintiff apprentice or their guardians presented an unflattering picture of exploited innocence, of the provision of inadequate food and clothing, of the neglect of training, of false accusations followed by abuse and undeserved beatings. Likewise, the defendant masters normally portrayed their former apprentices as unmitigated rogues, rude and unruly, negligent in their duties, and given to haunting taverns and gaming houses, to embezzling their master’s profits to pay such entertainment, and to returning late at night drunk and disorderly (Seaver 137; Brooks 74). In these cases, human failings seem to be more responsible than the nature or function of the institution. Nonetheless, the working parameter of personal relationship is often delimited by the structured social relations. What seems to be the consequence of human failings actually derives from the internal tension of the institution. This can be seen in the terms of the
masters’ defense, which are implicated in and appeal to the higher civic authority – the City regulations on the behavior of apprentices.

There were regulations enforced both by the London Common Council and by the various companies, which attempted to govern the lives of the apprentices. City regulations, in particular, prohibited them from wearing any clothing above their station and assessed fines for engaging in dancing or masking, for being at present at tennis courts or bowling alleys, for attending cock fights, brothels and stage plays. Along with the clothing regulations, there was a rule requiring apprentices to wear their hair short. That these rules were often resented and violated is suggested by a precept of the Aldermanic Court proclaiming that no apprentice would receive the freedom of the city unless he “shall first present himself at that time with the hair of his head cut in a decent and comely manner” (Smith 1973: 151). As a part and parcel of the Elizabethan Sumptuary laws, the city regulation on apprentices’ apparel reveals a preponderous concern over one of the negative aspects of social change, that is, the loosening of one’s proper place within a social hierarchy. This in turn explains what underlies the prohibition on the recreational activities on the urban scene. Apart from the moral degeneration that they allegedly breed in the youth, the entertainment establishments were seen to draw the working population out of its assigned place, the master’s house or the workplace.

It is these loopholes of dislocation that the masters saw their errant apprentices slip through and the City government accordingly sought to suppress. And it is also through one of these loopholes that an apprentice of 1580s found his way ‘out of place.’ as he was found “sleeping on the grass near theatre.” In 1584 William Fleetwood, the Recorder of the City of London, wrote to Lord Burgley.

Upon Mondaye night I returned to London and found all the wardes full of watchers. The cause thereof was for that very nere the Theatre or Curten at the tyme of the Playes there laye a prentice sleping upon the grasse, and one Charllses al. Grostock dyd tume upon the belly of the same prentice, whereupon the apprentice start up and after wordes they fell to playne bloues; the companie encressed of bothe sides to the number of Vc at the least. This Challes exclaimed and said that he was a gentleman and that the apprentice was but a Rascal; and some there were litell better then rooges that tooke upon theym the name of gentilmen and said the prentizes were
but the skomme of the worlde. Upon these trobles the prentizes began next
daye, being Twesdaye, to make mutines and assemblies, and dyd conspire to
have broken the presones & to have taken further the prentizes that were
imprisoned – chief conspirators committed to Newgate and stand indicted of
their lewd demeanors (Chambers vol 4: 297).

If we attempt to locate in this scene a site of contact between the theatres and apprentices of
the late sixteenth-century London, we are left with a rather insubstantial information. For,
at the first sight, the scene only seems to offer a tangential or contingent relationship
between the two. Like many other surviving records of apprentices' contact with the
theatres, it is not about their reaction to or participation in the theatrical event but about
what seems ulterior to it. that is, brawls or riots involving apprentices, domestic servants,
gentlemen of Inns of Court, and less frequently players. There seems to be little if any in
this scene that tells of the theatre's role in the outbreak of disorder except for its contiguity.

By contrast, the scene provides a glimpse into the 'youth culture' of the early modern
London. The volatility and the sense of solidarity with which the apprentices rushed into
a collective action attest to the apprentices' view of themselves as a distinct social group.
Meanwhile, their antagonism towards "gentilmen" and the authority who arrested their
fellow apprentices may be attributed to their transitory and precarious status both in social
hierarchy and as a distinct age group. The scene further tells us that the city authorities
normally perceived the youth group as chiefly responsible for the frequent, if not chronic,
public disorder. For the City set up a 'full watch' on that Monday night -- a rather unusual
measure for an incidence of fray involving a few hundred people – as if they had predicted
a commotion of a larger scale on the following day. Apparently, the City fathers knew
better than being content with the suppression of the minor disturbance near a northern
playhouse, which eventually turned to a devastating riot flooding into the streets of
London.

A focus on the apprentices as a collective, as constituents of a distinct subculture, tends
to preclude any formulation of their 'intimate' relationship to the theatres. Evidences on
their festive activities are rather indicative of their 'hostility' towards the commercial
institution. Shrove Tuesday, the traditional festival of London apprentices, is well known
for the ritualized yet violent attack on brothels, theatres, and other places of entertainment.

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As John Taylor (1580-1653), the London waterman-poet and comic writer, described, "Youths arm'd with cudgels, stones, hammers, rules, trowels and hand-saws, put playhouses to the sack and bawdy-houses to the spoil" (Burke 1977: 145). In view of the apprentices' riotous behavior against the entertainment industry, it is thus somewhat axiomatic to argue that the urban youths constituted a self-consciously tradition-bearing group, taking a stand against newer forms of urban popular culture. The apprentices may have indeed seen an incipient commercialism embodied in the parasitic establishments for entertainment, which violated the communal values of the urban society. They also may have articulated their resistance to such cultural change in a symbolic turning of the world upside down.

However, these observations should not be folded into an assertion that the apprentices took a decisive stance on the wing of traditionalism. Nor do they warrant a view of the theatres, among other entertainment institutions, as harbinger of capitalist culture, which averted the moral agents of London streets from its premises only to "become the target of violence" (Wilson 148). Equally unwarranted is the view that the theatres of early modern London constituted a strong foothold of popular culture, a haven for a continuance of the carnivalesque (Bristol 43-67). It is worthwhile, instead, to keep in mind Peter Burke's precaution: "It is easier to point out the functions of [the older and newer cultural forms] than to discover what they meant to contemporaries, if indeed they had the same meanings for everyone" (1977: 146). With this in mind, let us turn to other evidence related to the primal scene of the contact between theatres and apprentices of London: one being an emergent cultural form and a commercial institution, allegedly 'parasitic' to the urban economy, and the other being a time-honored, 'central' institution of the urban community.

Indeed, some evidence points toward a rather ambiguous if not explicitly hospitable relationship between apprentices and the professional theatres of London. On the top of their foresight of the apprentices' further commotion, the City fathers also knew that there existed something more than a contiguous relationship between the riotous apprentices and the seemingly inanimate theatres. Although the Recorder's letter does not reveal what measure was taken to "the Theatre or Curten" in this case, both playhouses were shut down after a similar incidence in the following year when "one Browne serving man quarelled
with handicraft prentises” (Chambers vol. 4: 298). In the City’s view, the site of disturbance must have posed as serious a problem as the agents of disorder. For London’s leading citizens knew that the apprentices slipped out of their workplace in order, not just to hang ‘around,’ but to find their way into the theatre. As the generation of Lord Mayors of London continually deplored, “the youth thereof is greatly corrupted & their manners infected with many evill & ungodly qualities, by reason of the wanton & prophane divises represented on the stages by the sayed players” (Chambers 307). In other words, the theatres were perceived, at least by those in the civic government, as not only related to but also contagious with disorder. Throughout the period of their operation, the public theatres of London were constantly attacked by the City as a breeding ground of urban problems – the spread of plague, traffic congestion and mob violence, inefficient workers and dangerous ideas. Among a number of accusations filed against the theatres, the indictment for “the corrupting of our youth” figures more or less conspicuous. For what was at stake in such an indictment concerned not merely the physical dimension of urban problems but the mental and ideological dimensions, upon which the entire process of reproduction of the urban society was predicated. As a Lord Mayor acknowledges, “our youth” however misguided. “are the seed of the Church of god & the common wealth among us” (Chambers 308).

However. the city authorities did not hesitate to associate the seed of “Christian Common Wealth” with “all vagrant persons & maisterless men that hang about the Citie” (Chambers 317). In their ceaseless complaints addressed to the Privy Council, the City continued to represent the playgoers as “the basest sort,” “the meanest sort,” “light & lewd disposed persons,” or “base & refuse sort of people,” among whom apprentices, servants and “such yoong gentlemen as have small regard of credit or conscience” were also found. While the assertion that “the greatest number [of playgoers] are of the meanest sort” may indeed have been grounded on reality, it is not difficult to tell what the authorities had in mind. By construing the majority of playgoers to be “the most susceptible and dangerous groups in the general population, the lowly and the youthful” (Montrose 1996:49), the city government sought to bring to their side the assistance of the central government, which proved almost always a reluctant partner in suppressing the theatres. Such an intention
reveals itself in the requests that normally conclude the City’s correspondence to the Privy Council. In 1595 the Lord Mayor finished the long catalogue of “inconveniences” caused by the theatres, by asking:

... to direct your lettres to the Iustices of peac of Surrey & Middlesex for the present stay & finall suppressing of the said Plaies, aswell at the Theator & Bankside as in all other places about the Citie. Whearby wee doubt not but, the opportunytie & very cause of so great disorders being taken away, wee shalbe able to keepe the people of this Citie in such good order & due obedienic, as that her highnes & your HH: shalbe well pleased & content thearwithal (Chambers 318).

The City’s requests were rarely abided by the crown, except for suspected outbreaks of plague. Apparently, the crown’s view of the theatres was markedly different from the City’s view. In the crown’s view, the negative role of the theatres, described as “the great hyndrance of the trades & traders inhabiting this Citie” or “prophnation of the good & godly religion established among us” (Chambers 307), was outweighed by their more positive role, which “may tende to represse vyce & extoll vertue, for the recreation of the people. & thereby to drawe them from sundrye worser exercyses” (Chambers 287). While the City insisted on a more disciplinary, repressive measure, the crown seemed to advocate a kind of safety-valve theory, and alternately prescribed a repressive tolerance. The Privy Council’s response of 1594 to the City’s complaint is typical in propounding that “the people must have some kynd o f recreatiion. & that policie requireth to divert idle heads & other ill disposed from other woorse practize by this kynd of exercize” (Chambers 316, emphasis added).

