

**CULTIVATING HERALDIC HISTORIES
IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH LITERATURE**

by

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Karen Goodreau and Randy Will, and my brother Alex.

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INTRODUCTION

The Social Life of Heraldry

Unlike nearly all her predecessors, Catherine “Kate” Middleton—the wife of Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, and mother of Prince George, third in line to the English throne—was born without the mantle of English gentility. As *The Guardian* reported in its announcement of William and Kate’s engagement, Miss Middleton would be “the first commoner to marry an expected future king for 350 years, since Anne Hyde married the future King James II in 1660.”¹ Indeed, rather than belonging to the aristocratic old guard, the Middleton family was decidedly mercantile: Kate’s father owned a mail-order party supply business. To be sure, it was a highly successful enterprise worth £30 million.² Nonetheless, the Middletons were new money rather than old blood, and neither of Catherine’s parents bore an inherited coat of arms.

Still, tradition demanded that Catherine have a coat to combine with her royal husband’s. Luckily, it was relatively easy for Michael Middleton to obtain a device to pass down to his daughter in time for the wedding. The guidelines set down by the College of Arms state, “There are no fixed criteria of eligibility for a grant of arms, but such things as awards or honours from the Crown, civil or military commissions, university degrees, professional qualifications, public and charitable services, and eminence or good standing in national or local life, are taken into account.”³ Like any other applicant, Kate’s father submitted his *curriculum vitae* for review and approval by the heralds—

¹ Stephen Bates and James Meikle, “Prince William and Kate Middleton engagement announced,” *The Guardian*, November 16, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/nov/16/prince-william-kate-middleton-engagement>.

² Geoffrey Levy and Richard Kay, “Money and the Middletons,” *The Daily Telegraph*, April 21, 2011, <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/money-and-the-middletons/story-fn888nar-1226042856760>.

³ “Granting of Arms,” College of Arms website, accessed January 20, 2014, <http://www.college-of-arms.gov.uk/services/granting-arms>.

in this case, the Garter and Clarenceux Kings of Arms, within whose jurisdiction his West Berkshire home resided. Normally he would pay a fee of 5,250£ (\$8,618) following the College's endorsement, but perhaps his charge was waived given the circumstances.⁴

Michael Middleton's coat was officially designed by the Garter King of Arms, the highest official at the College of Arms. But the family's input was also taken into account. The final Middleton device is an example of *canting arms*, i.e., arms that make subtle puns on their bearer's surname and other qualities or characteristics [Figure 1]. The division down the middle of the coat is a nod to the family moniker, while the gold chevron hints at Carole Middleton's maiden name, Goldsmith. The coat also references the interests and pastimes of the Middleton clan. The three acorns allude to the oak tree, which serves both as a symbol of English strength and of the foliage surrounding the family's home. The inverted white chevron symbolizes mountains and the Middletons' fondness for outdoor activities, particularly skiing.⁵

The coat was officially bestowed on Michael Middleton in April of 2011, and Kate, along with her sister Pippa, assumed the arms in the lozenge-shaped shields used exclusively by single women [Figure 2]. After Kate married William, the Queen granted her an *impaled* coat of arms, which depicts both coats in full on the two halves of a single crest. The two *supporters*, a white hind and a lion, are assigned to Kate and William, respectively [Figure 3].⁶ The *conjugal* coat of arms, a separate device used at official openings performed by the couple, displays William and Kate's coats side by side [Figure 4]. Like William's personal coat, the conjugal version features elements of

⁴ Figure obtained via Google Currency Converter, accessed January 21, 2014, www.google.com/finance/converter.

⁵ "The Arms of Miss Catherine Middleton," The College of Arms website, accessed April 19, 2011, <http://www.college-of-arms.gov.uk/news-grants/grants/item/8-arms-of-catherine-middleton>.

⁶ The official website of the British Monarch notes, "It is customary for individual versions of the Royal Arms with the Royal Supporters to be assigned by Royal Warrant to members of the Royal Family and for wives of members of the Royal Family to be granted one of their husband's Supporters and one relating to themselves. The Supporter assigned to The Duchess of Cambridge is a white hind, which has had continuing Royal connections in England since the 14th Century. The lion is the Supporter of The Duke of Cambridge's Coat of Arms." "The Duchess of Cambridge—Emblems," The Official Website of the British Monarchy, accessed February 8, 2014, <http://www.royal.gov.uk/ThecurrentRoyalFamily/TheDuchessofCambridge/Emblems.aspx>.

England's royal arms, and it will change over the years to reflect the royal pair's activities and accomplishments.⁷ From this point forward, the Duke and Duchess may use coats of arms as individuals or as a political power couple. Both have borne three separate coats of arms within two years, and they are likely to accumulate additional versions in the future.⁸

While the custom of bearing arms may seem archaic, as this recent example demonstrates, it has persisted partly because it can be adapted to represent fluid individual and social circumstances. *The Guardian's* Stephen Bates hints at the paradoxes that characterize heraldry: it is both anachronistic and modern, serious and whimsical. Though Bates labels the practice of granting coats a "quaint medievalism," he also gestures at its relationship to corporate brand identity by imagining a device that alludes to the family's party business: "crossed balloons on a field of serviettes with blowers rampant."⁹ Of course, he notes, the true Middleton coat of arms is "nothing so irreverent," and arms granted by the College rarely contain literal depictions of their bearer's occupation. Yet in the next sentence, Bates refers to the image's entertaining elements: "There are two in-jokes," he writes, "but you probably have to be a medieval French herald to appreciate them fully." The statement reflects the common view that heraldry is difficult to comprehend, and thus appreciated only by those in the know. In reality, its ostensibly esoteric in-jokes don't require much specialized

⁷ "The conjugal arms of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge," The College of Arms website, accessed February 9, 2014, <http://www.college-of-arms.gov.uk/about-us/history/2-coa/37-cambridge-conjugal-arms>; and Gordon Rayner, "Duke and Duchess of Cambridge get a joint coat of arms," *The Telegraph*, September 27, 2013, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/theroyalfamily/10338976/Duke-and-Duchess-of-Cambridge-get-a-joint-coat-of-arms.html>.

⁸ William's coat of arms is similar to the arms of the Queen, Prince Charles, and Prince Henry, though each feature minor differences. All three coats share the escutcheon of the arms of the sovereign in right of the United Kingdom, i.e., the shield bearing the three lions of England in the first and fourth quarters, the lion of Scotland in the second and the harp of Ireland in the third. William's and Harry's coats both include escallop shells that reference their mother Diana Spencer's family coat of arms. See "Symbols of the British Monarchy—Coats of Arms" and "The Current Royal Family—Prince William—Emblems," The Official Website of the British Monarchy, accessed February 8, 2014, <http://www.royal.gov.uk/MonarchUK/Symbols/Coatsofarms.aspx>, and <http://www.royal.gov.uk/ThecurrentRoyalFamily/PrinceWilliam/Emblems.aspx>.

⁹ Stephen Bates, "Kate Middleton's coat of arms blends in-jokes, symbolism and history," *The Guardian*, April 19, 2011, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/apr/19/middleton-coat-of-arms-symbolism>. For a discussion of the Royal Arms as a corporate heritage brand, see John M.T. Balmer, "Corporate Heritage Brands and Precepts of Corporate Heritage Brand Management: Insights from the British Monarchy on the Eve of the Royal Wedding of Prince William (April 2011) and Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee (1952-2012)," *Journal of Brand Management* 18, no. 8 (2011): 517-44.

education to decode. Given a few sentences of context, *The Guardian's* readers can easily appreciate the cleverness—or mock the banality—of this celebrity coat of arms.

The publicity surrounding the Middleton grant indicates that status in England still has a public relations component, and heraldry remains an important element of such display. Historian David Cannadine notes that an official system of hereditary class status still exists in England, although social distinctions extend well beyond one's birth circumstances. Writers have attempted to clarify these complex rankings, publishing books that set out “the five gradations of the hereditary peerage, [explain] the relative standing of the younger son of a baronet vis-à-vis the elder son of the younger son of a duke, and [point] out whether a Master of Arts from Oxford ranks higher than a provincial mayor with no university degree.”¹⁰ Such gradations may seem fussy, but they clearly remain influential at the highest social levels. It's doubtful, for example, that Catherine Middleton would have met Prince William had her parents lacked the fortune to send her to the University of St. Andrew's.¹¹ Similarly, a university-educated businessman, even one with “good standing in local life,” would find it difficult to obtain a coat of arms without the spare income required to buy it. In practice, although arms can technically be obtained by people who lack inherited titles—for example, those who marry a prince—their steep price tag gives them a close correlation to wealth, making them far from egalitarian.¹²

Despite the difficulty of procuring legitimate arms grants and the prestige afforded to those who have them, inherited heraldry is sometimes misunderstood as available to anyone. This misconception usually assumes a connection between arms and family surnames: a person named Goldsmith can easily find multiple websites selling plaques that bear a previous Goldsmith's coat of

¹⁰ David Cannadine, *The Rise and Fall of Class in Britain* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 23.

¹¹ “The Duchess of Cambridge,” The Official Website of the British Monarchy, accessed February 8, 2014, <http://www.royal.gov.uk/ThecurrentRoyalFamily/TheDuchessofCambridge/TheDuchessofCambridge.aspx>.

¹² As the following chapters will show, heraldry became a marker of lineage during the thirteenth century, but its connection with wealth and gentility was a late medieval invention, and its formal regulation arose even later.

arms, even though odds that the buyer is descended from the original bearer are miniscule.¹³ Myths like this one are partly attributable to ignorance about heraldry's historical origins, regulation, and functions. One reader responding to a *Daily Telegraph* article on the Middleton arms opined that heraldry has always been “elevated above the mean jockeying of politicians...[it] belongs not to some invented theatrical world of flummery, but to the same fabric of governance that the monarchy and established Church have inherited.”¹⁴ Like the presumed link between arms and surnames, this characterization of heraldic history has roots in fact but stems from misperceptions about heraldry's historical and contemporary roles. The institutions this reader mentions—heraldry, the monarchy, and the church—may be slightly less vulnerable than individual politicians to political interests. Nonetheless, all three systems are inherently, and at times vehemently, political. Each participates in the creation and maintenance of social divisions, which change over time depending on the interests of those in power. Heraldry has historically played an important role in the regulation and display of state authority and civic relationships. Over the centuries, debates (sometimes vitriolic) about heraldry's precepts and proper adjudication have produced a legacy that survives in print, manuscript, and performative formats, from royal proclamations to verse miscellanies and popular drama.

Indeed, “the mean jockeying of politicians” neatly describes the character of English heraldic policy and practice from the mid-sixteenth century onward. Heraldic imagery was hardly limited to noble houses, churches, tournaments, and funerals, though the vital role it played in each of these venues has been vividly illustrated by historians and literary scholars.¹⁵ In addition to its importance

¹³ House of Names (<http://www.houseofnames.com>) and The Tree Maker (<http://www.thetreemaker.com>) offer coats based on surnames. Other sites, like Fleur-de-lis Designs (www.fleurdelis.com), create custom coats using the buyer's specifications.

¹⁴ Henry Jameson, Letter to the editor, *The Daily Telegraph*, April 22, 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/letters/8467266/Heraldry-finds-its-purpose-in-the-royal-wedding.html>.

¹⁵ The classic descriptive reference on the heraldry of manor houses is popularly known as “Burke's Peerage.” See Sir Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry, Founded 1836 by John Burke and Sir Bernard Burke*, 18th ed., ed. Peter Townsend (London: Burke's Peerage, 1965-72); on churches, see Jan Broadway, *No Historie So Meete:*

in displays of elite pomp, heraldry acquired lasting cultural relevance by becoming an area of study with a capacious vocabulary and attendant imagery. The late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries saw the publication of multiple books explaining heraldic images and terminology, several of which sustained multiple print editions and became standard features in gentlemen's libraries. Some of these books were historiographic, activating readers' local and national memories through written histories and illustrations of the arms of historical figures, while others explained heraldic tenets and specialized vocabulary to their gentleman readers.¹⁶ These precepts could be studied at leisure by the well-to-do, and pored over with determined resolve by those who aspired to become so.¹⁷

Much like today, obtaining a legitimate coat of arms in the late sixteenth century, whether by royal favor or College grant, tended to be a lengthy, involved, and expensive process. For various reasons, including declining financial circumstances, William Shakespeare's father John wasn't granted a coat of arms until nearly thirty years after his initial application.¹⁸ Yet in the eyes of some elites, attaining arms had become far too easy. Both Queen Elizabeth and King James faced public criticism for allowing scores (and in James' case, hundreds) of men to be knighted simultaneously

Gentry Culture and the Development of Local History in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England (New York: Manchester University Press, 2006). On tournaments, see Alan Young, *Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments* (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Sheridan House, 1987), and "Sir Philip Sidney's Tournament Impresas," *Sidney Newsletter* 6 (1985): 6-24. On funerals, see J.F.R. Day, "Death be Very Proud: Sidney, Subversion, and Elizabethan Heraldic Funerals," in *Tudor Political Culture*, ed. Dale Hoak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 179-203; Jennifer Woodward, *The Theatre of Death: The Ritual Management of Royal Funerals in Renaissance England, 1570-1625* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 1997), and Mervyn James, "Two Tudor Funerals," in *Society, Politics, and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England*, ed. James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 176-87.

¹⁶ Though some emblem books feature heraldic imagery and mottoes, their primary purpose is not to provide heraldic and genealogical information, so I have omitted them from my discussion of heraldic texts; however, I mention their role as sources in my third chapter. A helpful introduction to scholarship on Renaissance emblem theory is *Aspects of Renaissance and Baroque Symbol Theory: 1500-1700*, eds. Peter M. Daly and John Manning, AMS Studies in the Emblem, no. 14 (New York: AMS Press, 1999).

¹⁷ J.F.R. Day's dissertation on heraldic texts, "Venal Heralds and Mushroom Gentlemen: Seventeenth Century Character Books and the Sale of Honor" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1985), was serialized in the College of Arms journal *The Coat of Arms*, 8, no. 149 (Spring 1990) through 9, no. 156 (Winter 1991). Day is also the author of "Primers of Honor: Heraldry, Heraldry Books, and English Renaissance Literature," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 21, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 93-103, the sole published article that focuses exclusively on heraldic texts. The essay is an excellent overview of these treatises and their influence on Renaissance literature. I provide a similar overview in order to discuss the books' roles as mediators between the private conflicts in the College of Arms and the public desire for heraldic information.

¹⁸ See Chapter 3, pp. 150-51.

and under questionable circumstances.¹⁹ Compounding this apparent profligacy at the highest levels, changes were underway among the gentry, as well. Upwardly mobile yeomen and professionals began to accumulate wealth equivalent to that of the landed gentry, who had historically achieved gentle status by earning between 15-40£ per year in rent. These *nouveau riche* sought the status symbols previously used only by old families who had inherited their land. Keith Wrightson observes that careers in the trade or the professions allowed younger sons of the gentry without land inheritances to make their own fortunes, while other men rose “from humbler origins among the yeomanry of the countryside and the ‘middling sort’ of townsmen.” Many such men were able to procure arms for one simple reason. Heralds at the College of Arms, ostensibly concerned with verifying applicants’ pedigreed backgrounds, instead “tended to grant a formal legitimacy to those whose claims rested on grounds less precise, but much firmer than those of genealogy”—namely, on wealth.²⁰ Among the elite, the view arose that heralds’ profit motives had undermined their dedication to proper methods, leading to a troubling surge in the number of arms bearers. Many professional writers shared this view, mocking heralds as peddlers and newly made gentlemen as opportunistic social climbers who bought arms using money made by their land-owning—or worse, working-class—fathers. Even though Ben Jonson’s stepfather worked as a bricklayer, Jonson claimed descent from a respected Scottish family, and he included brief jabs at heralds and their customers in many of his comedies.²¹

¹⁹ See Chapter 1, p. 45.

²⁰ Keith Wrightson, *English Society: 1580-1680* (London: Routledge, 1982), 30, 24.

²¹ London Consistory Court records call Jonson “Armiger,” and he told his friend William Drummond that his arms were “three spindles or rhombi; his own word about them, *percontabor* or *perscrutator*”—the arms held by the Johnstones of Annandale. Little is known about Jonson’s father, who died before Ben was born. See Ian Donaldson, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 163, 56-7; and *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, s.v. “Jonson, Benjamin (1572–1637),” by Ian Donaldson, accessed February 9, 2014, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/article/15116>. Jonson mentions heralds, pedigrees, and/or arms grants in *Eastward Ho*, *Cynthia’s Revels*, *The Staple of News*, *The New Inn*, *A Tale of A Tub*, *The Case is Altered*, *Every Man Out of His Humour*, and *Poetaster*. I discuss several of his epigrams briefly in Chapter 3, but due to the brief and repetitive nature of these references, I do not examine them at length.

Though Lawrence Stone's argument in *The Crisis of the Aristocracy* has been challenged, corrected, and partially refuted by later scholars, his account of the heralds' dilemma remains accurate. "It was not at all clear where the heralds' duty lay," Stone writes. "It was their function to accommodate new families to the old structure of titles of honour, and yet they were despised and hated by the older families for their pains, and readily believed—too often with justification—to be acting merely from corrupt motives."²² Indeed, for some officers, the allure of profit overrode moral qualms about rewarding arms to undeserving applicants. Compounding this tension, some English writers advocated for an inclusive standard of gentility that allowed persons to become gentle through education and accomplishments, not just fortunate birth. This argument seemed to established families like a loosening of standards: in their eyes, both arms grants and the social advantages they signified had become distressingly accessible.

The established gentry's dismay represents an early modern English precursor to the "dyspeptic hauteur" noted by Paul Fussell, who found a similar disdain toward class mobility in later centuries and in an American context.²³ In *Class: A Guide Through the American Status System*, Fussell devised the term "prole drift," which he defined as "the tendency in advanced industrialized societies for everything to become inexorably proletarianized." This trend comprises both social climbing and "class sinking": in capitalist cultures, he argues, middle-class people work to enhance their status by pursuing goods and activities formerly reserved for cultural elites. The capitalist profit motive ensures that these commodities—or at least their imitations—are mass produced for social strivers, whose possession devalues both the quality and the cachet of these idols of the rich and

²² *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), 69. Chapter 3, "The Inflation of Honours," discusses the subject in detail. In *The Rites of Knighthood: The Literature and Politics of Elizabethan Chivalry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), Richard C. McCoy concurs with Stone's account of the increasing numbers of gentry, 36. Notable studies that challenge aspects of Stone's argument include Wrightson, *English Society*; Miles Fairburn, *Social History: Problems, Strategies and Methods* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); and Alistair Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

²³ The phrase belongs to James Harkin, "What is... 'Proletarian drift'?" *The Times*, July 30, 2005, <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/law/columnists/article2048266.ece>.

famous. While “fantasist class climbers” buy wallpaper depicting mahogany libraries, the upper classes must increasingly serve themselves at grocery stores and endure cramped airline seating.²⁴ In essence, Fussell shows how the elite in the early twentieth century denigrated their perceived inferiors who sought, acquired, and tainted symbols of status.²⁵

The analogy between prole drift and attainable arms isn’t perfect. Early modern England was far from industrial; those who sought coats of arms were of the upper middling sort rather than proletarian;²⁶ and inherited heraldic arms weren’t strictly buyable commodities. Attaining a *genuine* coat of arms required not only financial affluence, but also a gentle lineage verified by an official at the College of Arms, a process that could take years to complete. Nonetheless, the unabashedly elitist ideology behind the prole drift concept helps contextualize upper-class disgust for the transactional heraldic economy that emerged in late sixteenth century England. In the eyes of many

²⁴ “Climbing and Sinking, And Prole Drift,” in *Class: A Guide Through the American Status System* (New York: Touchstone, 1983), 170-78. Fussell distinguishes between “climbers,” who attain status symbols, and “strainers” who only fantasize about them and/or settle for fraudulent versions, 170. Other trends that would fit Fussell’s “prole drift” paradigm include middle-class American women using designer handbags, and a subset of the English working class, derogatorily referred to as “chavs,” wearing expensive Burberry clothing. PR specialist Mark Borkowski has written that retailer Abercrombie & Fitch—having offered to pay an actor on the reality show *Jersey Shore* not to wear its clothes—“fears the ‘prole drift’ that so damaged the Burberry brand as it fell from casual wear to football thuggery to chav culture,” in “Is all publicity good publicity or should you try to tailor it?,” *The Financial Times*, August 23, 2011, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/e6403d6c-cdcf-11e0-a409-00144feabdc0.html>; see also Harkin, “What is...‘Proletarian drift?’” Interestingly, one quality now commonly attributed to the white working class in Britain is *lack* of ambition; see Owen Jones, *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class* (London: Verso, 2011), 7, 10-12.

²⁵ To other privileged observers, displays of expensive goods suggest an appalling lack of frugality among the poor. A person making minimum wage or on welfare, the argument goes, shouldn’t spend money on a \$2,000 purse. But this perspective is itself a luxury limited to those who already hold privileged racial and economic identities. A poor and/or non-white person who wears brand-name clothing may be highly attuned to the advantages that accrue to people who display the accoutrements of wealth and privilege. Pierre Bourdieu argues that middle-class professionals accept “cases in which luxury, ‘a conventional degree of prodigality,’ becomes, as Marx observed, ‘a business necessity’ and ‘enters into capital’s expenses of representation’ as ‘an exhibition of wealth and consequently as a source of credit,’” *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (1984; repr., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 287. Tressie McMillan Cotten extends this logic to upwardly mobile individuals in the working class, as well, noting that an “extravagant” purse or suit might help an underprivileged person access very real economic benefits—for example, a better job or assistance with a bureaucracy. See “Why Do Poor People ‘Waste’ Money On Luxury Goods?,” *Talking Points Memo*, November 1, 2013, <http://talkingpointsmemo.com/cafe/why-do-poor-people-waste-money-on-luxury-goods>.

²⁶ In “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” Engels defines the proletariat as “the class of modern wage-labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour-power in order to live,” *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), 473n5.

cultural commentators, including some playwrights, arms were well on their way to becoming victims of “middling-sort drift.”

The higher orders in England have always been concerned with genealogical proof of gentility. This preoccupation is due in part to the fact that an honorable lineage can be considered the purest possible distillation of social privilege—an early precursor to what Pierre Bourdieu labels “the art of living of the aristocrat.” Bourdieu writes that, by pursuing leisure activities, modern aristocrats distinguish themselves through “a long frequentation of old, cultivated people and things, that is, membership of an ancient group.” The skills they cultivate “can only be accumulated over time”; more importantly, they consist of leisurely pursuits, not paid labor.²⁷ The early modern aristocracy valued an early version of this quality in the form of lineage. Though a pedigree is not an activity *per se*, it exists because a person’s family line has extended through the ages: the only necessary activity is the accumulation of time. Simply because centuries have passed, a member of the gentry, peerage, or nobility belongs to “an ancient group.” For old English families, then, a genuine coat of arms symbolized the aura of honor a bearer had accreted over the centuries without expending any effort. When early modern English heralds and entrepreneurial tradesmen began to create coats of arms for the *nouveau riche*, who had money but lacked genealogical qualifications, this paradigm came under threat. Unlike other accoutrements of gentility—e.g., rent earned from land, genteel manners, or a university education—coats of arms were easily reproducible visual signs. As images, they could move quickly from conception to execution, not to mention from purchase to display. The allure of profit for both buyer and seller meant that heraldic arms no longer required “a long investment of time” in the form of membership in an old family: they could now “be acquired

²⁷ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 281. In contrast to his argument that the ability to take one’s time signifies aristocratic privilege, he observes that time’s passage is the enemy of the lower classes: “the dominated groups are exposed to the illusion that they have only to wait in order to receive advantages which, in reality, they will obtain only by struggle,” 164.

in haste or by proxy,” like any other commodity.²⁸ As a result, newly gotten arms became suspect in the eyes of those who felt true gentility rested on a venerable line of blue blood, not a hastily sketched *bend azure*.²⁹

The view that corrupt early regulators and consumers nearly destroyed heraldry’s august tradition has persisted over the centuries. Like their early modern predecessors, nineteenth and twentieth century heraldic scholars decried grants awarded by unlicensed “heralds” to social climbers. As historians, they were also embarrassed by the tone of Renaissance heraldry texts, whose authors enticed readers with vivid and sometimes invented accounts of heraldry’s visual, linguistic, and mythological significance. By their standards, Renaissance writers on heraldry were eccentric and methodologically suspect. These critics fostered an air of indignant superiority, complaining that early modern writers had tainted the rarefied grammar of a noble profession by making it available—and interesting—to a range of readers. In *Symbolisms of Heraldry* (1898), William Cecil Wade apologetically describes the “limitations of knowledge” that led writers during those “unenlightened ages” to circulate “mere exuberances of Gothic fancy,” and Arthur Huntington Nason describes Gerard Legh’s *The Accedens of Armory* (1562) as “highly idealistic nonsense,” “rambling,” “fanciful,” and “obscure,” calling it emblematic of the early modern appetite for “mystery,” “sham,” and “learned ignorance.”³⁰

Like their predecessors, these critics expressed discomfort with the burgeoning availability of heraldic information during the period. Still, many also grudgingly admitted that early modern heraldic texts provide a revealing portrait of a moment in history, as well as evidence of the difficulties inherent in defining and enforcing standards of honor and privilege. In *The Herald and*

²⁸ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 281.

²⁹ On a coat of arms, a *bend azure* is a blue line that extends diagonally from the top left to the bottom right corner.

³⁰ William Cecil Wade, *The Symbolisms of Heraldry: Or, A Treatise on the Meanings and Derivations of Armorial Bearings* (London, 1898), 14; and Arthur Huntington Nason, *Heralds and Heraldry in Ben Jonson’s Plays, Masques, and Entertainments* (New York: Burleigh & Flynt, 1907), 11-12.

Genealogist (1863), John Gough Nichols chastised Renaissance heraldic writers' "vast parade of extraneous and irrelevant learning"; however, he also admitted that they satisfied public appetite for a kind of knowledge the heralds had declined to provide. Writers like Legh, he noted, were conscious of "the delicate task...of attempting as [amateurs] to open to public apprehension an art belonging to a body of professors who lawfully and officially claimed, possessed, and exercised its peculiar jurisdiction and practice."³¹ In a sense, Nichols acknowledges that veracity of information in these books was less important than the fact that they were being published at all.

These historians' reluctant acceptance of heraldic invention also led to some questionable conclusions. Wade proclaimed that studies of early modern heraldry "will ever be dear to those who take an interest in the social life of our ancestors, or who desire to recall in imagination the bright pageantry and chivalry of the gentlemen of England, who, for age after age, were loved at home and respected abroad to such an extent as finds no parallel in the history of any other people."³² In addition to his assertion that the English have an unblemished cultural reputation, Wade fails to imagine any potential discrepancy between the "chivalry of the gentlemen of England" and "the social life of our ancestors." The "our" he implies is the one desired by the old families—a narrow field consisting of elite heirs, confined to royal proclamations, courtly tournaments, and noble funerals.

In reality, thanks in no small part to the popularity of heraldic texts, heraldic discourse itself had a vibrant "social life" and was ripe for use and debate in a broad range of venues. Though arms had always been owned by the nobility and aristocracy, they became available to corporate bodies in the fifteenth century and to newly made gentlemen in the sixteenth. Information about heraldic images and terminology could be found in guild halls, booksellers' stalls, and on the public stage. Its increasingly familiar visual components combined with its arcane vocabulary opened it up to

³¹ Introduction, *The Herald and Genealogist*, vol. 1, ed. Nichols (London, 1863), 42.

³² Wade, *The Symbolisms of Heraldry*, 14.

interpretation, mimicry, counterfeit, and parody by people across the social spectrum, from tradesmen to ballad-sellers to dramatists. These interpretations reveal that for most English subjects, arms did not represent unassailable honor. Instead, they operated as a visual and verbal shorthand for quotidian social and economic relationships that characterized life at the turn of the seventeenth century. Heraldry's distinctive lexicon and imagery became a vernacular that allowed the middling sort to participate in a range of localized social and political commentary.

In describing my subject as heraldry's "social life," I focus on heraldry as a set of discourses with many uses and meanings among different communities, not a fixed marker of ancient birth. In practice, it fostered public and private debates about individual and collective identities among courtiers, scholars, lawyers, artists, playwrights, and craftsmen, all of whom had roles in heraldry's creation, regulation, and public circulation. The many overlapping and competing sites of heraldic production ranged from official venues and texts—royal regulations, arms patents, heralds' books, and court masques and tournaments—to unregulated formats like readerly commentary, print and manuscript satire, and staged drama, which deployed heraldry's language and imagery in different ways than their sanctioned counterparts. Positing this wide range of heraldic communities and venues allows me to compare heraldry's aristocratic uses with heraldry's utility among the middling sort, as well as to contrast its public and private faces. Though I attend to lay readers and working class subjects in my discussion, I do not intend to suggest that early modern heraldic discourse betokened higher social status for people residing in the lower orders. Coats of arms and heraldic theory remained unattainable to most people: a majority of the population couldn't read, and textual debates about heraldry's significance often redounded to the benefit of the educated and well-to-do. Nonetheless, the forms I discuss here, including print, manuscript, and popular drama, all contributed to heraldry's contested textual, visual, and oral presence in the lives of English people across the social spectrum.

The body of scholarship examining heraldry's presence in early modern English literature has remained relatively small over the last century. The only full-length studies of heraldry in early modern drama are many decades old, though they remain excellent empirical introductions to the subject. Arthur Huntington Nason's *Heralds and Heraldry in Ben Jonson's Plays, Masques and Entertainments* (1907) and Charles Wilfred Scott-Giles' *Shakespeare's Heraldry* (1950) give comprehensive overviews of each playwright's heraldic references and link them to potential sources.³³ More recent studies have tended to focus on blazon as a rhetorical device.³⁴ Seminal essays by Patricia Parker, Nancy Vickers, and Ann Rosalind Jones discuss heraldic and poetic blazon as gendered discourse in travel narratives and poetry by Shakespeare, Marot, and Petrarch,³⁵ and recent articles by Jeffrey Paxton Hehmeyer and Laura Friedman build on this work in analyses of *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Astrophil and Stella*.³⁶ Margreta DeGrazia and Valerie Traub provide nuanced readings of heraldic allusions in *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,³⁷ and J.F.R. Day and Amy Elizabeth Fahey discuss heralds as characters in medieval and early modern texts.³⁸ Their studies provide a foundation for my own work, which treats heraldry as a wide-ranging social phenomenon

³³ Nason, *Heralds and Heraldry in Ben Jonson's Plays, Masques and Entertainments* (New York: Burleigh & Flynt, 1907), and Charles Wilfred Scott-Giles, *Shakespeare's Heraldry* (London: Dent, 1950).

³⁴ Georgio Melchiori discusses heraldry in his edition of *King Edward III* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); see also Anny Crunelle Vanrigh, "Illuminations, Heraldry and *King Edward III*," *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* 25, no. 3 (June 2009): 215-31, and Saxon Walker, "Mime and Heraldry in *Henry IV, Part 1*," *English* 11, no. 63 (1956): 91-96.

³⁵ Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (New York: Methuen, 1982), 126-54; Nancy Vickers, "Members Only: Marot's Anatomical Blazons," in *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, ed. David Hillman and Carla Mazzio (London: Routledge, 1997), "The blazon of sweet beauty's best: Shakespeare's *Lucrece*," in *Shakespeare and The Question of Theory*, ed. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (New York: Methuen, 1985), 95-115, "This Heraldry in *Lucrece's* Face," *Poetics Today* 6, nos. 1-2 (1985): 171-84, and "Diana Described: Scattered Woman and Scattered Rhyme," *Writing and Sexual Difference*, ed. Elizabeth Abel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 95-109; Ann Rosalind Jones, "'Blond chef, grande conquête': Feminist Theories of the Gaze, The blason anatomique, and Lousie Labe's Sonnet 6," in *Distant Voices Still Heard*, ed. John O'Brien and Malcolm Quainton (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 85-106.

³⁶ Jeffrey Paxton Hehmeyer, "Heralding the Commonplace: Authorship, Voice, and the Commonplace in Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 139-64, and Laura Friedman, "Displaying Stella: Anatomical Blazon and the Negotiation of Male Social Status," *Sidney Journal* 30, no. 1 (January 2012): 101-15.

³⁷ Margreta DeGrazia, "Generation and Degeneracy," *Hamlet Without Hamlet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 81-128; and Valerie Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 171-72.

