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*Enter Antigonus, a Murriner, Babe, Sheepe,
and Clowne.*

Ant. Thou art perfect then, our ship hath toucht v
The Defarts of Bohemia.

Mar. I (my lord) and feare
We haue Landed in ill time: the skies looke grimly,
And threaten present blusters. In my conscience,
The heauens with that we haue in hand, are angry.

Shakespeare and Festival

Margaret Shewring

This chapter begins by addressing the broad topic of Renaissance and early modern festivals as performance and then considers some examples of ways in which such an understanding of festivals can inform our reading of Shakespeare's history plays, with particular reference to *Richard II*. The chapter was given as one of two related papers on "Shakespeare and Festival." The leading paper, by Ronnie Mulryne, who has published widely and authoritatively on European festival, set the context within which we suggest that Shakespeare's treatment of festival can be understood and the meanings of certain of his plays appropriately enriched.¹

FESTIVAL AS PERFORMANCE

Renaissance and early modern festivals afforded, on a pan-European scale, an opportunity for public entertainment. These occasions could take over the life of a town or city and also included private, indoor occasions in churches and cathedrals, courts and great houses, academic institutions and law schools.

In her introduction to festival books for the two-volume *Europa Triumphans* collection, Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly has defined what she sees as a key distinction between "spectacles" and "ceremonies."² "Spectacles," she writes,

are theatrical events and can include dramatic, musical or danced performances, as well as military and sporting contests, in which members of the court are often both audience and actors. These theatrical forms include the opera and the *ballet de cour*, the theatrical tournament and the firework drama, all of which came into being in the late sixteenth century.

"Ceremonies," by contrast, are essentially "those events such as coronations which actually bring power structures into being." John Adamson has described such ceremonies as the "sacralization of power."³ They include the entries of monarchs into cities, elite baptisms, marriages, and state funerals. "Ceremonies tend to have a public dimension to them, and for them to be legally binding they need to be recognised by the populace."⁴

A number of Shakespeare's plays include preparations for, and performances of, spectacles for an onstage audience (in the context of the play's narrative), as well as for the delight of the general public in the open-air playhouse or indoor theatre. These plays include *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, *Hamlet*, *The Tempest*, and Shakespeare's collaborative piece with John Fletcher, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, in which the performance vocabularies of courtly entertainments, sporting contests, masques, music, and dance are employed—often with an unexpected twist. A further theatrical dimension emerges when these plays are performed for a royal and aristocratic audience in the Elizabethan or Jacobean court, or at the Inns of Court.

Shakespeare's use of spectacles such as those in the named plays has been widely discussed. This chapter will consider instead Shakespeare's treatment of ceremonies—in a context in which it is reasonable to assume that he could have depended on his audience's familiarity, and fascination, with such outdoor festival performances in urban streets and on waterways. Festival performances of this type were frequently occasions of state on the scale, in a modern context, of the coronation of Elizabeth II; the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, or of the Queen Mother; or the recent royal wedding celebrations of Prince William and Catherine Middleton.

Occasions of this kind took over the lives of thousands of people who gathered along the processional routes to share the outpouring of celebration or mourning. The occasions were at once familial and more widely political: affirmations of dynastic connections, economic prosperity, and cultural values that transcended religious, political, or cultural-specific boundaries. Specially commissioned music was heard alongside familiar pieces, sometimes with the impromptu singing of popular, often patriotic songs.

Anticipation proved crucial, both for the participants and those witnessing the celebrations. Different walks of life were represented by commentators on all aspects of the events—from the names, social status, and fashions of the participants to the place of the occasions in an understanding of national identity. The preparations extended for days, even months, in advance. Each occasion delighted its audience with a combination of traditional pomp and pageantry, and contemporary, idiosyncratic elements. A number of the occasions were marked by the minting of commemorative coins and medallions, souvenir programs (festival books), and gifts exhibiting varying levels of taste to be passed on to influential, sometimes foreign, friends who were not able to be present, or to future generations.

The sheer logistics of security and crowd control were matched by the challenge of providing refreshments to be sold to the crowds at various points along the route. And that route itself passed key landmarks, on routes employed by generations of

festival processions and evoking trace memories of such earlier events. The number and status of visiting dignitaries would be in proportion to the appropriate protocol for an occasion of state: royalty, ambassadors and heads of government, representatives of various faiths and nationalities, all accommodated alongside the families and friends of the principal performers.