A focus on the disputes over the theatres between the City and the crown may lead to an argument that the theatres were an appendage to the court activities and as such served to function as a vehicle of aristocratic ideologies. A related contention is that the puritan middle class of London maintained an adversary relationship to the prime manifestation of the ‘school of abuse,’ ‘market of bawderie,’ or ‘Satan’s synagogue.’ In a wider framework of historical development of a modern nation state, the disputes can be seen as symptomatic of the clash between the presumably local perspective of the London authorities and the national perspective held by the top officials of the central government, who found an
effective ideological state apparatus in the theatres of London. All these critical efforts to define the theatres' institutional status or ideological function seem to operate within the parameter of the attempts by the competing authorities to control the theatres, as if the initiative of control, whether by the City or the crown, had immediately come into effect—that is, without an intermediary agency of law-enforcement. Since the theatres were located outside the city's jurisdiction, the City had to depend upon the support of the Privy Council, which would in turn rely on an effective execution of its orders by "the justices of peace of Surrey & Middlesex," -- the two counties where the theatres were operating. The City was well aware of the significance of this machinery of legal system under the central government and, more acutely, of its occasional, if not chronic, malfunction.

... retaining of playes on Sabboth day is not obseived, and especiallie within the Libertie of the Clincke and in the parish of St. Saviours in southwark. which disorder is to be ascribed to the negligence of some of the Justices of Peace in that countie (305).

Even when the City finally won the Privy Council's "partial" consent for not a "finall" but a temporary suppression of the theatres on Sundays, they had to see the hard-won proclamation slip through the fingers of local officers of law-enforcement. Neither the City nor the central government could ensure a successful implementation of its legislative initiatives. Why? At least, two factors can be taken into account.

Historians of English local government in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century have noted the "interhierarchical" or "mediating position" (Kent 22) within the legal system occupied by Justices of Peace, village or ward constables, and jurymen of various jurisdictional units. In dealing with the problems of disorder, these local authorities or agents were "critical in determining whether 'disorderly' offenses were proceeded against or recorded at all" (Fletcher and Stevenson 30). As the "first tier" of local authority, the constables and their deputies in particular were said by higher authorities to be delinquent in apprehending vagrants or suppressing taverns, inns, or alehouses where illegal trades, not to mention criminal activities, were allegedly transacted (Fletcher and Stevenson 38). The constables were appointed annually by their neighbors, the middling sort of people who constituted a broader base of the local government, and the constables were
themselves craftsmen, tradesmen, or yeomen (Kent 64-7, 174-5). As such, the office was “rooted in local custom as well as in a national structure of authority” (Kent 23). The justice of peace came from local gentry and was thus placed well above the constabulary class in social hierarchy. But even the justice of the peace, according to Keith Wrightson, seems to “rarely have acted vigorously to enforce penal legislation except when stimulated by direct and unambiguous commands from the Privy Council, by crisis condition, or by both” (1980: 26). As local notables, the JPs may have shared “the ideal of neighbourly living” prevailing in the middling sort of people both in rural and urban contexts (Underdown 16-8; Boulton 292).

Was it the case with the suppression of plays on the Sabbath that the JPs of Surrey did not act immediately and effectively to carry out the central government’s precept? Or, was this one of the cases in which “JPs found themselves coping with a resistance from the constable” (Kent 54)? After all, the execution of law depended upon “co-operation of [these] unpaid, annually appointed, amateurs” (Fletcher and Stevenson 38). It is not certain which tier of the local law officers was responsible for the ‘malfunction’ in this case, although we can imagine that the measure prescribed by the higher authorities would not be taken into effect by the Shakespearean counterparts. Justice Shallow, himself once an avid playgoer (2 Henry IV), would certainly be unwilling to shut down his favorite resort: so too Constable Elbow, who remains inactive in pulling down the bawd-house partly because it is a ‘common house’ frequented by his neighbors, if not himself (Measure for Measure). In some aspect, Elbow’s somewhat purposeful inactiveness is indicative of the English constable’s “studied negligence,” by means of which the intermediary position of local law officers was negotiated between “national legislative prescription and local customary norms,” between “two concepts of order” (Wrightson 1980: 31, 21). Hence there were different concepts of ‘disorder’ too. What was “the oportunytie & very cause of so great disorders” in the City’s view may thus have been seen by the constables as a pleasurable, if more or less raucous, recreation for their neighbors. However, these neighbors – citizens of London or freemen of the city companies – do not figure as playgoers in the ‘document of control.’ while the next generation of constables and their neighbors – the apprentices – takes a conspicuous place in it.
As Andrew Gurr has noted, the presence of citizens in the London theatres is not well if at all documented except in literary sources. The City’s correspondence to the Privy Council continually asserts that “the greatest number therof is the basist sort.” The City’s complaints are evidently formulaic, reiterating the same items of attack in a remarkably similar structural pattern and in the same phrases and words. They are rarely based upon actual events. The insistent association of the youthful with the socially lowly in a characteristically anxiety-ridden tone is, of course, aimed at provoking an anxiety, among the noble addressees, for the politically volatile atmosphere the theatre allegedly breeds. Even when the City reports of real events, such as frays and riots, specific details of an event eventually work to confirm the ready-made formula of the theatre as “cheerf cause of disorder,” featuring only the infamous class of youth and lowly. One such report of 1580, however, reveals — by a slip of tongue — that not only “the children of honest citizens” but also the solid members of ‘the Christian Common Wealth’ were themselves there in the theatres. In 1580, Sir Nicholas Woodrofe, Lord Mayor of London wrote to Lord Chancellor.

On Sundaie last that some great disorder was committed at the Theatre, I sent for the underr sherie of Middlesex to understand the circumstances to the intent that by my self or by him I might have caused such redresse to be had in dutie and discretion I might, and therefore did also send for the plaiers to have apered afore me, and the rather because thoses plaies doe make assembles of Cittizens and their familes of whom I haue charged” (Chambers 279)

Who were these citizens that did not hesitate to mix themselves with their apprentices and servants, and with ‘the meanest sort of people”? Given the wide range in the amount of income and property that London’s middling sort constituted, we cannot simply establish the ‘citizen’ as a single socioeconomic category. Nor can we infer from their socioeconomic status a definite cultural behavior, that is, the preference for playgoing. Those who are able to pay a penny or two, and who do not share the city fathers’ hostility toward the theatre and paternalism toward the ‘errant’ youth, could and did resort to the stigmatized institution. It is probable, then, to locate a social and cultural divide between these theatre-going ‘ordinary’ citizens and the self-proclaimed opponents of the theatres: “the lorde Maior and his Brethren the aldermen, together with the grave and discrete
citizens in the Comen Counsell" (Chambers 274), who endorsed the condemnation of the theatres addressed to the Privy Council. Perhaps, there was a 'class-within-class' struggle in the late sixteenth-century London.

In view of what historians have termed "the crisis of 1590s," during which serious threats to the civic polity were constantly posed, such a view can certainly be entertained. Simultaneously, however, we should not overlook the relative stability of the urban society, which could more or less successfully cope with, if not totally contain, the crisis. No community is without conflict; not every conflict brings the community to the ground. Instead of seeking to establish a structured – either divisive or cohesive – social relation, we should look for the moments at which a structuring process is instantiated, in order to understand the culture of a society in its own dynamics. Both totalization and polarization must give way to a negotiated view, by which we envision the cultural process of a past society and by which the historical subjects – citizens of early modern London, and their lesser neighbors or next generation – might have pursued a more productive life. I do not imply that London's middling sort of people took up the negotiated position as a conscious strategy. Rather, I would argue that negotiation, in some particular instances at the least, is the effect of the complexity and confusion of experiences in the urban society of early modern London. Negotiation in this sense is embedded in the radically unpredictable nature of historical process, in which an active agent of a certain ideology – 'rationalism' or 'traditionalism' – for example – happen to confirm what he or she has consciously opposed. In other words, negotiation is possible not simply because the subjects are 'free,' but also because the ideological or cultural formation itself is contradictory.

To a certain extent, the formation of urban middling sort embodies the contradiction in their ambiguous status within the distinctively hierarchical social order. In terms of class allegiance, they might have experienced a confusion as well as definite alignment and decisive opposition. They might have found themselves identifying with the social betters in some occasions, and with the inferiors in others. In terms of cultural hegemony, the confusion was no less profound. Artisans and small tradesmen as well as apprentices might have sacked the playhouses one day and found themselves in the theatre a few days later. In some aspects, the theatre itself enacted the cultural contradiction both in its precarious
institutional status and the dynamics of its drama. Although the critical views of the London theatres either as a haven for continuance of popular culture or as a harbinger of capitalist culture are in themselves partial, it seems that such views were nonetheless taken up by the contemporaries themselves, but with a mixed feeling of hostility and fascination. While the site of contact between London apprentices and the theatre on the institutional level seems to figure an ambiguous relationship, such a relationship is in turn transfigured within the walls of playhouses. It is this internal dynamics of audience-stage interaction that I now venture into.
In 1592 Lord Mayor of London wrote to Lord Burgley of a familiar scene of the city:

Being informed of a great disorder & tumult lyke to grow yesternight abowt viij of the clock within the Borough of Southwark, I went thither with all speed I could, taking with mee on of the Sherifes, whear I found great multitudes of people assembled together, & the principall actours to bee certain servants of the feltmakers gathered together out of Barsey street & the Black fryers, with a great number of lose & maisterless men apt for such purposes.

Investigation of the following morning revealed that:

it began upon the serving of a warrant from my L. Chamberlain by on of the Knight Mareshalls men upon a feltmakers servant. who was committed to the Mareshallsea with certen others. that were accused to his L. by the sayed Knight Mareshalls men without cause of offence, as themselves doe affirm. For rescuing of whome the sayed companies assembled themselves by occasion & pretence of their meeting at a play. which bysides the breach of the Sabboth day giveth opportunitie of committing these & such lyke disorders (Chambers 310).

Just like the rioters in early modern London, the republican conspirators of Caesar’s Rome pretend to attend a play at Pompey’s Theatre: “Repair to Pompey's Porch” (Julius Caesar 1.3.126. 147, 153). Repeated thrice with an increasing urgency, Cassius’s injunction seems to add to the place a significance of its own. It is a matter of pure conjecture whether the insurrecting London apprentices in the face of abusive power found an identifiable position within the Roman republicans’ uprising against Caesar. It is a strong probability, though, that the Romans’ choice of a theatre as a place to initiate their action of revolt must have attracted the Londoners’ attentive eyes and ears. The analogy is not further sustained, however, as Shakespeare slyly ‘distorts’ his source: in Plutarch the assassination itself takes place in Pompey’s Theatre; in Shakespeare’s play the Capitol supplants the theatre. Probably, the actor-playwright did not want to associate his place of business with a
'regicide,' although the regicide indeed happened – virtually if not actually – on the stage of the Globe.