³⁸ J.F.R. Day, "Venal Heralds and Mushroom Gentlemen," and Amy Elizabeth Fahey, "Heralds and Heraldry in English Literature, c. 1350-1600" (Ph.D. diss., Washington University, 2005).

that transcends the disciplinary boundaries of both empiricist history and literary criticism. By linking the work of heralds, amateur writers, anonymous readers, and playwrights, this study unites previously disparate strands of literary and historical scholarship, treating heraldic texts, images, and speech as both a unique method of historical storytelling and a vehicle for early modern identity performance. Analyzing heraldry means exploring changes in class and the social order; self-fashioning and identity performance; historiography and nationalism; patronage, ownership, and labor; definitions of art and craft; the rise of disciplines and professionalism; and the intersections between oral, visual, textual, and material culture. In addition to outlining heraldry's vexed institutional history, I discuss authorized and unsanctioned displays of heraldic knowledge in text, manuscript, and stage plays. I argue that heraldic language and imagery could alternately create, conceal, and critique narratives of individual and collective identity. Moreover, as a system that supported multiple modes of communication, it fostered social commentary in venues that ranged from the court to the popular theater. Viewed as a hybrid of venerable tradition and adaptable language, early modern heraldry becomes a tool for vibrant social commentary.

My first chapter narrates the established history of heraldry and heraldic texts to contextualize the volatile atmosphere in and around the College of Arms during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. I argue that from their inception, arms grants exceeded the boundaries set by the aristocracy and gentry. Belated attempts by monarchs and the College of Arms to graft ideals of nobility onto an already established visual lexicon had mixed results, and standards of qualification were difficult to define, much less enforce. The heralds' regulatory authority was severely limited, and disagreements arose as the officers fought over titles, methods, and profits. Though some heraldic officers were collaborative, others preferred to assert their superiority by challenging and even sabotaging their colleagues' methods and conclusions, often in print. I also place this institutional history in wider cultural context by exploring the rising importance of herald

painters and amateur heraldic writers—groups the officers perceived as threats to their professional exclusivity. In particular, the writers of heraldic texts, capitalizing on the cachet inherent in heraldic details, paid lip service to the heralds' preeminence even as they created meaning from scratch. Although these books purported to decode heraldry's relationship to English honor, they instead complicated the already labyrinthine discourse surrounding it. In the past, scholars have used heraldic texts to formulate definitions of early modern gentility which they then apply to literary texts as traditionally understood. I treat these heraldic books as literary in their own right, suggesting they functioned as catalysts of social mobility in early modern English culture, and not merely as symptoms or historical evidence of such mobility.

The second chapter builds on my literary approach toward historiography through an analysis of unofficial, often vernacular responses to different kinds of heraldic texts. In addition to publishing scathing censures of each other's work, heralds continued their debates over time by writing in the margins of printed books. At times, their highly critical commentary takes on the tone of face-to-face argumentation. Readers outside the College also adapted heraldic texts by adding pictures and marginal notes; some cross-referenced writers' claims with chronicles and classical authors as they read, while others treated genealogical texts like modern-day tabloids, aiming barbs at the figures described within their pages. The lexical information and social critique supported by these texts helped lay the groundwork for the mock-heraldic poetry that frequently appears in satirical writing during the period. Though poets as early as Chaucer had ironized heraldry, usually to stereotype the poor, early modern writers took the satire further, employing heraldic *blazon* to poke fun at institutions and their own acquaintances. By juxtaposing these responses, I shed light on heraldic communities outside the English court and College of Arms, and suggest these communities' vitality contributed to the spread of a uniquely social literary form.

Chapter three shifts from the producers of heraldic texts to those who created performative heraldry for courtly and popular venues. Heraldic impresas played major roles in royal entertainments; unlike inherited coats of arms, impresas were single-use shields featuring images and mottoes with oblique meanings. Usually created by courtiers and poets, they were presented to the monarch before tournaments or during court masques. Though few Londoners were privy to these royal events, they could see impresa images and mottoes recreated on the public stage: they were common props in the “populuxe” dramas of Kyd, Wilson, Middleton, and Shakespeare.³⁹ These devices required a unique mix of intellectual and artistic knowledge to create, and playwrights—some of whom designed impresas themselves—often staged elements of their construction, alternately praising and critiquing the creative processes behind them. While *The Spanish Tragedy* and *The Three Lords and Three Ladies of London* focus on impresas as populist heraldic spectacle, *Your Five Gallants* and *Pericles* imply that a wide social and economic gulf separates heraldic creation from its display.

The final chapter analyzes English and Welsh forms of historiography in *The Valiant Welshman*, Shakespeare’s second tetralogy of history plays, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Despite Wales’ and England’s shared histories, their inhabitants’ ways of telling those histories diverged over the centuries. Even after they had settled in England, some Welsh retained a cultural tradition that involved celebrating their lineages in song, verse, and speech. This oral mode didn’t sit well with English gentlemen, many of whom lacked confidence in their own pedigrees. English genealogical reticence thus stood in marked contrast to open Welsh pride: English strivers relied on coats of arms to demonstrate their social stature, but satirized their Welsh counterparts’ investments in genealogy as prolix bragging. The anonymous play *The Valiant Welshman*, along with Shakespeare’s *Glendower*,

³⁹ The term is from Paul Yachnin’s essays “The Populuxe Theater,” in Anthony B. Dawson and Paul Yachnin, *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare’s England: A Collaborative Debate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 38-65, and “‘The Perfection of Ten’: Populuxe Art and Artisanal Value in *Troilus and Cressida*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (2005): 306-27.

Fluellen, Hotspur, and Parson Hugh Evans, offer critiques of this peculiar English prejudice. In particular, although Shakespeare's plays acknowledge the importance of heraldry in English history, they depict the Welsh as creators of an inclusive British historiography founded on visual, oral, and textual narratives—a rich rather than impoverished form of historical consciousness.

FIGURES

Figure 1. Michael Middleton's Coat of Arms



Figure 2. Catherine Middleton's Coat of Arms



Figure 3. Catherine's impaled coat of arms



Figure 4. William and Catherine's conjugal coat of arms



CHAPTER ONE

The History of Heraldry: Communities and Conflicts

In 1578, William Flower—Norroy King of Arms, one of the highest heraldic officials in the College of Arms—issued an exasperated public notice from his London office. As Norroy King of Arms, Flower held jurisdiction over all heraldic matters in the counties “FROM THE RIVER OF TRENT, North East and VWestvvard.” He made visitations to the country every few years to record the arms and pedigrees of local gentlemen, and to ensure that no brazen honor-seekers had taken up coats of arms without the College’s approval. Most of the time, however, his office kept him and his colleagues in London. The officers were required to take turns maintaining the official library at the College, and their families lived with them at Derby Place, the heralds’ residence near St. Paul’s. Thus, as he was often tied to his London desk, Flower needed help overseeing the granting of arms in far-flung provinces. His 1578 document appoints a deputy to do just that. However, the deed also contains a frustrated subtext. Not only is Flower issuing an overt warning to the unlicensed artisans who often infringed on heraldic duties; he was also casting a disapproving eye at the aspiring gentlemen who kept them in business.

Flower opens his missive by explaining that the Queen has appointed him to his office by letters patent. Lest any readers question his authority to issue this deed, he points out that *she* has expressly forbidden the production of coats of arms by unlicensed craftsmen:

prohibiting all Painters, Glasiars, Goldsmithes, Grauers, or any other Artificers whatsoever they be within my sayde prouince to take vpon them to painte, glayse, graue, deuise or set forth any maner of armes, creastes, cognisances or petidegrees, or any other deuises appertaining to the office of armes, otherwise then he or they shall be allowed by me the said Noroy king of armes, my Deputie or Deputies.

In accordance with this directive, Flower explains that he has “authorized & licenced” a single local artisan to act in a heraldic capacity. He designates Peter Proby of Westchester, “in whose honestie, fidelitie, and discession, I doe greatly trust to exercise and vse his arte of painting throughout my sayde prouince,” to act as his “lawfull Deputie.” Proby’s responsibilities relate primarily to outfitting noble funerals, and include the “painting and setting forth of Eskuchons of armes...with other the furniture thereunto belonging, as banners, standerds, penons, hachements, helmes, crestes, and such like.”⁴⁰

Flower follows this appointment by warning potential interlopers of the consequences of ignoring his order. Any painter “offending or intermeddling” by taking on heraldic projects without license will owe five marks for each offense. This pecuniary threat is aimed at the unscrupulous amateurs who used their artistic abilities to capitalize on the growing desire of upwardly mobile working men to bear coats of arms. He also addresses any well-to-do gentlemen who might be tempted to seek extralegal services, reminding “all such Nobles or Gentells, or others within my sayde prouince, that the sayd Peter Proby my lawfull Deputie...will be ready to worke, set forth and solemnize any such funeralls of any such persons.” This is a subtle plea, not to the sellers of coat-of-arms, but to their customers—the ambitious local residents who were less victims of the illicit arms trade than enablers of it.

Flower’s proclamation was an attempt to foster both a collective distaste for illicit heraldic dealings and a respect for coats of arms that had been lawfully obtained. It is unlikely, however, that his order dampened the so-called “offending and intermeddling” of the entrepreneurial artisans who manufactured coats outside the jurisdiction of the College of Arms. In early modern England—a society that attached a great deal of importance to social prestige—neither the purveyors of heraldic

⁴⁰ William Flower, “By the king of hearolds of this province, from the river of Trent, North East and VVestvard” (London, 1578), *STC* (2nd ed.) 11108.

insignia nor their customers had much incentive to listen to distant regulators, not even heralds citing royal authority.

As we will see, attempts by heralds to codify their authority in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods were in many ways doomed from the start. Though heraldry was by no means a populist system of signification, its roots in visual literacy and its autonomous development made it a daily presence in the lives of broad segments of the English population. From the eleventh century through the mid-1300s, heraldry flourished among the English gentry without official assistance or regulation. At the same time, non-armigerous lay people (i.e., those without arms) encountered heraldic symbolism on monuments, tombs, and in the carvings and stained glass windows of churches and cathedrals. By the Elizabethan period, traditional distinctions between the gentry and the upwardly mobile had become difficult to maintain. This ambiguity led those “at the lower margins of the upper classes,” especially aspiring gentlemen and well-to-do merchants, to seek out markers of privileged status, including heraldic emblems. By the middle of the sixteenth century, the desire for arms—and in turn, their availability for purchase—would spread beyond the lower gentry to a broad swath of the middling sort, including artisans and guild members.⁴¹ As more individuals and institutions clamored to display emblems that the nobility had once hoped to preserve for itself, efforts by English monarchs and the College of Arms to regulate heraldry’s use would fall increasingly short.⁴²

⁴¹ Dave D. Davis, “Hereditary Emblems: Material Culture in the Context of Social Change,” *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 4, no. 3 (1985): 149-176, 156. Davis’s essay argues that “lineage emblems represent the use of material culture to reconcile (1) systems of social ranking and economic privilege that are formally grounded in principles of inheritance with (2) the de facto upward mobility of some individuals into the lower ranks of the elite,” 151. The use of such emblems undergoes “progressive ‘democratization’” as it begins to rely less on hereditary privilege than on collective characteristics like residency or employment, which may apply to “lower-status individuals,” towns, and corporations, 157-8. Davis’s argument correlates in some ways with Fussell’s prole drift concept; however, as an exploration of material culture rather than a critique, it lacks the negative value judgment Fussell places on the phenomenon.

⁴² Davis, “Hereditary Emblems,” 160-61.

Early Heraldry: Materiality and Ideology

Heraldry evolved over many centuries, originating in soldiers' fortifications to their shields and eventually becoming a complex status marker. According to most historians, the earliest examples of shield decoration originate in classical society: ancient Greek pottery depicts figures carrying shields decorated with animal figures, and on Roman monuments, legions of soldiers are often shown carrying shields of a single unifying design. Archaeological evidence has revealed that the Vikings used similarly decorated defensive armor.⁴³ Such early armorial imagery would become a favorite topic of medieval and early modern writers, who imagined that their ancient forbears had dressed and fought like the chivalric warriors of the more recent past. A 1513 text called *The hystorye, sege and dystruccyon of Troye* is representative: written in Italian and translated into English by John Lydgate, it describes Trojan warriors in the language of feudal hierarchy. The text recounts "What noubre of kynges / & of dukes wente / Towarde the sege / all of one assente [will]," ascribing anachronistic titles to the soldiers in order to imbue their quest with an air of nobility. Lydgate also describes the soldiers as armed knights who seek to prove their chivalric worth: they venture forth "To wyne worshyp / and for excersyse / Of armes oonly [unparalleled] / in full knyghtly wyse."⁴⁴ Similarly, early modern herald painters—the tradesmen who illuminated arms grants—liked to adorn their records of arms "with fanciful ancestral portraits of Saxon thanes or Norman knights in Renaissance versions of Roman armour."⁴⁵ Despite these anachronistic longings, classical military insignia, including shield insignia, were still precursors to medieval heraldry, signifying collective

⁴³ Anthony Wagner, *Heraldry in England* (London: Penguin Books, 1946), 5; T.R. Davies, "As It Was in the Beginning," *Coat of Arms* 109 (Spring 1979), The Heraldry Society, http://www.theheraldrysociety.com/articles/early_history_of_heraldry/origins_of_heraldry_by_davies.htm.

⁴⁴ John Lydgate, *The hystorye, sege and dystruccyon of Troye* (London, 1513), A3r.

⁴⁵ Anthony Wagner, *Heralds and Ancestors* (London: British Museum Publications, 1978), 44. Wagner also notes that in William Camden's *Remains Concerning Britain* (London, 1623), the author refers to "devices of more or less heraldic type among the Israelites, the ancient Greeks and Romans, Germans, Danes and Anglo-Saxons," in *Pedigree and Progress: Essays in the Genealogical Interpretation of History* (London: Phillimore & Co., 1978), 35.

identity rather than knightly status or familial connections.⁴⁶ Fascinatingly, the patterns we recognize on heraldic arms today originated in materials that soldiers added to make their shields more defensively effective. These shield divisions and fortifications became decorative elements when soldiers began painting them different colors.⁴⁷ Planks of wood and bars of iron formed the geometrical designs later known as *ordinaries*; these materials were initially used to strengthen the shield without adding undue weight. Metal studs and leather strips had a similar function and eventually became the patterns known as *tinctures* and *furs*.

The most famous extant early medieval depiction of decorated shields occurs in the Bayeux Tapestry of 1068. In it, renowned royal figures and anonymous soldiers are depicted carrying “kite-shaped shields each painted in two colours and bearing mainly geometric or symmetric curvilinear designs.”⁴⁸ Shield designs were still far from systematized at this point, but the Bayeux images make convincing precursors to the symbols we recognize today. Heraldic scholar and former officer of arms Sir Anthony Wagner notes that “a line in the [late eleventh-century] *Chanson de Roland* suggests that shield devices were already used as means of recognition,”⁴⁹ while his colleague Rodney Dennys calls armorial practice during this period “proto-heraldry.” Dennys explains that “a simple system of personal devices, or ‘conoisances’ as they were termed, was essential if the commanders of armies and of subordinate units were to exercise any control over the knights, men-at-arms, archers and infantry under their command.”⁵⁰ Heraldry appears to have become a badge of individual identity after knights shifted from fighting in the Crusades to participating in tournaments, which were ritualized chivalric competitions. Maurice Keen notes that medieval armor completely

⁴⁶ Additionally, personal marks of identity were used to mark property ownership and authenticate documents (e.g. in the form of seals), but these icons don’t appear to have been transmitted through inheritance. Wagner, *Heraldry in England*, 5.

⁴⁷ Davies, “As It Was in the Beginning.”

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Wagner, *Heralds and Heraldry in the Middle Ages: An Inquiry Into the Growth and Armorial Function of Heraldry* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), 12-13.

⁵⁰ Rodney Dennys, *The Heraldic Imagination* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1975), 29, quotation p. 26.

concealed knights' visages, so they needed an external apparatus to distinguish themselves to spectators (hence the *coat of arms*, an actual garment worn outside a knight's suit of armor). In this manner, the devices that had served as collective symbols in a martial context became markers of individual identity when transplanted to a performative one.⁵¹

During war, some heralds worked for the sovereign as ambassadors, messengers and diplomats.⁵² In order to accurately report the identities of those who had died in battle, they may have learned to identify knights' arms, giving them their earliest association with armorial coats. Some early modern accounts insist that these medieval heralds had the authority to grant arms to soldiers who performed admirably: according to Thomas Churchyard, author of *A General Rehearsall of Warres* (1579), "beyng brought vp in warre, [heralds] behelde who deserued renowme, and had by their authoritie and experience, a power to giue Armes and signe of honour to those, whiche for well doying in feeelde or publike state, did merite remembraunce."⁵³ This was a retroactive attribution based on the officers' Renaissance roles, however. In actuality, heralds had little oversight at this stage, and their most prominent roles were as tournament officials in Europe beginning around the year 1170. In this capacity, their main duty was to present knights by name and identify the victors. As in battlefield reports, they needed the ability to recognize each knight's shield. Soon, their organizational role was established enough that they received license to marshal competitions in their assigned provinces, and they also began to record the arms of tournament participants.⁵⁴ Though they initially worked as freelancers, they evolved into servants, becoming the personal attendants and public representatives of individual knights.

⁵¹ Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 125; also Wagner, *Heraldry in England*, 7.

⁵² Wagner, *Heralds of England: A History of the Office and College of Arms in London* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1967), 21-3; and *Heraldry in England*, 18.

⁵³ Thomas Churchyard, *A generall rehearsall of warres, called Churchyardes choise wherein is fine hundred seuerall seruices of land and sea as seiges, battailes, skirmiches, and encounters* (London, 1579), sig. N2r.

⁵⁴ Wagner, *Heraldry in England*, 18-20.

In peacetime, heralds had close affinities with minstrels and jongleurs. They were nomadic, traveling with knights from tournament to tournament and composing written accounts of their masters' activities: one writer known only as 'The Chandos Herald' wrote a chronicle detailing the wartime exploits of the Black Prince during Richard II's reign.⁵⁵ The heralds' early documentary role suggests that they posed some literary competition for medieval poets.⁵⁶ In peacetime, heralds acted in a documentary capacity, recording the details of state ceremonies like weddings, births, coronations, and funerals. These activities set the stage for later heralds to become the recorders and guardians of family pedigrees. Still, medieval heralds were not linked with royal attempts to limit grants of arms; in fact, it would be decades before the Crown even found coats of arms worth regulating.

The use of symbols as military identification was thus established over a period of many years. These symbols gradually shifted in purpose from the unification of fighting groups to the identification of individuals. Their transformation into a common set of images and patterns that signified familial relationships was, by contrast, sudden. Early in the twelfth century, heraldic devices as genealogical markers sprang up in England, France, Germany, Spain, and Italy, all featuring the familiar figures and patterns we have come to associate with coats of arms.⁵⁷ The fleur-de-lis of France appeared on the seals of kings Henry I (1031-60) and Louis VII (1137-80). The *Roman de Brut*, written in French in 1155, suggested that England's King Arthur chose the Virgin Mary for his

⁵⁵ Keen, *Chivalry*, 125-142.

⁵⁶ Amy Fahey, "Heralds and Heraldry in English Literature, c. 1350-1600" (Ph.D. diss., Washington University, 2005), 7-9. Fahey examines the role of herald figures in the work of the medieval poets Chaucer, Malory, and Skelton, revealing "complex concerns about literary and political authority, the public status of the poet, and the stability of both visual and written discourses of fame and reputation," 7.

⁵⁷ Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 24-5; and *Heraldry in England*, 6.

shield and inherited the crest of a dragon from his father.⁵⁸ Heraldic seals proliferated in other parts of Europe, as well, and by the end of the twelfth century they had become common.⁵⁹

An important development in English heraldry's systematization was the creation of the first English Roll of Arms. This document, probably composed by a herald circa 1254, documented the arms of twenty earls and several hundred lords and knights. Alongside colorful illustrations of each shield, the document presented succinct descriptions that specified each coat's colors and the positioning of its symbols. These labels relied on a specialized vocabulary and formal organization that was regularized circa 1250-1270 and continues in use today.⁶⁰ Initially confined to French, this lexicon expanded into English and Latin, although the technical terms for colors and *charges* (objects on the shield) remained in the initial language. By about 1500, the practice of formally describing a heraldic charge was referred to as *blazoning*—probably in connection with the verb *to blazze*, which meant “to describe fitly [or] set forth honourably in words.”⁶¹ Blazon's vocabulary and format have remained largely unchanged through the centuries: the color of the field (the shield's background) is named first, followed by the main charge—the primary figure, whether an animal, plant, or some other object—and finally by subordinate charges and their colors.⁶² This linguistic specificity would

⁵⁸ Wagner quotes *Le Roman de Brut* in *Heralds and Heraldry in the Middle Ages*, 13, 121-22.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 15. The cause of heraldry's visual consistency across cultural boundaries remains unknown. T.R. Davies outlines two popular theories. The first is that heraldry “arose in Western Europe and spread rapidly from country to country...by international tournaments”; the second postulates that it emerged “in the Holy Land during one of the Crusades, when knights from all countries gathered together and could exchange ideas, which accounted for the adoption of armory in a single generation throughout so many countries.” Davies sides with the latter view, primarily because of the unusual nature of standard heraldic charges. He points out that European soldiers, rather than painting domestic beasts on their armor, favored exotic or fictional creatures like lions, double-headed eagles, and unicorns. Their postures were unnatural, as well: the lions “walk with both legs on the same side in the forward position and those on the other a pace behind, as in the walk of the camel,” while eagles are positioned “like a dead butterfly in a collection.” According to Davies, these fabulous animals and iconic poses were common in Byzantine art and woven textiles, supporting the theory that heraldic symbolism was imported from the Middle East (“As It Was in the Beginning”).

⁶⁰ Wagner, *Heralds and Heraldry in the Middle Ages*, 17-18; and *Heraldry in England*, 25. He explains that blazon “was inevitably French and so remained till about 1440 when English blazon beg[an] to come in,” while Latin blazon was less frequent.

⁶¹ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “blazon, v.,” II.4, accessed January 24, 2012, <http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/Entry/20025>. According to the *OED*'s etymology, “the non-heraldic senses are the earlier, though the heraldic use of *blasyn* (BLAZE v.2 3) in [a c. 1440 text] makes it likely that *blazon* in [the heraldic sense] may go back to c1500.” The poetic term *blason* seems related to both senses.

⁶² Wagner, *Heraldry in England*, 25.

prove to be an important aspect of heraldry's dispersion throughout various levels of literate English culture.

Popular images of arms-bearing knights usually depict a man on horseback, riding into battle girded with a shield displaying his family's coat of arms. In fact, heraldry's connections to the medieval feudal hierarchy are more complex than such representations suggest. Early in the medieval period, English barons were required to provide soldiers to the king, and the tenants living on their land served this purpose. These tenants were the earliest knights: the *OED* defines a knight in the early feudal system as "a military servant of the king or other person of rank," or "a feudal tenant holding land from a superior on condition of serving in the field as a mounted and well-armed man."⁶³ In *Remains Concerning Britain* (1614), William Camden wrote that these men began bearing coats "by borrowing of their Lords Arms, of whom they hold in fee, or to whom they were most devoted."⁶⁴ In the early twentieth century, historian Arthur Charles Fox-Davies also connected armorial bearings with grants of land: he presumed that since "originally practically all who held land bore arms," land ownership was a precondition for arms ownership.⁶⁵ However, later scholars lay this idea to rest. According to Dennys, the armigerous spanned a much broader social spectrum, since "in the early centuries of chivalry any knight could dub and invest with sword, lance, shield, hauberk and spurs any other free man." Furthermore, it was only later in the medieval period that knighthood became an esteemed office linked with ideals of honor and nobility.⁶⁶ Wagner likewise

⁶³ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "knight, n.," II.4.a., accessed January 29, 2012, <http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/Entry/104025>.

⁶⁴ Cited in Wagner, *Heralds and Heraldry in the Middle Ages*, 19.

⁶⁵ A. C. Fox-Davies, *A Complete Guide to Heraldry* (London: T.C. & E.C. Jack, 1909), 21.

⁶⁶ Dennys, *The Heraldic Imagination*, 35. The *OED* definition confirms this sense, explaining that "in the fully-developed feudal system," a knight was "one raised to honourable military rank by the king or other qualified person, the distinction being usually conferred only upon one of noble birth who had served a regular apprenticeship (as page and squire) to the profession of arms, and thus being a regular step in this even for those of the highest rank," I.4.a.

denies the common misconception that the earliest coats of arms symbolized “ideal virtues, exploits in battle and the like.”⁶⁷

Indeed, the knightly class in England was never legally solidified as it was in France. As violent skirmishes became less common, occasions that required military retainers also declined in frequency. If the need arose, many landholding knights chose to pay a fee in lieu of presenting themselves for service; for many, the price of outfitting themselves for battle had become prohibitively expensive. In turn, the fees they paid were used to hire soldiers.⁶⁸ Thus, the criteria for attaining knighthood essentially became financial. Beginning during the fourteenth century, a man who earned an amount between 15 and 40 pounds per year—whether by renting land or some other occupation—was required to acquire (i.e., pay for) knighthood.⁶⁹ Richard II and, most famously, James I used this authority opportunistically, knighting men primarily to raise revenue rather than to recruit an actual army.⁷⁰ The financial outlay required by knighthood actually prompted some men to hide income that would bump them up to knightly status or delay taking that status up. Indeed, D. Vance Smith deduces that knighthood was far from “universally attractive”: it may even have been “highly undesirable” for gentry whose primary source of income was mercantile activity rather than

⁶⁷ Wagner, *Heraldry in England*, 12.

⁶⁸ Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 33; and *Heraldry in England*, 15-16. He observes that “what had once been a widespread obligation came to be looked on as the privilege (though a costly one) of relatively few,” *Heraldry in England*, 16.

⁶⁹ D. Vance Smith, *Arts of Possession: The Middle English Household Imaginary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 26, 234n97; Wagner, *Heraldry in England*, 16.

⁷⁰ Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), 74-5. Stone suggests that by creating over 900 new knights during his first four months as king, James may have been imitating King Arthur, who supposedly knighted hundreds; attempting to rectify Elizabeth’s supposed parsimoniousness with knighthoods; or simply trying to please his new English subjects. Jonathan Goldberg has also suggested that James’ extravagance arose from “early desires to mold his subjects into images of himself,” *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and their Contemporaries* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), 141. Upon Charles II’s restoration, Somerset Herald John Philipot wrote pointedly in *A Perfect Collection or Catalogue of All Knights Batchelours Made by King James Since His Coming to the Crown of England* (London, 1660) that Charles “hath not made a quarter so many Knights, nor his Father a third part so many as his Grandfather. And yet King James then saw it necessary upon that Change and Vnion of his people...Now if you observe the Historie of those dayes, you’ll find many Knighted who (in the time of the late Queen) had shewed small affection to that King of Peace. But he was wise, and best knew how to make up a breach,” sig. A3v.

income from land.⁷¹ The term “gentleman” appears to have originated to describe the growing class of privileged men who paid not to go to war.⁷²

There was a high degree of class dispersion among arms-holders, as well. Keen observes that during the thirteenth century, heraldic insignia began to appear among esquires (who were lower on the feudal hierarchy than knights), as well as among descendents of noblemen who were not knights themselves.⁷³ Thus, families lower on the social scale gradually became armigerous. Heraldry

came in time to be emblematic of the pride of birth, station and culture of the nobility in its broadest range. Indeed, as in the later middle ages the ranks of the nobility were extended to embrace others besides knights—esquires, mere gentlemen, men at arms ... and even the urban patriciates—the title to bear arms came ultimately to displace the taking of knighthood as the key to admission into the charmed circle of the chivalrous.⁷⁴

As the pedigree behind one’s coat became its primary signification, rules for hereditary transmission of coats were developed. The clearest verifiable instance of hereditary arms in England comes from relatives of Geoffrey of Mandeville, Earl of Essex, early in the twelfth century; the earliest documentary evidence of English arms passed down as property appears slightly later, in the mid-1300s.⁷⁵ This shift meant that arms-holders, rather than merely differentiating themselves from their contemporaries, were linking themselves with family histories. In some cases, arms bearers insisted that their histories extended back earlier than the advent of Britain. Coats were passed down through a patrilineal system: only the head of the household could bear a “plain ancestral coat,” while sons, wives, and other relatives needed to *difference* the coat through some graphical alteration or addition.⁷⁶ Over time, lineage became a more important social marker than military service. Jennifer Woodward observes that as hereditary connections became the primary requirement for

⁷¹ Smith, *Arts of Possession*, 26-27, 29; Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 33.

⁷² Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 33.

⁷³ Keen, *Chivalry*, 127.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁷⁵ Wagner, *Heralds and Heraldry in the Middle Ages*, 17-20. King Arthur’s inherited charge, mentioned earlier, was a purely literary example; the dragon he was said to bear may have been an early royal emblem. Wagner, *Heralds and Heraldry in the Middle Ages*, 13.

⁷⁶ Wagner, *Heraldry in England*, 13.

assuming arms, the ritual of dubbing knights declined. A supplementary ceremony was needed to “demonstrate the continuity of the nobility in blood lineage through the paternal line,” and the heraldic funeral, which relied upon both religious and secular imagery, took on this role. The deceased was borne in a processional flanked by “achievements, escutcheons of arms, heralds and funeral horses,”⁷⁷ usually in full view of the public. These funerals showcased the departed’s wealth along with familial connections. They also exposed the middling and lower sorts to heraldic symbolism in a civic context, linking the apparatus of heraldry to local gentry rather than to the Crown.

Many individuals who assumed arms on their own took up *canting arms*, or coats that played on their surnames—whether obviously, like the falcons used on the coat of a man named Fauconer, or subtly, as in De La Ryver’s gold pattern on a blue field to symbolize waves.⁷⁸ Experts note that many canting coats “may require a knowledge of philology or dialects to unravel the source of the pun”; while an early modern British viewer may have easily understood why crows (also called *corbies*) appeared on Thomas Corbet’s shield, only those schooled in French were likely to appreciate the peapods (*pois*) adorning the coat of Le Pois.⁷⁹ Such puns were in widespread use well before heralds came onto the scene, and they remain so today.⁸⁰ The popularity of these visual puns confirms Dennys’ assertion that heraldry should not be considered an utterly serious science; rather, he observes, it has always been “a cheerful as well as weighty matter.”⁸¹

This paradox in heraldry’s character came to the fore during the late medieval and early modern periods, which saw increasing legal regulation of heraldry. As the Crown and, later, the

⁷⁷ Jennifer Woodward, *The Theatre of Death: The Ritual Management of Royal Funerals in Renaissance England 1570-1625* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 1997), 50-51.

⁷⁸ Wagner, *Heraldry in England*, 12.

⁷⁹ Ottfried Neubecker and J.P. Brooke-Little, *Heraldry: Sources, Symbols and Meaning* (London: Macdonald & Jane’s, 1977; London: Macdonald, 1982), 118, 134; Thomas Woodcock and John Martin Robinson, *The Oxford Guide to Heraldry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 63.

⁸⁰ For a modern example of canting arms, refer to the Introduction’s discussion of Catherine Middleton’s coat of arms, 1-3.

⁸¹ Dennys, *The Heraldic Imagination*, 21.

College of Arms took control over arms grants, the gap between the playfulness of heraldry's images and the social power they were intended to signify widened considerably. Those who skirted heraldic rules in the Elizabethan period faced consequences ranging from a slap on the wrist to capital punishment. But as coats of arms came within reach of individuals with ambiguous backgrounds, regulations emanating from the Court and the College of Arms became harder to enforce. To observers outside these institutions, the distribution of arms began to seem less like an honorable tradition than a cynical profit machine. And to the chagrin of the heralds—whose professional standing relied upon public trust in the sanctity of the system—heraldry's uses and abuses became increasingly the butt of derogatory jokes.

The Rise of the Heralds: Medieval Arms Regulation

In a 1959 book that remains the standard historical account of early English heraldic history, G.D. Squibb argued that a body called the Court of the Constable and Marshal, named after the Crown's two chief military officers, emerged in England during the fourteenth century. Confusingly, a separate court, the Court of Chivalry, governed by these same two officers but holding different jurisdictional powers, also became active by 1347-8. Like the Court of Admiralty, it "dealt with cases which could not be tried by the common law"—mainly military matters.⁸² A statute issued by Richard II described the Court's duties:

To the Constable it belongs to have knowledge of contracts touching deeds of arms and war out of the realm, and also of things touching arms or war within the realm which cannot be determined or discussed at common law, with other usages and customs thereunto belonging.⁸³

⁸² G.D. Squibb, *The High Court of Chivalry: A Study of the Civil Law in England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1959), 12. Using trial documents, Vernon Harcourt suggested that a court dealing with heraldic matters emerged during Edward I's reign (1239-1307). Squibb demurred, saying that these trials dealt with common law proceedings, while heraldry was a civil law matter. Because it was unlikely that the court would alter its arena of jurisdiction, he argued that the trials constituted insufficient evidence of an official heraldic court (Squibb, 14), and his opinion has become the accepted scholarly view. See Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 37-38.

⁸³ Squibb, *The High Court of Chivalry*, 21.