The key elements of such festival occasions owe a great deal to tradition: the flamboyant outfits worn by the participants; the means of transport including horses and open carriages (dependent on the protocol appropriate to each participant); the essential properties (the vestments and regalia of a coronation, the ring(s) for a wedding ceremony); and the need to display heraldic symbols representing all the key participants and establishing their claim to a place in history.⁵ Each of these elements carries significance over and above the details of the individual occasion, as part of an iconography of spectacle with resonances capable of situating the particular occasion in the context of many other such occasions in different towns, cities, or countries.⁶

Renaissance and early modern festivals utilized a highly developed range of performance languages, often employing classical and religious iconography alongside celebrations of heraldry and dynasty in flattering recognition of the status of local and visiting dignitaries. Such iconography, along with the construction of ephemeral architecture (often in the form of triumphal arches), can best be understood as part of the symbolism of cultural exchange in which the performance languages are designed to communicate across national and generational boundaries, situating each occasion in a broader European context. Each festival also drew on specific local details in terms of location, politics, and factionalism, along with local economics (both in the status indicated by the scale of the display and in the work generated for the local economy) and social and cultural fashions. Such elements permitted each individual festival to establish its significance within the wider tradition.

SHAKESPEARE AND FESTIVAL

As far as we know, Shakespeare did not write material for civic pageantry, unlike a number of his playwrighting contemporaries. Nor did he write freestanding court masques (unlike others, notably Ben Jonson). Yet, like many of his audience members, he would certainly have had a general knowledge of such occasions. He may have walked in processions through London wearing the livery of the lord chamberlain or the queen and, after 1603, of King James. As a player he may have participated alongside his fellow sharers in performances of entertainments and masques in the elite, private environment of the court.

We can see in his play texts the influence of such performance, vouching for Shakespeare's familiarity with, and understanding of, the festival occasions that were so much a part of civic and religious life in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, not just in England but in a wider European context. This is revealed both by the inclusion of festival occasions and by allusions to such occasions in the critique, and

even disruption, of such ceremonies. There is only space here to concentrate on a few examples, taken mainly from *Richard II* and ending with reference to *Henry VIII*. These plays were written in two different reigns: *Richard II* toward the end of the reign of Elizabeth I and *Henry VIII* (in collaboration with Fletcher) toward the end of the first decade of the reign of James VI and I. Each play draws on a range of sources to evoke past events from the late medieval court of Richard and the Tudor court of Elizabeth I's father, Henry. Each play addresses issues of state power in a religious as well as a secular context, and each provides contemporary resonances for the political and religious tensions as seen in the policies of the Elizabethan and Jacobean courts both at home and in Europe. Both plays are rich in festival events: tournaments, royal meetings, entries into London, coronations, weddings, and even, in *Henry VIII*, a royal christening.

RICHARD II

Richard II was written in 1595 or 1596 and was entered in the Stationers' Register on August 29, 1597, with the First Quarto of *The Tragedy of King Richard II* being published in that year.⁷ Shakespeare's sources for *Richard II* included Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles* (second edition, 1587), possibly supplemented by Edward Hall, *The union of l. . . J Lancastre & Yorke* and by Samuel Daniel's *First Four Books of the Civil Wars between the two Houses of Lancaster and York* (published 1594–1595). He also drew on a number of sources relating specifically to France, especially John Bourchier's early sixteenth-century translation of Jean Froissart's *Chronicles*.

The depiction, and description, of festival occasions is crucial to the play's impact in performance: the spectacle of tournaments and jousts, the ceremonies of coronation and deposition (with the related ceremonial processions), and a dynastic marriage alliance. There are more examples in this play alone than I have space to do justice to here.

TOURNAMENTS AND JOUSTS

Challenges and jousts contribute significantly to the public spectacle of the play: the challenge between Mowbray and Bolingbroke, the series of challenges as gauges are thrown down against Aumerle, and the preparation for further jousts planned at Oxford early in the reign of the new king (Henry IV). These jousts belong to the world of late medieval combat. The first, set to take place at Coventry on St. Lambert's Day (17 September), dominates the early part of the play. The lists are formal, with ceremonial challenges and a preparation for what is, potentially, mortal combat as both Bolingbroke and Mowbray insist on their "tight." The danger here, not just to the combatants but to Richard's authority, is palpable—and that danger needs to be aborted. The tournament at Oxford is presented in act 5 in terms of a different

threat, not to the participants in the lists but to the life of the newly crowned King Henry, who promptly cuts off the conspiracy that could have led to his assassination before it can materialize.