Instead, Shakespeare seems to have come up with another, more delicate solution to maintain the reverberating analogy between political action and the theatre. Both Caesar and the republicans in the play conceive the political action as theatrical event, but in contrasting ways. Caesar participates in the Lupercal festivities, demonstrating an intimacy with and a commitment to the popular culture of the Roman citizens: “Forget not in your speed, Antonio,/ To touch Calpurnia, for our elders say/ The barren, touched in this holy chase,/ Shake off their sterile curse” (1.2.6-9). The carnivalesque energy of the festival is in turn appropriated only to manipulate the crowd’s enthusiasm into a theatre of idolatry, which enacts the offer of the crown to Caesar thrice refused. At each refusal, “the rabblement hooted, and clapped their chopped hands, and threw up their sweaty nightcaps, and uttered such a deal of stinking breath” (240-1), as Casca describes it. This off-stage drama culminates in a brilliant coup de théâtre, the final swoon in the marketplace when Caesar falls before the crowd. Caesar’s theatre, in brief, is an approximation if not a replication of what we know as ‘the Elizabethan theatre’ where the popular tradition intermingles with a new realism, where the audience of a predominantly plebeian character still plays an active role in their unmitigated reaction to the stage. Casca’s concluding observation confirms this: “If the tag-rag people did not clap him and hiss him according as he pleased and displeased him, as they use to do the players in the theatre. I am no true man” (251-4).

Apparently, Casca is describing the ‘mob’ scene condescendingly. Although he is one of the spectators in Caesar’s theatre, he proves a critical one, seeing through the political intention of that theatre. Casca is not alone in observing Caesar’s theatre with a disenchanted eye. The two leading republicans, Brutus and Cassius, remain outside the theatrical dynamics operating between the ‘rabblement’ and the supreme actor. In Cassius Caesar finds “a great observer,” who “looks through the deeds of men” and “loves no plays” (1.2.222-3). But, after the killing of Caesar, it is Cassius who envisions the murderers’ heroic ‘action’ being enacted on future stages: “How many ages hence/ Shall this our lofty scene be acted over/ In states unborn and accents yet unknown!” (3.1.111-3).
And, it is Brutus, before the killing, who instructs the conspirators in the art of Roman actors: “Let not our looks put on our purposes;/ But bear it as our Roman actors do:/ With untired spirits and formal constancy” (2.1.225-7). In a sharp contrast to the Caesarian theatre, the republican theatre dwells in the domain of idea. The republican actors play to the ideal audience, whereas Caesar ‘pleases and displeases’ the local audience at will. Roman actor’s “formal constancy” espoused by Brutus counterpoints the Elizabethan actor’s protean transformation, which is better served by Caesar’s acknowledgement and conscious display of his “infirmity” (2.1.262). The republican theatre, then, may represent ‘the author’s theatre,’ toward which some, if not all, playwrights of Elizabethan-Jacobean era are said to have striven. in contradistinction to the popular or the audience’s theatre. The politics of Rome at the crucial juncture of emerging absolutism and traditional republicanism seems to be embedded in these two different conceptions of the theatre.

It is commonplace to note that ‘Shakespeare’s Rome’ is more like the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century England, or London in particular, than the ancient city. Many critical readings of Julius Caesar produced in the vein of political criticism of 1980s thus identify a connection between Caesar and English monarchy, and between the Roman republicans and the radical wing of the English Puritans’ ‘godly egalitarianism.’ Such a view is difficult to resist, although it certainly does not warrant a conclusion that the play endorses an unimpeded triumph of Caesarism. Nor do the analogues work to establish a pair of perfectly mirrored parallels. There are quirks and overlaps, too, between Shakespeare’s London and Caesar’s Rome. The ‘parallels’ should be complicated if not annulled. What follows is an attempt to locate points of entry through which the London audiences – apprentices in particular -- might have found their way into the world of the play, and into the theatre as well.

The strongest link is again the theatres or the theatricality of politics. Caesar’s appropriation of the popular, ceremonial culture to his political ends seems to find its analogue in the Tudor state’s licensing and patronage of the public theatres. As clearly indicated by the Privy Council’s unperturbed response to the City’s attack, the Elizabethan regime perceived the London theatres as a means of diverting the ‘idle heads’ to a harmless ‘recreation,’ thus potentially useful as “an instrument for the aggrandizement of the dynastic
nation state and for the supervision and governance of its subjects” (Montrose 1996: 29). On the top of these common denominators in Caesarian and Elizabethan use of theatre, it is all too easy to build a thesis that “through allusion to the radical subversiveness of carnival, the play mimics a crucial juncture in the precarious cultural reconstruction of the absolutist state” (Wilson 147). Such an argument ignores a seemingly minor but contextually significant difference between the two regimes. In later Elizabethan England, establishment and licensing of professional theatres in London was concomitant with the nation-wide suppression of the religious drama and popular rites in the wake of Reformation. In Rome, the ceremonial culture is not at all suppressed; there seems to have been no Reformation in the capital of the pagan world. Caesar appropriates but does not replace the traditional popular culture in order to build his ‘political’ theatre. As Caesar’s order to “touch Calpurnia” to “shake off [her] sterile curse” and to “leave no ceremony out” (1.2.7-9, 11) makes clear, his “ceremony” is firmly rooted to the fertility rites of the agrarian society.\(^\text{20}\)

By contrast, Elizabethan or Jacobean royal processions have often been seen as a substitute for such popular rites of the traditional society. How was this discrepancy perceived, or was it perceived at all by the London audience, who are well known for their habit of identifying, if not entirely collapsing, the difference between the ancient and the modern?\(^\text{21}\) What significations did the word “ceremony” – one of the most resounding words in the play – bring to the spectators at the Globe, who lived in the post-Reformation London and came to a theatre featuring both a drama and a jig?\(^\text{22}\) A detour through a larger cultural context might help to clarify the issue at hand.

As many historians agree, the transition on the threshold of modern European societies involved a historical shift from a culture focused upon local community to a culture that incorporates the local within the national framework and subordinates it to the political and cultural center. The potential conflicts implicated in the process of political centralization was exacerbated in the case of the English society, whose break with its own past was radicalized by the Reformation. The cultural discontinuity created in the post-Reformation society has often been explored in the domain of the religious and civic ceremonies, since the impact of the Reformation upon the social fabric was most highly visible in this particular cultural field. A customary description of the change has been that the advent of
the Protestantism with its powerful ally, the nation-state, brought about the fragmentation and loss of a pre-existing organic community, one that had been infused with the festive and sacramental culture of late medieval Catholicism. Mervyn James, for instance, has recently argued that the decline of Corpus Christi plays in the middle and later years of the sixteenth-century was the consequence of the early modern Protestant state’s concerted efforts to suppress all the regional and civic customs and institutions associated with the Roman Catholic Church. The effects of change were ambiguous, James suggests, because the nation-state, though more or less firmly in place, lost much of the broad sense of community espoused in the ritualistic culture of the traditional English society, and because such a loss would eventually undermine the state’s legitimation basis with divisive and conflictual ideological claims (James 1994: 8-47).

Although we should be more careful than immediately to conclude that medieval social cohesion was replaced by modern political coercion, this may be the case particularly in the pre-modern urban contexts. The impact of Reformation on the national scale may suggest a major conflict between central government and regional polities. But Charles Phythian-Adams’s study of the sixteenth-century Coventry reveals that the civic government itself was beleaguered by internal tensions and conflicts. What was at stake in the ‘reformation’ of the moderate town seems to have been competing definitions of “ceremony.” According to Phythian-Adams, urban communities of early modern England underwent “a more abrupt break with the past” than rural areas, where social control by central government was more or less indirect and much part of the traditional “annual pattern of ceremonies and cognate observances peculiar to each local community” was still retained if gradually being declined (118). In the urban context, the change was immediate and radical: “Not only were specific customs and institutions brusquely changed or abolished, but a whole, vigorous and variegated popular culture, the matrix of everyday life, was eroded and began to perish” (119-20). In Coventry, these changes were most effectively carried out by a process of substitution, in which sacred ceremonies and popular rites disappeared only to give way to ‘the new secular order,’ in which formal communal processions were abolished in order to restrict the formal communal involvement of any sort to the mayoral or aldermanic inauguration ceremonies.
It is this secularized ceremony, rather than a total liquidation of ceremony, with which the leading representatives of the ‘reformed’ society of Coventry attempted to appropriate the previously “pervasive role of the pre-Reformation Church and its practices in that community” (Phythian-Adams 122). Nevertheless, the post-Reformation civic ceremonies did not recover the major function of what they had replaced. The late medieval framework of ceremonial life operated as “visible means of relating individuals to the social structure,” and as such often provided opportunities for bringing together in celebratory circumstances those who might be otherwise opposed or separated in their respective spheres. This communal quality of a late medieval urban society – particularly “the evident subordination of the parts to the workings of the whole” (122) – was sought in the post-Reformation civic ceremony. The attempt was evidently aborted, since, Phythian-Adams concludes, for the civic elite of the town, who had helped to bring about all these changes and formed a more or less oligarchic group, societal horizons were much narrower. Thus, by the beginning of the seventeenth century, “the claims of the community were yielding first place to class royalties” (128).

In London, the rapid disintegration of what had once evidently formed a coherent ceremonial pattern must have been further accelerated as it was growing into a metropolis. As Peter Burke has observed, parishes and wards were losing their cultural importance, because London was growing fast by immigration, and so contained a substantial number of people who had been uprooted from their traditional community and were not yet accustomed to London traditions. But ‘traditions’ themselves were radically modified; some of them entirely displaced. The traditional Corpus Christi procession and plays had already been effectively suppressed by 1570s, so had parish dedication day festivals since they were mostly associated with Catholic saints. Some other traditional festivals were still active – the notorious May Day and Shrovetide among them – though in a residual form, but shops remained open during all these festivals except Christmas and Easter, which must have reduced participation in festivals (Burke 1978: 145-7). In this diluted cultural scene of post-Reformation London, two different families of ostensibly festive events took the place of religious ceremonies: the royal procession and the Lord Mayor’s Show. These secularized ceremonies appropriated the older forms of religious and popular rites, but in
such a way that the primary function was redirected into the legitimation of the governing group. Both royal and civic ceremonies on the London streets were aimed to disseminate political messages in support of the establishment rather than address or redress the concerns of the community as a whole. And both participated in the common understanding of politics as theatre, epitomized in the statement that the ‘public must be fed with shows.’ Were these two authorities of theatre somehow in competition, that is, in relation to their audience? Can we discern which is Caesar’s theatre and which is the republicans’? This leads to the second link of parallels between Shakespeare’s London and Caesar’s Rome – which is, the alleged anti-theatrical prejudice of the Roman Tribunes and the London Aldermen.

The opening scene of Julius Caesar seems indeed to reenact the controversy over London’s professional theatres. Flavius and Murrelus rebuke the “certain Commoners” (1.1.1-3) for making a holiday to celebrate Caesar’s triumph, just as the London Aldermen complained that the theatres “drawe the prentices & servants of the Citie from worke.” Just like their London counterparts, the Roman Tribunes show a preoccupation with one’s proper place in society.

Flavius. Hence! Home, you idle creatures, get you home!
Is this a holiday? What, know you not.
Being mechanical, you ought not to walk
Upon a labouring day without the sign
Of your profession? Speak, what trade art thou?