The Court of Chivalry appears to have made its first heraldic ruling in 1348, during King Edward's reign, but judging armorial matters was not its main occupation.⁸⁴ There is no evidence that the Court acted to stop "unqualified persons" from using armorial bearings during this early period.⁸⁵ Half a century later, however, the Court began to take a real interest in the right to bear arms; several cases of disputed coats that would have remained local squabbles now became matters of royal interest. The most famous early legal case centering on a heraldic disagreement was *Scrope v. Grosvenor*, which lasted from 1385 to 1390. While at war in Scotland, two of Richard II's knights discovered they were carrying the same arms—*azure a bend or*, or a gold stripe on a blue background. Sir Richard Scrope took out a legal complaint against Sir Robert Grosvenor, and the case was eventually heard at the Court of Chivalry. It ended with Richard Scrope's victory after a variety of witnesses, including Geoffrey Chaucer, testified that his family had borne the disputed arms for centuries. The Court of Chivalry required defendants to prove that they had borne a disputed coat since "time immemorial," which it defined as the Norman Conquest.⁸⁶

Robert W. Barrett explains that deponents on each side hailed from various regions, and gave witness to each man's pedigrees by "recalling local muniments and architectural features inscribed with the device under dispute." Barrett argues that these material displays of arms created a locale-specific identity for the knights claiming them: in other words, a knight whose arms appeared in one or more public locations had valid public proof of his chivalric standing.⁸⁷ Joel Rosenthal characterizes the deponents' testimonies on behalf of Scrope as an example of collective civic memory—"a chronicle...of Sir Richard Scrope and his valiant kin" based on their repeated and

⁸⁴ Squibb, *The High Court of Chivalry*, 1, 10-11, 14.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 179-80. He explains that "under the common law time immemorial was deemed to date from the accession of Richard I in 1189," but the Court of Chivalry required proof of use since 1066 (180-1). For a full account, see *The Controversy Between Sir Richard Scrope and Sir Robert Grosvenor*, ed. Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas (London, 1832).

⁸⁷ Robert W. Barrett, *Against All England: Regional Identity and Cheshire Writing, 1195-1656* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 139-40. Barrett argues that the trial has "obsessive concern for the same issues of chivalry, identity, and heraldry that inform *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: Scrope & Grosvenor's arms of *azure a bend or* function in ways similar to those of Gawain's pentangle and Bertilak's green girdle," 139.

consistent recollections of visual, material, and oral evidence.⁸⁸ Nonetheless, Scrope's armorial identity was geographically limited to the vicinity, where people who encountered his arms on a regular basis could recall them at vital moments, particularly in the event of legal troubles.

Under the purview of the Court, chief heralds called Kings of Arms were appointed, as were several junior heralds known as pursuivants. At first the Kings of Arms were limited to recording and registering armorial bearings in assigned regions, a task they were acquainted with from their tournament days. At this stage, only the Crown had statutory control over actual grants of arms: in 1417, Henry V issued an order stating that no person should begin using a coat of arms without permission from an authority, excepting that they were his by way of ancestry or he had received them from the king himself at Agincourt.⁸⁹ This seems to be an early argument that arms bearers should display noble qualities in order to earn a coat. However, his successor expanded the meaning of coats of arms to designate corporate bodies. Henry VI bestowed the first guild arms on the Draper's Company in 1438-9; this device was part of the first-ever guild charter, which allowed the company to regulate the practice of its designated activity.⁹⁰

It wasn't until 1467 that the Kings of Arms received a royal patent to grant arms on their own, and subsequently, the number of grants awarded directly by the king diminished.⁹¹ The heralds' official acknowledgment was even longer in coming: though they had held their first chapter meeting sixty years earlier, the group didn't receive its charter of incorporation until Richard III bestowed it upon them in 1483-4.⁹² The heralds' incorporation finally allowed them to determine set fees for granting arms and outfitting funerals. Before their incorporation, heralds attending funerals

⁸⁸ Joel Thomas Rosenthal, *Telling Tales: Sources and Narration in Late Medieval England* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 63-78, quotation p. 65.

⁸⁹ Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 36.

⁹⁰ Arthur Henry Johnson, *The History of the Worshipful Company of the Drapers of London*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1914-22), 221-4; the frontispiece of the book is a facsimile of the patent. See also Wagner, *Heralds and Heraldry in the Middle Ages*, 75.

⁹¹ Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 29-30, 39; and *Heraldry in England*, 19-20.

⁹² Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 123; and *Heraldry in England*, 22.

were usually private employees of the deceased person; as personal attendants, they bore his or her arms on their tabards. After their official centralization as a branch of the royal house, the heralds' tabards displayed the royal coat of arms instead.⁹³

Incorporation afforded the heralds a royal residence at Coldharbour on Upper Thames Street in London as well as means to preserve their record books in an official library.⁹⁴ Finally, the heralds themselves could bear a corporate coat of arms [Figure 5]; it was also at this time that they adopted the phrase that would become their motto: "Secret and Diligent."⁹⁵ Besides denoting the protection of knowledge from public observation, "secret" could also refer to the concealment "of doctrines, ceremonies, language, signs, methods of procedure, remedies, and the like" from "uninitiated" persons.⁹⁶ This definition declared the heralds' firm conviction that they were guardians of a unique branch of knowledge, responsible for policing a field whose interpretation required their professional expertise. Proficiency in heraldic matters, they felt, required skills that went far beyond the layperson's ability to recognize who owned a particular coat. It demanded the ability to expound upon heraldic signs' historical and allegorical meanings, an aptitude for pedigree research, and a familiarity with the idiom of *blazon*—the highly specific heraldic terminology based not in English, but in French.

The period of royal endorsement following the heralds' incorporation was brief. When Richard was killed in 1485 they lost their patron, and with him died their institutional support. During Henry VII's first Parliament, he did away with many of Edward IV's and Richard III's grants, including the heralds' charter.⁹⁷ The king also favored certain officers over others, creating professional resentments. In a precursor to formalized visitations, under Henry's order of 1498-9,

⁹³ Woodward, *The Theatre of Death*, 52.

⁹⁴ "The History of the Royal Heraldry and the College of Arms," The College of Arms website, accessed January 27, 2012, <http://www.college-of-arms.gov.uk/About/01.htm>, and Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 123.

⁹⁵ Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 133.

⁹⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "secret, adj. and n.," accessed January 16, 2012, <http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/Entry/174537>.

⁹⁷ Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 134.

only the Garter and Clarenceux Kings of Arms were authorized to visit the provinces to investigate “the arms and cognisances of gentry and to reform the same if it were necessary and according to their oath and bond made at their creations.”⁹⁸ By granting authority to only a few of the heralds, the order’s major effect was to pit the officers against one another. Disputes among the officers would prove to be a recurring problem at the College: without a firm source of centralized support, many of the heralds treated each other as competitors rather than colleagues.

The Medieval Heraldry Text

One of the earliest heraldic texts in English appeared shortly after the heralds’ incorporation was rescinded. Called *The Booke of Hauking, Huntyng and Fysshynge* and known more popularly as *The Boke of St. Albans*, this fascinating text is usually attributed to a prioress named Dame Juliana Berners, but its provenance remains unknown.⁹⁹ *The Boke of St. Albans* was published many times and under multiple titles between 1486 and 1596, and in each case it appears to have been intended as a gentlemen’s instruction manual. Berners clearly read Latin, as the text includes a translation of part of *De officio militare*—a book about armory published in 1447 by the English cleric Nicholas Upton.¹⁰⁰ In addition to the topics mentioned in the title, several editions include two sections on armory—one describing “the lygnage of Cote armures” and focusing on standards of gentility, the other explaining “sygnes in armes & of the blasing of armes.” In these sections, Berners establishes Biblical precedents for the practice of bestowing arms and outlines the requirements for obtaining

⁹⁸ Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 137.

⁹⁹ I will quote from the unpaginated 1496 edition, titled on EEBO *This present boke shewyth the manere of hawkynge [and] huntyng and also of diuysynge of cote armours*, STC 3309. The producers of later editions, working from no discernible evidence, describe Berners as a prioress at Sopwell. This mysterious clergywoman may never have existed, much less written this particular text; nonetheless, the *Boke*’s popularity necessitates her entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. The biographer notes, “Whatever reasons might explain the invocation of Juliana Berners’ name at the end of the ‘boke of hunting,’ [based on its subject matter and mode of address], the attribution of the text to a female author is not implausible,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, s.v. “Berners, Juliana (fl. 1460),” by Julia Boffey, accessed June 19, 2011, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/article/2255>.

¹⁰⁰ Nicholas Upton, *De officio militari* (c. 1440). The Latin text was published alongside Henry Spelman’s armorial tract *Aspilogia* as *Nicolai Vptoni De studio militari libri quatuor* (London, 1654).

coats; she also describes the chivalrous behavior expected of knights, discusses heraldic colors and terminology, and presents simple illustrations of coats of arms in the text's final pages.¹⁰¹

The author creates a typology of coats that reflects the flexibility surrounding the medieval practice of granting arms. She explains that there are four types of coats: first, those that come from one's parents, which are "beste prouyd" and indisputably ancient; second, arms "by our merytis [merits]," as when a soldier captures a nobleman in battle and assumes his coat; third are arms that have been granted by a prince or a lord, which "receyue no question." Lastly, there are self-assumed arms, "as in thyse dayes openly we se how many poore men by their grace fauour labour or deseruyng are made nobles Some by theyr prudence: some by their manhede: some by theyr strength: some by their cunningg som by other vertues." Though these arms are legitimate, Berners says that they are "not of so grete dygnyte & auctoryte" as those granted by a prince or a lord. Perhaps surprisingly to modern readers, she opines that arms granted by heralds inhabit this same lesser category. Berners' schema here, though hierarchical, is more egalitarian than the standards she delimited earlier in the book: earlier, she says that "none of the .ix. orders of regalyte [royalty] but ... only the souereyne kynge gyue cotearmure." In contrast, her final outline confirms actual practice by noting that men may be given a coat by a lord, not just the king, and that they may even assume arms of their own accord.

In addition to classifying coats of arms in terms of provenance, Berners obliquely links readers and viewers' fitness to bear arms with their interpretive abilities. In her description of "armes that are bendly barryd," Berners notes that anyone describing this particular shield must be careful to interpret it correctly: "for & they ben not subtylly conceyued a man sodenly answeyrnge may

¹⁰¹ Berners' catalogue of armorial symbols links each of them with a specific virtuous behavior. The author's carefully numbered descriptions—including "The foure vertues of chyualrye" and ".ix. vyces contrary to gentylnen"—consistently emphasize language's role in maintaining a noble bearing. A chivalrous person should "be not to bostefull of his manhede" and must remain "curteys, lowly & gentyll & without rybawdry in his langage." A gentleman is "Tretable in langage[,] Wyse in his answeyr," while a churl (or a misbehaving nobleman) will "boste of his prowess and "tell[ing] his souerayne fals tales."

lightly in those armes be dyscyued.” Deception—or at least misreading—is undesirable, as it reflects badly on both the person who created the arms “unsubtly” and on the person who blazons them incorrectly. Later, she reiterates her admonition to readers to “be not in youre mynde to hasty or to swyfte in the dyscernynge / Nor ye maye not ouerrenne swyftly the forsayd rules but dilygently haue them in your mynde.” Correct interpretation is vital but not assured: it reflects not only a reader’s memorization of heraldic precepts, but also his or her internalization of those rules’ social importance.

While Berners’ book appears to have been aimed at upwardly mobile men, medieval English rulers apparently also recognized the value of heraldic literature for their monarchs in training. Not long after *The Boke of St. Albans* appeared, William Caxton was commissioned by King Henry VII to print an English translation of Christine de Pizan’s *Livre des fais d’armes et de chevalerie*, a text that described rules of engagement and conduct in war. Caxton’s version, published in 1489, was titled *The Fayt of Armes and of Chyvalrye*, and it appears to have acted as a resource for readers who hoped to shape the actions of rulers. Rosemarie McGerr makes a convincing case for the treatise’s importance in Margaret of Anjou’s education of her son Edward, whom she hoped would succeed her husband Henry VI. According to Gerr, Margaret “took on an active role in protecting her son’s rights and preparing him to take on the responsibilities of kingship,” and Christine’s book may have provided her with vital educational subject matter.¹⁰² In a more speculative vein, Dominique Hoche has

¹⁰² Rosemarie McGerr, “A Statue Book and Lancastrian Mirror for Princes: The Yale Law School Manuscript of the *Nova statua Angliae*,” *Textual Cultures: Texts, Contexts, Interpretation* 1, no. 2 (Autumn 2006): 17-18. Early modern heraldic writers cited Pizan’s book (or, more accurately, Caxton’s translation of it) more often than Berners, particularly her evaluations of heraldic colors. In *The Accedens of Armory* (1562), Gerard Legh cites the same passage as John Bossewell does near the end of *Workes of Armorie* (1572), i.e., “Therefore (as Christine de Pyse saithe in the Booke of the feates of Armes) they [arms] were first founde, that euery estate might be known in vattaile, one from an othrr, by their Armes or Ensignes,” sig. A4r. In 1610, John Guillim mentions Pizan’s views on the proper use of or (gold), saying, “Therefore such is the worthinesse of this Colour, which doth resemble it, that (as Christine de Pice holdeth) none ought to beare the same in Armes, but Emperours and Kings, and such as be of the Bloud Royall, though indeed it be in vse more common,” *A Display of Heraldrie*, sig. B2v. On the topic of white fur, he notes, “In the blazoning of Arms, this Colour is evermore termed Argent, unless it be in the description of the Arms of one that is Reus Laesae Majestatis [a traitor]: but being a doubling, it is no offence (saith Christine de Pice) to call it White, because therein it is to be understood only as a Furr or Skin,” sigs. B3v-B4r.

argued that Shakespeare's justification for war in Henry V is based partly on his familiarity with medieval chivalric writings, including Caxton's translation of Pizan's original work.¹⁰³

Tudor Heraldry and the Pedigree Craze

Henry VIII's support of the heralds, like his father's, was fickle. He bestowed and then withdrew the heralds' stipends and livery, probably because they no longer spent enough time at court to warrant such perquisites.¹⁰⁴ The heralds would later petition the Duke of Suffolk—Earl Marshal from 1524-1533—for a house in which to hold their chapter meetings and the books of their trade, to no avail. In one critic's words, "Heraldry lay for more than half a century beyond the pale of officialdom. [...] Without a sponsoring government, the Tudor heralds kept their books privately."¹⁰⁵ Henry VIII did, however, bolster the heralds' status in one important respect. He instituted heralds' visitations in 1530, giving more members of the College authority to conduct organized regional surveys. Now *all* the heralds had a royal mandate to visit their assigned region on a regular basis in order to "reform all false armory and arms devised without authority."¹⁰⁶ Using interviews and local records, each herald compiled a list of arms whose owners' pedigrees satisfied his standards and recorded the names of those whose rights to arms he found lacking. The lists were proclaimed at the next Assizes and in the marketplace of the Hundred's chief town, both highly public venues.¹⁰⁷ Exposure of a false coat was undoubtedly "a serious and unpleasant penalty in a society which attached such importance to prestige," while a questionable coat that passed muster

¹⁰³ Dominique T. Hoch, *The Reception of Christine de Pizan's Fais d'armes in Fifteenth-century England: Chivalric Self-fashioning* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007).

¹⁰⁴ Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 98.

¹⁰⁵ Raphael Falco, *Conceived Presences: Literary Genealogy in Renaissance England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 173. As I will discuss in Chapter 2, the notion of the "private" College library is somewhat misleading, since the heralds frequently aired their discussions and grievances in print.

¹⁰⁶ J. S. Brewer, ed., *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII*, vol. 4: 1524-1530, nos. 6314, 6347, British History Online, accessed 23 January 2014, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=91394&strquery=benolt>, reproduced in Wagner, *Heralds and Heraldry*, 9-10.

¹⁰⁷ For more on heralds' visitations, see Wagner, *Heralds and Heraldry in the Middle Ages*, 100-120.

could raise a person's local stature.¹⁰⁸ At the same time, such public exposure was fairly unlikely: the heralds' visitations to each province were infrequent, occurring only once every few decades.

Wagner also admits that "in the earlier stages much of the [visitation] work was romantic and amateurish—some indeed fraudulent."¹⁰⁹ Still, he calls these events vital to the heralds' increasing professionalization as genealogists.

For the aristocracy, the gravity of consequences for claiming arms through a fraudulent pedigree was exponentially higher than for the gentry. During Henry VIII's reign, the Crown used the accusation of an improper heraldic bearing as the legal justification for executing Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. A courtly poet and aspiring soldier, Surrey was a royal favorite until the mid-1540s, when several failed military campaigns in France damaged his reputation. Susan Brigden writes that in 1546, Surrey was summoned in front of a grand jury on suspicions of "treachery, of irregularities and mismanagement regarding victuals and munitions."¹¹⁰ Evidence later surfaced linking him with a conspiracy to murder the royal council, but the grand jury's only initial charge was that he had "displayed in his own heraldry the royal arms and insignia, with three labels silver, thereby threatening the king's title to the throne and the prince's inheritance."¹¹¹ In a painting that later served as damning evidence, he displayed shields of Brotherton and Thomas of Woodstock; he had been granted permission to bear these, as well as arms linking him with Edward the Confessor, by Christopher Barker, the Garter King of Arms.

During the trial, Surrey claimed these arms "as a hitherto unchallenged right," a defense that was heraldically valid and had been effective in earlier cases, including *Scrope v. Grosvenor*. But Barker testified that he had expressed doubt as to the pedigree's authenticity and advised Surrey not to

¹⁰⁸ Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 186; see also Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*, 67-68.

¹⁰⁹ Wagner, *Heralds and Ancestors*, 32.

¹¹⁰ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, s.v. "Howard, Henry, earl of Surrey (1516/17–1547)," by Susan Brigden, accessed December 6, 2011, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/article/13905>.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

claim it.¹¹² Surrey's prosecutor, Lord Chancellor Thomas Wriothesley "knew the ineluctability of the heraldic charge: once the heralds had declared against Surrey there was no defence," and Surrey pleaded not guilty to no avail. The heralds thus played a crucial, and perhaps unfair, role in Surrey's damnation; however, it is important to take into account the instability of the officers' own political positions. We cannot know what really occurred: Barker may have willingly bestowed the arms on Surrey, whether for profit or out of genuine belief, then testified against the earl once the political tide had turned against him. But given the social and political influence of elite courtiers, the herald may have felt compelled to comply with Surrey's request (or more likely, his demand) against his own judgment. This episode testifies to the heralds' ascendancy as public figures during and after the Reformation. They began to be respected as knowledgeable officials and expert witnesses, giving them a modicum of political power during a time when it was particularly dangerous, and potentially deadly, to attract the sovereign's ire.¹¹³

Indeed, heralds in the sixteenth century helped shape the legacies of elite individuals both in life and death. Despite the iconoclasm that was a central component of the Reformation, the symbols of heraldry remained a vital presence at noble funerals during Henry VIII's reign. Additionally, the royal arms remained in the stained-glass windows of churches that had been stripped of Catholic imagery—an important continuity in a culture undergoing massive changes in the relationship between the sacred and the secular.¹¹⁴ The heralds' relevance to monarchs on both sides of the religious question was reaffirmed in 1555, when Queen Mary reestablished their charter.

¹¹² *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, s.v. "Howard, Henry, earl of Surrey."

¹¹³ Decades later, Queen Elizabeth would encounter a rival who used heraldry as a public statement to challenge Elizabeth's succession. Mary, Queen of Scots—Henry VIII's great-niece, and the daughter-in-law of Henri II, King of France—publicized her right to England's throne after Mary I's death in 1558 by displaying England's royal arms as part of her own. France was hesitant to provoke England during peace negotiations, however, and following various personal and political mishaps, Mary dropped her claim. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Mary [Mary Stewart] (1542–1587)," by Julian Goodare, accessed February 9, 2014, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/article/18248>.

¹¹⁴ The classic text on this topic is Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

She also granted them a new house at Derby Place, the site of the present-day College of Arms, thus solidifying their physical proximity to the court.¹¹⁵ This space began to be referred to as the College of Arms under Queen Elizabeth, approximately a decade after the heralds took up residence.¹¹⁶

As an image system, heraldry had always bridged the divide between secular and religious symbolism. This was particularly the case during the second half of the sixteenth century, when nostalgia for medieval imagery and values became an obsession with the Elizabethan court. The chivalric revival that accompanied Queen Elizabeth's reign provides an important context for the burgeoning number of coats granted during the period. Some scholars focus on the queen's cult of personality as the main factor in the chivalric phenomenon, which consisted of a renewed interest in martial culture among members of Elizabeth's court, as well as the peerage and gentry.¹¹⁷ The queen actively encouraged chivalric performances within her courtly circle, both acknowledging the aspirations of her courtly followers and keeping them in check.¹¹⁸ During the Accession Day tilts, for example, she required participating knights to present her with personalized pasteboard shields, which were displayed in a Whitehall gallery through which visitors had to pass on their way to court.¹¹⁹

Other critics argue that Elizabeth's actions were actually responses to noblemen's aspirations. Roger B. Manning argues that both Elizabeth and James I "neglected to foster martial values" during peacetime. In response, the English noblemen who had fought overseas, including

¹¹⁵ "The Architecture of the College of Arms," The College of Arms website, accessed January 27, 2012, <http://college-of-arms.gov.uk/About/05.htm>.

¹¹⁶ Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 182, 184.

¹¹⁷ Roger B. Manning, *Swordsmen: The Martial Ethos in the Three Kingdoms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 6, 27. See also Arthur B. Ferguson, *The Indian Summer of English Chivalry: Studies in the Decline and Transformation of Chivalric Idealism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1960), and *The Chivalric Tradition in Renaissance England* (Washington, D.C: Folger Books, 1986); Richard C. McCoy, *The Rites of Knighthood: The Literature and Politics of Elizabethan Chivalry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); J.S.A. Adamson, "The Baronial Context of the English Civil War," *Trans. R. Hist. Soc.*, 5th series, 40 (1990); and "Chivalry and Political Culture in Caroline England," in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 161-97.

¹¹⁸ McCoy, *The Rites of Knighthood*, 18-19.

¹¹⁹ James Shapiro, *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* (London: Harper Collins, 2006), 43-44.

Sir Philip Sidney, did their best to preserve and foster the “distinctly European martial culture” they had experienced while abroad with their fellow soldiers.¹²⁰ For these men, demonstrating a mastery of chivalric qualities—particularly those focused on honorable conduct—became a means to attain respect at court.¹²¹ These achievements increased the likelihood that they would be chosen for leadership roles when military opportunities *did* present themselves. This culture explains the proliferation of war-based texts, including “military treatises, manuals on the exercise of arms, translations of classical writers and historians on military topics, newsbooks and newspapers, sermons preached to military societies, depictions of war in the graphic arts, not to mention chivalric romances,”¹²² as well as texts like *The Booke of St. Albans*, which were guides to gentlemanly conduct and sports like hawking and hunting.

This cultural milieu led to illegal—or at least questionable—activity by heralds and their customers. Raphael Falco asserts that as “the legitimation of family lineage became exceedingly important...the heralds gained professional prestige, power, and influence, and, probably, affluence in the form of bribes from aspiring gentry.”¹²³ As the number of claims for arms increased, the heralds were frequently torn between their respect for genealogical honesty on the one hand, and their own desires for profit (as well as aspirations of their clients) on the other. According to Wagner, “the number [of arms granted], already growing under Henry VIII, rose under Elizabeth to an unprecedented peak.” While earlier heraldic officers had been stingy in awarding grants, Robert Cooke, Clarenceux King of Arms from 1567-1593, had 900 patents to his name.¹²⁴ Both Cooke and

¹²⁰ Manning, *Swordsmen*, 35.

¹²¹ Keen, *Chivalry*, 239, 249-50, 252-53, cited in Manning, *Swordsmen*, 60-61.

¹²² Manning, *Swordsmen*, 35.

¹²³ Falco, *Conceived Presences*, 173.

¹²⁴ Woodcock and Robinson, *The Oxford Guide to Heraldry*, 34-35.

William Dethick, Garter King of Arms from 1586-1606, were accused by their fellow heralds of “granting arms improperly to base persons for lucre.”¹²⁵

Criticism only intensified after James’ death: satirists openly ridiculed heralds and their middling-sort customers, whom they saw as exacerbating heraldry’s decline. In *Microcosmographie* (1628), John Earle’s popular book of characters, Earle likens the herald to a traveling merchant, calling his arms grants “a kind of Pedlery ware, Scutchions, and Pennons and little Daggers, and Lyons, such as Children esteeme and Gentlemen.” He also takes the heralds to task for using blazon deceptively, suggesting that their elaborate language is no more than a sales pitch. Though he acknowledges the herald “seemes very rich in discourse, for he tels you of whole fields of gold and siluer, Or & Argent”—i.e., he can promise a customer an impressively blazoned coat—those words are “worth much in French, but in English nothing.”¹²⁶ Wye Saltonstall trains his sights instead on grasping upstarts, mocking the “young heir” who “takes Armes afresh of the Herauld, and payes for crest, and Motto.”¹²⁷ Both portraits characterize heraldic devices as puerile trinkets—mere commodities to be bought and sold by rubes and commnen.

Recent scholarship takes a more nuanced view of this apparent rise in heraldic corruption. In a study of seventeenth-century writers’ disparagements of heralds and upstart noblemen, J.F.R. Day acknowledges that such public criticism “was rather one-sided. After all, the heralds did have guidelines for granting arms, and a good many of the divergences between the various Officers of Arms had more to do with their own personalities than with anything more sinister.”¹²⁸ Indeed, the lack of clear guidelines for determining a pedigree’s legitimacy meant that heralds often had to make up standards of evidence as they went along. Further complicating matters, the initial surge of grants

¹²⁵ Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 188.

¹²⁶ John Earle, *Micro-cosmographie, or, A peece of the world discovered in essayes and characters* (London, 1628), sig. I9r.

¹²⁷ Wye Saltonstall, *Picturae Loquentes* (London, 1631), sig. C11r-v.

¹²⁸ J.F.R. Day, “Venal Herald and Mushroom Gentleman: Seventeenth Century Character Books and the Sale of Honor” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1985), 111.

coincided with a difficult period for the officers at the College. After years of self-regulation, the heralds were again compelled in 1568 to submit to an external authority, as Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk—the current Earl Marshal—decreed that no new arms could be granted without his approval.¹²⁹ Disagreements arose over which heralds held custodianship over the books housed in the College, and the officers quarreled publicly with one another over official matters, including their visitation jurisdictions and the accuracy of one another’s grants. The fighting continued throughout James’ reign, especially during the tenure of contentious York Herald Ralph Brooke. Brooke’s provocations created extreme consternation among his colleagues and superiors; as just one example, in 1616, he “tricked Sir William Segar, Garter [King of Arms], into making a grant of arms to Gregory Brandon, who was, in fact, the common hangman of London, by representing him as a gentleman on the point of going abroad, the ship awaiting him, and so needing the patent in haste.” Though King James wanted Segar sent to the Star Chamber as punishment, the Earl Marshal’s commission found out the truth of the matter and eventually sent both men to the Marshalsea for several days.¹³⁰ Brooke also fought with chorographer and Clarenceux King of Arms William Camden regarding the accuracy of Camden’s genealogies in *Britannia*, his most famous work. Several books came out of the dispute, including a defense of Camden by another herald, Augustine Vincent. The men’s ripostes displayed a unique focus on the books of the heralds’ trade. When Brooke argued that his own library was better furnished than that of the College, and thus that his printed pedigrees were more trustworthy, Vincent replied, “Perhaps with Heraldes Notes or Painters Records: Or graunt your Librarie bee better furnished with ancient and authenticke Records then the *Office at the Tower*, while I know your Scholarship, I shall never feare your Librarie.”¹³¹

¹²⁹ Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 197.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 219-20; Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*, 68.

¹³¹ Quoted in Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 228. For more on this feud, see Chapter Two, pp. 67-68.

The Painter-Stainers: Heraldic Competitors

Vincent's scoffing reference to "painters records" is no throwaway insult. Exacerbating the heralds' internal disagreements was the fact that, in addition to being beholden to striving nobles and would-be gentlemen, they were also fearful of sabotage by men at the lower end of the social ladder. The herald painters, a subset of the Painter-Stainers guild, were responsible for painting arms for public use and display, on "royal castles, manors, ships, funerals, tents, pavilions and so forth."¹³² These artisans performed a substantial amount of work for the London heralds, who were too far away to oversee every grant of arms in the provinces; the College officers relied upon these tradesmen to pick up their slack, in some cases even licensing them to carry out visitations. Although historian Robert Tittler emphasizes the interdependence and collaboration between London heralds and provincial painters, he acknowledges that their members came into frequent conflict.¹³³ Many heralds saw the painters as thorns in the College's side—sometimes with good reason. According to records, one painter named William Dakyns or Dawkins "most presumptuously invested himselfe in the Kings Coat of Armes takeing upon him to discharge the office of an Herald," an action which the Earl Marshal's commissioners decried as a "foule offence." Falsely assuming the persona of the Norroy King of Arms, Dakyns had inappropriately bestowed coats on men in several parts of the country, and by 1597 there was a warrant out for his arrest.¹³⁴ William Smith, Rouge Dragon Pursuivant from 1597-1618, complained that "every painter's shop was become an office of arms, 'they take mony for serching for Armes, do forge and devise both cotes, creasts and make pedegrees.'" Smith describes one incident in which a woman commissioned a local painter to create a coat for her, then discovered he had neglected to do any research into her

¹³² Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 237.

¹³³ Robert Tittler, "Regional Portraiture and the Heraldic Connection in Tudor and Early Stuart England," *The British Art Journal* 10, no. 1 (2009): 4-5. Tittler's essay is a fascinating exploration of the regional and provincial "matrices of employment, apprenticeship, family and influence" that linked tradesmen, portrait artists, and heralds in sixteenth-century England, 5.

¹³⁴ Squibb, *The High Court of Chivalry*, 35; and Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 237-38.

family's history. Upon learning that her new arms blatantly cited those of an entirely different family, she asked the painter why he hadn't conferred with the heralds. He responded that he was only trying to save her from paying the College's exorbitant fees.¹³⁵

As a result of such unlicensed activity, the Crown—in the form of the Earl Marshal's commissioners—began to pay closer attention to official funerals, requiring documentation of a herald's presence at each ceremony and prosecuting rogue painters who usurped the officers' roles. William Camden, who (to Ralph Brooke's chagrin) had risen to become Clarenceux King of Arms, made a good-faith attempt to regulate the fraught relationship between heralds and painters in 1621. Camden's own father had been a Painter-Stainer; perhaps sympathetic to the guild's cause, he licensed eight of its men to work with officers at the College. He even secured an agreement with his colleagues stipulating that additional painters could work for them as the need arose. Unfortunately, the agreement broke down, since unregulated transactions between painters and the public continued largely unabated. In 1624, the Crown itself got involved: James I told the Earl Marshal to bring upstart painters to the King himself, "to be punished by imprisonment or otherwise 'that by their examples others may be fore warned & disheartened from attempting the like in tyme to come.'"¹³⁶

Public warnings by frustrated heralds to local painters, like William Flower's deed described at the opening of this chapter, were a clear sign of the growing hostility between the two groups. Despite the College's attempts to consolidate its arms-granting authority, a persistent group of tradesmen had gradually become the heralds' more accessible counterparts and, in the process, their competitors. Moreover, the gentry were supporting this trend, which the heralds understandably viewed as degrading to their profession. This challenge to official heraldic control during the Tudor and early Stuart eras was in some ways inevitable, since the practice of bearing coat armor had

¹³⁵ Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 238.

¹³⁶ Squibb, *The High Court of Chivalry*, 52.

originated in personal prerogative and was difficult to attach to any consistent formal honor code. Given the social milieu, the gentry and near-gentry's yearnings for armorial status were probably strong enough for them to ignore royal regulations. Most people were unlikely to know whether their neighbors' visual claims to nobility were false, and the heralds' visitations were irregular enough that public exposure was relatively unlikely. The lure of owning a coat of arms thus often trumped the desire for truth. By seeking out a local painter's services, a gentleman—whether established or aspiring—could help create his own origin myth.

Early Modern Heraldic Texts

As the painters began to encroach on the College officers' territory, another group of enterprising men saw an opportunity to capitalize on public interest in heraldry through the increasingly profitable medium of print. Gerard Legh, the first early modern English author to tap into the wellspring of interest in heraldic matters, was not a member of the College of Arms—indeed, he had no official connection with heraldry. A member of the Draper's Company and later of the Inner Temple, Legh took it upon himself to publish a guide to blazon and heraldic symbolism, *The Accedens of Armory*, in 1562. The 250-page treatise rode a long wave of popularity, enjoying five reprintings before 1612 even though Legh had died a year after the first edition's publication. The title appears in the lists of various early modern book owners, and among those owners it was well-preserved; copies can still be found in many American and British research libraries.