Many among Shakespeare's audience may have been familiar with something of the process of late medieval tournaments, and by the late sixteenth century, tournaments were also an important form of entertainment for the royal court, including an annual celebration of the Queen's accession to the throne.⁸ Tournaments also played an important part in the entertainments during royal progresses around England. They were elaborate performance occasions, with the participants adopting fictional (sometimes mythical) personae and playing out choreographed narratives in which the fictional frameworks controlled the action.

Such spectacles sometimes barely concealed political motivation and aggression. The dominant figure in such tournaments during the 1590s was Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Essex. It is usually accepted that the writing of *Richard II* post-dated the Accession Day Tilts of November 1595, when the most elaborate tiltyard device was Essex's piece *Love and Self Love*. As Gabriel Heaton has argued, "Essex tested the limits of factionalism and overtly political content in this device."⁹ Much of the contemporary Elizabethan political danger in Shakespeare's *Richard II* can be seen in terms of the Earl of Essex and his faction, culminating in the commissioned performance of a dramatized version of Richard II's story (possibly, but not necessarily, Shakespeare's play) on the eve of Essex's rebellion in London in 1601.

CORONATIONS

Coronation and deposition have a central part to play in *Richard II*. Historically Richard was the first king of England to have a spectacular coronation procession through the streets of London. Crowned in Westminster Abbey on July 16, 1377, the day before his coronation he processed on horseback from the Tower of London to Westminster. The procession passed through London streets bustling with enter-tainers and decorated with bright banners and tapestries, just as Elizabeth I did on her entry into London, marking a public recognition of a new reign.

In Shakespeare's play, the Duke of York recounts the journey of Richard to the Tower of London, following his capitulation to Bolingbroke at Flint Castle:

[. . .] men's eyes
Did scowl on gentle Richard. No man cried God save him!
No joyful tongue gave him his welcome home,
But dust was thrown upon his sacred head,
Which with such gentle sorrow he shook off,
His face still combating with tears and smiles [. . .]. (5.2.27–33)¹⁰

As Charles Forker points out, "this desecration of the royal person is Shakespeare's invention and contrasts significantly with the mob savagery described in Holin-

shed and with the attempt of Londoners to have Richard beheaded even before he reached the capital.¹¹ York's description conflates this humiliating acknowledgment of defeat with Bolingbroke's subsequent triumphal entry into London in preparation for his coronation:

the Duke, great Bolingbroke,
Mounted upon a hot and fiery steed,
Which his aspiring rider seemed to know,
With slow but stately pace kept on his course,
Whilst all tongues cried, "God save thee, Bolingbroke!"
You would have thought the very windows spake,
So many greedy looks of young and old
Through casements darted their desiring eyes
Upon his visage, and that all the walls
With painted imagery had said at once,
"Jesu preserve thee! Welcome, Bolingbroke!" (5.2.7–17)

Shakespeare's conflation of the separate occasions in York's recounting of the transition of power, and his emphasis on each of the cousins, Richard and Bolingbroke, allows him to continue to balance their different approaches to authority and kingship. Historically, the public elements of the deposition and coronation ceremonies were of great importance. In Helen Watanabe's words, for such crucial events to be "legally binding" they need to be "recognised by the populace."¹² The public acceptance of his defeat then needs to be completed in parallel by the ceremony of Richard's formal reversal of his coronation promises. On the journey from Flint Castle, Richard's destination is the Tower. He is sent for, from the Tower, for the ceremony of deposition to take place. By the time York gives his account of the procession, the formal deposition at Westminster Hall has also taken place, for the commons "to be satisfied." This process, insisted upon by the Duke of Northumberland, serves to ratify Bolingbroke's usurpation of the throne and his formal coronation. Shakespeare acknowledges his conflation of the two processions and the two ceremonies with the end of York's speech: "To Bolingbroke are we sworn subjects now, / Whose state and honour I for aye allow" (5.2.39–40).

Historically Bolingbroke did, indeed, have his own coronation procession (as Richard had done). It is this occasion that Richard's Groom evokes when he visits his "sometime master" in Pomfret:

O, how it erned my heart when I beheld
In London streets, that coronation day,
When Bolingbroke rode on roan Barbary,
That horse that thou so often hast besstrid,
That horse that I so carefully have dressed! (5.5.76–80)

Another ceremony of coronation, this time of Bolingbroke's son, Henry V, is featured in 2 *Henry IV*. Prince Hal, now the newly crowned King Henry V, cannot al-

low Falstaff to interrupt, or hijack for personal gain, the public "sacralization" of his kingship. The equally public rejection of his old friend, mentor, and surrogate father figure completes Henry V's public acceptance of the seriousness of his new authority.