Carpenter. Why, sir, a carpenter.

Murrelus. Where is thy leather apron and thy rule?
What dost thou with thy best apparel on?
You, sir, what trade are you? (1.1.1-9)

Obviously, the Tribunes share the concerns expressed in the Elizabethan sumptuary laws and the City regulations on the apprentices’ apparel as well as the Aldermen’s view of the theatres as a breeding ground of ‘idleness.’ In both London and Rome, dislocation of the labor force from workplace, coupled with blurring of social distinctions in “best apparel,” represents the unsettling effects of theatre-going. But the Tribunal and the Aldermainic views of theatre begin to diverge, as they reveal quite different conceptions of political functions of the theatre. Apart from the theatres being “cheefe cause of disorder” and “great hyndrance to
the trade and tradesmen of the Cittie," the London authorities construed the effects of "playes & enterludes" to be fundamentally subversive. Far from inculcating moral lessons in the subjects of 'her highness,' the stage representation of "nothing ells but unchaste fables, lascivious divises, shifts of cozenage, & matters of lyke sort" only serves, in the Aldermen's view, to "draue the same into example of imitation & not of avoyding the syaed lewd offences" (Chambers 317). For the Roman Tribunes, 'Caesar's theatre' operates in quite the opposite way. The theatre of idolatry works to empower the ruler. That is why the Tribunes are intent on having "these growing feathers [i.e., the Commoners who flock into Caesar's ceremonial theatre] plucked from Caesar's wing," which "will make him fly an ordinary pitch./ Who else would soar above the view of men/ And keep us all in servile fearfulness" (1.1.71-4). Such an effort seems to succeed, at least for the moment, as Flavius comments somewhat self-reassuringly on the crowd's disappearance: "They vanish tongue-tied in their guiltiness" (61).

"A great crowd" reappears, however, in the immediately following scene of Caesar's theatre (1.2.sd). Thus, the parallels between Rome and London resume, as we find the Lord Mayor of London deploring in 1583 at the instant reconstruction of the 'house of infamacie' destroyed by 'godes rightfull hand.'

"... unlawfull spectacles and unchaste enterludes [are responsible for] the drawing of godes wrath and plages upon us. whereof god hath in his judgement shewed a late terrible example at Paris Garden. in which place in great contempt of god the scaffoldes ar new builded. and the multitudes on the Saboath daie called together in most excessive number. These things ar objected to us. both in open sermons at Poules crosse and elsewhere in the hearing of such as repaire from all partes of to our shame and grief. when we cannot remedie it." (Chambers 294-5).

The parallels here are not only limited to the unquenchable desire for a spectacular entertainment on the part of the spectators. The rhetorical urgency of the god-fearing Mayor finds its analogue in the strong emotionalism that characterizes Murrelus's harangue over the Commoners' "heartless" shift of allegiance from Pompey to Caesar.

You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things!

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O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome,
Knew you not Pompey? Many a time and oft
Have you climbed up to walls and battlements,
To towers and windows, yea, to chimney tops,
Your infants in your arms, and there have sat
The livelong day, with patient expectation,
To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome.
And when you saw his chariot but appear
Have you not made an universal shout,
That Tiber trembled underneath her banks
To hear the replication of your sounds
Made in her concave shores?
And do you now put on your best attire?
And do you now cull out a holiday?
And do you now strew flowers in his way,
That comes in triumph over Pompey's blood?
Be gone!
Run to your houses, fall upon your knees,
Pray to the gods to intermit the plague
That needs must light on this ingratitude (1.1.34-54).

It is not difficult to see that Murrelus's dependence on the imagery of stony hearts, chariots, swelling rivers, and, above all, plagues evokes the Old Testament—Exodus in particular—favored by the Puritan reformers in the late Elizabethan England and their "spiritual" style of preaching. Besides, Murrelus's rhetoric is in turn implemented in Flavius's anti-ritualistic action: "Disrobe the images/ If you find them decked with ceremonies... let no images/ Be hung with Caesar's trophies" (1.1.63-4, 67-8). Several critics have indeed taken note of the rhetorical similarity and suggested an analogy between the Tribunes and the Puritan preachers. In this version, Caesar worship is represented as something akin to Roman Catholic worship, whose 'theatricality' drew a fire from all the sectors of the Protestant Church, Anglican as well as Puritan. Accordingly, Caesar himself is associated with the Pope. Other critics, who choose to prefer the more familiar analogy between the ancient Tribunes and the London Aldermen, have been more interested in the analogy between Caesar and Elizabeth, or more closely James I, whose "self-fashioning in the Roman Imperial ideals" are well known. In this version, the play represents "one of the originary myths of the Imperial Tudor State" (Rose 265), whether the advent of an
absolutist state is seen as "something inevitable" (Goldberg 1988: 102) or in "sympathetic dispraise" (Hardin 153).  

In these distinct but nonetheless overlapping analogies, where do the Roman republicans stand? The critics who seek to establish the connection between Caesar's Rome and Shakespeare's England invariably suggest a matter-of-fact confederation of the Tribunes and the Republicans. The Tribunes' brief, and more or less one-dimensional, existence may also suggest that they are functional characters by means of which the central, more fully developed characters, who also elaborate and expand on the Tribunes' political position, are introduced. Apparently, the Republicans are aligned with the Tribunes within the play and supposedly further represent them in a higher political domain of the Senate. Casca's passing but suggestively sympathetic comment on the fate of the Tribunes seems to confirm their anti-Caesarian alliance: "Murrelus and Flavius, for pulling scarves off Caesar's images, are put to silence" (1.2.274-5). Yet a closer look may reveal that the conjunction between the two parties is much less stable than supposed. First of all, the republicans, except Casca in his cynical view of the spectators in Caesar's theatre, do not seem to share the Tribunes' contempt for the 'mob.' After all, the 'mob,' represented by the artisans in the opening scene, are "Romans, countrymen, and lovers" (3.2.13), to whom the leader of republicans, Brutus, addresses respectfully for an endorsement of Caesar's assassination. As Brutus justifies the conspirators' cause for "general good" of Rome, the republicans "rose against Caesar" so that these people "shall receive the benefit of [Caesar's] dying, a place in the commonwealth" (3.2.19, 36-7), which is not denied even to Mark Antony, the Caesar-lover. Secondly, the republicans deflect if not entirely displace the anti-ritualistic, if not explicitly anti-theatrical, sentiment strongly inveighed by the Tribunes. Cassius's institution of what Antony names a "butchery" (3.2.255) as a "lofty scene" (3.2.112) in fact takes its lead from Brutus's more explicit ritualization of Caesar's assassination: "Stoop, Romans, stoop./ And let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood..." (3.2.105-6). Before and after the assassination, too, political actions are conceived as ritual: "Let's be sacrificers, but not butchers..." (2.1.166); "... Caesar shall/ Have all true rites and lawful ceremonies" (3.1.240-1).  

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As a whole, do these vulnerable conjunctures suggest that Shakespeare intended to plant a seed of doubt on the political connection between the Tribunes and the republicans? If, as many critics suppose, the Tribunes stand for the civic elite of London and/or their more radical colleagues and neighbors on the Puritan wing, what do the republicans then represent? By complicating the possible analogies, what particular effects were sought to achieve? But is it warranted, above all, to identify the republicans as a single collective, whether they are construed as a dramatic transfiguration of conservative London Aldermen or intractable Puritans, or even the Essex faction? The fact is that Shakespeare presents the characters in such a way that the audience perceives individual differences among them – between Brutus and Cassius, for instance – as well as their identity as a socio-political group. It seems that Shakespeare is determined not to prescribe any definite point of entry or identification for his audience. Instead, he allows for multiple entries so that, in Cicero’s words, “men may construe things after their fashion/ Clean from the purpose of the things themselves” (1.3.34-5).

Whether such indeterminacy did make Shakespeare’s theatre powerful or powerless has been one of the predominant concerns of the historical criticism in the past decades. As I have discussed in the introduction of this chapter, critics who take either side of the debate depend upon a conception of ‘politics,’ either too narrow or too slippery. This difference nonetheless collapses into a rather simplified view of the process by which a play ‘interpellates’ the audience into identifiable positions within the world of the play. Once a discursive instance of a hegemonic ideology is identified in the play, the audience is inserted into a more or less definite position in relation to the hegemonic or counter-hegemonic ideology. Thus, in Julius Caesar, the audience has two options of identification, that is, either with Caesar-lovers or with Caesar-haters, either with absolutist claim of the English monarchy or with the egalitarian claim of the radical Puritanism. In this perspective, the play recruits its subjects into a definite and determined political allegiance, whether such allegiance is to be ‘imitated’ and reinforced by the course of the dramatic action or entertained for the moment and eventually diverted to ‘harmless recreation.’ The City fathers of London and the lords of the Privy Council seem to find their spokesmen in modern literary critics.
I do not advocate, however, that there were as many spectatorial positions as there were spectators in the London theatres. Even though we admit that such is nearer to the fact, we cannot entertain such diversity, partly because of insufficient evidence and partly because of the nature of our enterprise. Historical writing necessarily involves selection, abstraction and generalization, if not simplification. Thus, I do not have a strong objection to the critical procedure of constructing the past audiences in terms of class, gender, or any comparable status within the dominant power relation of the society, but only on one condition. Both the identity of and the difference among an audience formation should unfold in our view. Concomitantly, the point of entry that initially invites an audience into the play should be not seen to set up a fixed position adhered to by the audience throughout the drama. In its unpredictable unfolding of dramatic action, the play may complicate, confuse, and dis-articulate, as well as clarify, intensify, and re-articulate, the spectatorial position, which it initially advanced. This is especially true with Shakespearean drama, and thematized particularly in Julius Caesar — a play fully conscious and, to a certain extent, being a critique of what Louis Althusser termed “ideological interpellation.” In what follows, I bring the London apprentices into the sets of analogies between Caesar’s Rome and Shakespeare’s London in an attempt to envision both the ‘class’ loyalty and the ideological or social differences among the youth group. I do not want merely to add another social category to the battle between puritans and conservative Anglicans or between monarchists and republicans. By exploring both the possible points of entry into the play and the subsequently complicated trajectories that the apprentices might have followed, I also attend the specifically ‘theatrical’ power in contradistinction to political conceptions of Shakespeare’s theatre. This returns us to the London scene with which I began this section, that is, the 1592 scene of “a great disorder & tumult” caused by “certain servants of the feltmakers,” who “assembled themselves by occasion & pretense of a meeting at a play.”