Approximately half a dozen new books about heraldry appeared on the heels of Legh's success during the reigns of Elizabeth and James: John Bossewell's *Workes of Armorie* (1572); John Ferne's *The Blazon of Gentry* (1586); William Wyrley's *The True Vse of Armorie* (1592); John Guillim's *A Display of Heraldry* (1610); and Edmund Bolton's *The Elements of Armories* (1610). Guillim's book was republished at least six times through 1724, and more heraldic titles appeared during the

seventeenth century. According to one 1822 catalogue, by the time Charles I was executed in 1649, there were 171 books that discussed armory, coats of arms, or genealogy and ceremony in some manner.¹³⁷ This explosion of English heraldic texts was due in part to translations of continental books on armorial subjects.

Bossewell, Legh, Bolton, and Ferne were historians, antiquarians, notary publics, and members of the Inns of Court, not officers in the College of Arms. Edmund Bolton's *Elements of Armories* received the blessing of William Segar, who was Garter King of Arms at the time of the book's publication in 1610, but his book appears to have been an exception.¹³⁸ Gerard Legh neither received nor sought the blessing of the College; his *Accedens of Armory* is dedicated "to the honorable assembly of gentle men in the Innes of Court and Chauncery," the legal society of which he was a member. His desire to expound on the topic of heraldry, he insists, stems from a combined sense of responsibility to God and his fellow Englishmen, as well as a connection to their shared intellectual and architectural surroundings.¹³⁹

Several heralds composed treatises during this period, as well. Ralph Brooke and Augustine Vincent—the authors of competing texts at the turn of the seventeenth century—were York Herald and Rouge-Croix Pursuivant, respectively, and thus had the backing of the College of Arms to recommend their work. But these books generally focused on setting forth royal genealogies rather than discussing heraldry more generally; most importantly, they functioned as salvos in the heralds' internal battles rather than attempts to educate the public. Brooke's publications in the feud between himself, Vincent, and William Camden—*A Discoverie of Certaine Errours Published in Print in the Much Commended Britannia* (1599), and *A Catalogue and Succession of the Kings, Princes, Dukes, Marquesses, Earles, and Viscounts of This Realme of England* (1619)—are notable for their lack of endorsements: the fiery

¹³⁷ J.F.R. Day, "Primers of Honor," 97.

¹³⁸ Segar was also a court painter, and is thought to have painted the Ermine Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I. See Chapter 3, p. 112.

¹³⁹ Gerard Legh, *The Accedens of Armory* (London, 1562), ii.

York herald had alienated many of his colleagues during his tenure. By contrast, Vincent's rebuttal, *A Discoverie of Errours in the First Edition of the Catalogue of Nobility, Published by Ralph Brooke* (1622), features a commendation from William Segar, Garter King of Arms; approving poems from the Norroy, Windsor, Richmond, and Chester heralds; blurbs by Richard Braithwaite and John Bradshaw; and perhaps most importantly, a long letter from Vincent's "affectionate friend" John Selden, the prominent legal and historical scholar who had published his magisterial *Titles of Honor* in 1614.

A few amateur authors tried to capitalize on the chivalric craze by affixing narratives of knights' exploits to their technical descriptions. William Wyrley's *The True Use of Armorie* explains the technicalities of heraldry for only 28 pages; the rest of the text comprises two long poems by Wyrley, applauding the exploits of two medieval knights.¹⁴⁰ But Wyrley's nostalgic approach appears to have been less popular than books like Legh's and Guillim's, which promised their readers a guide to heraldry's symbolic mysteries. Legh in particular "was of opinion that a Herald should be a living encyclopaedia": in his introduction to the reader, he

marvayle[s] what Science, Arte, or Misterye it were, that an Herehaught [herald] should have none intelligence thereof, were it never so secrete or profounde. For, if he have not of all thinges some under standinge, aswell as of severall languages, He is not worthy to be an Herehaught. Therefore necessary it is for him to have an universall knowlege in eche thing.¹⁴¹

Of course, Legh was not himself a herald, so this may have been an attempt at mollifying his official readers—or perhaps at helping lay readers forget that he was not, in fact, an actual officer of arms.¹⁴²

In any case, his argument that writers on heraldry should be general experts is not surprising.

¹⁴⁰ *The Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 63, ed. Sir Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee (London: Smith, Elder, 1900), s.v. "William Wyrley," 271.

¹⁴¹ Legh, *The Accedens of Armory* (1562), sig. 6v-7r, quoted in *The Herald and Genealogist*, vol. 1, ed. John Gough Nichols, (London, 1863), 113.

¹⁴² Nichols finds his circumspection purposeful, opining that "it is observable through out Gerard Legh's book with what deference and tenderness he trenches upon the province of the Heralds, how he ever leaves knotty points to be referred to their decision, how continually he speaks of secrets that must not be disclosed, and how he purposely, as it were, leaves information incomplete, as if afraid of being called to account," *The Herald and Genealogist*, 42.

According to William West, the culture of early modern Europe “was ... an encyclopedia culture, obsessed with collecting and sorting information, diligently reducing knowledge to the possession of discrete facts, driven by the desire to map the world’s order and to construct a universal theory of everything.”¹⁴³ West explains that encyclopedias are “compiled and organized to reflect some reality to which by definition they are secondary”; indeed, “they all tend towards one goal—literal reference, in the sense of bearing their users back to the substratum of a reality, to things themselves, conceived as univocal.”¹⁴⁴ As compilers of wisdom, heraldic authors shared encyclopedists’ hopes of “bearing their users back to the substratum of a reality”—in their case, a reality in which the signs of noble bearing were clear and unambiguous.

Paradoxically, however, the effect of these texts was to make nobility an even more contested topic. Each author put a slightly different spin on the meanings of heraldic symbols and—like Juliana Berners in the fifteenth century—created his own typology of nobility, contributing yet more voices to the cacophony of opinions about heraldry’s relationship to gentility. In Edmund Bolton’s *Elements of Armories*, for example, two knights named Eustace and Amias engage in a lengthy dialogue about the fundamental precepts of heraldry. The novice knight, Eustace, asks Amias, “Who is then your gentleman?” Amias replies, “Simply, and onely for the present, the lawfull bearer of such markes, or tokens of noblesse.”¹⁴⁵ Happily for readers aspiring to higher status, his formulation is tautological: it suggests that one only need possess arms in order to be a gentleman, not the other way around. By 1661, on the title page of *The Sphere of Gentry*, the herald painter Sylvanus Morgan would afford pride of place to both inherited, or “native” nobility, and its earned, or “dative,” counterpart.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ William N. West, *Theatres and Encyclopedias in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁴⁵ Bolton, *The Elements of Armories*, sig. B3v.

¹⁴⁶ Sylvanus Morgan, *The Sphere of Gentry* (London, 1661).

Writers like Legh and Bolton were conscious that they were walking a fine rhetorical line. They insisted that they were loathe to undermine the College of Arms' standards and expertise, but for all practical purposes, their texts were aimed at doing precisely that. John Ferne's introduction to *The Blazon of Gentry* encapsulates this paradoxical stance. Like Legh before him, Ferne addresses his book to the members of the Inns of Court rather than to a broader audience of gentlemen, ostensibly limiting his interlocutors to an intellectually curious cadre of aspiring heraldic scholars. Taking on the role of a heraldic insider, he scolds an anonymous author who he says has revealed too much to readers who might use the information for nefarious purposes. This writer, he says,

hath said little in Blazon, but rather hath taught men how to devise Crests, Badges, or Symbols Armoriall... therein he hath something too much incroched vppon our Heralds, which thing in this worke I haue alwayes abandoned, leauing the deuse of such matters to the pleasure of our Armorists.¹⁴⁷

Ferne remains circumspect about this predecessor, whom he believes overstepped his bounds in writing about heraldry's finer points. He hints that such information is likely to assist delinquent herald painters in designing and selling coats outside the College's jurisdiction. He also complains that too many heraldic writers are like "Alcumisters" (alchemists), fabricating "imagined secrets" that they insist remain unknowable unless readers buy into their "madnesse." True heralds, he opines, should be purveyors *and* guardians of genuinely precious information, and writers who venture into their territory should be careful to respect their authority. Ferne says he personally does not pretend to possess expertise, and promises to "refrain from reuealing the secrets of [the heralds'] owne breasts." This is a fascinating assertion, considering that his book runs for 341 pages and describes all manner of heraldry's symbols and uses. His feigned reluctance is an attempt to have it both ways: he wants to avoid the wrath of the College, yet his main goal is to sell books to customers desirous of heraldry's "secrets." While the actual heralds were busy trying to quash extralegal trade in arms,

¹⁴⁷ Ferne, *The Blazon of Gentry*, sig. A6v.

writers like Ferne, Bolton, and Legh recognized that the participants in that trade—both buyers and sellers—constituted their books’ primary audience.

In *Heralds of England* (1967), Sir Anthony Wagner’s magisterial history of the profession, the author titles his chapter on late Tudor and early Stuart heraldry “The Elizabethan Troubles” and the succeeding era “The Troublesome Times.” His findings reaffirm the social and economic disjunctions that were so evident in William Flower’s 1578 warning to heraldic pretenders. There was no consensus regarding the heralds’ responsibilities during this period, which saw an intense focus on social climbing among both the gentry and the middling sort. Were heralds obligated to entertain requests from aspiring gentlemen, who sought the increased status a coat of arms could provide? Or was it best to dismiss all questionable claims, turning away business that would profit both the heralds and their upwardly mobile customers? No one could say, and the heralds’ divergent philosophies on the matter led to disputes within and beyond the College of Arms, some of which turned litigious. In Wagner’s words, an “overambitious reorganization and a clash of stormy personalities” during Elizabeth’s reign caused much infighting at the College—not only between heraldic officers and their royal supervisors, but also among the heralds themselves.¹⁴⁸

Compounding this institutional turmoil, early modern heralds had begun to face an external challenge to their office in the form of a burgeoning popular literature on heraldry. During Elizabeth’s reign, the heralds’ already tenuous custodianship of armorial history and practice was being undercut by the publication of printed books on the topic. While the officers at the College squabbled amongst themselves about profits and proper standards of evidence, educated laymen bypassed official channels to publish heraldry treatises of their own. These books, which resembled Renaissance courtesy books in that they gave lip service to maintaining standards of nobility, were

¹⁴⁸ Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 199.

actually aimed at making heraldic “experts” out of their upwardly mobile readership. These authors were mostly antiquarians and lawyers, and their popular influence was clear.

To experienced heralds, their work was a travesty. Many of these publications combined classical and Biblical lore lifted directly from older texts with a pastiche of information only tangentially related to heraldry. Alchemical precepts and original poetry were presented alongside explanations of heraldic terminology and symbolism, and fantastical accounts from medieval bestiaries complemented illustrations of actual and imagined coats of arms. At the same time, these odd texts provided a new public forum for amateur genealogical scholarship. Though not classifiable as a genre *per se*, these books provide a body of evidence suggesting that early modern printers and publishers recognized and facilitated widespread interest in heraldry’s imagery and language.

The diffusion of arms-granting privilege to a specific set of tradesmen naturally led to uncertainty—not only about who deserved to own coats of arms, but also regarding who should be allowed to possess heraldic knowledge. As access to heraldry’s benefits became increasingly easy to obtain, so too did a wealth of information about its historical and contemporary symbolism. Newly minted arms-bearers naturally hoped to demonstrate to their peers that they deserved their recently obtained coats, and they began to seek out information that would help them discuss heraldry, not just display it. Conversely, readers of heraldry manuals were likely to regard themselves favorably in light of the books’ generous descriptions of nobility. In the authors’ characterizations of noble virtue as attainable by means other than birth, and their insistence that simply bearing a coat of arms signified one’s social worth, they found a pleasing endorsement of their own social aspirations.

This dynamic led to a great deal of ambivalence about the role that heraldry and heraldic knowledge should play in differentiating between social and occupational groups. If mere arms painters could create convincing coats, and members of the lower gentry could buy them, what was to stop amateur writers from claiming expertise on the topic and disseminating it to eager

(potentially ungentle) audiences? Curiosity about heraldry's history and precepts naturally followed from its increasing role in the identities of the middling sort, and the writers and printers of heraldic treatises would be instrumental in making heraldic terminology increasingly public. As the following chapters will show, heraldic imagery's expanding presence in civic life would help foster its reappropriation as satire among professional heralds, educated professionals, and anonymous readers with an axe to grind.

FIGURES

Figure 5. Corporate arms of the College of Arms



CHAPTER TWO

Heraldic Literacy and the Evolution of Heraldic Satire

The Turnament of Tottenbam, a fifteenth-century manuscript poem printed in 1631, burlesques the expansion of heraldic imagery throughout English civic life by depicting a group of dimwitted Tottenham peasants participating in a community joust. In addition to laughing at the men's cowardly behavior, the writer also mocks their workaday heraldry, which explicitly symbolizes their occupations. The baker's crest features "a dough-trough and a pele [baker's shovel]," while a farmer bears a "riddle and a rake," both agricultural tools.¹⁴⁹ Because the men have no idea how to joust and are unable to properly protect themselves, the tournament concludes with the wounded participants being carted ignominiously off the field by their wives. One critic observes that the poem comically "ridicules rural and village occupations, and the socially inappropriate imitation of noble practices"¹⁵⁰ while stopping short of mocking the practices themselves. The ignoble residents of Tottenham can only marshal a poor imitation of a chivalric event, a paltry effort that nonetheless leads to the peasants' injury and embarrassment.

Blazoning terms and language had been standardized by the end of the thirteenth century,¹⁵¹ but they were largely unfamiliar to the illiterate. Laypeople untrained in the discipline were thus unlikely to accurately identify the heraldic images they encountered, and, like the Tottenham

¹⁴⁹ *The Turnament of Tottenbam*, transcr. Gilbert Pilkington (London, 1631), STC 19925, sig. B2v. For provenance, dating, and additional information, see Erik Kooper's Introduction to *The Tournament of Tottenham and The Feast of Tottenham, Sentimental and Humorous Romances*, ed. Kooper (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005), <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/kooper-sentimental-and-humorous-romances-tournament-of-tottenham-and-feast-of-totteham-introduction>.

¹⁵⁰ Victor I. Scherb, "The Tournament of Power: Public Combat and Social Inferiority in Late Medieval England," in *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, 3rd series, vol. 12, ed. J.A.S. Evans and R.W. Unger (1991), 105-28, pp. 113, 115.

¹⁵¹ John A. Goodall, "Heraldry," in *The Dictionary of Art*, vol. 14, ed. Jane Turner (London: Macmillan, 1996), 405.

jousters, their lack of heraldic literacy provided writers with comic fodder. An anonymous interlude added to the *Canterbury Tales* in the fifteenth century depicts the Pardoner and Miller, a pair of “lewde sotes,” visiting Thomas à Becket’s shrine at Canterbury Cathedral. Both men lack training in heraldry’s formal vocabulary and symbols, but this doesn’t stop them from trying to decipher the stained-glass images in the windows—or as the poem puts it, “Counterfeting gentilmen, the armes for to blase.” The Pardoner announces that one panel depicts “a balstaff [cudgel], or els a rakes end,” while the Miller argues instead that “It is a spere, yf thowe canst se, with a prik tofore / To bussh adown his enmy and thurh the sholder bore.”¹⁵²

The men’s disagreement demonstrates the uncertainty that a single image could cause in lay audiences, and by extension, the role that misrecognition could play in any given heraldic interpretation. The Pardoner’s perception of a farm tool in the stained glass emphasizes the heuristic gap between those who worked with their hands, and the fortunate few whose income came from inheritances, patronage, and rents. While Karen Elizabeth Gross argues that the scene demonstrates the “legibility of heraldry to all social strata,” proving it “a public sign-system advertising ownership and patronage that all would have recognized,”¹⁵³ the differences in patterns of visual interpretation among social and occupational groups were just as significant as the similarities. In fact, by labeling heraldry as universally legible, Gross elides the fact that the window doesn’t seem to have depicted a coat of arms at all. According to the poem’s editor, “many of these windows, rather than betokening ‘a book to the lewyd peple’ as commonly claimed by defenses of church art...instead offered challenging, even esoteric images directed primarily at the monks of the cathedral.” Indeed, the unsophisticated Pardoner and Miller don’t seem to know that this particular window depicts the

¹⁵² John M. Bowers, ed., *The Canterbury Interlude and Merchant’s Tale of Beryn*, originally published in *The Canterbury Tales: Fifteenth-Century Continuations and Additions* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1992), line 147.

¹⁵³ Karen Elizabeth Gross, “Hunting, Heraldry, and the Fall in the *Boke of St. Albans* (1486),” *Viator* 38, no. 2 (2007): 200-201.

Biblical Adam using a shovel.¹⁵⁴ Additionally, the “lewd” viewers have no idea that the image may have been commissioned by a wealthy patron or guild, giving it contemporary civic significance.¹⁵⁵ Although Gross emphasizes heraldry’s visual legibility, in reality, it often concealed meaning from some groups while revealing it to others.

As the Tottenham jousters and Pardoner indicate, for many lower-class and middling English subjects, heraldic imagery wasn’t always linked with nobility. Rather, it was a familiar element of their everyday lives, reminding them of their own occupations, locations, and experiences. Cities, towns, and abbeys had begun using coats of arms, and London’s civic militia bore heraldic banners, before the end of the fourteenth century. City aldermen used armorial seals, and London’s corporations eventually received them, as well; recall that the Drapers were granted the first corporate coat in 1439-40.¹⁵⁶ Heraldic images thus appeared regularly in community contexts as symbols of civic institutions and trades, a trend that was helped along during the sixteenth century by the expansion of print. One 1596 broadside, “The Armes of all the chiefe corporat[i]ons of Englande w[i]th the companyes of London,” is essentially a poster that displays the arms and mottoes of all of London’s trade corporations. It showcases the companies’ civic importance with a dedication to the Lord Mayor and a border featuring the arms of every English county [Figure 6].¹⁵⁷ The illustration celebrates the companies’ visual and textual identities and seems to have been intended for public display.

¹⁵⁴ Bowers, ed., *The Canterbury Interlude and Merchant’s Tale of Beryn*, 147-57n, citing Madeline Harrison Caviness, *Early Stained Glass of Canterbury Cathedral, circa 1175-1220* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 113, plate 6.

¹⁵⁵ David K. Coley notes, “The coats of arms that the Miller and Pardoner attempt to ‘blaze’ attest to the myriad coats of arms and heraldic insignia integrated into the narrative programs of gothic glass cycles as conditions for window bequests and patronage. Window donors also insisted that their membership in craft guilds or chivalric associations, such as the Order of the Garter, be depicted in glass, and wealthy individuals sometimes included extensive, self-memorializing glass commissions in their wills,” in “Withyn a temple ymad of glas’: Glazing, Glossing, and Patronage in Chaucer’s *House of Fame*,” *The Chaucer Review* 45, no. 1 (2010): 72.

¹⁵⁶ *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner, vol. 14 (London: Macmillan, 1996), s.v. “heraldry,” by John A. Goodall, 409, and “The Granting of Arms – Corporate Arms,” The College of Arms website, accessed November 13, 2011, <http://www.college-of-arms.gov.uk/About/08.htm#e>.

¹⁵⁷ Benjamin Wright, *The Armes of all the cheife corporat[i]ons of Englande w[i]th the companyes of London* (London, 1596).

Such corporate arms were an important element of London’s civic identity—a communal counterpoint to the heraldry borne by individual gentlemen. While noble heraldry was displayed during public festivals and processions, it wasn’t an everyday presence in the life of the average Londoner. As lavish heraldic funerals for the gentry waned during the 1580s,¹⁵⁸ residents received less exposure to heraldic arms as emblems of pomp and circumstance. And residents of far-flung shires were probably even less likely to be exposed to royal pageantry. At the same time, for a variety of reasons—elite pressure on the College of Arms, illegitimate business by herald painters, and eventually, James’ inflation of honors—increasing numbers of people were being granted individual coats of arms. The distinctions between those who could and couldn’t own heraldry, if they had ever truly existed, had begun to change markedly. This expansion of heraldic devices throughout society bothered plenty of gentlemen—not only traditionalists, who insisted that arms be limited to ancient gentility, but also those who allowed that they could be earned through virtuous action and a good education.

Professional and amateur heraldic authors, many with established family names and fortunate social connections, complained about the preponderance of “new” gentlemen whose heraldic accoutrements not only belied their genealogies, but surpassed their formal training. Too many feckless viewers, writers declared, failed to supplement their everyday heraldic encounters with sustained study. In Edmund Bolton’s letter to readers at the beginning of *The Elements of Armories* (1610), for example, he laments that arms appear frequently in public and private spaces, in full view of (and even owned by) people with no understanding of their meanings:

Armories therefore occurring euery-where, in seales, in frontes of buildings, in vtensils, in all things; Monarcks vsing them, mighty Peeres, and in briefe, all the noble *tàm maiorum, quàm minorum gentium*, from *Caesar* to the simplest Gentleman, yet all of them (for the more part) most vnknowingly, very few (euen of the most studious) do sildome goe any farther then to fill vp a wide Wardrobe with particular Coates: whose zeale notwithstanding is worthy to know the better things thereof: *that other* beeing no more *the thing*, then bookes not

¹⁵⁸ Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), 573-79.

vnderstood are learning.¹⁵⁹

It troubles Bolton that many early modern English subjects, rich and poor, lettered and unlettered, absorb heraldic images only through the eye without taking the time to delve into their technicalities. Comparing coats to books is a particularly striking analogy, for it suggests that a coat should not be merely perceived but must be *read*, and read closely. A prefatory letter to the book adds support to the author's critique. Bolton's "late deare friend the Graue, and Courtly Thomas Bedingfield Esquire," despite having been a gentleman pensioner at Elizabeth's court and master of tents for King James, admits he lacks the knowledge to judge Bolton's book on its merits.¹⁶⁰ Observing that his own "blinde eyes can iudge no colours," Bedingfield surmises that other readers will also fail to appreciate Bolton's wisdom: "If you permit these discourses to wander abroad," he writes, "they shall meet with more men to maruail, then vnderstand them."¹⁶¹

Bolton's lament and his friend's concurrence probably served as useful sales tactics. A gentleman browsing the wares at a bookstall, having read the introduction and opening letters, might decide to buy the book in order to separate himself from the heraldically ignorant masses. In this way, authors like Bolton tried to make heraldic literacy itself a requirement for owning a coat of arms. Only gentle readers with the time, resources, and education to study and compare multiple books could learn heraldic terminology, much less distinguish between dozens of different authors' often arbitrary rules for blazoning arms. Some authors wrote multiple editions of their books, and in other cases, printers claimed to have revised and expanded them in hopes of creating demand for the latest and most accurate information.¹⁶² Consequently, although heraldic comprehension was already pegged to existing social categories, the sophistication with which a person discussed

¹⁵⁹ Edmund Bolton, *The Elements of Armories* (London, 1610), sig. A4r.

¹⁶⁰ Bolton, *The Elements of Armories*, n.p.

¹⁶¹ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, "Bedingfield, Thomas (early 1540s?–1613)," by L. G. Kelly, accessed January 29, 2014, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/article/1938>.

¹⁶² For example, one edition of Guillim's *Display of Heraldrie* printed after the author's death claims to have been "corrected and much enlarged by the author himselfe in his life time" (London, 1632), STC (2nd ed.) 12502.

heraldry—their vocabulary, sources, and modes of expression—became a social marker in and of itself. Although gentle writers and readers couldn't prevent coats of arms from appearing in guild halls or the homes of merchants, they could at least try to hamper the democratization of heraldic discourse. For all practical purposes, many writers claiming to clarify the principles of genealogy and heraldry often achieved the opposite effect.

Heralds' and amateur writers' texts demonstrated that a powerful combination of visual, textual, and oral discourses—not print alone—made heraldry relevant in the lives of early modern English readers. Scholars have shown that spoken, written, and print practices both shaped and reflected the ways information was transmitted at all social levels during the early modern period. The rise of print did not undermine or replace the spoken word, especially on a local scale: rather, so-called “popular” oral practice drew from and influenced print in a variety of ways. Heraldry's strong relationship with verbal forms of communication—especially its basis in individual and collective memory and its ability to foster gossip—eluded the control of the Tudor and Stuart heralds tasked with protecting heraldry's lofty stature, not to mention the gentlemen and aspirants eager to maintain its exclusivity. For example, even though heralds published genealogical treatises in print, they argued about evidence through manuscript commentary that resembled fractious oral argument. Their printed tomes and scathing appraisals of each other's work provide a window into the uniquely volatile mixture of civic dedication, occupational insecurity, and personal ego that fueled their professional relationships.

At the same time, popular heraldry books inspired unique forms of heraldic study and creativity in aristocratic and educated readers. *Pace* Bedingfield's pessimistic view of readerly engagement, some book owners left ample evidence suggesting they both understood and interrogated heraldic authors' divergent opinions. They bound heraldry books with similar titles, cross-referenced them with multiple historical sources, and used the margins for drawing practice, as

well as to express their opinions about contemporary and historical events. By playing with heraldry's rarefied vocabulary and visual cachet, both readers and writers turned it into a satirical framework that allowed them to display their erudition alongside their disdain. The generic conventions of libel provided elite writers with a measure of textual control that slightly alleviated their dismay over heraldry's swiftly eroding social distinctions.

Heralds and Antiquarians: Professional Disputes in Print and on the Margins

The surge of heraldic manuals during the late Tudor and early Stuart years was a symptom of what D.R. Woolf describes as the dissolution of the chronicle genre into a variety of shorter, more accessible formats.¹⁶³ Print “rob[bed] the chronicle...of its function as the recorder and communicator of recent events,” eventually dissolving it into “parasite genres,” such as almanacs, antiquarian treatises, newspapers—and, I would argue, heraldry manuals.¹⁶⁴ Books that discussed heraldry spanned a wide generic range, from antiquarian chorographies like William Camden's *Britannia* (1586) to instruction manuals like Henry Peacham's *A Compleat Gentleman* (1622). Some focused on explaining the terms commonly used in heraldry, while others grandly showcased the arms and ancestries of English kings or local gentry. The latter tended to be massive folios, while the former were usually quarto-sized, making them more affordable and easier to reference. These books and their genealogical counterparts were particularly appealing to educated gentlemen: Ben Jonson, for example, owned York Herald Ralph Brooke's *Catalogue and Succession of the Kings, Princes, Dukes, Marquesses, Earles and Viscounts of this Realme of England since the Norman Conquest* (1619), and Jonson refers to the feud between Brooke and his colleague Augustine Vincent in his late play *The New Inn* (1629).¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ D.R. Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 11-78.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 27; parasite genres, 26-36.

¹⁶⁵ Ben Jonson, *The New Inn*, ed. Michael Hattaway (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1984), line 2.6.28.

Alluding to such citation, D.F. Mackenzie has observed that “a history of books will have no point if it fails to account for the meanings they later come to make.”¹⁶⁶ Such an accounting should consider the meanings that different readers generated through textual, oral, and visual methods, all of which helped circulate the language and imagery of heraldry within and beyond printed heraldry texts. This approach is particularly useful for exploring the history of the College of Arms, one marked primarily by ongoing contentiousness among the heralds. Though Richard III had granted the officers a library in 1483-84, Henry VII withdrew it in 1487, forcing the heralds to organize records and hold meetings privately, often at their own residences.¹⁶⁷ As a result, the heralds often treated their books and records as personal property rather than resources to be shared with their colleagues. But in 1568, Queen Elizabeth’s Earl Marshal, Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, issued orders that essentially required the officers to integrate their records. He also forbade heralds and pursuivants from granting arms, limiting this privilege (and most importantly, its attached fees) to the six Kings of Arms.¹⁶⁸ The new regulations confused and angered the heralds, who were understandably protective of their individual documents, not to mention their profits. Though they periodically met with their fellow officers, they were accustomed to creating pedigrees for arms seekers by consulting their personal records. When each herald’s hard-earned proprietary information was suddenly released to the entire college, some officers felt their entrepreneurial efforts had been wasted and their independence needlessly curtailed.

The most competitive personalities in the College didn’t take these changes lightly. Some simply refused to abide by the regulations: William Dethick created patents for arms grants despite being only York Herald, and bribed a clerk to list among his duties the ability to conduct visitations

¹⁶⁶ D.F. MacKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 23.

¹⁶⁷ Richard III granted the heralds an official library along with their charter, but Henry VII removed the charter and library support upon his ascension; Philip and Mary granted them a house at Derby Place in 1555, but they didn’t begin using it until 1564/5. See Anthony Wagner, *Heralds of England: A History of the Office and College of Arms* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1967), 134-35, 181-84.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 188-89.

and present arms without the approval of his fellow officers.¹⁶⁹ Other heralds moved their private battles into the open via print, waging public relations campaigns that consisted largely of attacks on each other's methods. Each author used his individual knowledge of British antiquity and contemporary visitation records to affirm his expertise and correct errors. Ralph Brooke (*A Discoverie of Certaine Errours Published in Print in the Much Commended Britannia*, 1599), William Wyrley (*The True Use of Armorie*, 1592), and John Guillim (*A Display of Heraldry*, 1610) each published a book on heraldry after serving as Rouge Croix Pursuivant. William Camden, the son of a Painter-Stainer and a member of the Society of Antiquaries, wrote and published his chorographical *Britannia* as an independent scholar. The feat helped elevate him to Clarenceux King of Arms, one of the highest positions in the College—and disgruntled Ralph Brooke, who would have preferred to receive the promotion himself.¹⁷⁰

The heralds' discord is evident in nearly every text published by an officer of arms. In his introduction to *The True Use of Armorie* (1592), William Wyrley, Rouge Croix Pursuivant, bemoans the fact that herald painters and his fellow officers of arms are guilty of creating false arms for profit. He takes particular aim at quartering, the practice of incorporating distant relatives' coats—sometimes dozens of them—into eager applicants' new devices. He argues that such displays conceal questionable claims and are “fountains of errors”:

A number of meaner persons, who if they possesse any mannor or lands by descent, albeit their ancestors married the heire of the same many hundred yeers agone, and whose parents peradventure neuer did beare any marke, or if they did (time hauing obscured the same) it remaineth vnknown: yet shall you haue them run to an Herald or painter, as busily as if the matter were of weight, and there make search they know not for what, and the herald or painter (on the other side) to draw some small peece of siluer from them, will find out the badge of some one or other of the same name, although many times none of the

¹⁶⁹ Dethick, perhaps the most extreme personality in College history, was notoriously violent. Anthony Wagner explains that in 1573, Dethick attacked the Chester Herald's wife by kicking and suffocating her, forcing her head into the fireplace, and pouring urine and hot ashes on her head. He also physically attacked members of his own family, and according to a document that removed him from office in 1603, he “sued,” “beat,” “reviled,” and “was always a tyrant” to his colleagues. Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 201-202.

¹⁷⁰ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, s.v. “Camden, William (1551–1623),” by Wyman H. Herendeen, accessed October 2, 2013, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/article/4431>.

kindred...which serues yet to no other vse, but to make vp a iust number, whereby their owne marks become the more confused: and yet into this quartering (being a very fountaine of errors) many both Noble men and Gentlemen, and the officers of Armes themselues, do oftentimes very rashly enter.¹⁷¹

Wyrley's frustration with such indiscriminate standards was shared by some heralds within the college, as well. Some officers of arms took it upon themselves to dissect their own colleagues' work in print, almost always with the aim of delegitimizing it and demonstrating the superiority of their own methods. York Herald Ralph Brooke's *Catalogue of Errors* claimed that the prior York Herald, William Dethick, had awarded nearly two dozen improper grants, including one to a troubled bailiff named John Shakespeare.¹⁷² Brooke also accused William Camden of propagating bad history. In defense of his friend Camden, another heraldic officer, Rouge Croix Pursuivant Augustine Vincent, published *A Discoverie of Errors* (1622), a treatise attacking Brooke's methodology.¹⁷³ Having spent years conducting mostly independent research, their difficulty adapting to collectivization showed in both print and manuscript. Although writers with positions at the College were supremely confident in their own knowledge and training, many had no compunction about denigrating the work of their colleagues. Their quarrels betokened the growing pains of heraldic regulation as a profession: its members weren't yet able or willing to conceive of themselves as a unified group with shared goals.

Since its publication, the *Discoverie* appears to have been a staple in the College of Arms library, not to mention in the private libraries of heralds from the seventeenth century onward. Many of these preserved copies, whether currently owned by individuals or shelved in scholarly archives, include margin comments from prominent readers connected with the College. The heralds and their antiquarian colleagues passed along manuscript commentary in the margins of books they lent and borrowed, interspersing scholarly notes with vitriolic personal insults. As William Sherman, D.R.

¹⁷¹ William Wyrley, *The True Vse of Armorie* (London, 1592), sig. A3v.

¹⁷² For additional discussion of John Shakespeare's arms, see Chapter 3, pages 151-53.