DYNASTIC ALLIANCES: ENGLAND AND FRANCE

Richard II's queen belongs historically to the late medieval and Renaissance world, providing a link to the European resonances of Shakespeare's play and, in particular, to England's relationship with France (both in the late fourteenth and the late sixteenth centuries).¹³ Richard II was born (January 6, 1367) in Bordeaux. His coronation took place in London when he was only ten years old, and John of Gaunt, his uncle, born in Ghent, ruled on his behalf until 1387. Richard's native language was French.

The queen represented in Shakespeare's play is Isabelle de Valois, Richard's second wife. Historically, Mowbray was involved in the marriage negotiated between Richard and the Valois court, a circumstance Richard alludes to in 1.1. But Richard went in person to collect his princess. It is difficult to assess just how much Shakespeare's audiences would have known of Richard's second marriage.¹⁴ They would have known that his queen was French, and certainly England's relationship with France was still a contentious issue in the 1590s. A beautifully illuminated manuscript, now in the British Library, was sent from Paris by Charles VI, Isabelle's father, in advance of the marriage. This manuscript, Philippe de Mézières's *Letter to King Richard*, set out the case for peace in Western Europe, supported the marriage, and exhorted Richard to undertake a crusade. In 1396 a meeting took place between Charles VI and Richard II, when Richard was thirty-seven years of age and a widower. He was to marry Charles's eldest daughter, Isabelle, who was not quite seven years old. R. J. Knecht records that the marriage contract "was followed by a twenty-eight year truce." He goes on: "The meeting of the two kings and their escorts took place in a meadow at Ardres, near Calais, in what was almost like a dress rehearsal for the more famous Field of Cloth of Gold of 1520."¹⁵ The meeting extended from October 27 to 30, 1396, and the kings exchanged magnificent gifts of gold on each of the days. On November 4 the meeting was ratified with the marriage of Richard and Isabelle, solemnized at Calais.

Froissart's *Chronicle* includes details of the meeting between the kings, as well as details of the marriage ceremony. It is very likely that Shakespeare knew this account. In act 5 of *Richard II*, when Richard meets his Queen in a London street as he is being escorted to prison, he recalls her arrival from France: "from whence, set forth in pomp, / She came adorned hither like sweet May" (5.1.78–79). Sadly, he accepts the inevitability of her departure: "Sent back like Hallowmas or short st of day" (5.1.80).¹⁶

HENRY VIII

The Field of Cloth of Gold was to feature in Shakespeare and Fletcher's *Henry VIII*.¹⁷ It is recounted alongside two other festival occasions, the coronation of Anne Boleyn (4.1) and the baptism of Elizabeth I (5.4).¹⁸ The potential contemporary Jacobean allusions in *Henry VIII* are complex as the play looks back to the Elizabethan age and to the rise of the Church of England. It may well have been written at the time of the marriage of James I's daughter, Princess Elizabeth, to Frederick, Elector Palatine. For the purposes of this chapter, what is distinctive about *Henry VIII* is that it offers the fullest account of festival occasions among Shakespeare's plays and that it was written at a time when the audience would have been even more familiar with royal entries and dynastic marriages and with reports of spectacular courtly entertainments. By the time of this collaboration with Fletcher, Shakespeare can depend upon his audience's familiarity with such ceremonial and spectacle.

This time Shakespeare brings the processional elements onto the stage as Anne leaves Westminster Abbey after her coronation and a Gentleman who has been in the Abbey recounts the ceremony to two other Gentlemen as she emerges into public view (4.1). In a later scene the Porter and Man talk of the great crowds pushing into London for Elizabeth's christening (5.3.1–63). Shakespeare also concentrates on other implications of festival as it impinges on status and factionalism. So, for example, Wolsey realizes that he has been superseded when it becomes obvious that it is Anne herself who has masterminded her own coronation, so substantially reducing Wolsey's role and, thus, his power and influence as a patron and politician as well as a master of ceremonies. As the play ends it is Cranmer who spells out the significance of the christening of the baby Elizabeth and underlines the expectations for her reign—a reign now evoked as a model of Protestant authority, in the hope that Elizabeth's successor, James, can be encouraged to favor the Protestant cause in Europe.