As I suggested at the beginning, the analogy between the theatre of early modern London and the Roman theatre within the play as a place for ‘conspiracy’ might have constituted a strong point of entry for the playgoing London apprentices. Subsequently, this point of entry might have been deterred from further development by Shakespeare’s subtle
erasure of the analogy by supplanting the Roman Capitol as the site of assassination. Nonetheless, who would prevent the riotous apprentices from 'construing things after their fashion'? Staged at the end of the decade strewn with insurrections and riots, Julius Caesar might as well recall a number of the urban disturbances, in which the apprentices had been themselves a leading force of rioters. Historians differ in their assessment of the extent to which these instances of disorder amounted up to a general 'crisis' of the urban society. They generally agree, however, that the severity of disorder increased as the decade moved towards the end (Archer 6).

The 1592 instance that took place at the southbank playhouse was pacified by the intervention of the Mayor, who argued for leniency because the residents claimed that the blame lay with the knight marshal's men. The Mayor knew that any action which might be seen as being partial would merely "give soom occasion to such seditious persons to kindle the coals of a further disorder, which wear better prevented by equal severitie or favour to both parts" (Archer 5). As Ian Archer observes, however, such mediatory position of the civic elite was under severe strain in 1595 because Sir John Spencer, the Lord Mayor himself, became the target of apprentices' attack. After a series of food riots, which were occasioned by the Mayor's neglect of duty in mediating the market-price of grains and further vitiated by the popular belief in the Mayor's profiteering in the process of importing grains from other regions, a thousand apprentices marched through the city, stoned the City's officers, and set up a gallows outside the house of the unpopular mayor. Allegedly, the rioters planned "to robbe, steals, pill and spoile the welthy and well disposed inhabitaunts of the saide cytye, and to take the sworde of authoritie from the magistrates and governours lawfully aucthorised" (Manning 1984: 222).

The conspicuous presence of apprentices in these outbreaks of disorder may be ascribed to the fact that, apart from other participants – discharged soldiers and small artisans as well as 'vagrant persons' and 'masterless men' – they formed a more or less distinct subculture, or at least recognized as such by the contemporaries. As Steven Smith suggests, London apprentices might have seen themselves as "moral agents," defending the right of 'the poor,' 'the weak,' and 'the deprivileged' (1973: 161). A full manifestation of their "political activism" may have had to wait to emerge in the era of the Civil War. But it
would not be misleading to see such activism by the apprentices as contributing to the 'crisis' of 1590s. Roger Manning may stretch a little too far to argue "they felt more of a sense of solidarity with others in their own condition and less of a sense of loyalty towards superiors, and out of this was born class-consciousness" (1976: 71). Certainly, individual differences must have modified or reinforced such 'class-consciousness.' It is undeniable, though, that the apprentices shared a strong sense of solidarity or even fraternity, as clearly indicated by their frequent attempts at rescuing their arrested colleagues, which often worsened the already inflamed situations. Neither would it be unreasonable to suppose that, as youths exposed to and excited at the metropolitan life, they were more open to new impressions and to radical notions than their village counterparts. They were surely much suppler in their ideological outlook than their elders, attending, for instance, both sermons and plays. As a contemporary deplored, "it may be noted how uncomely it is for youth to runne streight from prayers to plays, from Godes service to the devills" (Chambers 301). But the apprentices might turn the rigid moralism on its head by arguing "that playes are as good as sermons, and that they learne as much or more at a playe, than they do at God's worde preached" (Chambers 198). While the worried elders saw in the theatre a threat to the Reformation, the youth seem to have found little incompatibility between church-going and play-going, especially when the theatre offered them an image of their own collective identity as 'moral agents' of the urban community - or, at the least, a rallying cry for justice, however 'theatrical' it may be on the stage of the Globe.

If the apprentice rioters of 1595 had succeeded in hanging the notorious Mayor, with what rallying cry would they poured out on the London streets? Four years later at a playhouse called the Globe, would some of these apprentices have heard their own voice in a Roman conspirator's shout over Caesar's body: "Liberty, freedom, tyranny is dead!/ Run hence, proclaim, cry it about the streets" (3.1.78-9)? If, as historians have shown, the urban 'crisis' still persisted around the turn of the century, was the voice of revolt even more resounding? Meanwhile, would the apprentices at the Globe on the twenty-first day of September have had to choose between Caesar and the republicans, while they enjoyed both play and jig? Given the London apprentices' alleged hero worship and Caesar's seemingly stronger tie with the popular culture in the play, did the apprentice audiences of 270
Julius Caesar find themselves caught in the dilemma of choosing from the incompatible claims for allegiance? To what extent did the apprentices' hero worship outweigh their sense of fraternity, which is no more emphatically depicted than in the Roman republicans' intimate comradeship -- particularly in the brotherly relationship between Brutus and Cassius. Although the conspirators can hardly be identified as an age group, their relative 'youthfulness' is suggestively delineated in their discussion of whether or not Cicero is to be persuaded into their confederation. Metellus Cimber argues for Cicero's inclusion by observing "his silver hairs/ Will purchase us a good opinion/ ... Our youths and wildness shall no whit appear/ But all be buried in his gravity" (2.1.144-9). Brutus makes the final decision to "leave him out" (153) on the ground that "he will never follow anything/ That other men begin" (151-2). Thus, as Brutus himself earlier identified the conspirators as if somewhat foreordained, "they are the faction" (2.1.78) -- the youth who would dispense with the 'silver hairs.'

If the republican fraternity seems to extend well beyond the representational frame of the drama, it is because such solidarity is less presented as a given than carefully prepared and orchestrated by a series of scenes that enact the process of 'interpellation.' And the interpellation occurs not only within the play but also across the boundary between stage and audience. In these scenes, Cassius is the voice that recruits the subjects into the anti-Caesarian ideology of the republican confederation. Driven by strange sights and ominous visions, Casca wanders about the streets of Rome at a thunder-storming night "when all the sway of earth/ Shakes like a thing unfirm" (1.3.3-4). Both natural and supernatural signs of chaotic catastrophe create a confusion in a man who is as astute as to see through the "foolerj of Caesar's theatre, and clever enough to "put on this tardy form" -- in Cassius's words -- lest he should reveal his in-sight (1.2.275, 288). Penetrating the confusion is a voice that demands an identification.

Cassius. Who's there?
Casca. A Roman. (1.3.41-2).

What is a Roman? Recognizing the voice as addressing him and not anybody else, Casca himself sets the process of interpellation in motion. All that Cassius has to do is suggest what a Roman is not or should be not, that is, "a willing bondman" who would not confront
"a man no mightier than thyself, or me,/ In personal action, yet prodigious grown/ And fearful, as these strange eruptions are" (113, 76-8). Upon this suggestion, Casca, who already imagined "a civil strife in heaven" at the cataclysmic sights of the night (11), reveals what is "the true cause" (62) of his inner — rather than the Nature's external signs of — confusions: "'Tis Caesar that you mean, is it not, Cassius?" (79). "The sparks of life/ That should be in a Roman," for the lack of which he was indicted by Cassius, is now fully recovered in Casca the Roman (1.3.57-8). Cementing Casca's self-recognition as a Roman and concomitant disavowal of Caesar as enemy of the Romans, Cassius launches an open recruitment for the confederate. If Caesar is to wear the crown:

Cassius. I know where I will wear this dagger then:
Cassius from bondage will deliver Cassius.
Therein, ye gods, you make the weak most strong
Therein, ye gods, you tyrants do defeat.
Nor stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass
Nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron
Can be retentive to the strength of spirit:
But life, being weary of these worldly bars.
Never lack power to dismiss itself.
If I know this, know all the world besides.
That part of tyranny that I do bear
I can shake off at pleasure.

*Thunder still*

Casca. So can I.
So every bondman in his own hand bears
The power to cancel his captivity (89-102).

Whether or not Cassius here invokes the puritan god of wrath, the force of rhetoric seems to lie largely in its appeal to the Elizabethan subjects in "bondage," instantly reiterated in Casca's "every bondman." Brutus will recapitulate the same rhetorical strategy with the same word in his public speech after assassination: "Who is here so base that would be a bondman?" (3.2.26). The word seems to strike hard upon the Romans, for those in the play called commoners, plebeians, or simply crowd, and the republicans as well — especially for Casca who was suspected, deliberately of course, for being a "willing bondman." The word might as well strike a resonant key in an early modern London theatre, especially for those among the audience who had to suffer — in the words of a
contemporary — "the tedium of a seven years’ bondage." As I have noted in the previous section, the late sixteenth-century London saw an increasingly strained relationship of master and apprentice evidenced by the growing number of litigations. A seven-year apprenticeship required a young man to live within a strange household and to work for little or no pay. Although apprentices’ hope of becoming a master of their own shop or an independent trader may have reconciled them to the inevitable long years of service, not a few of these young men must have believed that they lived in ‘bondage.’ Particularly for the substantial number of apprentices who never completed their term of years, such must have been the case (Brooks 74). Given the subordination and servitude intrinsic to the institution of apprenticeship, then, Julius Caesar seems to have provided a point of entry for apprentices distinct from, if closely related to, the context of urban crisis of 1590s and their role as moral agents in riots and insurrections. Briefly, the apprentice audiences at the Globe might have found another image of their lives: one, which is more embedded in the structured social relations than erupted from an explicitly political activism.

The penultimate proclamation over Caesar’s body of the end of tyranny— "Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead!" — may complete the trajectory followed by the moral agents of London streets. A succeeding but slightly modified call draws attention to another trajectory that was pursued by apprentices in their more quotidian experience: “Liberty, freedom, and enfranchisement!” (3.1.81). The term ‘enfranchisement’ that Cassius employs here refers to Publius Cimber’s recovery of citizenship, which was repealed by Caesar, and thus more broadly to the liberation of the Roman citizens from the ‘bondage’ under Caesar the tyrant. In the Elizabethan context, the same term specifically referred to an entry to the City’s or one of the City companies’ ‘freedom,’ that is, to becoming a freeman after a successful completion of apprenticeship (Brooks 58). For the Roman republicans, such terms as enfranchisement, freedom, or freeman implies an innate right as Roman citizen. Thus, Cassius can declare to Brutus: “I was born free as Caesar, so were you” (1.2.97). Freedom in Rome can be taken away by a tyranny; in that case, freemen must fight to recover it. Brutus’s post-assassination speech proves the point: “Had you rather Caesar living, and die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live all freemen?” (3.2.24-5). For the London apprentices, by contrast, ‘freedom’ is something to be gained after a long years’
service, during which they are sometimes subject to a galling discipline, if not a tyranny. ‘Freedom’ or ‘enfranchisement’ in the Elizabethan London was therefore less associated with a bloody revolution than with the structured social process whereby a young man grew into the civic life of the urban society.