¹⁷³ William Jaggard, Vincent's friend, actually postponed publication of Shakespeare's First Folio in order to bring the *Discoverie* to print. See Adam G. Hooks, "The Least Important Book of the Year: The First Folio in 1622" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Textual Scholarship, Austin, TX, May 31-June 2, 2012).

Woolf, and other historians of print have shown, books weren't merely unidirectional purveyors of information: they were vehicles for ongoing dialogues between authors and readers, and between original and subsequent book owners—i.e., between readers at different points in time. Woolf shows that early modern readers of historical texts had a tendency “not simply to absorb their texts but to emend and interpret them by addition or correction,”¹⁷⁴ and archival evidence shows that these emendations could take on lives of their own.

These lively conversations are vividly illustrated in a Folger Library copy of Vincent's *Discoverie of Errours*, which features copious margin commentary in several different hands.¹⁷⁵ One commentator mentions the date 1635, indicating that this set of notes was written during the mid-seventeenth century. Another series of comments appears to be the handiwork of an opinionated reader with an antiquarian background; every entry in this hand ends with the initials “S.L.K.” The two sets of marginalia have separate provenances, making the book a prime specimen of the range of synchronic and diachronic responses that early modern texts—particularly historical ones—could inspire in their professional readers.¹⁷⁶ On closer inspection, we find that their origins are even more complicated. A note at the front of the book reveals that the margin comments are actually transcriptions: they originally appeared in a copy of the *Discoverie of Errours* owned by the Elizabethan antiquary St. Loe Kniveton. The owner of the Folger copy was Peter Le Neve, Norroy Herald from 1704-7, who explained the situation in the front of the book. It's unclear whether the book was part

¹⁷⁴ Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England*, 92.

¹⁷⁵ Ralph Brooke, *A discoverie of errors in the first edition of the catalogue of nobility* (London, 1622), STC 24756 copy 2, Folger copy cs92. Thomas Woodcock, the current Garter Principal King of Arms at the College, owns a copy of Vincent's *Discoverie* featuring marginalia by Jacob Chaloner, the stepson and apprentice of the seventeenth-century herald and painter Randle Holme, as well as notes by Vincent's own son John (personal correspondence with Thomas Woodcock, Garter Principal King of Arms, February 2012). For more on Randle Holme's familial connections with heraldry, see Chapter 3, 112.

¹⁷⁶ Recent history scholars have argued that early modern chronicle histories generated a sense of self-conscious, even subversive, multivocality rather than unquestioning loyalty to a unified royal or theological perspective. See D.R. Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture 1500-1730* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), and *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England: Erudition, Ideology, and the 'Light of Truth' from the Accession of James I to the Civil War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); and Annabel Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

of Le Neve's private collection or if it was shelved in the College of Arms library, which would have made it available to Le Neve's colleagues. In any case, his introductory note reveals that the spirited margin notes originated elsewhere and were passed from herald to herald over several generations.

On the front pastedown, Le Neve writes:

M[emoran]d[um] I Peter Le Neve Norroy transcribed some few & my amanuensis the rest of the marginall notes which are markt with this note to them S.L.K: from a book I borrowed of John Hare Esqr Richmond Herald at Arms which was before the book of Henry Dethick Esqr & before that of Sr William Dugdale Mr Garter King of Arms & which notes were transcribed in that book by Henry Lilly Gent. Rouge Rose pursuivant from a book of St Loe Kniveton a Derbyshire gent. & good antiquary whose collections for the most part are in the Yelverton Library but I have some 3 or 4 of them. P: Le Neve Norroy.¹⁷⁷

Le Neve's note shows that several generations of distinguished readers, many of them heralds, were impressed with (and, for reasons that will become clear, scandalously delighted by) Kniveton's commentary. Kniveton was a respected antiquary who ran in an intellectual circle inhabited by prominent officers, and he was clearly invested in the heralds' debates about genealogical and heraldic evidence. Judging by a commendation in *Britannia*, he was an acquaintance of William Camden. In the section on Darbyshire, Camden describes an area populated by "many places which have given name and Habitation to worshipfull Families: as *Longford, Bradburne, Kniveton*, from whence came those Knivetons of Mercaston and Bradley: of which house Saint Lo Kniveton is one, to whose judicious and studious diligence I am deeply endebted."¹⁷⁸ Kniveton also must have commanded the respect of Vincent, an established herald who was a friend and defender of Camden from Ralph Brooke's attacks. In a manuscript from the College of Arms, Vincent describes Kniveton as "a learned gentelman and a Rare antiquarye and fellowe of this Colledge," a member of

¹⁷⁷ I am grateful to Heather Wolfe, Curator of Manuscripts at the Folger Shakespeare Library, for transcribing the margin comments here, as well as for her assistance in editing my own transcriptions.

¹⁷⁸ William Camden, *Britain, or A chorographically description of the most flourishing kingdomes, England, Scotland, and Ireland* (London, 1610), 2Z6.

Gray's Inn who "afirmeth" that institution's history "out of his own serche and Readinges of Antiquities."¹⁷⁹

Vincent's privately documented respect for Kniveton did not foreclose heated disagreements between the two men, however. Kniveton's marginalia in his copy of Vincent's *Discoverie* show he has no compunction about attacking his fellow researcher's methods and motivation. When Vincent acknowledges his inability to ascertain the identity of one "Isabell" in the Arundel family, Kniveton writes, "this Discovery by your own Confession discovers but your Ignorance." The antiquary constantly challenges Vincent's credibility, as well as that of Ralph Brooke, the herald whose text Vincent is critiquing. "Here is but your Usual Confident Affirmation & no proof of it so as it rest (vize Creditis) a Measuring cast betwixt you," he complains, comparing Vincent and Brooke's inaccuracies to a game in which both men have tried and failed to hit a target.¹⁸⁰

Kniveton seems most disgruntled by Vincent's fondness for what Kniveton perceives as shoddy evidence gleaned from oral sources. Vincent consulted public records, which included details of oral testimony in legal cases, to analyze Brooke's assertions—a form of research that some early modern researchers considered archaic.¹⁸¹ Kniveton certainly put little stock in the method: his marginalia insist that antiquarians should not make claims based on records stemming from court testimony. Kniveton prefers to cite physical evidence of familial coats of arms: next to a coat that Vincent has attributed to the wrong person, Kniveton writes, "That Holland Earl of Exeter bore these very Arms appears plainly by Seals to his Deeds which I have Seen & can show." By contrast,

¹⁷⁹ Herald's College Manuscript Vincent 190, cited in William Ralph Douthwaite, *Gray's Inn: Its History & Associations, Comp. from Original and Unpublished Documents* (London, 1886), 20.

¹⁸⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "cast, n.," I.b, accessed October 21, 2011, <http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/Entry/28530>.

¹⁸¹ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, s.v. "Vincent, Augustine (c.1584–1626)," by A. E. Brown, accessed September 22, 2011, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/article/28307>. As Adam Fox writes, oral evidence was considered localized and pedestrian: "The fanciful fables which some small towns or villages liked to cherish about their former greatness, for example, were often sustained by local memory and by the physical evidence all around rather than by any written documents"; in "Remembering the Past in Early Modern England: Oral and Written Tradition," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th Series, 9 (1999): 233-56, p. 235.

he writes, Vincent “produce[s] a Cloud p[er]haps of ignorant Jurors & where in Inquests in several shires they often Differ both in the Day & Year shamefully all wch. in truth are your only Evidences.”

Here, Kniveton decries the interplay of oral, material, and textual modes of historical documentation. Though he pushes hard for textual precedence in modern antiquarian study, oral testimony had long been an acceptable form of evidence in heraldic legislation. In the fourteenth century *Scrope v. Grosvenor* trial, multiple witnesses provided oral testimony in favor of Richard Scrope, who was eventually awarded the coat. More recently, in 1546, the Earl of Surrey had been convicted of wrongfully using a royal coat of arms, thanks in part to the Garter King of Arms’ oral testimony in front of a grand jury.¹⁸² Judging by his vehement rebuttals, Kniveton was part of a new generation of antiquarians who hoped to move away from this style of historical affirmation.

In addition to evidentiary critique, Kniveton accuses Vincent of being ill-intentioned and of pretending to possess legal training. “You show much more Malice then true Understanding even in your own p[ro]per Science of Arms,” he chastises; “see & Observe more & correct less.” In Kniveton’s view, Vincent “often insist[s] so much & so over Violently” on his critiques of Ralph Brooke that he undermines them; moreover, he “take[s] upon [him] to be a lawyer by saying [i.e., quoting] our law books pag[es].” At times he degenerates into pure spite, using colorful insults to express his displeasure with Vincent’s methods. For example, at one point he writes, “Here your Froth of a little Wit ouerflows your shallow brain Pann for it was sufficiently scummed in the Marginal Note in the Page Precedent.”¹⁸³ Despite the fact that his critique is in written form, his insults have all the fervor of a verbal, indeed almost physical altercation. All Kniveton’s comments take place in the second person, as though the two men are quarreling face-to-face, and he characterizes Vincent’s modesty as a “Confession” of ignorance, suggesting a verbal admission. He

¹⁸² See Chapter 1, pp. 42-43.

¹⁸³ STC 24756 copy 2, sig. 2Z4v.

also describes the emotional heat of Vincent's argument in oral terms ("insisting so much & so over Violently"), invokes Vincent's sense of sight ("see & Observe more"), and summons a sensory image of his overtaxed brain as a tub of dirty water.

Kniveton's virulent rhetoric suggests that, despite his theoretical rejection of oral communication as evidence, the distinctions between spoken, written, and visual expression could be difficult to maintain in scholarly practice. This fusion of modes emerges again, albeit in a visual vein, in Le Neve's note that the first person to copy Kniveton's curmudgeonly notes was herald painter Henry Lilly. Lilly was not initially a member of the official heraldic circle; he was one of eight herald painters whom the College grudgingly gave license to paint arms as long as they operated under the heralds' purview. This regulation was largely a failure, and Lilly ran afoul of it in 1628 by joining his fellow painters in extralegal arms design.¹⁸⁴ After years of falling in and out of the College's good graces, he was eventually sent to Marshalsea prison for improperly outfitting a heraldic funeral. But the College must have considered him suitably chastened after his release, because he accompanied the York King of Arms on several county visitations and continued to paint for the College. When he became Rouge Rose Pursuivant in 1634, his reformation was complete.¹⁸⁵

Lilly's promotions confirm that the dynamic that had kept Painter-Stainers out of the business of heraldry from the late years of Elizabeth's reign through most of James' was on the decline by the mid-1630s. Although we don't know whether Le Neve's transcription occurred before or after Lilly was incorporated into the heraldic fold, its mere existence reveals an important expansion in the forms of heraldic knowledge recognized by the College. The increasing desire for arms and the resultant need of officials to grant them had widened the range of heraldic experts to

¹⁸⁴ See Chapter 1, pp. 48-50.

¹⁸⁵ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, s.v. "Lilly, Henry (1588/9–1638)," by Thomas Woodcock, accessed September 21, 2011, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/article/16660>.

include artisans like Lilly. By granting him and other painters regulatory agency over the consummate symbols of social authority, the College of Arms added a visual and material element to high-level conversations about lineage and nobility. This shift was far from smooth: as we have seen, both friendships and friction characterized intracollegiate relationships. These men's tumultuous interactions manifested themselves in a variety of textual venues, from printed attacks like Vincent's to the acerbic commentary of colleagues passing copies of his book amongst themselves. But public vitriol was often tempered by private respect. Despite their divergent backgrounds, the herald William Dugdale seems to have respected Lilly's artistic skill: he refers to him in one letter as "my old freind."¹⁸⁶

Kniveton's roving commentary is confirmation of William Sherman's observation that "the private library and the solitary scholarly reader are less representations of early modern reality" than studied fictions. Sherman argues that the intellectual "rhetoric of solitude," most famously employed by Montaigne in his *Essays*, actually contradicts the active scholastic exchanges a library often engendered.¹⁸⁷ Well-to-do Elizabethan antiquaries like John Dee and Robert Cotton kept libraries that functioned more like museums and academies than quiet nooks for private contemplation. As gathering places for political and intellectual visitors, they were the next best thing to a royal archive, which Queen Elizabeth steadfastly refused to sponsor.¹⁸⁸ The heralds had enjoyed residence and a library at Derby Place since 1565, but history had shown that it could be taken away at any time. The whimsical nature of official support, combined with the College officers' own possessiveness, thus helped the heralds' books become portable libraries. The texts served as secure spaces for opening, circulating, and preserving professional debates: while heralds could advance their arguments in print, their colleagues were free to disagree in printed or written commentary of their own. The fact

¹⁸⁶ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, s.v. "Lilly, Henry."

¹⁸⁷ William H. Sherman, "The Place of Reading in the English Renaissance: John Dee Revisited," in *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, ed. James Ravel et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 76, 72.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

that marked-up books like Kniveton's circulated among a network of antiquaries and heralds shows that, despite a pattern of monarchical indifference, a robust intellectual conversation flourished among the officers without the help of royal support or regulation. And even though the officers insulted one another's intelligence publicly in print and privately in the margins, their profession survived in part because they shared their critiques with each other and with their successors. Though heraldic historians tend to wince when describing the chaotic, partisan atmosphere that characterized the College during the "Elizabethan troubles," the fervor—and often, the antipathy—with which that conversation was conducted ensured that records of (and responses to) changing standards for heraldic distinction would be created, preserved, and circulated for centuries to come.¹⁸⁹

Amateur Writers, Anonymous Readers

The Tudor and Stuart heralds and antiquaries who aired their opinions and grievances gave voice to the priorities of their professional communities. Given that they were the most heraldically literate members of English society, it is no surprise that their texts and commentary were preserved for posterity. By contrast, we might expect to have more trouble ascertaining how anonymous readers used heraldry books, as their copies were less likely to be preserved in well-kept libraries. But the practice of commenting in heraldic treatises wasn't limited to prominent scholars and officials; a wide range of anonymous book owners also wrote in the margins of heraldic texts, often linking them to other books and current events. As a general rule, their comments tend to be less cohesive—or as Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton put it, less "goal-orientated"—than those written

¹⁸⁹ Anthony Wagner acknowledges that there was a silver lining to the discord: "The wonder is not that critical standards were so low," he writes, "but that they improved so soon and so much, both in the College of Arms and elsewhere," *Heralds of England*, 207, 205.

by antiquaries and scholars.¹⁹⁰ Nonetheless, they provide a window into the ways readers used their heraldry books: not just for personal enrichment, but also to conduct scathing social commentary.

The texts I turn to here are the wide-ranging, quarto-sized manuals written by amateur writers like Gerard Legh—men who were proximate at best to the College of Arms, although some had civic credentials. Legh’s fellows at the Inner Temple and succeeding generations of lawyers must have found *The Accedens of Armory* an excellent primer, given that it was printed six times between 1562 and 1612. Johnne Ferne, author of *The Blazon of Gentry* (1586), another Inner Temple man, served as deputy secretary to the council in the north at York and as a member of Parliament at Boroughbridge. John Bossewell (*Workes of Armorie*, 1572) had a relatively low profile as a notary public, while Edmund Bolton, author of *The Elements of Armories* (1610), was a substantially more prominent courtier, antiquary, and historian.¹⁹¹

These writers targeted gentlemen and aspirants eager to impress their fellows with their knowledge of heraldry’s minutiae. Not surprisingly, their readers seem to have been concerned with numbering lists and memorizing proper heraldic terminology: their penned responses tend to consist of corrections, restatements, and paraphrases of the printed text, underlined words and sentences, and manicules or similar symbols intended to point out noteworthy facts. Still, some readers do more than number or highlight the printed text. Certain commentators substantially altered their books’ contents by adding charts and indices, coloring in outlined coats of arms, drawing pictures, cutting out and re-pasting pages and illustrations, and combining multiple titles into a single bound text. Their unique engagements with their books convey an earnest community of readers interested in heraldry as a tool of social criticism.

¹⁹⁰ Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, “‘Studied for Action’: How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy,” *Past and Present* 129, no. 1 (1990): 30-78. This essay is the standard discussion of active early modern scholarly reading practices.

¹⁹¹ Along with the Earl of Buckingham, Bolton tried to found an *academ royal* “to be dedicated to the study of history, antiquities, heraldry, and literature in general.” The project went defunct in 1624, and Bolton never completed a history of Britain he planned to write. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, “Bolton, Edmund Mary (b. 1574/5, d. in or after 1634),” by D. R. Woolf, accessed January 31, 2014, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/article/2800>.

Heraldry manuals preserved in rare book libraries across the U.S. and Britain are packed with evidence of readerly use. The frequent appearance of heraldic rules and blazons written by hand in the margins implies that many readers used the books as study aids, and tried to memorize or at least familiarize themselves with heraldic terminology. In one copy of Legh's *Accedens of Armory*, a reader has recorded a series of directives on the blank back pages, some of them almost humorously specific. "A mullet must not be named of how many points it is except it be of 6 points, it cannot be about 7," they write. Another rule warns against impermissible combinations of charges on a shield, cautioning, "In a bendelet, you must put noe fish."¹⁹² Indeed, rule-bound accuracy seems to have been foremost in many readers' minds. In one copy of Guillim's *Display of Heraldrie*, the reader blazons illustrated coats in the left-hand margin using more succinct language than the printed text, which provides somewhat verbose guidelines. This meticulous reader adds to the printed blazons—for example, inserting the descriptor "passant" to one blazon of *lioncels* (small lions). The commentator also refers to oral representation in their notes; underneath one description of a shield depicting birds within a border, he or she writes, "You shall say { a bord. [bordure]," followed by four separate blazons for different images within borders. While the sample image is an "enaluron of birds," the reader notes that proper blazon would be "enurny of beasts" or "entoyre of any dead things"—that is, of inanimate objects [Figure 7].¹⁹³ The note-taker was apparently anxious to cultivate a familiarity with proper heraldic vocabulary.

Other readers seem to have been less interested in accurately describing shields than in mimicking the visual symbols they contained. In some cases, readers demonstrate their ability to draw shields and charges using written blazons as a guide. Others practice drawing heraldic lions and

¹⁹² Gerard Legh, *The Accedence of Armorie* (London, 1612), Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Primary Source Microfilm X3203, reel 1729:011. According to A.C. Fox Davies, "A charge half the width of a bend is a bendlet," *A Complete Guide to Heraldry* (London: T.C. & E.C. Jack, 1909), 113.

¹⁹³ John Guillim, *A Display of Heraldrie*, 3rd ed. (London, 1632), Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Primary Source Microfilm X3203, reel 990.

leopards, as one mid-seventeenth century reader does throughout a copy of Guillim's *Display of Heraldrie* [Figure 8].¹⁹⁴ Much like pupils today, some students of heraldry probably enjoyed the pictures more than the text itself, leading them to doodle in their books. In one Huntington copy of Henry Peacham's *The Compleat Gentleman*—a primer for well-to-do young men that includes sections on heraldic identification—a mischievous (or perhaps bored?) reader has drawn myriad human forms, calling to mind the playful medieval illustrations Michael Camille discusses in *Image on the Edge*.¹⁹⁵ Some readers clearly focused more on heraldry's visual appeal than its procedural and linguistic technicalities.

Coats of arms, particularly noble ones, were aesthetically engaging and often complex. Consequently, many heraldry books feature only blank outlines of arms, since printing detailed designs was difficult. Some artistic readers used the accompanying text as a guide to draw, or *trick*, the charges in themselves [Figure 9].¹⁹⁶ Even fully printed coats appeared in black and white rather than color, so in some copies, a reader or professional painter has painted the engraved coats with the designated tinctures, making the books both beautiful and whimsical. It is difficult to determine whether the color in a given book was enhanced by its owner or whether a local painter was commissioned to do the work, but clues may be found in the books whose coloration is incomplete.¹⁹⁷ In one Folger copy of Legh's *Accedence of Armory*, all the colors except for *argent* (silver) and *azure*

¹⁹⁴ John Guillim, *A Display of Heraldrie*, 4th ed. (London, 1660), Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Primary Source Microfilm X440, reel 2656.

¹⁹⁵ Henry Peacham, *The Compleat Gentleman* (London, 1634), Huntington MS 600720. One page in this copy of Peacham's book features a hand holding a large mug or lantern. On another, a pair of legs emerges from the left-hand margin, as though a small fellow living between the pages has taken a tumble off of them. The reference is to Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004).

¹⁹⁶ Ralph Brooke, *A catalogue and succession of the kings, princes, dukes, marquesses, earles, and viscounts of this realme of England, since the Norman Conquest, to this present year, 1619* (London, 1619), STC 3832 copy 2, Folger copy cs275.

¹⁹⁷ While intaglio printing is identifiable by patterns in the color, is difficult to distinguish relief, stenciled, and printed images from hand-colored ones. See Bamber Gascoigne, *How to Identify Prints* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1986), 64a-d. According to Dr. Erin Blake, Curator of Art & Special Collections at the Folger Library, "Generally, stencil color will be 'flatter' looking (because it was applied with a broad brush or dabber) while hand-color will look more 'lively' (because a smaller brush was used, brushstrokes are more likely to swirl the pigment around a bit)." She also writes, "Professional coloring happened both before and after sale, and to different degrees (a few highlights or outline color being less expensive than full coloring). I think it's reasonable to assume that when coloring stops part-way through a volume, it was an amateur job," personal electronic communication, September 30, 2013.

(blue) have been filled in throughout the entire book [Figure 10].¹⁹⁸ In another book, all the shields, even those lacking color specifications, are painted—up until page 34, when blue (*azure*) completely disappears but even miniscule sections of *or* and *gules* (red) receive their proper hues.¹⁹⁹ These patterns suggest that the owners of heraldry books enjoyed partaking in a grown-up version of paint-by-number. They probably had limited ingredients for mixing heraldic tinctures, yet they still made an effort to embellish their books using the colors they had on hand.

While some readers demonstrated their concern for heraldic tradition through commentary and illustrations, others went further by making changes to a manual's format, or even by creating their own. In one manuscript, the text's creator lays out a basic table of contents—"The Armes of the Cities of England, The Armes of ye Gentry of Every shire, The Armes of ye Corporations of England wth the companies of London"—and then writes out each section alphabetically, blazoning each gentle individual's coat of arms using heraldic terminology. The compiler also draws small illustrations instead of blazoning some symbols. He or she may be using the images as shorthand, or alternatively, acknowledging an inability to properly identify the images using heraldic vocabulary [Figure 11]. Finally, he or she has cut up and pasted into the book a broadside sheet depicting the arms of all of London's guilds. Benjamin Wright's magnificently illustrated 1596 broadside, "The Arms of All the Cheife Corporat[i]ons of London," has been chopped up and pasted onto the final pages of the book, and someone has colored in the arms of the black-and-white illustrations [Figure 12].²⁰⁰

Theorizing book-cutting as a reading strategy, Juliet Fleming notes that librarians and archivists are sometimes at a loss to categorize "hybrid" books like this one. Such books are difficult

¹⁹⁸ STC 3832 copy 2.

¹⁹⁹ STC 15391 copy 2, Folger copy HH132/1.

²⁰⁰ *A Booke of Armes whearein firste are sett the Armes of all the citties of Englande secondlye the Armes of the gentlemen of every shire and lastlye the Armes of all the chiefe corporations of Englande wth the companyes of London*, HM 37538, Huntington Library, Pasadena, CA.

to categorize and shelve, since early readers have so heavily altered their initial forms. However disconcerting these specimens may be to modern curators and researchers, Fleming explains that such addition and deletion was quite common in the medieval and early modern periods:

Fifteenth-, sixteenth-, and seventeenth-century readers cut and pasted books...to remove newly proscribed material from prayerbooks and primers or to censor material found to be personally offensive; to expand and embellish devotional and other books; to create devotional objects; to obviate the labor of copying in the production of miscellanies, commonplace books, and other compilations; to reformat texts in order to rationalize the material they contained; to provide room for marginal or other commentaries; and to illustrate or embellish presentation and other manuscripts with motifs cut from printed sources.²⁰¹

Despite the abundance of editorial prefaces expressing anxiety that readers will misread or misuse the text at hand, evidence exists that authors and publishers—who were, of course, readers themselves—actually took readers’ habits into account when producing their texts. In 1640, John Raworth printed an addendum called “A Most Exact Alphabetical Table, For the More Speedy Finding Out of All Their Names and Surnames, Whose Coat-Armes Are Contained in Guillim his Display of Heraldry.”²⁰² The index would allow readers to skip the book’s initial heraldry primer and proceed directly to the arms of specific noble families. Even more fascinating is a note printed in Edmund Bolton’s *The Elements of Armories*. One section opens with Sir Eustace, one of the talkative knights, about to embark on a description of proper positioning in blazonry, and he has a novel method in mind. “Concerning *Position*,” he says, “it shall suffice (instead of all other demonstrations) to giue you the vse, and admirable effects thereof in a little moouable instrument of mine owne devise.” The five illustrations that follow his announcement show *cinquefoils* (heraldic charges that

²⁰¹ Juliet Fleming, “Afterword,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (September 2010): 543-52, p. 546. At the time, an essay by Adam Smyth, which describes a miscellany book created by Sir John Gibson between 1655 and 1670, was the sole published study to take seriously the practice of book-cutting. Notably for my study, along with sermons, poems, copied passages, recipes, and sketches, the miscellany includes pictures of heraldic shields. See Adam Smyth, “‘Rend and teare in peeces’: Textual Fragmentation in Seventeenth Century England,” *The Seventeenth Century* 19 (2004): 36-52; and “‘Shreds of holinesse’: George Herbert, Little Gidding, and Cutting Up Texts in Early Modern England,” *English Literary Renaissance* 42, no. 3 (Autumn 2012): 452-81.

²⁰² One copy at the Folger—STC 23633a.5, Folger copy 10/31/38.2—is bound with a copy of Guillim’s book, STC 12503.

resemble flowers with five petals) on a field, each in different arrangement [Figure 13]. A brief directive accompanies each shield illustration:

Open, or display the Instrument one way, and it produceth five *Cinque foiles* in *Crosse*. Open, or display it another way, and they present five *cinquefoils* in *Saltoir*. Mooue them clozed, and without displaying, if toward the *fesse-point* they tender to you three *cinquefoils* in *fesse*: Shift their station from thence upward into the dexter obliquity they are three *cinquefoils* *Bend*. Bring it about to a *perpendicular* position they are in *pale*. And yet a little farther into the *sinister point*, we are lastly afforded three *cinquefoils* in *bend sinister*.²⁰³

This page was indeed meant to include a moveable part. Bolton's device is an example of a *volvelle*, a moving dial or wheel. Some *volvelles* were flaps glued onto the page by printshop workers; others were do-it-yourself models, which readers could cut out and sew on themselves.²⁰⁴ Bolton's invention seems to have been an instance of the latter, as no evidence of a flap exists on the relevant pages. While the shield printed in books at the University of Michigan and Newberry Libraries remains blank, in several Folger Library copies, the former owners have sewn in the two pieces of the *volvelle* as directed.²⁰⁵ Readers dedicated to educating themselves in heraldic minutiae must have enjoyed it as an opportunity to cut up their books and play with heraldry's visual, not just its linguistic, possibilities.

Heraldry book owners organized, embellished, co-bound, and cut up pre-existing texts. Like the heralds, they also added their own notes and opinions in the margins. In fact, some readers took on actively interpretive roles—if not with the same erudition as scholarly readers, then at least with similar zeal. Near the end of another copy of Bolton's *Elements of Armories*, the author provides banner-like tables that illustrate three other heraldic authors' opinions on the precedence of blazoning colors. The diligent reader has colored in the tables using the printed letter abbreviations as a guide; in the margin, he or she has written, "Vide fferne his glory of generosity. p. 263. and p.

²⁰³ Bolton, *The Elements of Armories*, sig. 2C3v.

²⁰⁴ Beinecke Library, "Renaissance Pop-Ups: Interactive Books at the Beinecke Library: 1474-1677" (Yale University, November 2003), accessed March 24, 2014, <http://interactive-prints.com/Exhibitions/Pop-Ups%20brochure.pdf>.

²⁰⁵ STC 3220 copy 1, Folger copy HH31/3.3; STC 3220 copy 2, Folger copy cs61.

257. and Guillim his display of Heraldry p. 19.”²⁰⁶ The level of detail in this single margin note is impressive: apparently the reader has at hand copies of heraldic books by John Ferne and John Guillim. This commentator seems to have cross-referenced while they read, confirming the scholarship of one author by consulting the work of several others. Some readers made this process easier by binding multiple heraldry books together. In one case, three small quartos—Bossewell’s *Works of Armorie*, Legh’s *Accedence of Armorie*, and Bolton’s *Elements of Armories*—have been bound with one cover and given the title “Work of Armory,” making the trio of texts appear to be a single authoritative work.²⁰⁷

Readerly cross-referencing sometimes led to correction, especially when it came to genealogical facts. Thomas Milles’ massive tome *A Catalogue of Honor* is an expensive 1610 book that illustrates the heraldry of English and Scottish kings and nobility, as well as Welsh nobles and their descendants.²⁰⁸ One copy features two small yet significant notes that appear to have been made by an early modern reader. Using a neat hand, the reader only adds information, but also corrects a mistake in the text—impressively, without the assistance of the errata list that normally guides readers’ emendations of ubiquitous misprints. In Milles’ entries on the Cecil family, he records the lineage of Thomas Cecil by listing his wife, Dorothy, along with the couple’s children. The name of their daughter Elizabeth is accompanied by the adjective “married.” To this brief note, the conscientious pencil-wielding reader has added the detail “to Sir Edward Coke.” Several names later, the printed text proclaims that Cecil’s daughter Frances was “wife to Richard Tufton, knight.” Here

²⁰⁶ Bolton, *The Elements of Armories*, sig. S4r.

²⁰⁷ STC 3394 copy 2, STC 15392 copy 2, STC 3220 copy 1; Folger copies HH29/15, HH31/3.2, HH31/3.3. According to Georgianna Ziegler, head of reference at the Folger Library, the binding and binder’s mark date from the seventeenth century, so the operation was likely requested by the owner rather than performed by a librarian at a later date. Three inscriptions on the front flyleaf read “Sir William Monson,” the name of a naval officer who also owned several other texts in the Folger collection, including Somerset Herald John Philipot’s *A Perfect Collection or Catalogue of All Knights Batchelours Made by King James Since His Coming to the Crown of England* (London, 1660).

²⁰⁸ Thomas Milles, *The Catalogue of Honor, or, Treasury of True Nobility, Peculiar and Proper to the Isle of Great Britaine* (London, 1610), CS 420 M65, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

again, the reader has intervened, crossing out the name “Richard” and replacing it with “Nicholas.”²⁰⁹

Both of the reader’s fixes are correct, and though they seem minimal, these tiny changes to the text are actually quite suggestive. This vigilant early reader of Milles’ *Catalogue* clearly possessed a historical familiarity that was not only detailed, but up-to-date. The note that Elizabeth Cecil had married Sir Edward Coke shows that he or she had the most current information, as Coke was Cecil’s *second* husband; she married him after the death of her first husband, William Hatton, in 1597.²¹⁰ The reader may have consulted another author’s account in order to make the change—evidence, perhaps, that he or she owned multiple history books and was committed to adjudicating between them.

It is also possible that the reader was familiar enough with the Cecils’ history to make the changes from personal acquaintance or memory. Sir Edward Coke’s marriage to Elizabeth Hatton was notoriously tempestuous, and its major events had occurred not long before the *Catalogue*’s publication. Lady Hatton, who never adopted Coke’s surname as her own, took her husband to court in 1617 to protest his seizure of her first husband’s assets; she continued the suit after Coke’s death in 1634. Also in 1617, Coke arranged their daughter Frances’ marriage to Sir John Villiers without consulting either Frances or his wife. The decision angered Lady Hatton—not to mention Frances, who carried on an adulterous affair throughout her marriage. In any case, the reader’s correction is clearly not the result of Milles’ belated editorial precision. The list of errata printed in the back of the *Catalogue* fails to mention either mistake, although it corrects a different error on the same page.²¹¹ Milles’ reader thus seems to have undertaken an independent, if incomplete, editing

²⁰⁹ Sig. 3S5r.

²¹⁰ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, s.v. “Hatton, Elizabeth, Lady Hatton [other married name Elizabeth Coke, Lady Coke] (1578–1646),” by Kate Aughterson, accessed December 12, 2009, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/article/68059>.

²¹¹ Sig. 6B4r. The errata list’s only correction for p. 495 is to “read Harsheath for Hounslow” in one of the descriptions.

process. Though he or she fails to mark any of Milles' printed corrections, in this unprompted change, the reader takes to heart the author's closing request that "All such other Errors and mistakings as shall fall out to be found; the Learned—modest Reader, will be pleased to correct with his Pen."