FESTIVAL IN THE PERFORMANCE OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

Shakespeare evidently could rely on his Elizabethan and Jacobean audiences to understand the importance of festival in political, economic, and social terms, and as performance. He did not need, therefore, to do more than evoke verbally the scale and grandeur of such occasions of state. It is these evocations that have offered significant challenges and opportunities to subsequent performances, including Charles Kean's spectacular historical reconstruction (1857) of the entry into London of Bolingbroke and the deposed Richard. Today, an appreciation of the significance of festival, however qualified and perhaps attenuated in our modern experience, remains alive as a factor in the ways in which we understand the nation's political and ceremonial life. Even now, we do not need to see festivals recreated on stage in order to appreciate their place within the often complex politics of Shakespeare's plays. We risk, however, misunderstanding and under-appreciating these politics if we

overlook the widespread occurrence of festival within the overall dramatic economy of the plays, from some of the earliest to some of the most mature. An awareness of the place of festival, both in the real world of Shakespeare's contemporaries and in the fictional world of his plays, may serve to rebalance and enhance our response to these plays both as texts and on the stage.

NOTES

1. J. R. Mulryne's paper was concerned with both European and English Renaissance and early modern festival occasions. For a summary discussion of early modern festival, see J. R. Mulryne's introduction to *Europa Triumphans: Court and Civic Festivals in Early Modern Europe*, ed. J. R. Mulryne, Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, and Margaret Shewring, 2 vols. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), and J. R. Mulryne and Elizabeth Goldring, eds., *Court Festivals of the European Renaissance: Art Politics and Performance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002). For a link between seventeenth-century English drama and Florentine festival, see J. R. Mulryne, "Entries and Festivals in Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Century Florence as Precedents for Court and Theatre in England, 1600–1620," in *Writing Royal Entries in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Marie-Claude Canova-Green et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012).
2. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, "The Early Modern Festival Book: Function and Form," in *Europa Triumphans*, 1:3–17, esp. 5–6.
3. Quoted in Watanabe-O'Kelly, "The Early Modern Festival Book," 6.
4. Watanabe-O'Kelly, "The Early Modern Festival Book," 5.
5. For the recent royal wedding in Britain, the Middleton family was granted its own coat of arms in recognition of the current and future role to be played by their daughter, Catherine.
6. Such examples could be drawn from European, rather than British, occasions, for example the 2009 wedding of the Swedish Crown Princess, Victoria, for which waterborne elements of the pageantry included the traditional royal barge (known famously in Venice as the *bucintoro*).
7. No deposition scene was included until the Fourth Quarto, published in 1608 (after Elizabeth's death). Overall, six quartos were published during Shakespeare's lifetime before the inclusion of the play in the Folio (as *The Life and Death of Richard the Second*).
8. From the mid-1570s to the early 1590s, Sir Henry Lee played a significant part in the organization of these chivalric spectacles, including establishing the annual Accession Day Tilts.
9. Gabriel Heaton, *Writing and Reading Royal Entertainments from George Gascoigne to Ben Jonson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 79; see also 68–80.
10. All quotations from *King Richard II* are from the Arden Shakespeare, ed. Charles R. Forker (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2002).
11. See Charles R. Forker's annotations to this scene in Shakespeare, *King Richard II*, 429.
12. See notes 2 and 3, above.
13. In Richard's reign and in that of Elizabeth I.
14. In 1383 Richard married Anne of Bohemia, daughter of Charles IV, Holy Roman Emperor. It is often asserted that Shakespeare conflated Anne with the Queen in the play, Richard's second wife, Isabelle de Valois, daughter of Charles VI of France.

15. R. J. Knecht, *The Valois: Kings of France 1328–1589* (London: Hambleton Continuum, 2004; repr. 2006), 48.
16. In a further dynastic alliance with France, it is Isabelle's younger sister whose wooing by Henry V is depicted in Shakespeare's *Henry V*.
17. For further discussion of the representation of the Field of Cloth of Gold in *Henry VIII*, see Gordon McMullan's edition of the play (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2000). All references are to this edition. Historically Buckingham was present at the Field of Cloth of Gold. In *Henry VIII*, although in France, he has been detained by "an ague," giving an excuse for Norfolk to evoke the meeting of the two kings of England and France, "Those suns of glory, those two lights of men," as he relates it to Buckingham and, of course, to the audience.
18. Shakespeare's play assumes Henry's presence at the christening of Elizabeth.