It should also be reminded that the urban society of London was itself hierarchically structured. There were distinct occupational hierarchies even among the city companies, and a company itself consisted of hierarchically organized status groups. The lower stratum was occupied by freemen, the middle layer by yeomen, and the uppermost plane by liverymen, from which Aldermen and Mayor of London were elected. The status distinction should not be construed as fundamentally divisive. The groups should be seen to be contiguous and continuous, for an apprentice becomes a freeman, who in the passage of time and with a relatively good ‘fortune’ could rise to yeomanry and further to the livery — in theory at the least. In fact, some ‘realities’ point towards quite an opposite direction. Although the urban institution of guild had never been ‘democratic,’ its more or less egalitarian ideal of ‘common wealth’ was rapidly declining in the late sixteenth-century London; or, so was it perceived, particularly in the milieu of population growth, which entailed a highly competitive social relation among the working population. The civic elite was congealed into an almost exclusive oligarchy, quite inaccessible for ordinary working males. Even upon a successful entry to the urban society as a freeman, a young man who could not establish his own business for the lack of finance had to remain in a master’s shop as journeyman or, in the contemporary terminology, ‘covenanted servant.’ At once freeman and citizen but at the same time journeyman under a master, the young man who came out of long years’ apprenticeship had to see his hope of becoming a ‘freeman’ — in the Roman republicans’ usage of the word — drifting further away, and find himself captivated in a prolonged ‘bondage.’ For those in this anomalous position within the urban society, Cassius’s call for ‘shaking off the bondage’ must have struck a heart-wrenching chord.

Thus, even in this more or less normal context of structured social relations, the republican revolt against a tyranny in Julius Caesar may have addressed the conflictual nature of the urban institutions. Cassius’s apparent envy of Caesar, who “is now become a

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god.” while “Cassius is/ A wretched creature” (1.2.116-7) is an obvious instance of the social discontent that the ordinary Londoners – the blue-apron class in Peter Burke’s words – may have held toward their betters. More articulate of such discontent is Brutus’s critique of Caesar’s ‘ambition,’ in which apprentices and certain freemen of London could have seen the civic oligarchy’s dissociation from ‘middling-sortedness.’

[Caesar] would be crowned;  
How that might change his nature, there’s the question.

Th’abuse of greatness is when it disjoins  
Remorse from power.

But ’tis a common proof  
That lowliness is young ambition’s ladder.  
Whereunto the climber-upward turn his face;  
But when he once attains the utmost round  
He then unto the ladder turns his back.  
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees  
By which he did ascend. So Caesar may (2.1.12-3. 18-9. 21-27).

Thus. Caesar’s ambition or the prosperous Londoners’ relentless pursuit of greater privilege is turned to establish a cause of rebellion. In a moment, Brutus receives a letter – by the name of Roman citizens, but in fact forged by Cassius -- that urges him to “Speak. strike. redress!” (47). that incites him to take a decisive political action. Brutus deliberates for a decision. for “such instigations have been often dropped/ Where I have took them up” (49-50). Next moment, “the faction” appears before Brutus, who eventually takes the lead of “conspiracy” (77). Nonetheless, the otherwise swift movement into a resolution is in fact impeded by Brutus’s deliberation upon the ‘instigation’ and his further hesitation to act. Brutus pauses to ask: “Am I entreated/ To speak and strike?” (55-6). Before the ‘faction’ turns up to seal off his hesitation. Brutus is all by himself, caught in “the interim” posed “between the acting of a dreadful thing/And the first motion [i.e., inward prompting or impulse],” overshadowed by “a phantasma or a hideous dream” (63-5). Is this ‘interim’ necessary or even useful to bring Brutus to the side of conspirators and cement them together into a ‘faction’? So it seems, that is, from a dramaturgical point of view. For
Brutus is conscious himself of his hesitation as an interim. Then, what is its specific function in the process of interpellation that was set in motion by Cassius?

An open recruitment of rebellious subjects has been already successfully conducted in the preceding scene, where Casca and other republicans join Cassius in a determination to 'shakes off the bondage.' Cassius further tells the newly joined force that "some certain of the noblest-minded Roman" are assembling at "Pompey's Theatre" (1.3.122-5). It can be safely supposed, then, that the interpellation was also effectively conducted in relation to the apprentice audiences, who were most likely to subscribe to both the rhetorical force of Cassius's eloquence on justice and freedom and the suggestive allusion to their favorite place for rioting. The scene is full of rallying cries further amplified by the stage machinery of drums and fireworks creating "Thunder and lightning" (1.3.sd), which altogether are sufficient to arouse something of mass emotion. What is missing, or rather, remains inarticulate, constitutes in fact the most critical phase of the interpellation process, that is, internalization of the 'calling' ideology. To this task Brutus, in his loneliness, is ascribed. As an internalization of the open recruitment, the orchard scene (2.1) has a strong similarity to as well as differences from the previous scene. The thunder and lightning, for instance, are still there, but in Brutus's mind -- in the form of 'a phantasma and hideous dreams.' As he glances into his inner self, however, Brutus finds no necessity for an act of rebellion except for his own self-image: "the state of a man/[that] Like to a little kingdom, suffers then/The nature of an insurrection" (67-9). The self-recruitment turns out to be complicating rather than clarifying, whereas the collective interpellation was automatic. The contradiction is passed over, as Brutus decides -- half-unconsciously, I suppose -- to act out the inner conflict upon the ceremonial stage of history envisioned by Cassius and himself. Nonetheless, the trace of inner war remains, and perhaps interpellates the apprentice audiences into a reflection upon their own lives as individuals.

In the 'interim' between the plotting of a riot and the impulse of revolt, what 'hideous dreams' would the London apprentices have dreamt? What inner conflicts did the riotous apprentices act out on the London streets? In its thematization of the problematic self-interpellation, Julius Caesar seems to foreground what lies behind the customary (self-) image of London apprentices as moral agent, whose collective and thus anonymous action
often conceals the existence of a vulnerable young man, forced to leave his own family and live in a strange household for years in anticipation of a far-off freedom. Even upon the termination of the terms of service, some of these young men, who were to become 'covenanted servants,' were left uncertain about their future. At once freemen and bondmen, they embodied and internalized the social contradiction. Others — apprentices of gentry origin -- seem to have enjoyed a better prospect, although the contradiction they had to live was no less if not more severe (Seaver 1992:129). Precariously situated in social status and in a peculiarly transitional period of life-cycle, these young men may have sought to create a subculture and bind the members of that subculture more closely together in order to 'pass over,' as Brutus does, their confused identity as individuals (Smith 1973: 160). Thus, Brutus interpellates the apprentices in a way that differs from the open recruitment of a 'faction.' The play on this trajectory addresses the personal, the individual, or the cognitive, rather than the collective or the overtly political, needs and anxieties of London apprentices. I do not privilege this trajectory over the one followed by the apprentice audiences as a distinct social group. Nor do I here set up a binary of the personal and the political. To the contrary, I suggest that Julius Caesar insists upon an inextricable inter-relation between the two — an alternative proposition, which does not subscribe to our current thinking of politics as subsuming all the personal relationships.

Critics have been predominantly concerned with the dominant ideological discourse in the plays of Shakespeare. A number of readings of Julius Caesar have offered an interpretation of the play as preoccupied with the Elizabethan or Jacobean manifestation of absolutism. A much favored trope, with which the critics construe the play as such, is Caesar’s ghost, which is “ranging for revenge/... with a monarch’s voice,” in Mark Antony’s words (3.1.270-2). According to Jonathan Goldberg, even Brutus’s problematic subjectivity is the effect of absolutism embodied, or rather, disfigured in “the spectre that haunts [Brutus] as his double, the spirit of Caesar, the very form of power (Goldberg 1988: 94). The ‘power’ or the politics in this account is so dispersed that there remains no site of resistance. The typically new historicist conception of power could be counterpointed by the cultural materialist assertion that, despite the apparent defeat of the republican cause, the containment is not absolute, leaving traces of attempted subversion. Having followed
both the trajectories of the personal and the political, London apprentices might have nonetheless witnessed another conception of politics emerging towards the end of the play, when Cassius rushes into Brutus’s camp, complaining: “Most noble brother, you have done me wrong” (4.2.37). Brutus has just done the same, doubting upon Cassius’s ‘sickening’ love for him: “When love begins to sicken and decay/It useth an enforced ceremony/There are no tricks in plain and simple faith/But hollow men, like horses hot at hand./Make gallant show and promise of their mettle” (20-4).

The quarrel between the two ‘brothers’ reveals that Cassius breeds corruption in the republican army by “sell[ing] and mart[ing] the offices for gold” (4.3.11). To the high-minded Brutus, who is “armed so strong in honesty,” “contaminat[ing] our fingers with base bribes” is an inexonerable act (67, 24). The consequence of such honesty is, however, the lack of finance to support the army: “I can raise no money by vile means” (71). The issue at hand seems to be a choice over a corrupted army or no army at all. But the conflict between the leaders of the republican army cuts deeper than this apparent issue. As Brutus continues to blame his ‘brother,’ Cassius protests that “A friend should bear his friend’s infirmities./But Brutus makes mine greater than they are” (85-6). In Brutus’s moral regime of ‘formal constancy,’ Cassius remains unforgiven and left to a heart-broken lamentation: “Cassius is a-wear> of the world/Hated by one he loves...Checked like bondman, all his faults observed./Set in a notebook, learned and conned by rote./To cast into my teeth” (95-9). The strong sense of fraternity collapses into another ‘bondage,’ which is as hard as Caesar’s ghost to shake off. Cassius still attempts a reconciliation: “O my dear bother! This was an ill beginning of the night./Never come such division ‘tween our souls! Let it not.

Brutus” (233-6). The final attempt to recover the earlier brotherhood only receives “an enforced ceremony.” as Brutus bids a rather dismissive farewell: “Everything is well” (237). But not many apprentices among the audiences would believe so. For London apprentices, who marched shoulder-to-shoulder on the streets for ‘freedom,’ politics could not be thought without solidarity, without the reflecting glass that Cassius offered to Brutus at the opening of the play – that is, Cassius himself. There is a grain of truth, in this context, in the statement that the personal is the political, although London apprentices would have it in reverse, refusing to subscribe to the implication that politics subsumes all. At the same
time, they might have recognized in the breach between the Roman brothers something that would eventually come – that is, a fragmentation of the subculture they once had been a part of. As the apprentices disappear into the anonymity, or rather grow into diversity, of urban life, they would become a part of the broader culture of middling sort. Whether the majority of the young men actually became Caesarists or republicans before and during the Civil War cannot be determined, although historians such as Steven Smith and G. E. Aylmer tend to portray them as those who, at the beheading of the unfortunate English monarch, cried out “Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead!” In view of their simultaneous recognition of politics as interpersonal rather than impersonal and the limitation of fraternity as foundation of politics, it would not be misleading to conclude that – in Cassius’s words – they would have been “ready to give up the ghost” (5.1.88), both Caesar’s and their own self-image as moral agents of the increasingly complex urban society.
NOTES

1 Convenietly compiled in “Documents of Control” (pp. 259-344) and “Documents of Criticism” (pp. 184-258) in vol. 4 of E. K. Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage (1923). Subsequent quotations are from this volume.