The sagas of courtly celebrities apparently held prominent places in recent historical memory, as indicated by another seventeenth-century reader's blunt opinions about courtiers in a 1622 copy of Ralph Brooke's *A Catalogue of the Succession of the Kings, Princes, Dukes, Marquesses, Earles and Viscounts of this Realme of England since the Norman Conquest*. The reader's remarks reveal their opinionated perspective on the lives—and in particular the rumored indiscretions—of several well-to-do court figures.²¹² In Brooke's brief biographical entry for Sir John Villiers, he explains that Villiers married Frances, daughter of Coke, the renowned knight and "sometime Lord chiefe Iustice of the Kings Bench, and now one of his Maiesties most Honourable Priuie Councell, 1621." Though the entry, like the others in the book, is meant to be a succinct portrait of Villiers' respectable lineage, the reader adds a note that discredits Frances' parentage. The annotator adds a note that Frances is merely the "reputed" daughter of Coke, and makes the insult more explicit at the printed entry's conclusion. Frances was not, the reader asserts, the daughter of Coke, "but was indeed a bastard, begotten before marriage, by S[i]r Robert Howard knight." The suggestion turns Coke into a cuckold and Frances' strong-willed mother into an adulteress. The insult continues in the margin, where the reader opines that Frances followed in her mother's ostensibly unfaithful footsteps: not only was Frances born out of wedlock: she also "prooued an errant whoore."²¹³

²¹² My thanks again to Heather Wolfe for dating the handwriting.

²¹³ Brooke, *A catalogue and succession of the kings, princes, dukes, marquesses, earles, and viscounts of this realme of England, since the Norman Conquest, to this present year, 1622* (London, 1622), STC (2nd ed.) 3833, *Early English Books Online*, accessed October 16, 2013, http://gateway.proquest.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99842816, sig. 2L5v.

Given the Cokes' and Hattons' tempestuous family life, the reader may indeed have meant their remarks to apply to this particular set of courtiers. Yet the mention of "Sir Robert Howard" suggests that the commenter has actually conflated two different women named Frances. Frances Howard, Countess of Somerset—not Frances Coke—was the daughter of Sir Thomas Howard, whose name the reader may have remembered incorrectly. Frances, the one-time wife of Robert Devereaux, the third earl of Essex, had been under constant attack in manuscript libels beginning in 1613. In what became a celebrity court case, Frances—who was in the midst of a public affair with Robert Carr, a favorite of King James—attempted to nullify her marriage with Essex by claiming that he was impotent. Although she won the case, popular opinion rose strongly against her, as evidenced by the many surviving manuscript ballads and libels that accuse her of promiscuity and other sexual misdeeds.²¹⁴ Then, in 1616, Howard was convicted of murdering Thomas Overbury, a onetime friend who had opposed her plan to marry Carr. Following the verdict, libels excoriating Howard became even more vicious.²¹⁵ The reader of Brooke's book has likely heard or read accounts of *this* famous Frances and seems to relish defaming her, although he or she inadvertently tarnishes the reputation of an entirely different woman in the process.²¹⁶ The marginalia in both Milles' and Brooke's *Catalogues* indicate that readers used the margins of heraldic histories to take sides in relatively recent, often scandalous social dramas, many of which involved representations of subversive female behavior. Rather than acting as vehicles for royal or courtly nostalgia, heraldry texts shaped contemporary discourse by providing symbolic and linguistic sites for acerbic social commentary.

²¹⁴ For more on the anti-Howard ballads and libels, see Andrew McRae, *Literature, Satire and the Early Stuart State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 63-64.

²¹⁵ Howard was pardoned by King James and died in 1632; see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, s.v. "Howard, Frances, countess of Somerset (1590–1632)," by Alastair Bellany, accessed February 5, 2014, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/article/53028>. For full accounts of Frances' depiction during the scandal, see Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), and David Lindley, *The Trials of Frances Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James* (London: Routledge, 1993).

²¹⁶ I hope to explore the significance of this gendered conflation and its surrounding discourses in future work.

The Evolution of Heraldic Satire

Heraldry manuals that described the arms and lineages of famous English people essentially combined education with celebrity gossip. As a result, in addition to learning heraldry's linguistic and visual rules, their readers could encounter and express strong opinions about real arms-bearing individuals. I surmise that the reader who labeled Francis Coke/Howard "an errant whoore" was likely a consumer of such libels; creative readers with a penchant for verse may even have used their heraldry texts as inspiration for satirical libels of their own. These insulting verses were usually used to attack individuals, from prominent courtiers to irritating neighbors. Historians Adam Fox and Andrew McRae have shown that such verse flourished at multiple social levels during the late Tudor and early Stuart periods.²¹⁷ Fox explains that ordinary people often composed ballads lampooning their acquaintances, but he notes the form was also "employed by those of gentle and even of aristocratic stamp," making it a genre that "defied the crude dichotomies implied by the labels 'elite' and 'popular.'"²¹⁸ McRae observes that while the formal verse satires that appeared during prior decades had been "emphatically a product of print culture," during the late Elizabethan and early Stuart eras, a new, pithier form of libel circulated in manuscript. "Though sometimes described as an 'underground' form," he notes, this genre "thrived in a literary context in which manuscript circulation was valorized by most major writers."²¹⁹ It also tended to ridicule individuals rather than groups or institutions. Conceivably, readers who made handwritten notes in heraldry books could have participated in this culture of manuscript circulation, since the content of these texts supported a similar form of social critique.

²¹⁷ Fox concentrates on songs and ballads, while McRae analyzes manuscript libels and printed pamphlets. See Fox, "Ballads, Libels and Popular Ridicule in Jacobean England," *Past and Present* 145, no. 1 (November 1994): 47-83; and McRae, *Literature, Satire and the Early Stuart State*.

²¹⁸ Fox, "Ballads, Libels and Popular Ridicule in Jacobean England," 57.

²¹⁹ McRae, *Literature, Satire and the Early Stuart State*, 33, 41.

The empirical heraldic information in heraldry texts may have proven beneficial for aspiring libelers, as well, since mock or satirical heraldic blazon was a highly efficient trope for the genre. Besides providing a standardized quasi-poetic form, it allowed a clever writer to undermine an individual's dignity by publicizing their worst characteristics. In the medieval texts discussed earlier—*The Turnament of Tottenham* and the *Canterbury Tales* sequel—mock heraldry was used primarily to deride peasant identity and manual labor. The authors of both poems portrayed true heraldry as beyond the practical reach, not to mention the comprehension, of the lower orders. But by the late sixteenth century, the rise in arms grants and concomitant expansion of heraldic literacy had led to changes in the content and form of heraldic satire; the category of undeserving coat-owners had shifted from laughable commoners to a range of depraved figures. Recognizing that real heraldic devices would only mask a bearer's faults or sins, never reveal them, libel writers retaliated by using heraldic blazon as a form of poetic attack. Its consistent, recognizable grammar and French terminology easily supported imitation; in particular, its reliance on adjectives, or *attitudes*, ending in *-ant* (e.g. *passant*, denoting the act of walking, or *guardant*, for an animal facing the spectator) inspired writers to insult their subjects using both real and fabricated heraldic positions.²²⁰ Most importantly, writers who felt heraldry's visual dignity had been compromised by its indiscriminate proliferation throughout society could still flaunt their mastery of its specialized vocabulary. Writers thus capitalized on blazon's exclusivity by pillorying various targets in manuscript and print, hoping to delight a like-minded audience with their heraldic and poetic skill.

Satirical heraldic poetry also hinted at the silent fears of some arms holders. New gentlemen—particularly those with dubious claims—worried that a herald or painter might include in their coat a visual slur, whether obvious or oblique. Some heraldry manuals claimed that

²²⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “passant, adj., n., and adv.,” A.3, and “guardant, adj. and n.,” A.2, accessed January 30, 2014, <http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/Entry/138448?redirectedFrom=passant>, and <http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/Entry/82139?redirectedFrom=guardant>.

“abatements of honour... could be added to arms by the Court of Chivalry for base behavior,” such as adultery, drunkenness, or empty boasting. In Shakespeare’s *Rape of Lucrece* (1594), Tarquin frets that evidence of his terrible deeds will graphically outlive him: “Though I die the scandal will survive / And be an eye-sore in my golden coat; / Some loathsome dash the herald will contrive / To cipher me how fondly I did dote” (204-7).²²¹ Though no real-life examples of such heraldic aspersions have been found to exist, the myth and mystery surrounding abatements persists even today.²²² And during the early modern period, gentlemen alluded to the threat of secret heraldic insults by creating mocking blazons of others, which featured blatantly offensive imagery that a herald would never use.

One mock blazon that survives in late-sixteenth century London records embodies the sort of manuscript libel that circulated among the university elite. In or around 1580, the brothers John and Lawrence Dutton, players in the Earl of Warwick’s drama company, were looking to improve their fortunes; they quit acting for Warwick and took up as players for the Earl of Oxford.²²³ At the time of their transfer to Oxford’s troupe, Lawrence had already switched his dramatic allegiances once; he had been an actor for the Earl of Lincoln before moving over to the Earl of Warwick’s men. Though such transfers were quite common, records suggest that the Dutton brothers became notorious for other reasons. Around the time of Lawrence’s initial move, records show he was involved in a physical fight with residents at the Inns of Court, though the reasons for the dispute

²²¹ William Shakespeare, *The Rape of Lucrece*, in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd ed., ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 1819. For discussions of the heraldic and blazoning discourses that structure *Lucrece*, see Nancy J. Vickers, “This Heraldry in Lucrece’s Face,” *Poetics Today* 6, nos. 1-2 (1985): 171-84; and Margaret Rice Vasileiou, “Violence, Visual Metaphor, and the ‘True’ Lucrece,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 51, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 47-63.

²²² Thomas Woodcock and John Martin Robinson, *The Oxford Guide to Heraldry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 68.

²²³ William Ingram, “Laurence Dutton, Stage Player: Missing and Presumed Lost,” in *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, vol. 14, ed. John Pitcher (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2001), 124-25; Edwin Nungezer, *A Dictionary of Actors And of Other Persons Associated With the Public Representation of Plays In England Before 1642* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1929), 123.

have been lost.²²⁴ Like many actors, they were both members of a trade company, the Weavers. Pursuing multiple occupations was standard practice among actors, but the Duttons' acquaintances apparently disapproved of their various enterprises. Lawrence reportedly kept a brothel at which he availed customers of his wife's sexual services, and records from the Court of Exchequer Special Commissions suggest he may have been involved in illegal money-changing activities.²²⁵ He would eventually go to prison for defaulting on a loan, jump bail, and leave his brother to pay his debts.²²⁶

An early twentieth-century critic notes, "Judging from their frequent shifting from one company to another, we may assume that the Duttons...were of an unstable temperament";²²⁷ though such behavior was far from unheard of, the brothers' contemporaries seem to have felt it was unjustified. The Duttons were apparently infamous enough in local circles to provoke documented public disapproval. In *The Elizabethan Stage*, E.K. Chambers reproduces a manuscript concerning the Duttons preserved in a nineteenth-century compilation. The manuscript notes that the Duttons had "forsaken" the Earl of Warwick for Oxford, and although they "wrot themselves his COMOEDIANS," "certayne Gentlemen altered [the name to] CAMOELIANS." The Duttons, predictably "angry with that, compared themselves to any gentlemen." Their assertion was seized upon by an anonymous critic or critics, who devised a mock coat for the brothers. The device, blazoned in ballad form, is full of gloriously vivid imagery—at turns violent, absurd, and scatological. The first two stanzas read as follows:

The fyeld, a fart durty, a gybbet crosse-corded,
A dauncing Dame Flurty of all men abhorred
A lyther lad scampant, a roge in his ragges,
A whore that is rampant, astryde wyth her legges,
A woodcocke displayed, a calfe and a shepe,
A bitch that is splayed, a domouse asleepe;

²²⁴ E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923), 97-8.

²²⁵ Ingram, "Laurence Dutton, Stage Player," 124-25.

²²⁶ David Kathman, "Grocers, Goldsmiths, and Drapers: Freeman and Apprentices in the Elizabethan Theater," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 25, and Ingram, "Laurence Dutton, Stage Player," 125.

²²⁷ Nungezer, *A Dictionary of Actors*, 124.

A vyper in stynch, la part de la drut,
Spell backwarde this Frenche and cracke me that nut.

Parcy per pillery, perced with a rope,
To slythe the more lytherly anynted with sope;
A coxcombe crosbate in token of witte,
Two eares perforate, a nose wythe slytte.
Three nettles resplendent, three owles, three swallowes,
Three mynstrellmen pendent on three payre of gallowes,
Further sufficiently placed in them
A knaves head, for a difference from all honest men.²²⁸

We have no way of knowing who originally composed the Dutton verses. Neither the original source, nor the compiler of *Reliquae Antiquae*, nor Chambers identify the gossipy source of the manuscript. The poem seems to fall into a category of university-based libel McRae identifies: it is anonymous; it has been preserved in manuscript rather than in print; and even though its rhyming form could easily be sung or recited, it wasn't necessarily intended to circulate among the general public.²²⁹ Perhaps the writer knew the Duttons, or had been personally wronged by them. Given Lawrence's alleged physical altercation with members of the Inns of Court, one of the affronted young lawyers may have felt the safest mode of retribution was a penned insult.

²²⁸ Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, vol. 2, 98. Ingram briefly mentions the satirical ballad in his essay but does not discuss it in detail, 124. The remainder of the poem proceeds as follows:

*The wreate is a chayne of chaungeable red,
To show they ar vayne and fickle of bead;
The creste is a lastrylle whose fethers ar blen,
In sign that these fydlers will never be tren;
Whereon is placed the horne of a gote,
Because they ar chast, to this is theyr lotte,
For their bravery, indented and parted,
And for their knavery innebulated.
Mantled lowsy, with doubled drynke,
Their ancient house is called the Clynce;
Thys Posy they beare over the whole earthe,
Wylt please you to have a fyt of our mirthe?
But reason it is, and heraultes allowe welle,
That fidlers should beare their armes in a towelle.*

²²⁹ McRae writes, "The construction of libels in song and ballad forms may in many instances have facilitated oral circulation; however, this need not mean that authors were directing their work principally at those of low degree," in *Literature, Satire and the Early Stuart State*, 44-45. Fox also explains that ballad authorship can be difficult to determine: many ballads were created and dictated for transcription by people who lacked writing skills; Fox, "Ballads, Libels and Popular Ridicule in Jacobean England," 58-60.

The verses do more than merely draw upon the language of blazon: they smartly parody it, suggesting the author may have learned rules and terminology from books like Legh's *Accedens of Armory* or Ferne's *Blazon of Gentry*. Emulating a proper blazon, the poet begins by describing the *field*—how a fart is illustrated, we can only guess—and then moves to the major *charges* or figures on the shield. In addition to the image of the gybbet (gallows), the first stanza features a cast of unsavory characters, including a wicked lad, a rogue, and multiple unseemly ladies—a “dauncing Dame Flurty” and “a whore that is rampant.” Readers unfamiliar with the term *rampant* may be helped along by the phrase “astryde with her legges,” but a lewd picture rather than a strictly accurate blazon was undoubtedly the point; “a bitch that is splayed” has the same effect. Other terms are nonce-words: “cross-corded,” “crosbate,” and “perforate” are all comprehensible as adjectives. The animals in the poem, rather than noble heraldic beasts, are symbols of treachery and stupidity: woodcocks are easily duped; vipers are evil; calves, sheep, and owls are notoriously simple. The poem also employs synaesthesia, transcending the realms of the textual and visual with creative sensory imagery. It evokes foul smells, particularly excremental ones—“a fart durty” and “la part de la drut” (“turd” spelled backwards), emanating from the “vyper in stynche”—and efficiently narrates the men’s uncouth actions and appearances, accusing them of robbery and pillage with “Parcy per pillery” as well as lice infestation and intoxication (“Mantled lowsy, with doubled drynke”).

Like medieval heraldic satire, this poem uses heraldry as an essentializing sign system, assigning the Duttons a mock coat that directly corresponds to their reputed undesirable character. But unlike earlier poems, it self-consciously perverts the ideology and poetic form of blazon in order to attack specific people. The author “grants” the coat to real London residents whom readers or listeners might have personally encountered; readers aware of the Duttons’ claim to resemble “any gentlemen” would understand the mock coat as a direct response. At the same time, the writer imposes a degree of order on the Duttons’ disorderly actions by heraldically listing their faults, thus

confining them within a framework created by gentlemen and circulated within an elite literary coterie. Its perversion of a heraldic device becomes a particularly condescending insult in the hands of the Duttons' social superiors, some of whom probably bore coats themselves. Although the brothers' behavior confounded and angered those around them, by comically blazoning their sins, the poem renders them grotesquely aberrant, innocuous, and laughable. The poem's malicious tone and graphic content are characteristic of the genre. As McRae observes, "although libellers are commonly motivated by a profound moralism...they participate in a poetics of rhetorical excess and violent contestation, committed to acts of degradation rather than discrimination."²³⁰

While anonymous libel was popular among the university set, heralds and career writers were happy to take credit for their printed satires. In 1587, the junior herald William Segar dedicated a poem to Queen Elizabeth that used heraldic attitudes to critique Catholic perfidy. Published as "A Blazon of Papistes," his verses ridicule nine types of Catholics, whom he identifies using a mix of real and fictional heraldic labels, from "A Papist Couchant" and "Gardant" (actual blazoning terms) to "A Papist Seminant" (a parodic one).²³¹ A decade later, Thomas Dekker, hoping to capitalize on anti-Catholic sentiment following the Gunpowder Plot, borrowed Segar's conceit in "The Double PP: A Papist in Armes" (1606).²³² Dekker's pamphlet essentially reproduces Segar's original poem, but he adds additional stanzas and a tenth category of Catholic ("A Papist Umbreant"), as well as two additional poems.

Segar's "Papist Couchant," like a crouching animal, "is that kinde of man / That humbly bowes and bendes at euery becke," while the Papist Rampant "is a furious Beast / That will not let to set vpon the Prince / VVith violent handes." Both Segar and Dekker's final blazons feature a violent image that seems to have been endemic to mock blazon: the subject's death by hanging.

²³⁰ McRae, *Literature, Satire and the Early Stuart State*, 53.

²³¹ William Segar, *A Blazon of Papistes* (London, 1587).

²³² F.P. Wilson first explained the source in "Dekker, Segar, and Some Others," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (May 1955): 297-300.

Here, the Jesuit meets his end as “A Papist Pendant”—a pun whose meaning was clear in context, at least for those nominally familiar with blazon. Segar writes, “For of al others of this romish race / A Papist pendant hath his duest grace,” while Dekker observes, “Yet this good turne hees sure off, when the Rest / Are all held Bad, the Pendant is the best.” The conceit was memorable enough to find its way into the memories and manuscripts of several educated readers. In *The Honestie of This Age* (1614), Barnabe Rich writes, “I remember that many yeeres sithens, I sawe a fewe printed lynes, intituled, *The Blazon of a Papist*, written by some *Herault of Armes*, that had pretily contriued a *Papist* in the compasse of *Armory*,” and proceeds to list all nine blazons.²³³ Segar’s poem appears in at least one commonplace book, as well: an anonymous mid-seventeenth century reader transcribed most of the text, including Segar’s dedication to the Queen, into a lengthy handwritten collection of poetical miscellany.²³⁴

Though language was a critical element of these satires’ memorability, their sensory images were just as important. As the above poems’ field of farts and pendant papists suggest, the ease of direct representation often inspired vulgar imagery. In 1622, John Taylor, the “Water Poet,” fully exploited heraldry’s scandalous potential by using heraldic language in his pamphlet poem *A Common Whore*.²³⁵ Though the poem ostensibly decries the qualities and behavior of prostitutes and their masters, its primary purpose seems to be titillating its readers with misogynistic imagery, including a graphic blazon. Taylor insists that “Women haue beene plagued in / The bottomlesse Abyesse of” prostitution throughout human history, and as a result, “there are examples of [whores] infinite”—not just the rampant variety described in the Dutton poem. These women’s sexual abundance necessitates some form of symbolic ordering, and heraldic imagery provides him with precisely such a system. He writes,

²³³ Wilson, “Dekker, Segar, and Some Others,” 297-98.

²³⁴ *Poetical Miscellany*, Curteis manuscript (c. 1630), Folger ms V.a.345, Folger copy cs452, pp. 96-98.

²³⁵ John Taylor, *A Common Whore with all these Graces Grav'd* (London, 1622). I am grateful to my colleague, Stephen Spiess, for alerting me to the heraldic passage in this poem and discussing its significance with me.

But as there's wondrous difference in mens meat,
 So is the ods [kinds] of Whores exceeding great:
 Some *Rampant*, & some *Couchant*, and some *Passant*,
 Some *Guardant*, & some *Dormant*, & some *Cressant*.
 Some *Pendant*, some (a Pox on't) but the best on't,
 A priuate Whore, trades safely, there's the iest on't.

Taylor uses heraldry's language and imagery as forms of enclosure, arranging categories of sexually aggressive women within static rhetorical and visual tableaux.²³⁶ The words *rampant*, *couchant*, *passant*, *guardant*, and *dormant* are real heraldic positions (e.g., walking, looking at the viewer, reclining), while *pendant* (hanging) and *cressant* are concocted adjectives.²³⁷ These terms summon images of heraldic beasts in the minds of readers, who can then mentally substitute scantily clad women posed in the designated positions, as well as a variety of others. Characterized as heraldic charges, the women become suggestive decorations among which men can choose based on their sexual predilections, whether they prefer the adventurous *whore passant* or her docile *dormant* counterpart. An entire category of sexually threatening women is thus confined within a linguistic and visual system controlled primarily by socially insecure men. The trope makes whores rhetorically legible, and their actions more palatable, to the educated gentlemen who are simultaneously attracted to and repulsed by women's promiscuity. The fact that Taylor's list concludes, once again, with a figure *pendant* suggests that heraldic metaphor allowed gentlemen to fantasize about a world in which troubling behavior always received the ultimate punishment.²³⁸

²³⁶ For the classic study on women's sexual and rhetorical excess, see Peter Stallybrass, "Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed," in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 123-42.

²³⁷ The word *cressant* may be a pun on Cressida, an emblem of feminine inconstancy, or on "crest," a term for hemorrhoids (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "crest, n.2.," accessed January 31, 2014, <http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/Entry/44292?rkey=8BpXwG&result=10&isAdvanced=false>). It also suggests a heraldic charge called a *crescent*, a crescent moon with the points facing upwards (s.v. "crescent, n.," 3b., accessed January 29, 2014, <http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/Entry/44267?redirectedFrom=cressant>.)

²³⁸ At the end of a colorful 1953 book of heraldry for children, the word "Finis" is accompanied by an illustration of a knight hanging on a gallows. Without any further explanation, the effect is disturbing, especially since the book's title is *Simple Heraldry, Cheerfully Illustrated*. Iain Moncrieff and Don Pottinger, *Simple Heraldry, Cheerfully Illustrated* (1953; repr., Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1956), 64.

Heraldry as Social Commentary

As Adrian Ailes has observed, from the late middle ages onward, heraldic symbols were political objects. In addition to symbolizing a person or corporate entity's identity, a coat of arms was an assertion of its bearer's public status. To display a coat of arms betokened a willingness (if not a desire) to claim a public identity, attract collective notice, and leave one's mark on present and future generations at court or in a local milieu. Especially in close-knit communities, coats of arms could be used to foster both "affection and anger" and, "as weapons of criticism, even misrepresent and distort."²³⁹ As signs specifically intended to make personal histories public, coats of arms and their accompanying vocabulary became fair game for reappropriation and, by extension, satire. Through visual and linguistic mimicry, heraldry could be used to mock social outsiders and express disapproval of nearly any person or institution.

Though many of these texts share a fondness for caustic humor, they also demonstrate a serious desire to uphold heraldic hierarchies. Most are generated by readers and writers opposed to the widespread comprehension of heraldry's mysteries and the proliferation of its imagery. They also unite exclusive groups of readers in a common cause: namely, disapproval of ignoble or dishonest behavior by peers as well as social inferiors. Complex heraldic language provided a vehicle for shaming and dishonoring, providing a corrective to what the gentle class saw as the harmful effects of heraldry's visual accessibility.

By the late sixteenth century, this distinction had been picked up by playwrights as well as poets. Near the end of Robert Wilson's 1590 comedy *The Three Ladies of London*, mock heraldry makes a brief appearance in the service of lowbrow humor. A "wise clown" named Simplicity,

²³⁹ Adrian Ailes, "Heraldry in Medieval England: Symbols of Politics and Propaganda," in *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England*, ed. Peter R. Coss and Maurice Keen (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2002), 104.

accompanied by two beggars, seek alms at the door of a conman named Fraud.²⁴⁰ Fraud gives the beggars food, but Simplicity, who holds out in hopes of a better meal, ends up receiving nothing. When Simplicity accuses Fraud of stinginess, Fraud exclaims, “By the faith of a gentleman, I have it not.” This appeal to gentility angers the clown, who spitefully informs Fraud that he has seen his coat of arms in production, and the results aren’t pretty. Though Simplicity is ostensibly an illiterate simpleton, his blazon’s sophistication rivals those created by professional satirists:

SIMPLICITY.

O sir, I saw your arms hang out of a stable-door.

FRAUD.

Indeed, my arms are at the painter’s; belike, he hung them out to dry.
I pray thee, tell me what they were, if thou canst them descry.

SIMPLICITY.

Marry, there was never a scutcheon, but there was two trees rampant,
And then over them lay a sour tree passant,
With a man like you in a green field pendant,
Having a hempen halter about his neck, with a knot under the left ear,
because you are a younger brother.
Then, sir, there stands on each side, holding up the cres’,
A worthy ostler’s hand in a dish of grease.
Besides all this, on the helmet stands the hangman’s hand,
Ready to turn the ladder, whereon your picture did stand:
Then under the helmet hung cables I like chains, and for what
they are I cannot devise,
Except it be to make you hang fast, that the crows might pick
out your eyes. (2.1634-1649)²⁴¹

Some playgoers would have understood Simplicity’s verbal portrait, but he might also have mimed or drawn the image as he spoke. *Two trees rampant* are poles standing upright, while the *sour tree passant* comprises the horizontal crossbar; *a man like you in a green field pendant* completes the picture of a man hanging on a gallows. Lest anyone miss the point, he adds a crest comprised of a hangman’s hand,

²⁴⁰ As one Wilson biographer notes, many of Wilson’s plays featured this character; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, s.v. “Wilson, Robert (d. 1600),” by David Kathman, accessed October 17, 2013, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/article/29682>.

²⁴¹ The play is divided into two acts, but the most recent editor numbers the lines continuously; see *An Edition of Robert Wilson’s Three Ladies of London and Three Lords and Three Ladies of London*, ed. H.S.D. Mithal, *The Renaissance Imagination*, vol. 36 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1988).

“ready to turn the ladder / whereon [Fraud’s] picture did stand.” The supporters—ostlers’ hands in dishes of grease—refer to Fraud’s dishonest business practices. He cheats travelers by greasing their horses’ teeth, preventing them from eating hay, and then insists their owners buy more expensive feed. The line “With a knot under the left ear, because you are a younger brother” refers to heraldic precedence: some in Wilson’s audience may have known that the eldest brother inherited a family’s ancestral coat, while younger siblings were required to *difference* their shields with a graphical alteration.²⁴²

Given the disparities in heraldic literacy during this period, Simplicity’s reprimand of Fraud is dramatic fabrication: a poor man would have been unable to marshal blazon so accurately. The audience knows that the real creator of the blazon is Wilson, a comparatively learned playwright.²⁴³ But Simplicity’s spiteful riposte to a man who holds the economic upper hand would presumably have had great satirical force for Wilson’s spectators. Though out of reach for most in the audience, onstage, heraldry’s language becomes a tool wielded by Everyman over his unjust social superior. Moreover, it has the salutary effect of exposing the bearer’s corruption—unlike a coats of arm, whose innocuous iconography reveals no trace of the bearer’s lineal gaps or personal flaws.

Wilson was far from the only playwright to take dramatic advantage of heraldry’s ubiquitous yet socially fraught possibilities. As the following chapter will show, dramatists from Wilson onward took up the possibility that ignoble people could mimic and even create original heraldic devices, whether for themselves or for others. But not all shared Wilson’s appreciation for egalitarian heraldic invention. While some celebrated the community-building potential of heraldic imagery,

²⁴² Simplicity confirms this when he refers to Fraud’s older brother Deceit, cheerfully noting, “When he is hung, you may put out the knot without fear.”

²⁴³ Kathman writes, “Thomas Lodge called [Wilson] ‘a good scholler,’ and Francis Meres referred to his ‘learning,’ but he cannot be identified with any of the Robert Wilsons who matriculated at Oxford or Cambridge in the mid-sixteenth century”; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, s.v. “Wilson, Robert.”

others insisted on maintaining its antagonistic character by expressly limiting its narratives to the elite.

FIGURES

Figure 6. Benjamin Wright, *The Armes of All the Cheife Corporat[i]ons of London* (1592)

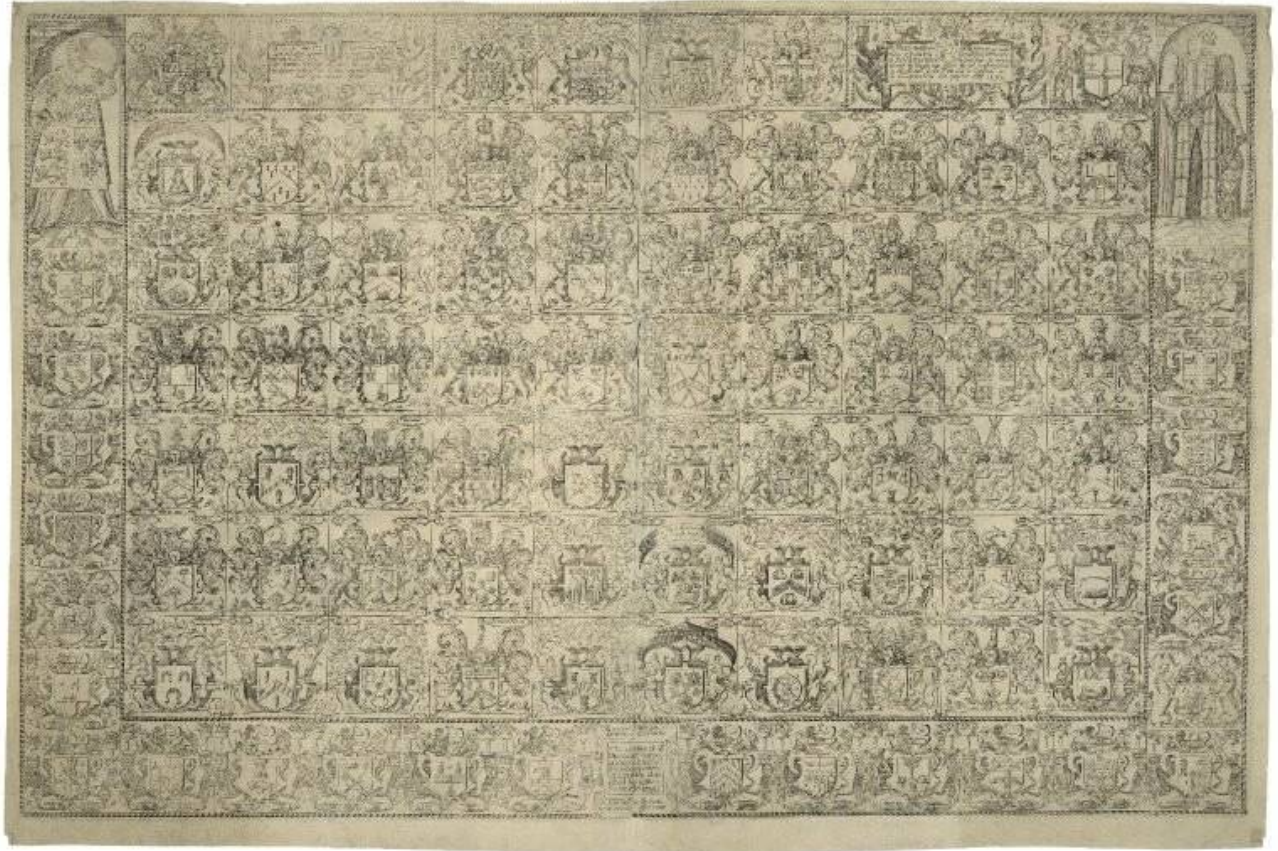


Figure 7. Detail of readers' comments in a copy of John Guillim's *A Display of Heraldrie*, 3rd edn. (London, 1632), Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Primary Source Microfilm X3203, reel 990

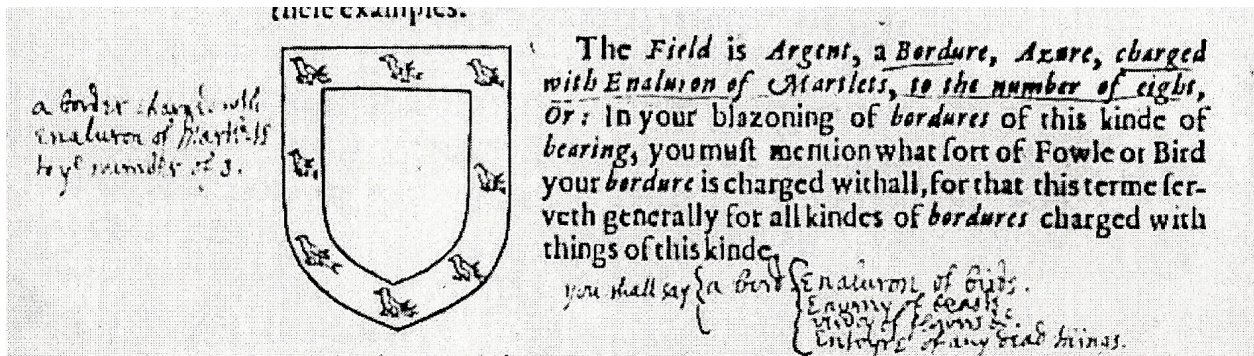


Figure 8. Reader's drawing in John Guillim, *A Display of Heraldrie*, 4th edn. (London, 1660), Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Primary Source Microfilm X440, reel 2656



Figure 9. Pages from a copy of Ralph Brooke's *Catalogue and Succession* with arms tricked in, STC 3832 copy 2, Folger copy cs275



Figure 10. Copy of Gerard Legh's *Accedence of Armorie* with partially colored arms: *or*, *sable*, *gules*, and *vert* are colored in throughout the book; *argent* and *azure* are not, STC 15391 copy 3, Folger copy cs92



Figure 11. List of gentlemen’s arms in “A Booke of Armes whearein firste are sett the Armes of all the citties of Englande secondlye the Armes of the gentlemen of every shire and lastlye the Armes of all the chiefe corporations of Englande wth the companyes of London,” Huntington ms HM37538

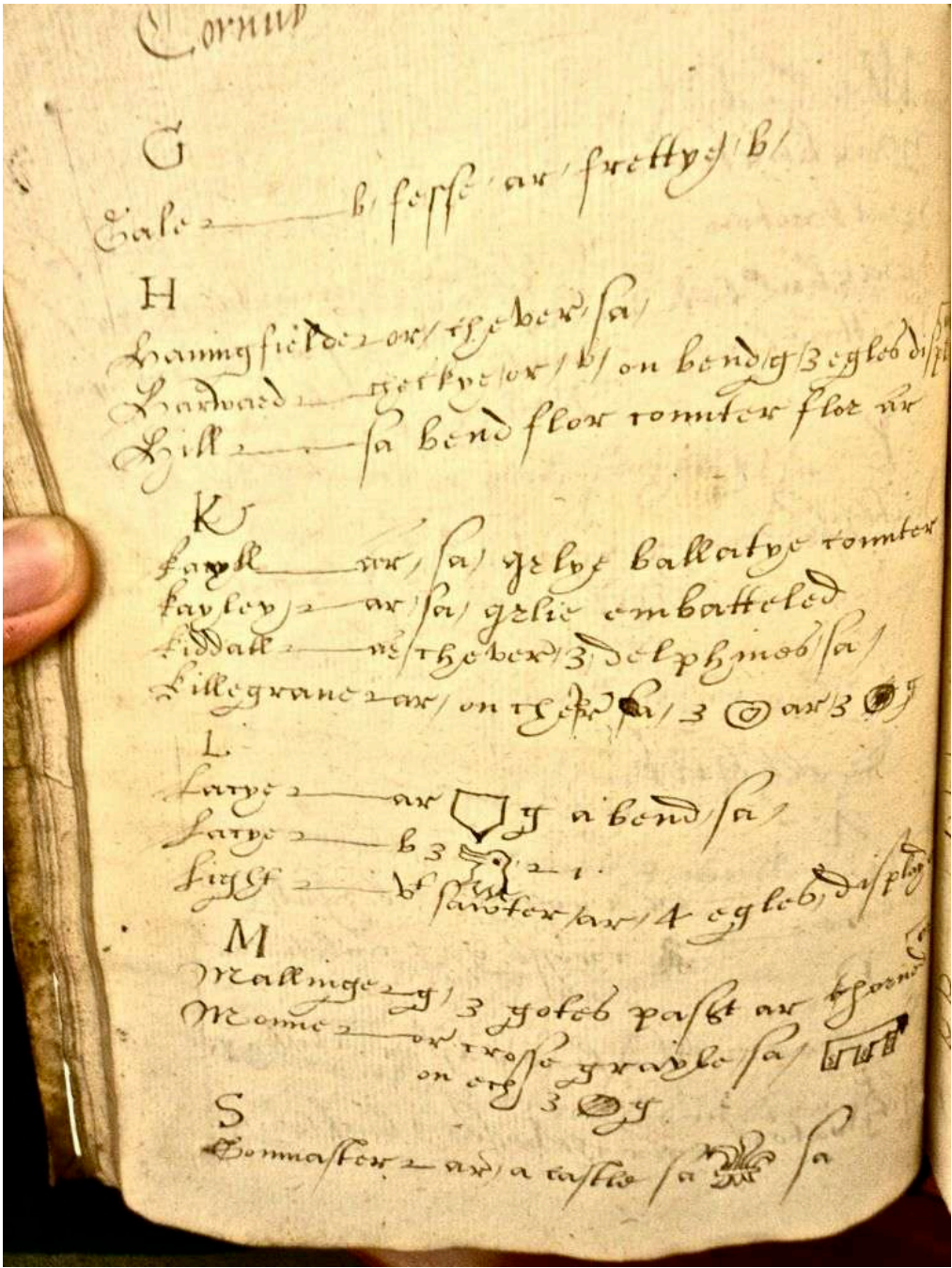
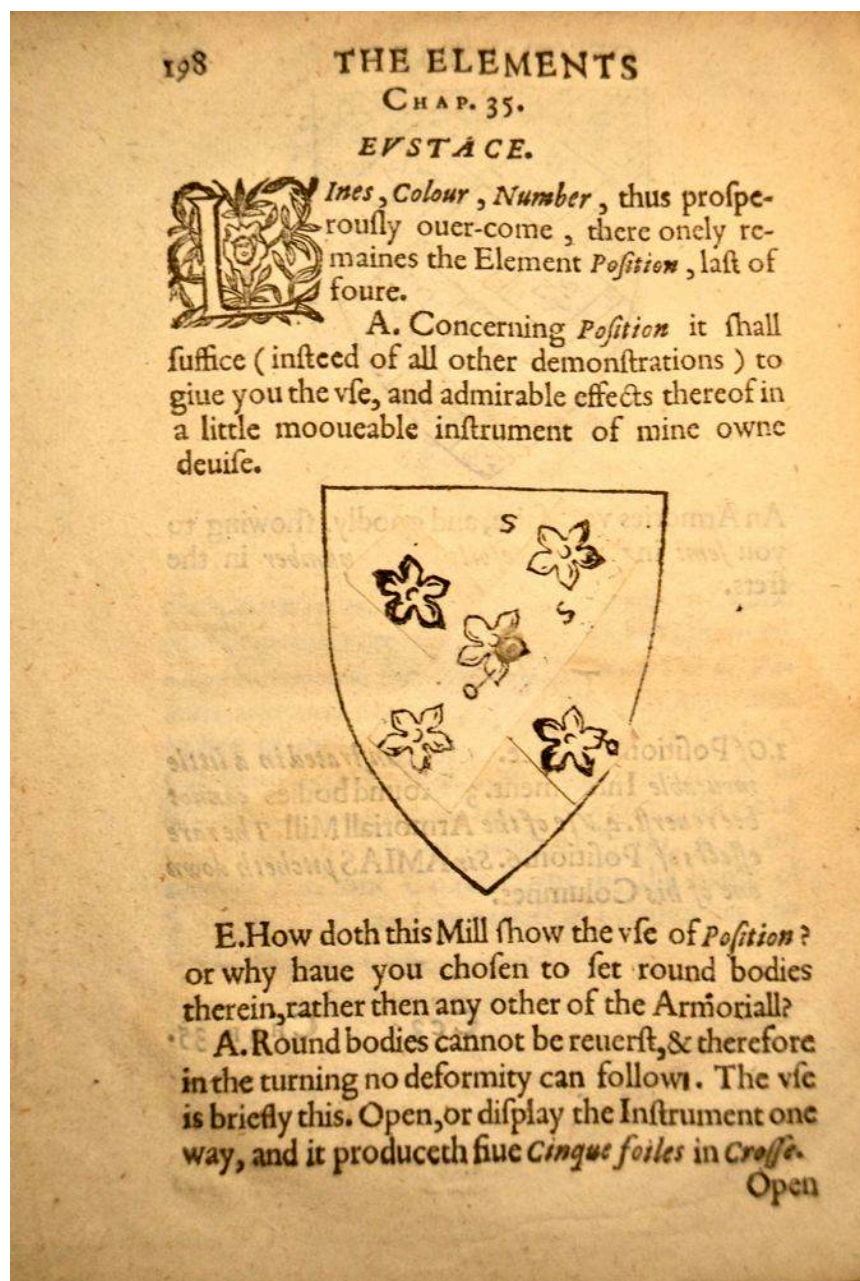


Figure 12. Images from Benjamin Wright's broadside sheet depicting the arms of the London livery companies cut up, colored and pasted into the back of Huntington ms HM37538



FIGURE 13. Volvelle in a copy of Edmund Bolton's *Elements of Armories* (1610), STC 3220 copy 2, Folger copy cs61



CHAPTER THREE

Labored Devices: Heraldic Invention and the Populuxe Theater

Heraldry's shift from wartime necessity to social asset had long been evident in the changing materials used to create coats of arms. The *ordinaries*—geometric shapes such as chevrons and bars—were no longer made of steel and wood, once used to craft and strengthen the shields of medieval soldiers. Now status symbols rather than practical supports, these once functional elements were turned into *trompe l'oeil* graphics. Each arms grant was carefully drafted by an officer of arms; the herald then either passed the document on to a painter to be inked, illustrated, and colored, or—like John Guillim, who carefully recorded recipes for heraldic tints—performed the work himself [Figure 14].²⁴⁴ The finished grant might then be displayed on the bearer's wall, while replicas of the coat of arms could adorn “moveables and immoveables, such as trunks, furniture, bed canopies, book-bindings, glass windows, seal-rings, as well as carved and painted above the entrance to [a] gentleman's residence.”²⁴⁵ People who entered an arms-bearer's social circle might encounter that person's device in the local church's stained glass windows, in stone carvings on tombs and funeral monuments, as tapestries gracing their manor-houses, or in embroidery on the liveries of their servants.

Despite forceful insistence by writers that heraldry was a natural extension of nobility, virtue, education, or all three, it became increasingly clear that coats of arms often acted like social prosthetics: they could just as often supplement a lack of these characteristics as signify their

²⁴⁴ Folger manuscript V.a.447.

²⁴⁵ Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Shakespeare: An Ungentle Life* (London: Methuen Drama, 2010), 98.

presence.²⁴⁶ As such, they could incite scorn rather than veneration. Compounding this socially fraught role, heraldry's ability to function both as the identification of nobility and the disguise of its lack made it useful as an element of theatrical performance. By the late sixteenth century, heraldic props appeared in a variety of performative contexts in and beyond the court. Chivalric impresas, or single-use shields, had long been an important component of courtly masques and tournaments; by the late sixteenth century, replicas of these devices were ubiquitous on the popular stage. Such staged courtly heraldry was an element of what Paul Yachnin calls the "populuxe" trend in early modern English theater. Historians have defined populuxe consumption in later centuries as "both a social aspiration on the part of lower-class people and a 'commoning' of the material markers of high class," a form of social leveling akin to prole drift.²⁴⁷ Yachnin applies this definition to early modern dramatic production, positing that Shakespeare's theater attracted mass audiences using courtly stories and characters. Read in this light, onstage heraldic displays could entrance viewers by providing an insider's view of elite ceremonies and their royal participants.

In an important addendum, however, Yachnin suggests that populuxe theater included a "artisanal ethos"—a "recognition of the value of theatrical labor" evident even in ostensibly

²⁴⁶ The notion of the prosthetic object has been used to conceptualize the paradoxical ways in which heraldic objects could signify to their viewers. In *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Peter Stallybrass and Ann Rosalind Jones identify the complex depiction of bodies in early modern drama, describing the trappings of the elite as prosthetics. They argue that the knightly aristocracy relied upon a Derridean "prosthetic body"—one that would survive in the memory if not in the flesh—which was "given shape by the work of the armorer and by the emblems of genealogical identity," 256. Crucially, they observe that armor itself is alienable because detachable, or "transferrable from body to body," 257. They do not claim that armor and heraldic shields are prosthetics in and of themselves; instead, they suggest that these items help create parallel "prosthetic" identities for noble bodies, a schema that produces fruitful readings of armor as material memory in *Hamlet* and *Pericles*. However, the authors fail to distinguish between armor and visually discrete genealogical symbols like heraldic shields. Armor—even decorated armor—could be worn by unrelated individuals without genealogical consequence. Conversely, a heraldic shield was inextricably tied to an individual's identity; by definition, a coat of arms belonged to one specific person. It also supplements a thing that's absent or lost, if not missing: namely, recorded proof of one's noble origins or deeds. Given these characteristics, I would argue that heraldic shields are better theorized as prosthetics than suits of armor are.

²⁴⁷ Cissie Fairchild, "The Production and Marketing of Populuxe goods in Eighteenth-Century Paris," in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1994), 228-48, esp. 228; cited in Paul Yachnin, "'The Perfection of Ten': Populuxe Art and Artisanal Value in *Troilus and Cressida*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (2005): 307.

highbrow plays like *Troilus and Cressida*.²⁴⁸ “While any ideal of labor would have been under pressure because of the Shakespearean theater’s populuxe aspirations,” Yachnin writes, “the artisanal dimension would nonetheless have been implicit in the production of the play itself, as the members of the company performed their tasks skillfully in concert with each other.”²⁴⁹ Onstage displays of courtly heraldry participated in this double-edged populuxe mode: while stage heraldry often showcased pomp and spectacle, it could also reveal heraldic imagery as a form of populist craft. Natasha Korda and Michelle Dowd argue that “work was a culturally resonant topic that profoundly shaped the plots, themes, generic structures, poetic forms, and ideological frameworks of the period’s drama, as well as the material culture of the stage, including its costumes, props, and stage furniture, which were themselves constructed by laboring hands.”²⁵⁰ These “laboring hands” included those who created shields as stage props, both for public playing companies and for singular dramatic events like masques. Playwrights and tradesmen alike were responsible for creating heraldry at court and for popular theatrical performances, and acknowledgments of this work seeped into plays otherwise preoccupied with elite ideals. The aristocratic ethos that infused much popular drama, in other words, remained “restlessly and productively at odds with commercial, popular, artisanal playmaking.”²⁵¹

The Painter-Stainers Company: Heraldic Artisans

During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, newly awarded grants of arms were produced by herald painters, a subset of craftsmen in the Painter-Stainers company. Despite the uniqueness of their occupation and the high demand for their services, little attention has been paid

²⁴⁸ Yachnin, “The Perfection of Ten,” 308, 311. In this essay, Yachnin revises an earlier claim that the development of populuxe theater was the result of structural inequalities between playgoers and the gentry they sought to view and emulate; see “The Populuxe Theater,” in Anthony B. Dawson and Paul Yachnin, *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare’s England: A Collaborative Debate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 38-65.

²⁴⁹ Yachnin, “The Perfection of Ten,” 309.

²⁵⁰ Michelle M. Dowd and Natasha Korda, “Introduction: Working Subjects,” in *Working Subjects in Early Modern English Drama*, Studies in Performance and Early Modern Drama, ed. Helen Ostovich (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 3.

²⁵¹ Yachnin, “The Perfection of Ten,” 317.

to their activities or impact. Thanks to historians and literary scholars of material history, we have learned the value of studying the processes and people who produced early modern commodities, including theatrical ones.²⁵² By attending to the role of tradesmen and women in inventing and interpreting symbols of legitimacy, we can identify patterns in the individual and community relationships underlying heraldic displays.

As early as the thirteenth century, London's painters and stainers were separate, informal companies. Painters were those who colored wood, while stainers worked with cloth. The more powerful painters' guild was incorporated first; it received a grant of arms in the latter part of the fifteenth century, and it joined with the stainers shortly afterward, in 1502.²⁵³ In 1581, the Painter-Stainers received the most coveted of corporate affirmations, a charter from Queen Elizabeth. Art historian Robert Johns explains that during the Elizabethan period, members of this guild had a variety of specializations, from large-scale home decoration to miniscule, painstaking ornamentation. Tasks falling to the group's proto-interior designers ranged from "the simple rendering of walls and ceilings with a single colour to the work of more highly skilled house painters who specialized in fashionable grotesquery." Some painters were experts at mimicking the appearance of expensive materials like marble.²⁵⁴ Herald painters concentrated exclusively on creating coats of arms, while leather gilders adorned book covers with gold tooling and images of well-to-do owners' heraldic coats.

²⁵² See Dowd and Korda, *Working Subjects in Early Modern English Drama*; Korda, *Labor's Lost: Working Women on the Early Modern English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Tom Rutter, *Work and Play on the Shakespearean Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Laurie Ellinghausen, *Labor and Writing in Early Modern England, 1567-1667* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2008); David Kathman, "Grocers, Goldsmiths, and Drapers: Freemen and Apprentices in the Elizabethan Theater," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 1-49; and Ian Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

²⁵³ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "Painter-Stainer, n.," 1, accessed August 23, 2012, <http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/Entry/136089>.

²⁵⁴ Richard Johns, "Framing Richard Aggas: The Painter-Stainers' Company and the 'English School of Painters,'" *Art History* 31, no. 3 (June 2008): 328-29.

Far from being mere decorators, the Painter-Stainers were heavily involved in the economic and social politics of the period. The 1581 charter was a sign of Elizabeth's desire to limit painterly practice to an approved subset of workers.²⁵⁵ She was famously obsessed with controlling her image and quick to condemn unsatisfactory work. By 1563, some presumptuous artists had apparently gone afoul of her good graces. In a drafted proclamation from that year, she complained that a

great number of Paynters, and some Printers and gravers, have already, and doe dayly attempt to make in divers manners portraictures of hir Majestie...wherein is evidently shewn that hitherto none hath sufficiently expressed the naturall representation of hir Majesties person favor, or grace, but for the most part have also erred therein.

She added that "some coning person" of her choice would be commissioned to create "a pourtraict of hir person or visage to be participated to others for satisfaction of hir loving subjects," and so "all manner of persons in the meantime [should] forbear from paynting, graving, printing, or making of any pourtraict of hir Majestie."²⁵⁶ The proclamation was never published, but it suggests that Elizabeth's royal charter to the Painter-Stainers was a special honor: she trusted them not to overstep the strict boundaries she placed on artistic representations of her queenship.

Even given Elizabeth's vote of confidence, the Painter-Stainers' Company struggled to maintain its authority over local business. Both in London and in the counties, herald painters came into conflict with royal heralds, who tried to limit the number of painters allied with the College of Arms. By engaging in their own profitable trade, entrepreneurial painters prompted the College to issue decrees forbidding illicit arms painting. Along with this top-down discord, the Painter-Stainers also had to fight to maintain their corporate authority from the bottom up. Just as the royal heralds sought to prevent painters from usurping their professional territory, the Painter-Stainers found

²⁵⁵ Even today, the group's website notes that "Queen Elizabeth I approved of the Company because its members maintained painting standards and made sure that her image was presented in the way she wanted it." "The History of Painters' Hall," accessed August 23, 2012, <http://www.paintershall.co.uk/history>.

²⁵⁶ Quoted in *Engraving in England in the Sixteenth & Seventeenth Centuries: A Descriptive Catalogue with Introductions*, vol. 1, The Tudor Period, ed. Arthur Mayger Hind, Margery Corbett, and Michael Norton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), 10-11.

themselves trying to quash independent painters who they feared would snatch up guild members' work. In 1612, London's Court of Common Council—the ruling body of the city—published a broadside that outlined the problem and established penalties. It observed that “of late years...divers Freemen [i.e., non-guild members] of this City do daily practise, use, and exercise Painting in and about the same; neither have been brought up as Apprentices to the said Art, nor being free of the Company of *Painter-Stainers*, but of sundry other Companies of this City.” The document warned that any person practicing the trade illicitly—i.e., outside the guild's purview—would “henceforth be under the Survey and Search of the Master and Wardens of the said Company of *Painter-Stainers*.” Just as importantly, these rogue painters were prohibited from hiring apprentices unless they registered them with the guild; failing to do so would lead to a penalty of twenty pounds to be paid to the aforesaid Master and Wardens.²⁵⁷ The guild clearly considered it vital to control the education of young tradesmen, as monetary penalties were attached only to the inappropriate use of protégés rather than non-guild painting *tout court*.²⁵⁸ Like many other London guilds, the Painter-Stainers also worked with local government to enact ordinances that discouraged trade by “aliens” from France and the Netherlands, as well as by Englishmen outside the guild.²⁵⁹

The company's practical economic concerns tended to sit uneasily alongside its artistic endeavors. Painter-Stainers and their fellow tradesmen were increasingly supporting the Continental tradition of emblematic representation, albeit in uniquely English forms. Two distinct genres of European-influenced portraiture emerged in London and the provinces during the sixteenth century. The infusion of Continental artists into England introduced the far-flung counties to civic portraiture, a genre that honored and memorialized the local elite. The Painter-Stainers, including

²⁵⁷ *Commune Consilium tentum in Camera Guild-Hall Civitatis London* (London, 1612).

²⁵⁸ Though foreign workers are invisible in the text of this document, the herald-painters' worries about “freemen” and their apprentices had much to do with London's fraught immigration politics. English-born painters faced competition from the continental painters who were establishing their own artistic reputations in England. Robert Tittler, “Portraiture, Precedence and Politics Amongst the London Liveries c. 1540–1640,” *Urban History* 35, no. 3 (2008): 357.

²⁵⁹ Such undesirables escaped company fines and fees, not to mention trained large numbers of apprentices who went on to compete with company workers; Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, 131.

herald painters, did their best to take on such work in the face of European competition, creating “vernacular” portraits of local personalities. With their bright, unblended colors and two-dimensional appearance, these portraits owed a clear debt to heraldic painting. As portraiture became more commonplace in London and the provinces, its connection with heraldic occupations continued to grow. Randle Holme (1570/1-1655), master of the Chester branch of the Painter-Stainers, was the patriarch of long line of arms painters, some of whom also painted noble portraits.²⁶⁰ The most notable member of the profession was probably William Segar (1564-1633), Garter King of Arms from 1604-33; in addition to holding the highest heraldic office, he was a highly respected portrait artist who painted a bevy of prominent sitters, including the Earl of Essex, Sir Francis Drake, and Queen Elizabeth.²⁶¹

Still, most of these portraits were treated as crafts rather than works of art.²⁶² Beyond the small circle of the College of Arms and tight-knight communities of regional portrait painters, heraldic devices and portraits were not considered expressions of creative talent.²⁶³ Even the 1585 Ermine Portrait of Queen Elizabeth, which some scholars believe was painted by the herald William Segar, could be read this way: it features a recurring pattern that calls to mind a heraldic shield “engraled Ermyne” [**Figure 15 & Figure 16**].²⁶⁴ But recent critics challenge generalizations about

²⁶⁰ Robert Tittler, “Regional Portraiture and the Heraldic Connection in Tudor and Early Stuart England,” *British Art Journal* 10, no. 1 (Summer 2009): 6-7.

²⁶¹ Boris Borukhov, “Sir William Segar: Nine Additions to his Biography,” *Notes and Queries* 54, no. 3 (2007): 330.

²⁶² Tittler, “Regional Portraiture and the Heraldic Connection in Tudor and Early Stuart England,” 4.

²⁶³ This historical attitude has persisted in much contemporary literary and visual criticism of heraldic motifs. Scholars have tended to use the adjective *heraldic* to mean *flat*, and thus antonymous to the more sophisticated perspective used in Italian portrait painting. When Andrew Belsey and Catherine Belsey note that “English painters...were decidedly not working in the Italian Renaissance tradition of perspective and chiaroscuro,” they imply that English artists lacked the refinement of their Continental counterparts. Accordingly, they describe a portrait of Lady Elizabeth Pope as influenced by “the non-illusionistic ordering of heraldic shields,” a rigid schema that uses “surface geometries of quarterings and vivid color...flat, schematized and immobile”; “Icons of Divinity: Portraits of Elizabeth I,” in Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn, *Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture c. 1540–1660* (London: Reaktion Books, 1990), 18. See also Ellen Chirelstein, “Lady Elizabeth Pope: The Heraldic Body,” in *Renaissance Bodies*, 36-59.

²⁶⁴ In *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Valerie Traub argues that while “opaque and two-dimensional” portraits of the Queen enforced her (and viewers’) modesty, preventing them from “lift[ing] the body visually from the background,” they also included visual elements that metaphorically or coyly brought her sexual body and its political prowess to the fore. See Chapter 3, “The Politics of Pleasure; or,

the flatness of English art, both in portraiture and three-dimensional contexts. John Astington writes that part of the problem is scholars' constrictive definitions of early modern art. Responding to arguments positing English inferiority in this realm, he counters, "English culture throughout the sixteenth century shared fully in artistic developments elsewhere in Europe, and the view of the English as a nation of visual anorexics and Calvinist iconophobes has been much overstated by those influenced by an art history traditionally dominated by the connoisseurship of native easel painting."²⁶⁵ To challenge this view, he reminds us that Henry VIII was particularly supportive of international artistic influences: he brought Hans Holbein to England as a court artist, ordered Italian-inspired architecture at Whitehall, and commissioned court revels that featured complexly layered frames and tapestries as backdrops [**Figure 17**].²⁶⁶

Astington's revisionist account suggests that in order to properly analyze heraldic images, we need to acknowledge the interplay between various modes of artistic expression. English portraiture reduced heraldic meanings to a set of visual conventions, and they may have been largely one-dimensional rather than perspectival, but they were lively conventions. Just as importantly, the existence of a localized portrait tradition shows that a unique economy of artistic labor existed in the English provinces, particularly among those involved in heraldic trades. The portraits of local gentility and guild masters linked heraldic images to important civic and economic relationships, and showcased a branch of collective identity being continuously nurtured through artisanal labor.

Queering Queen Elizabeth," 130. For other discussions of the Ermine Portrait in particular and portraits of Elizabeth in general, see Roy Strong, *Gloriana: The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I*, 2nd ed. (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987; London: Pimlico, 2003) and *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); Graham Holderness, "Rainbow and Sword," in *Shakespeare: The Histories* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), 19-41; and Frances A. Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1975).

²⁶⁵ John H. Astington, "Best Painter's Art?: The Chronology of Theatrical Perspective" (paper circulated for the Shakespeare Association of America conference, Boston, MA, April 2012), 10-11. Astington explains that Patrick Collinson used the phrase "visual anorexics" in a lecture at the University of Reading in 1985.

²⁶⁶ Astington, "Best Painter's Art," 11. Even engraved heraldic illustrations could be impressively three-dimensional. Consider the frontispiece of Queen Elizabeth at the front of Christopher Saxton's *Atlas of the Counties of England and Wales* (London, 1579), in which she sits on a throne flanked by pillars and topped with the royal crest, all of which are engraved and painted in perspective.

While provincial artists were bringing their heraldic skills to bear on the portrait tradition, the London livery companies were featuring similar images in their professional spaces. Companies who saw their business threatened by overseas competition, inflation, and war found comfort by displaying images of past successes, and by visually linking their work and personnel with the stability of the Crown. Robert Tittler notes, “By 1611 the Grocers’ Company had hung banner portraits of Elizabeth and James I near images of some of its own heroes so as to emphasize the historic affinity of one with the other.”²⁶⁷ He argues that unlike courtiers or landed gentry, whose portraits were part of a strategy of self-fashioning, the livery portraits were less aspirational than commemorative. Again, heraldic imagery was a crucial component of the genre:

Once established as part of the celebratory vocabulary, such images became an enduring feature of the livery hall. ... The mnemonic quality of these portraits, including symbolic devices of dress and ornament—the company livery and arms especially—along with illuminating and often didactic inscriptions, allowed them very effectively to serve as ‘sites of memory.’²⁶⁸

In general, the links between heraldry and portraiture were both occupational and familial. Arms painters did not simply record and display genealogical and community histories; they also promoted these communal relationships in their own professional and personal lives. Their trade—a unique blend of artistic and manual labor—was a vital component of their collective and individual identities, and the skills they developed allowed them to take on new forms of artistic labor in the contemporary economy. Moreover, herald painters could preserve and perpetuate institutional honor by creating portraits and other images that memorialized their occupational histories.

The men who painted arms and portraits to adorn the walls of guild halls and noble households thus held a particular form of social agency: they created highly visible expressions of English social structure. Despite their status as artisans, the herald painters’ profession lifted them higher than they might otherwise reside on society’s hermeneutic pyramid. In some early modern

²⁶⁷ Tittler, “Portraiture, Precedence and Politics Amongst the London Liveries,” 357.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 355.

representations, the artist possesses a “special knowledge” that “enables him to contemplate beauty more profoundly than a world conqueror or mere courtier can.”²⁶⁹ Of course, this idealization was also easily satirized. Dumaine jokes about the notion in Shakespeare’s *Love’s Labour’s Lost* when he observes that a bumbling actor in a rustic play is “a god or a painter, for he makes faces” (5.2.643).²⁷⁰ Still, in a small but significant sense, the herald painters’ positions gave them a degree of interpretive agency—not only in the identities of their fellows, but in the public identities of people much more powerful than themselves.

Impresas as Speaking Properties

While artisans focused on developing heraldry’s visual conventions, courtiers were largely concerned with its role as a vehicle for courtly discourse. By the late sixteenth century, heraldic study had become a crucial element of a gentleman’s education. Writers on heraldry supplied an ever-expanding schema of terminology and imagery to be memorized by men whose social circles valued *sprezzatura* as much as—and sometimes more than—feats of courage. The study of heraldry perfectly encapsulated the ideal course of training in “arts and arms” for aristocrats during the early modern period. References to these twin pursuits frequently appear in drama, poetry, and prose, neither distinguishing nor equating them. A 1622 tract titled *THRIFTS EQVIPAGE: Viz. Five Diuine and Morall Meditations* recommends that young men avoid gambling and instead spend time “In Tiltting, Hunting, Armes, Arts Liberall, / And so with Piety your minds prepare.”²⁷¹ In Shakespeare’s *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (c. 1594-5), Maria refers to Longaville to as “A man of sovereign [parts, peerless]

²⁶⁹ Marguerite A. Tassi, *The Scandal of Images: Iconoclasm, Eroticism, and Painting in Early Modern English Drama* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2005), 78. Laurie Ellinghausen discusses Jonson’s *Execration Upon Vulcan* in these terms, arguing that Jonson (by way of Homer) portrays Vulcan as a respectable—but still marginal—artist-laborer. She writes, “Mythological blacksmithing captures the process by which something is forged divinely into perfect form [...] Unlike so many early modern social descriptions that posit material labor as ignoble, Homer’s massive, solid Vulcan sweats at his anvil to make objects useful to the gods—his labor at once is bodily and divine,” *Labor and Writing in Early Modern England, 1557-1667* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 71-72.

²⁷⁰ The object of Dumaine’s comment is playing the role of Hector in a performance, making the line a satirical poke at actors’ creative choices as well as a citation of the divine artist trope. William Shakespeare, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd ed., ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 243.

²⁷¹ Robert Aylett, *Thriffts equipage Viz. five diuine and morall meditations* (London, 1622), sig. D1r.

esteem'd, / Well fitted in arts, glorious in arms" (2.1.7-8), while in *Pericles* (1608), the hero calls himself "A gentleman of Tyre" with education "in arts and arms" (2.3.81-82). The trope wasn't just a literary fabrication: among elite courtiers, the distinction between artistic and armorial endeavors had begun to collapse. At royal tournaments, ambitious courtiers like the Earl of Essex could display their chivalric prowess even during peacetime. In particular, Queen Elizabeth encouraged chivalric performances by her male followers, using tournaments to consolidate her authority over the fractious English nobles while simultaneously providing propaganda for foreign visitors to report to their home countries.²⁷²

In contrast to the memorial nature of working class heraldic imagery, elite individuals used it in an aspirational mode, taking advantage of its verbal components to showcase their personal goals and desires.²⁷³ Tournaments were a particularly rich site for such individuated heraldic performance. Following a tradition that had existed since the medieval period, in addition to displaying their inherited coats of arms, knights sometimes presented impresas during a ceremony preceding a joust. Unlike the coats of arms passed down through generations, these ephemeral devices distinguished participants in a single performative event. A close cousin of the heraldic shield, the impresa was an escutcheon bearing an image accompanied by a motto. In *The Art of Poesie*, George Puttenham explains,

The Greekes call it *Emblema*, the Italiens *Impresa*, and we, a Deuice, such as a man may put into letters of gold and sende to his mistresses for a token, or cause to be embroidered in escutcheons of armes, or in any bordure of a rich garment to giue by

²⁷² Alan Young, *Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments* (London: George Philip, 1987), 35.