2 It has been frequently argued that the London theatres, as an unprecedented commercial institution of entertainment industry, carried with them the changing social relations, and as such provoked the same moral anxiety generated by the ongoing social changes. See, in particular, Jean E. Howard, The Stage and the Social Struggle (1994), esp. chapter 2. By contrast, Jonas Barish’s study of The Antitheatrical Prejudice (1981) is more interested in the history of ideas than in the social and cultural specifics that engendered antitheatrical discourses in early modern England.

3 There were certainly some trends of thought that attempted to impose such boundary; nonetheless, they were far from being dominant but much contested one. See Michael McKeon, “Politics of Discourse and the Rise of the Aesthetic in Seventeenth-Century England” in Sharpe and Stuchlik (eds) Politics of Discourse (1987), pp. 35-51.

4 See Mullaney’s analysis in The Place of the Stage (pp. 141-43) of the brothel scene in Pericles.

5 In the Introduction, I have already pointed out that the disparity of the two historians’ views are only apparent, both are embedded in a dichotomous view.

6 See “An Acte for the punishement of Vagabondes and for Relief of the Poore & Impotent,” an extract reprinted in E. K. Chambers 4: 269-71. The act was amended in 1576 and 1584-5 and continued to be in effect during our period. For a study on the Elizabethan-Jacobean social policy of vagrancy and poverty, see A. L. Beier, Masterless Men (1985).

7 Complaints about London’s monopolizing force often erupted into riots, especially when food supply during a time of dearth was at stake. It was reported, for instance, in the wake of a food riot in 1631 that chandlers of London haunted all the market near unto London and swept the market of all the com both on sale and in stock. In view of local food deficiency caused by transport to London and London merchants’ monopolization of international trade with local products, Clark and Slack maintain that “London's exceptional growth was mainly parasitical, feeding off the significant redistribution of wealth which was occurring in the provincial economy” (English Towns in transition [1972], p. 76).

8 For an incisive study on Londoners’ perception of the changes in the urban topography, see Lawrence Manley, “From Matron to Monster: Tudor-Stuart London and the Languages
of Urban Description,” in Heather Dubrow and Richard Strier (eds) The Historical
Renaissance (pp. 347-74).

See M. Power, “East London Housing in the Seventeenth Century,” in Peter Clark and
Paul Slack (eds), Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700 (pp. 237-63), which should
be read in conjunction with L. Stone, “The Residential Development in the West End of
London in the 17th century” in B. Malament (ed), After the Reformation (pp. 167-212).

Peter Burke seems to provide a more balanced view on the issue. See his Popular Culture
in Early Modern Europe (1978) and "Popular Culture in Seventeenth Century London"

By 1600, four to five thousand apprentices enrolled each year in the metropolis, which
accounted for a major proportion of the 6000 immigrants per year. For estimates of the
numbers of apprentices bound in London and their place of origin, see S. R. Smith, “The
Social and Geographic Origins of the London Apprentices” (200-3), together with Roger
Finlay, Population and Metropolis (63-7).

Rappaport’s estimation is made upon the evidences of mid-sixteenth century. It would
not be wildly wrong to suppose that towards the end of the century, the drop-off rates
increased by the pressure of population growth. For a suggestive account of the causes of
such ‘failure’ in apprentices of regional cities, see I. K. Ben-Amos, “Failure to Become

Christopher Brooks locates the beginning of such a decline in the latter half of the
seventeenth century and in the following centuries, during which “the middling sort had
been replaced by the middle and working classes” (83). See his “Apprenticeship, Social
Mobility and the Middling Sort, 1550-1800” in Jonathan Barry and Christopher Brooks
(eds) Middling Sort of People (52-83). For a similar account of ‘decline’ in the importance
of apprentices within urban economy, see William F. Kahl, “Apprenticeship and the

Recent interest in the early modern youth as having formed a distinct subculture was
initiated by Natalie Zemon Davis in “The Reasons of Misrule: Youth Groups and
Charivaris in Sixteenth-Century France” (1971). Davis’s argument that the youth culture
active in rural societies lost its significance in the urban setting has been questioned by
Steven Smith (1973) and Peter Burke (1978).

Jack a Lent (London, 1620). In addition to literary sources, Burke provides some details
from the Middlesex Sessions Records as evidence on the violent aspect of apprentice
behavior.

Louis Montrose provides an incisive study on ‘the Purpose of Playing’ in early modern
London. For Montrose, London theatres occupied a position of “alternative authority
between crown and city’s attempt to control” (p. 65) rather than was subject to the censure and appropriation of the political authorities. See in particular “The Theatre, the City, and the Crown,” in The Purpose of Playing (1996), pp. 53-65.

17 Theodore Leinwand focuses upon the role of the Shakespearean constables as social intermediaries in his analysis of Measure for Measure and Much Ado About Nothing. See his “Negotiation and New Historicism” (1988).

18 For the constables and their middling sort neighbors, as Keith Wrightson suggests, “order” meant little more than conformity to a fairly malleable local custom which was considerably more flexible than the impersonal statute law” (“Two Concepts” [1980], p. 24).

19 All the subsequent quotations of the play are from Julius Caesar. The New Cambridge Shakespeare, (ed) Marvin Spevack (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

20 Naomi Conn Niebler, in “Thou Bleeding Piece of Earth: The Ritual Ground of Julius Caesar,” is particularly concerned with Shakespeare’s use of Roman rituals. Her argument is that in the Caesarian period there was confusion about ritual practices as one social order was coming to the end and another was emerging. Niebler refers to some historians but there are no such suggestions in the play itself.

21 In Apology for Actors Thomas Heywood makes a representative statement: “If wee present a forreigne History, the subject is so intended, that in the lives of Romans, Grecians, or others, either the vertues of our Countrymen are extolled, or their vices reproved” (cited in Richard F. Hardin, Civil Idolatry, p. 38).

22 This ‘strange’ combination is what Thomas Platter saw at the southbank of London during his well-recorded journey through England: “On September 21st after lunch, about two o’clock, I and my party crossed the water, and there in the house with the thatched roof witnessed an excellent performance of the tragedy of the first Emperor Julius Caesar with a cast of some fifteen people; when the play was over, they danced very marvellously and gracefully together as is their wont, two dressed as men and two as women” (Thomas Platter, Travels in England, cited in Andrew Gurr (1987: Appendix 2), p. 214.

23 Such connection is fully explored in David Kaula, “‘Let Us Be Sacrificers’: Religious Motifs in Julius Caesar” (1981). On the “spiritual” style of preaching, which developed in the 1580s and 1590s, see William Haller, The Rise of Puritanism (1934, 128-72).

theme has been also noted in Roy Strong, “Eliza Triumphans” in his Cult of Elizabeth (17-55). See also Frances A. Yates, Astrea (29-87) in conjunction with Strong.

25 “Sympathetic dispraise” is a phrase by Richard Hardin, who contextualizes the play within the English humanist view – Erasmus as well as Thomas More – of Caesar as tyrant. Thomas More wrote to Erasmus in 1516: “If Caesar in the olden days had combined this [Greek] moderate way of thinking with his lofty spirit, he would beyond doubt have won more glory by preserving the republic than he got from all the people whom he conquered and subdued” (Hardin 153).

26 The unusual frequency of urban disturbances during the last decade of the sixteenth century has been noted by a number of historians such as Roger B. Manning, who writes: “Between 1581 and 1602, the city was disturbed by no fewer than 35 outbreaks of disorder. Since there were at least 96 insurrections, riots, and unlawful assemblies in London between 1517 and 1640, this means that more than one third of the instances of popular disorder during that century-and-a-quarter were concentrated within a 20-year period (1988: 67). For evidence on the coordination among apprentices, discontented soldiery, and small artisans, see Ian Archer, The Pursuit of Stability (1-4).

27 See Steven Smith’s earlier article on the apprentices’ role in the Civil War, “The Apprentices’ Parliament of 1648” (1972), together with “Gentlemen Levellers?” (1973) by G. E. Aylmer, who suggests that many Levellers of gentry origin gained experience in street politics while apprentices.

28 A contemporary published a sort of encyclopedia of information about crafts and trades, by which apprentices may learn “the theory of their trades before they are bound to a master, and consequently may be exempted from the tedium of seven years’ bondage” (William Petty, The Advancement of Some Particular Parts of learning [London, 1641], cited in Smith 1973: 151).

29 The entrance into the civic society of London was through membership in a craft, trade, or mystery, and freedom in one of the guilds or livery companies had long been a prerequisite for citizenship. The vast majority of working males entered urban life and came to their freedom as a consequence of apprenticeship. It was possible to achieve one’s freedom by patrimony, that is, inheritance, or purchase, but only a small percentage came to their freedom and citizenship in this fashion (Jonathan Barry, “Introduction,” The Middling Sort of People [1994], pp. 17-9).

30 For a detailed account of the structure of urban economic institutions and social relations, see Steven Rappaport, Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London (1989).
CONCLUSION:
TOWARDS A METHODOLOGY OF NEGOTIATION

At the beginning, it seemed that I was running after two rabbits: the historical Renaissance and the historicized Renaissance(s), or the past and the present. The dual focus was operating in my methodology, too. Quite determinedly, I stated in the Introduction that my aim is to complicate—rather than clarify—the image(s) of the Renaissance as reproduced in our contemporary historical criticism. Somewhat presumably I also claimed that a third, intermediary reading position was necessary to break through the fundamental binarism of new historicist, cultural materialist, and feminist critical paradigms. The question that I want to hammer out in these concluding pages concerns the relationship between the two seemingly separate objects and methods, a set of which the readers might find gradually blurring, if not totally evaporated, somewhere along the axis of this study.

Indeed, there might be a serious doubt if the study has clearly delineated a third position from which to make a more profitable access to the real historical Renaissance. Furthermore, some readers might question if the study has produced a viable and tangible alternative to the competing versions of historicized Renaissance. Such a discontent is not groundless, especially in view of the continual reservations, hesitations, and indefinite conclusions— if not evasions, setbacks, and withdrawals—that in some aspect characterize the overtone of my study. Thus I feel obliged to give the doubts a rest—or, better still, a redirection. In other words, I do not wish to eschew the questions by an attempt at alleviating the discontent. On the contrary, I want to foreground the discontent as both foundation and sustaining force of historical inquiries. This may necessitate a self-reflexive
account of what it is that I have offered throughout the entire study, and what I have learned from it.

Let me first try to define it by what it is not. In the first place, I did not seek to combine the strengths of the competing interpretive models. Nor did I aim to harmonize the conflicting critical assertions of new historicism, cultural materialism and feminism. Such endeavors toward a reconciliation through synthesis would not survive the tensions that define these critical modes, partly because the debate among scholars today has been over which critical mode should have precedence over the others, and partly because the tensions arose from the significant scholarly differences in regard to contemporary political commitment. In fact, what my study has offered in part is an elucidation of these differences as foundational agendas underlying the historicized Renaissance(s).

Secondly, throughout my analysis of recent historical criticism, I did not intend to provide a sustained 'ideological critique' of interpretive assumptions and methods. Such critiques have been abundantly produced after and even during the heyday of "political criticism" of 1980s. Although these critiques range over a wide spectrum of scholarly orientation, they seem to operate between two poles. On the one hand, a group of critiques were generated by the internal dissension of the historicist movement itself, figuring distinctive and diametrically opposed locations within the political and ideological spectrum of contemporary North American or British society: for instance, liberal scepticism versus leftist opposition espoused by new historicism and cultural materialism, respectively. This kind of work was often contestatory in nature, since the writers tended to take a position and thus privilege one critical perspective over the others. On the other hand, there was a different kind of critique -- such as Brian Vickers' Appropriating Shakespeare and Richard Levin's continual disputation with the historical criticism -- which attempted to undermine the basic premises of political/historicist criticism as a whole. Detractors rather than critics, the writers who pursued such a goal were only concerned to expose the ideological and methodological assumptions of historical criticisms as biased and thus false. For the most part, these detractors remain blind to their own ideological biases. This latter kind of critiques was not concerned, in brief, to provide
an alternative mode of critical inquiry, just as the contestatory critiques were not able to do so under the grip of theoretical and political binarism.

A more balanced work comes in between — such as the sustained efforts by Jean E. Howard, Annabel Patterson, or Theodore Leinwand to rearticulate the key issues within the historical criticism, and Edward Pechter's *What Was Shakespeare?*, which represents a basically sceptical yet critically engaged viewpoint from outside the historicist movement. In part, I took a lead from these scholars, whose endeavor marks a progressive move out of the paradigmatic binarism of the contemporary critical models. Nonetheless, the critical terrain beyond binarism remains uncharted, since even these scholars tend to take up a position either inside or outside the embattled ground of historical criticism.

Hence my proposition of an intermediary — by definition, neither synthesizing nor transcendental — reading position, which I tried to anchor to the central premise of this study.

At a certain level, the last three chapters were an exploration in the contour of the 'negotiated' position. But this third position looked very different, as I was moving from one area of investigation to another. In Chapter Three, the position seemed to be securely grounded in the London citizens both as spectators and objects of stage representation, who demarcate a middle ground between the ruling aristocracy and the ruled populace, and who thereby constitute a historical basis on which to avoid the binary of powerful and powerless. But this relatively unified position did not hold for long. When I considered the seemingly antagonistic relationship between the citizenry and the 'rascal' or 'common' rebels, I found it difficult to maintain a clear-cut distinction between the two. For there were overlaps as well as differences between the supposedly distinct social categories.

In the following chapter on women characters and spectators, the same categorical fuzziness reasserted itself. The early modern English women were seen both as a 'distinct sociological group' and vulnerable individuals further fragmented by class distinctions — not either one or the other. Thus, there was simply no stable ground on which to assert the female subjection or resistance as a dominant mode of women's lives in the period. Instead, there were numerous possibilities and probabilities that suggested the women of the period were themselves negotiating — neither radically challenging nor totally subjected to the patriarchal authority — for a more secure and autonomous place in society and in individual
life. In this context, my negotiated reading position was at variance with the trajectory of the female subject, whose search for identity led to a transformation of the original contradictory position as a split subject into a wider — complementary, as it were — circle of collective subjects.

The final chapter on London apprentices confirmed both the indefiniteness of social, or any other conceptual, categories and the variability of subject positions, which altogether pointed toward the gaping interstices, rather than the seamless orchestration, among structures, institutions, practices, and ideologies. The social formation of middling sort of people, which helped to question the dichotomous view of urban social structure and ideological practices — including representations on the professional stage — revealed itself as fundamentally heterogeneous, beleaguered by internal contradictions and conflicts. Even the youth group of the urban society — allegedly the most cohesive group within the social formation — was exposed to internal differences, and such individual differences were further subject to changes in time. Accordingly, the ideological effectivity of London's professional theatres and their drama upon this strongly companionate group of the audience could not be determined, although I attempted to trace some possible trajectories of audience response.

Consequently, what has eventually emerged is not so much a single definite position as a broad spectrum of positions. Does this contradict or invalidate my methodological claim to an intermediary reading position? Indeed, the dispersion of the third position seems to belie what a position denotes, and as such may lend itself to a feeling of discontent for my readers who demand a definitive alternative position in contradistinction to the critical models that I have contended with. However, I have argued that a position is necessarily a counter-position, unless a conceptual shift is made. In fact, the entire study was inspired by such a shift in social historians' changing focus from 'middle class' to 'middling sort of people.' I do not want to reiterate the significance of this shift. Suffice it to say here that the indiscriminately homogenized group of people has turned out to be a non-centered formation. To a large extent, then, the dispersion of the intermediary position was expected from the beginning. But what is more significant about the dispersion concerns the kind of alternatives that my study purports to suggest; that is, neither a theorization of the

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negotiated position *per se* nor its location in the historical era, but a preliminary
methodology of negotiation, which has been gradually developing in the course of
'rewriting the Renaissance.'

If the negotiated reading position theorized by Stuart Hall provided a conceptual
framework of my study, what I sought beyond the framework was a historical substance to
fill it out. But the historical substance — the social and cultural conditions of early modern
England that shaped, and was in turn shaped by, the theatrical events and the subject
positions of the theatre audiences — never allowed the theoretical framework to subsume its
overwhelming complexity. Nevertheless, I was continually tempted to posit a definitive
version of the narrative about the social and cultural terrain on which Shakespeare's theatre
operated. The temptation grew stronger, especially when I attempted to construe certain
aspects of Shakespeare's plays as derivative of, reflexive upon, or (re)productive of certain
aspects of the early modern English society. This temptation seems to be inherent in any
historicist project that seeks to stabilize the elusive meanings of literary texts on a
presumably solid ground of historical contexts. Notwithstanding its claim to the
permeability between text and context, the new historicist enterprise was also haunted by
the dichotomous view of 'opacity' of texts and 'clarity' of contexts. Such a relapse can be
attributed to the limited scope of the literary scholarship, whose espousal of 'history' as a
relevant, even indispensable field of inquiry has been often belied by an inadequate
conception of what constitutes the historical investigation and an insufficient contact with
the historical scholarship.

From my survey of the audience studies (Chapter Two), it became apparent that theatre
historians rarely engaged with the methods and assumptions of the professional historical
scholars. The result was a production of definitive images of 'Shakespeare's audience,'
which were built upon partial evidence misappropriated from professional historians, and
ultimately upon the unarticulated agenda of the writers themselves. Such is the case with
the literary scholars, too. Although the new historicist analysis of unfamiliar anecdotes,
political treatises, or colonial discourse seemed to constitute an innovative methodology in
its own right, these *evidences* had in turn to be contextualized before related to the literary
text that they supposedly spoke of. In this process, the literary scholars drew upon, but
failed to sufficiently examine the historical formulations — such as ‘one-class society,’ absolutist state or patriarchal family — established by social historians. More often than not, this ‘dependence’ or uncritical borrowing evades what is at stake in historical investigation; for the historian’s formulations are not ‘facts,’ but interpretations of the selected evidence, the procedure of which is subject to a further investigation. The canonical authority that Lawrence Stone’s work assumed in the historicist criticism is only one obvious example, as David Cressy has shown how saturated literary history has become with the writings of Stone (“Shakespeare and Social History”).

If I could avoid — I hope I have done so — depending upon the unquestioned historical interpretations for a non-problematic context or for the evidence to fill it out, it is due to an awareness that what is going on in the domain of historical scholarship is a full-fledged debate about evidence and its interpretation. Within the scholarship of early modern English history, many of the old certainties have been disrupted. Some of the familiar historical narratives began to be seen mis-informed and ill-constructed, built upon inadequate treatment of evidence: dismissal of contrary evidence, misinterpretation of ambiguous evidence, failure to use relevant evidence, import of evidence from other countries to fill gaps, and, above all, unsupportable and often pre-drawn conclusions. Concomitantly, more cautious and reliable work that comes to radically different conclusions has emerged with a sharper scepticism and more rigorous methods. If the older generation of historians preferred accumulating the evidence as ‘hard facts’ and proceeding toward a larger social or cultural pattern, the new approach can be characterized by an acute awareness of problems of interpretation, a thorough examination of the nature of evidence before using it as the evidence, deployment of shifting perspectives in constructing narratives, and most of all a greater attention to the local conditions which do not lend themselves easily to a single or consistent pattern.

It is this new approach of historical inquiry that has sustained my efforts to cope with the intractable complexity of the historical realities concerning Shakespeare’s theatre. Attending to the historians’ injunctions that the historical contexts are as opaque as the literary texts and that the problematization of contexts is an indispensable procedure prior to historicization of texts, I could resist the temptation of securing a stable ground — that is.
even for a third position. In fact, what I have learned from the social historians is that the pursuit of historical “facts” necessarily remains unfulfilled, because we are only allowed to trace the probabilities, not certainties, of the past. If this is part of the discontent that unsettles my readers, I would argue that such a discontent is the very precondition for rewriting history, or in Lee Patterson’s words, “negotiating with the past”:

While wanting to do justice to the otherness of a distant past, the historian is unavoidably conditioned by his own historical situation; while concerned to incorporate and understand as much of the material relevant to his chosen problem as he can, he is also aware that material is never raw data but rather produced by elaborate processes of interpretation — many of which are so much second nature as to be unrecognizable as interpretations at all; and while attentive to the particularities and detail in which the significance of the past reside, he also knows that for detail to be significant at all it must be located within a larger, totalizing context. These are oppositions that can never come to resolution; on the contrary they must be continually renegotiated. Like Freud’s civilization, historicism both issues from and entails discontent; the insufficiency of the present directs us to the past, but what we recover fails to satisfy. And so history continues to be written (ix-x).

It is certainly an underestimation to declare that the historicist critics were unaware of this foundational discontent. Nonetheless, they chose to foreclose the discontent, while the social historians encourage us to entertain it both in a sharper scepticism and in the hope of getting closer — not quite being there — to the past that we look back upon. In this context, what my study has offered is an exploration in a preliminary methodology of ‘negotiation and renegotiation’; what it further points toward is an imperative of developing a more rigorous discipline of interdisciplinary work among literary, theatre, and historical scholarship. It is time we should actively think what it means, and how, to write history after new historicism. In the emerging histories, we shall find ourselves negotiating, still and ever, with Shakespeare — his theatres, his plays, his audiences, his political perspectives, and his many social conditions and positions.


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