²⁷³ Funerals were another important site for heraldic display, but as they were under the royal heralds' purview rather than an extra-institutional expression of heraldic imagery, they are not the focus of my investigation in this chapter. A number of excellent studies on the topic exist: Mervyn James explains how funerals consolidated the deceased's identity in his survivors and descendents in "Two Tudor Funerals," Chapter 5 in *Society, Politics, and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); and Jennifer Woodward conducts a thorough exploration of the meticulous social aims of noble funerals in *The Theatre of Death: The Ritual Management of Royal Funerals in Renaissance England 1570-1625* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 1997). J.F.R. Day shows that Sidney, a popular figure, was given a funeral more appropriate to a baron than to a knight of his status; see his essay "Death Be Very Proud: Sidney, Subversion and Elizabethan Heraldic Funerals," in *Tudor Political Culture*, ed. Dale Hoak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 179-203.

his novelties maruell to the beholder.²⁷⁴

Though not identical to coats of arms or to Renaissance emblems, impresas shared a close kinship with both traditions. Robert Parker writes, “Unlike the more familiar emblem, the impresa had only two parts, the picture and the motto, while the emblem added glossing verses; it was designed to be worn” on objects like “standards, shields, brooches, helmets, or tablets as part of wars, jousts, or ‘amorous services.’” Emblems and their accompanying verses appeared primarily in books.²⁷⁵ In keeping with the heraldic tradition, impresas were associated with ideals of martial prowess. In his translation of Italian writer Paolo Giovo’s *Dialogo Dell’ Impresas Militari e Amoroze*, Samuel Daniels wrote “that impresas ‘are neuer worne but either in true or fained warre, or at Iusts, Turneis, Maskes, or at such like extrauagant shewes.”²⁷⁶ Likewise, William Camden stated that impresas should be “borne by noble and learned personages,” much like heraldic shields. However, their owners should “notifie some particular conceit of their owne”²⁷⁷—that is, their impresas should wittily express “a personal undertaking, aim, or condition”²⁷⁸ rather than cite a familial relationship.

Alan Young writes that Queen Elizabeth, the ultimate royal “beholder,” not only took up this medieval custom but made it an imperative. Every knight who jousted in a royal tourney, including the Accession Day tilts, needed to compose his own image and motto, then present them

²⁷⁴ George Puttenham, *The arte of English poesie Contrined into three booke: the first of poets and poesie, the second of proportion, the third of ornament* (London, 1589), i. In John Florio’s formulation, “impresa” could mean “attempt, enterprise, undertaking.” Later it began to refer also to emblems; then it expanded to refer to “word” or “mot,” i.e. a motto itself; eventually it could refer to a device or a jewel with a device to wear in one’s hat. D.J. Gordon, *The Renaissance Imagination: Essays and Lectures by D.J. Gordon*, ed. Steven Orgel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 16.

²⁷⁵ Robert Parker, “The Art of Sidney’s Heroic Impresas,” *English Literary Renaissance* 20, no. 3 (September 1999): 410-11.

²⁷⁶ Quoted in Young, *Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments*, 124. As Daniels’ and Puttenham’s remarks make clear, even though English painters took few lessons from Italian portraiture, in the world of impresas, as in that of emblems and masques, Italian influence was widespread.

²⁷⁷ Quoted in Young, *Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments*, 123. Eliza Fisher Laskowski questions Daniels’ insistence that masques should only be performed during wartime, noting that the entertainments staged during James’ peaceful reign included plenty of warlike imagery; “Performance, Politics, and Religion: Reconstructing Seventeenth-Century Masque” (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006), 117.

²⁷⁸ Parker, “The Art of Sidney’s Heroic Impresas,” 410.

to her in the form of an emblazoned shield.²⁷⁹ These showy, mock-chivalric performances were initially confined to Queen Elizabeth's Gentlemen Pensioners, a group of handsome court escorts. Yet noblemen increasingly offered themselves as tilers in hopes of gaining the Queen's favor.²⁸⁰ Two such strivers were Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex, and George, third Earl of Cumberland. In addition to participating in the jousts, both men commissioned paintings of themselves bedecked in tournament paraphernalia [**Figure 18 & Figure 19**]. Both portraits show the earls wearing armor and displaying lances, and Cumberland's portrait prominently features an *impresa*.²⁸¹

These courtly jousts were as much performative show as competitive event. To impress their sovereign spectators, some participants commissioned "pageant[s] which demanded dramatic action and parts spoken by several actors." A German visitor attending Elizabeth's tilts, Lupold von Wedel, wrote that some jousters had their servants "[address] the queen in well-composed verses or a ludicrous speech, making her and her ladies laugh."²⁸² Paul E.J. Hammer describes how the Earl of Essex used a brazenly self-promotional entertainment at the 1595 Accession Day tilts to demonstrate his desire to become a statesman, a performance that made him "the talk of London."²⁸³ Essex constructed his own *impresas* for this event: a confident performer, he apparently "relished the intellectual challenge of this rarefied art-form."²⁸⁴ Philip Sidney also created dozens of *impresas*, both for himself and for use in literary contexts, including the *Arcadia* (1593).²⁸⁵ Other

²⁷⁹ Young, *Tudor and Jacobean Tournaments*, 123. The shields were then hung in Whitehall and "shown to every visitor in the palace"; Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth*, 144.

²⁸⁰ Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth*, 135.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 156-59.

²⁸² "Journey through England and Scotland made by Lupold von Wedel in the years 1584 and 1585," trans. Gottfried Von Bulow, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, New series (1895) 9:258-9, quoted in Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth*, 139, 134-35.

²⁸³ Paul E.J. Hammer, *The Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics: The Political Career of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, 1585-1597* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 145, 144-47, 202-206. See also his "Upstaging the Queen: The Earl of Essex, Francis Bacon and the Accession Day Celebrations of 1595," in *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque*, ed. David Bevington and Peter Holbrook (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 41-66.

²⁸⁴ Hammer, *The Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics*, 203.

²⁸⁵ Young, "Sir Philip Sidney's Tournament *Impresas*"; Parker, "The Art of Sidney's Heroic *Impresas*."

noblemen found the task less invigorating and farmed it out to hired professionals. Shakespeare himself took on at least one such project late in his career. An entry in the accounts of the steward to the Earl of Rutland on the King's Accession Day in 1613 states, "To Mr. Shakespeare in gold about my Lord's impresa 44s.; to Richard Burbage for painting and making it, in gold 44s."²⁸⁶ Here, Shakespeare almost certainly devised the impresa's motto; it is unclear whether he or Burbage created the accompanying image, but Burbage seems to have done the work of painting it. Also during James' reign, Ben Jonson was asked by Sir Robert and Sir Henry Rich to "write graceful verses on behalf of 'two noble knights' who tender James I 'their lives, their loves, their hearts.'"²⁸⁷ Jonson found this work distasteful: he wrote several epigrams complaining about the process, as well as insulting the recipients' intelligence.²⁸⁸ The importance attached to impresas by their creators and bearers suggests that they were viewed as signs of poetic prowess.

Whether they were a knight's own brainchild or the work of a poet, impresas, miniature pageants, and other tournament verses put a certain set of elite traits—intellectual industriousness, courtly poise, and deep pockets—on full display. Performative tournament rituals were perfect showcases for these qualities, as they required participants to distinguish themselves through *sprezzatura*, the attitude of effortless success that had begun to displace qualities like athletic ability and ancient pedigree in terms of social value. As Michael Schoenfeldt writes, Castiglione and other Renaissance authors taught their readers to value—and cultivate—"an aesthetic whereby the finest work of art is produced by a labour which it at once conceals and discloses."²⁸⁹ In tournament

²⁸⁶ Charles Wilfred Scott-Giles, *Shakespeare's Heraldry* (London: J.M. Dent, 1950), 20. Katherine Duncan-Jones also refers to this transaction in *Shakespeare: An Ungentle Life*, 105.

²⁸⁷ Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth*, 138.

²⁸⁸ Epigram 29, "To Sir Annual Tilter," and Epigram 79, "To Fine Grand," in Ben Jonson, *Poems*, ed. Ian Donaldson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

²⁸⁹ Michael Schoenfeldt, "Courts and Patronage," in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 3, *The Renaissance*, ed. Glyn P. Norton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 373. Laurie Ellinghausen argues that Ben Jonson aimed for a similar effect in his poetry, writing: "When applied to authorship, the courtly notion of *sprezzatura* represents a fantasy that the composition of poetry, like the ideal courtly self, needs no process. In these terms, the opposite of *sprezzatura* would be art that *calls attention to* this process," *Labor and Writing in Early Modern England*, 69.

situations, elite courtiers could present clever impresas without revealing any assistance they may have received in creating them.

In a courtly impresa, brevity and creativity were the visible fruits of such concealed labor. The devices were intended to “giue maruell” through their “noueltie,” encapsulating a positive attribute or worthy aspiration specific to the bearer. Like emblems, they inhabited what Juliet Fleming calls “the other end of the expressive spectrum” from written texts. More than a written manuscript or printed book, the material space of a heraldic shield or an impresa “bound thought” by restricting the space available for its expression.²⁹⁰ In a knight’s presentation at a royal tournament, it determined the significance of his interaction with the monarch, as well. Without an accompanying explanation, it was difficult, if not impossible, to comprehend the intended meaning of an impresa featuring an enigmatic image and Latin motto. By encouraging the monarch to ask for an exegesis, an impresa could draw a knight briefly into the sovereign’s intimate conversational circle. Combined with an admirable performance at the joust, the interaction might help bring the knight into royal favor, potentially gaining him a favorable position or patronage at court.

Impresas thus required creative work on the part of elites and intellectuals, as well as interpretive work by their viewers. Given their visual beauty and symbolic complexity, shields and impresas made appealing props for Stuart masques as well as Elizabethan tournaments.²⁹¹ While the jousting competitions preserved the illusion of armed conflict, royal entertainments like Beaumont’s *Masque of the Inner Temple and Grey’s Inn* (1613) emphasized heraldry’s artistic and political potential even as they presented it in agonistic contexts. Beaumont’s masque, which staged a disagreement between the gods Mercury and Iris, featured pavilions “trimmed on the inside with rich Armour and Militarie furniture hanged vp as vpon the walles,” along with fifteen Olympian knights outfitted in

²⁹⁰ Juliet Fleming, *Graffiti and the Writing Arts of Early Modern England* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009), 13.

²⁹¹ So, apparently, did armor: Discussing the tilt portraits of Essex and Cumberland mentioned above, Strong observes that with a few tweaks, the men’s costume-like armor “would be suitable for an indoor masquerade,” *The Cult of Elizabeth*, 144.

beautifully heraldic fashion: the description of their armor includes elements of blazon, namely “arming doublets of Carnation satten embroidered with Blazing Starres of siluer plate, with powderings of smaller Starres betwixt.”²⁹² By contrast, the plot of Jonson’s *Masque of Blackness* (1605) explicitly eschewed conflict. His masquing ladies were initially supposed to carry shields, but he later changed their props to fans bearing hieroglyphs.²⁹³ In the notes, he wrote that he “rather chose [fans] than impresas, as well for strangeness, as relishing of antiquity, and more applying to that original doctrine of sculpture.”²⁹⁴ His explanation suggests that impresas would have been interpreted as symbols of martial action, putting them at cross-purposes with the static sculptural tableau he desired.

The Renaissance masque deployed a combination of visual and verbal spectacle in order for the court to display itself as it wished to be perceived.²⁹⁵ While public theaters depended on their audiences for profit, court entertainments were in part created by their noble and royal sponsors, some of whom would later join the performances. The Countesses of Bedford and Pembroke, for example, were both prominent patrons of royal masques, and the former eventually appeared in four of Jonson’s entertainments.²⁹⁶ Such performances were “designed not only for a particular group but for a particular production or occasion,”²⁹⁷ and many presented martial iconography to glorify the current monarch’s political achievements and aspirations. By presenting chivalric props and mock

²⁹² Francis Beaumont, *The Masque of the Inner Temple and Grayes Inne presented before his Maiestie, the Queenes Maiestie, the Prince, Count Palatine and the Lady Elizabeth their Highnesses* (London, 1613), sigs. C4v, D1r.

²⁹³ Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 19.

²⁹⁴ Ben Jonson, *The Masque of Blackness*, in *Masques of Difference: Four Court Masques*, ed. Kristen McDermott (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2007), x.

²⁹⁵ Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

²⁹⁶ David M. Bergeron, “Women as Patrons of English Renaissance Drama,” in *Patronage in the Renaissance*, ed. Guy Fitch Lyle and Stephen Orgel (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 283.

²⁹⁷ Orgel, *The Illusion of Power*, 6. In *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court*, Orgel and Roy Strong argue that inherent in a masque’s success was its spectators’ ability to recognize the distance between its spectacles and reality; at the same time, they were meant to understand and appreciate its rhetorical and symbolic import in the context of a particular occasion and its courtly setting. Others (e.g., Bevington and Holbrook in *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque*) have complicated this view by arguing that masque writers also used the mode for gentle critique.

battles to its foreign guests, as Eliza Laskowski argues, “royal entertainment became the gentler twin of warfare as an expression of royal power.”²⁹⁸ These masques could also hint to overly aggressive royal heirs like Prince Henry that they needed to balance aggression with diplomacy.²⁹⁹ As part of these symbolic shows of military and political prowess, heraldic images were used to bolster a presenter’s reputation while flattering an established or future royal patron.

Staging Shields

While references to heraldic imagery in tournaments and masques provide us with a sense of their authors’ and royal participants’ performance goals, heraldry and other trappings of knighthood also enjoyed a lively presence in popular theater. During the excavation of the Rose theater in the late 1980s, along with the remains of audience members’ snack foods and tobacco pipes, archaeologists uncovered part of a wooden shield. Scholars think it was used as a prop and then lost and covered up, perhaps during 1592 when Henslowe had the theater enlarged and the stage moved back.³⁰⁰ This is plausible, since a wide range of early modern plays call for heraldic devices either in explicit stage directions or through dialogue.³⁰¹ Dessen and Thomson’s dictionary of stage directions gives a rough sense of such devices’ formal presence. Though there is no entry for *impresa*, a *shield* is defined as “a piece of protective armor...[that] often bore an insignia or crest of the bearer’s allegiance.” The volume is necessarily selective in its lists of plays accompanying each entry, but the authors’ survey of over 22,000 stage directions in 500 plays reveals the presence of heraldic shields in a range of dramatic genres: they appear in Heywood’s *The Four Prentices of London* (1592), Marston’s *Antonio and Mellida* (1602) and *Sophonisba* (1606), and Shirley’s *The Martyred Soldier* (1618). Dessen and Thomson note that “more often the shield appears in a ceremonial context,” in which “the heraldic

²⁹⁸ Laskowski, “Performance, Politics, and Religion,” 123, 109.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 123-4.

³⁰⁰ Julian Bowsher and Pat Miller, *The Rose and the Globe—Play-Houses of Shakespeare’s Bank-Side, Southwark: Excavations 1988–90*, MOLA Monograph 48 (London: Museum of London Archaeology, 2009).

³⁰¹ Michael Hattaway, “Playhouses and Stages,” in *Elizabethan Popular Theatre: Plays in Performance* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), 34-35.

decoration is sometimes specified,” as in *The Three Lords of London*, *The Four Prentices*, *The Insatiate Countess* (between 1603-13), Middleton’s *Your Five Gallants* (1608), Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi* (1613), Fletcher’s *The Faithful Friends* (date unknown), *The Birth of Merlin* (1622), *The Thracian Wonder* (published 1661), and *The Two Noble Ladies* (1619).³⁰² Stage directions specifying the use of a “scutcheon”—another term for a ceremonial shield, sometimes associated with funerals but often used interchangeably with “impresa”—appear in *The Spanish Tragedy* (c. 1585-88), *The Four Prentices*, *Four Plays in One* (1592), *The Honest Whore Part One* (1604), and *The Fatal Dowry* (c. 1619).³⁰³

The heraldic objects and scenes in popular drama point to the highly collaborative and collective nature of theatrical labor. As Tiffany Stern explains in *Documents of Performance*, the apparatus of any given early modern play comprised myriad fragments or “patches,” including playbills, prologues, songs, and scrolls. Many of these documents were created separately from the playtext and by agents other than the playwright. Any given performance thus depended upon the work of writers, composers, scribes, prompters, and printers in addition to the playwright and the actors.³⁰⁴ We can expand Stern’s concept of a play’s constitutive “patches” beyond texts to include its heraldic stage properties, as well. These properties—along with other heraldic stage devices like banners, pennons, and armor—drew in several ways upon the creative and manual labor of personnel outside the theater. Like their real-life counterparts, the words and images used in stage impresas could be original formulations or borrowings from other sources. Playwrights sometimes created unique devices, but they often extracted them from the writings of historians and poets. In

³⁰² Alan C. Dessen and Leslie Thomson, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 194.

³⁰³ Dessen and Thomson, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama*, 189. The list omits multiple plays in which shields feature prominently, from the anonymous *The Trial of Chivalry* (1605) to Beaumont’s now famous mock epic *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607). Still, even given this required brevity, the absence of any plays by Shakespeare is conspicuous, particularly since the compilers say they “rely more heavily upon signals from veteran professionals...especially Shakespeare,” xii. This omission may be due in part to the fact that Shakespeare’s famously laconic stage directions specify very few heraldic props.

³⁰⁴ Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3.

turn, playing companies relied on the manual efforts of painters, textile workers, and other craftsmen to bring these devices to the stage using their skills with wood, metal, paint, and fabric.

Though we know that early modern stage decorations and properties could be elaborate and ornate, we know little about the actual people who fashioned them.³⁰⁵ Did the Painter-Stainers who illuminated arms patents also paint the heraldic props used in courtly masques, and did these same people create the heraldic items that appeared on professional stages? As the Earl of Rutland's record suggests, theater workers like Shakespeare and Burbage may have been capable of performing this work. Still, some companies may have hired trade professionals. W.R. Streitberger explains that in 1579, the Revels Office was in charge of constructing "large and elaborate properties such as the burning rock made for a play," but by 1587, contractors like John Mildney, a carpenter, were being hired to build such elements. That year, Mildney was paid for "mending and setting vpp of the howses," the large edifices that framed separate locales and scenes within a play.³⁰⁶ Similarly, Henslowe's diary includes entries for payments to cobblers and tailors, providing evidence that tradesmen made theatrical costumes.³⁰⁷ One entry delineates money "geuen the paynter in earnest" (i.e., as installments)³⁰⁸ for painting the playhouse in 1595.³⁰⁹ More suggestively, he also records money "Lent vnto John thare the 30 of septmb[er] 1602 to paye vnto the armerer for targattes."³¹⁰ "Targattes" were either props or costume components: the word could refer to lightweight round shields or bucklers, or "shield-shaped ornaments or plaques of precious metal" used as headdress

³⁰⁵ Michael Hattaway notes, "It is wrong...to look for evidence in Elizabethan plays of 'scenery,'" as the term wasn't used in its modern theatrical sense until 1774; *Elizabethan Popular Theatre*, 34.

³⁰⁶ W. R. Streitberger, "The Earl of Sussex, the Revels Office, and London Commercial Theatre, 1572-83," *Review of English Studies* 58, no. 233 (February 2007): 53-4. For a description of these houses, see Hattaway, "Playhouses and Stages," in *Elizabethan Popular Theatre: Plays in Performance*, 38.

³⁰⁷ Philip Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, 2nd ed., ed. R.A. Foakes (1961; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 72.

³⁰⁸ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "earnest, n.," 2, accessed August 29, 2012, <http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/Entry/59002>.

³⁰⁹ Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, 6-7.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 217.

decorations.³¹¹ Such a purchase would have been a good investment: according to Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, “the theater itself had become a collector and renter of armor, transforming the insignia of martial prowess into money-making display.”³¹² The fact that Henslowe approached an actual armorer to create costume elements and props suggests that he may have asked the Painter-Stainers company to create heraldic decorations. Doing so would have given the props verisimilitude, especially if they were meant to represent the arms of actual historical figures.

Heraldic devices in the public theater may have had a “populuxe” appeal for spectators who would never attend a masque or tournament at court. Yet early modern dramatists floated in the liminal spaces between the trades, professions, and gentle classes, and their awareness of both popular and elite expressions of identity is reflected in their stage productions. Plays by Wilson, Kyd, Middleton, and Shakespeare show the playwrights taking pains to present impresas of their own and others’ creation. Each playwright uses heraldic devices to showcase, interrogate, and comment upon different modes of artisanal and intellectual activity; however, they rarely devalue heraldry itself, much less the intellectual and economic prestige required to attain noble status. As Yachnin notes, “it was in their own interests to maintain the worth of what they were selling to the public”; for dramatists who composed impresas, it was equally important to flatter their noble customers.³¹³ In their depictions of heraldry, these playwrights upheld traditional social distinctions by privileging the heraldic skills of nobles and gentlemen above those of lowly strivers and craftsmen. Still, their portrayals of popular heraldic consumption offer a hint of diversity. While Shakespeare and Middleton insist that an intellectual and moral divide separates elite heraldry consumers from the common sort, Wilson and Kyd portray collective heraldic comprehension as an essential component of civic pride.

³¹¹ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, “target, n.,” 1, accessed November 15, 2012), <http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/Entry/197836>.

³¹² *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory*, 258.

³¹³ Yachnin, “The Populuxe Theater,” 41.

Meta-Violence: *The Spanish Tragedy* and *The Three Lords & Three Ladies of London*

Recent scholarship places the composition of *The Spanish Tragedy* between 1585 and 1588.³¹⁴ Whether it was written before or after England's 1588 defeat of the Spanish Armada, the play is generally acknowledged to participate in xenophobic attitudes directed toward the Spanish during this period. In an apparent reflection of this perspective, Kyd uses heraldry to promote the English national cause during a masque within the play. But if we consider this imagery as a recurring motif in a series of metatheatrical moments, it becomes more sophisticated than simple jingoism. Kyd uses heraldry as a stage element in multiple plays-within-the-play to comment on the perils inherent in social performance. In Hieronimo's hands, both heraldry's courtly and communal roles regress to brutality; the individual and collective violence he inflicts may serve as Kyd's wry commentary on the motives of commercial playwrights.

The play's Spanish protagonist, Hieronimo, holds the title of Knight Marshal. In the fictional world of the drama, this makes him the chief magistrate of Spain;³¹⁵ however, some viewers might also have recognized this title as a real position in the English royal household. During the 1580s and 1590s, the Knight Marshal acted as deputy to the Earl Marshal, who oversaw the College of Arms.³¹⁶ According to an ordinance from the reign of King Henry VIII, the Knight Marshal had "special respect to the exclusion of boyes and vile persons, and punishment of vagabonds and mighty beggars" who came "within the precinct of the verge," or within twelve miles of the court. He also oversaw the Marshalsea court.³¹⁷ In both the real and fictional worlds surrounding the play, the office held by Hieronimo implies a juridical role. His position imbues him with the authority to

³¹⁴ Andrew Gurr, introduction to Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, ed. J.R. Mulryne (London: Methuen Drama, 2009), xix-xxiv. All citations from the play come from this edition.

³¹⁵ Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, p. 6, line 1.1.25n.

³¹⁶ Recall that the Earl Marshal eventually oversaw the College of Arms. As early as 1568, the current Earl Marshal, Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, decreed that no new arms were to be granted without his consent (Chapter 1, p. 47).

³¹⁷ J. Horace Round, *The King's Serjeants and Officers of State With Their Coronation Services* (London: James Nisbet, 1911), 86, and *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "marshalsea, n.," accessed November 20, 2012, <http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/Entry/114372>.

bestow legitimacy on others, or alternatively, to punish them; he is less a creative figure than a legal one. As such, his quest for revenge—and its violently imaginative climax—is particularly noteworthy. Rather than pursuing legal measures to exact vengeance for his son’s murder, he concocts his own program of extralegal and theatrically brutal tactics, which culminate in a murderous masque at the play’s conclusion.

Hieronimo’s first entertainment follows the Spanish defeat of the Portuguese. Like many real court entertainments staged for political purposes, the dumb show he presents is a leaden-footed piece of propaganda. His visible audience consists of the Spanish King, his family, and the recently conquered Portuguese, who are represented by a single ambassador. Per the play’s framing narrative, Revenge and the Ghost of Don Andrea are also watching the action, unseen by Hieronimo and the other courtiers. The stage directions call for Hieronimo and the other performers to enter during the banquet, just after the king wonders aloud when they will appear. The Knight Marshal comes in with “*three knights, each his scutcheon; then he fetches three kings, they take their crowns and them [the knights] captive*” (1.4.137). The show is brief but apparently impressive: the King announces that he finds it visually pleasing, although he cannot “sound well the mystery” (1.4.138-39).

Like *impresas* presented at a tournament, the heraldic scutcheons used in the masque are illegible to spectators—onstage and offstage—without an accompanying narrative. The King’s admission of ignorance prompts Hieronimo to supply an explanation, which most spectators in the audience likely also required. Re-presenting the shields to the king one at a time, and using a prepared text, Hieronimo explains that the three knights in the masque represent English heroes. Two of the masque figures were victorious over the Portuguese in past battles. Robert, Earl of Gloucester, invaded Portugal and “Enforced the king...To bear the yoke of the English monarchy” (145-46), while Edmund Earl of Kent “razed Lisbon walls, / And took the King of Portingale in fight” (154-55). The final character, by contrast, vanquished the Spanish: Hieronimo notes that John

of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster, once “took our King of Castile prisoner” (167). This final figure represents a self-effacing gesture by the Spanish court, one that is appreciatively noted by the Portuguese ambassador.

For the play’s spectators, the Spanish façade is a thin veil for visual and verbal allusions to England’s political history and culture. Scholars have noted that Kyd’s understanding of history itself was muddy. But the factual accuracy of the scene is beside the point: his audience probably required little information about the masque figures other than that they were English. In addition to Hieronimo’s verbal cues, the shields bearing heraldic insignia were a shorthand method for representing the men’s noble character and deeds. When Hieronimo asserted that John of Gaunt, “a valiant Englishman...by his scutcheon plainly may appear” (164-65), viewers may have been treated to an accurate depiction of the real John of Gaunt’s device, which featured a set of three English lions in two quarters [**Figure 7**]. A similarly realistic shield may have been given to the actor playing Edmund Earl of Kent, who bore the same royal lions [**Figure 8**]. Alternatively, the coats could have been imaginary ones created by either an artisan or a multitalented player or playwright solely for the production. Even if a painter had been commissioned to create faithful reproductions of each figure’s coat of arms, such accuracy wouldn’t have been possible for all the characters in Hieronimo’s masque. The show’s first hero, Robert Earl of Gloucester, died in 1147—well before heraldic arms were codified as symbols of hereditary identity.³¹⁸

As Knight Marshal, Hieronimo ensures that the masque’s props are properly interpreted by the play’s audiences, giving him an authorial role that sublimates any messages his real or fictional spectators might find in the shields’ imagery. Outside the play, these escutcheons are meant to incite English national pride. In the world of the play, they accompany a pageant intended to placate the defeated Portuguese. But the devices’ meanings, like the meanings of all heraldic images, aren’t

³¹⁸ Kyd could have had Hieronimo display a shield that cited the arms of the De Clares, subsequent Earls of Gloucester; their coat of arms featured three red chevrons on a yellow field.

entirely within their maker's control. Though partly circumscribed by Hieronimo's narration, the shields nonetheless exceed their intended effects. Indeed, the masque is an unwitting provocation to several parties. Supposedly a "masque of peace," the show actually contains multiple antagonistic messages. J.R. Mulryne points out that although it "counsel[s] humility," it "is written in honour of Spain's military glory."³¹⁹ Even though the Portuguese ambassador obligingly interprets the final figure as "an argument...that Spain may not insult for her success" (1.4.168-69), the overall narrative sharply emphasizes the Spanish victory over the Portuguese. More troublingly for Hieronimo, the masque also has the ancillary effect of enraging Don Andrea. The ghost of the murdered soldier angrily asks Revenge, "Come we for this from depth of underground, / To see him feast that gave me my death's wound? / These pleasant sights are sorrow to my soul" (1.5.1-3). Revenge mollifies him with the promise of turning the courtiers' "joys to pain, their bliss to misery" (9). Unbeknownst to Hieronimo, his own theatrical celebration of Spanish glory spurs Revenge's creativity and presages his own dramatic downfall.

Hieronimo's masque and the heraldry contained within it are meant to indicate his artistic and authorial control over diplomatic relations, not to mention over his own courtly identity. But subsequent events in the play will largely undercut the argument that Hieronimo is master of anything, least of all his own actions. His son's murder catalyzes his increasingly frenzied behavior: the gruesome tableau of Horatio hanging from a tree immediately skews his sense of justice toward revenge. The image of the hanging man appears on the play's 1615 title page [**Figure 20**]; once viewed in terms of the history of heraldry, it calls to mind the many mock coats of arms featuring men *pendant*. This woodcut image—a potential guide for the scene's theatrical staging—replaces the triumphant escutcheons of Hieronimo's court masque with graphic evidence of youthful mortality. While the masque figures with their shields represented generations of English martial success,

³¹⁹ J.R. Mulryne, "Introduction," in Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, xxv.

Horatio's death at the hands of his lover's brother and her rival suitor is the effect of private rather than patriotic violence. His murder shows that competition can be fatal for young men—even outside the confines of the battlefield, including the one that initiated the play's events.

The play also gestures at the violence latent in much masque symbolism, particularly heraldic images, stage armor, and weaponry. After Hieronimo's initial masque for the Portuguese ambassador, the play stages two additional metatheatrical performances with much darker consequences. First, the character Revenge puts on a brief entertainment for Don Andrea, in order to motivate the ghost's revenge plot against Hieronimo. The masque features an inverted wedding ceremony; in it, Hymen, the god of marriage, blows out a pair of nuptial candles and then "quencheth them with blood" (3.15.34). The ominous dumb show suggests the bloody events that will shortly follow. Though Revenge's masque features no heraldry, scholars have noted that Revenge himself was often clad in a helmet and breastplate, suggesting the character's military role.³²⁰ So dressed, he would serve as an allegory for the violence that so often accompanies revenge plots in early modern drama. Moreover, this Revenge's stint as a masque creator emphasizes the particularly performative violence that structures much of *The Spanish Tragedy's* action.

Indeed, in the last act, the play explicitly draws together chivalric brutality, personal retribution, and theatrical labor. Kyd drives home the connections between artistic invention, violence, and performance by making Hieronimo choose to direct and perform the play *Soliman and Perseda*—the title of one of Kyd's other dramas. The fictional Hieronimo thus takes after his own creator, suggesting that Kyd was slyly acknowledging his own tendency toward theatrical excess—not just linguistically, but also in his exploitation of patriotic imagery. The repetition of medieval heraldic symbolism in *Soliman and Perseda* is surely intentional: Hieronimo's fatal performance has as

³²⁰ Frederick Kiefer, *Shakespeare's Visual Theatre: Staging the Personified Characters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 50; quoted in Erika Lin, *Shakespeare and the Materiality of Performance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 93. Although Lin analyzes the play's metatheatrical structure and the plays-within-the-play, she omits discussion of Hieronimo's initial staged court masque.

its main character “a knight of Rhodes” (4.1.109) who bears a cross as his symbol (146). The play-within-the-play thus mirrors the masque that took place at the play’s opening. But while the earlier performance merely alluded to historical violence, this one literally enacts bloodshed on behalf of Hieronimo’s personal vendetta. It concludes with the deaths of all the actors involved, imbuing objects that normally function as harmless props—like the pen he uses to stab the King—with deadly force. Hieronimo thus falls victim to his own theatricality, evolving from a staid masque writer into a creative, and increasingly mad, playwright. As Knight Martial, he used martial images, including heraldic symbols, as implements of public and nationalistic diplomacy. But as a father crazed with grief, he turns the pen—the consummate writer’s tool—into an instrument of personal revenge. Hieronimo’s final grisly act thus becomes an ironic statement on the danger of creative agency. It is no accident that the Knight Marshal achieves his murderous goals by creating and then utterly perverting the traditional, highly ritualized court performance. Hieronimo’s final act is a darkly parodic rejection of masque’s creative conventions. Instead of using his pen to create heraldic impresas for a courtly performance, as he did earlier in the play, he uses the writing instrument to commit regicide. The concluding travesty inverts the utopian vision propounded by many court masques, giving the audience a kind of thrill entirely different from that produced by sublime courtly performance. Beneath its pathos, the play’s conclusion may also serve as ironic commentary on the lengths to which playwrights like Kyd must go to appeal to popular audiences, who want both courtly spectacle and grisly melodrama.

Written about 1588 and published in 1590, Robert Wilson’s comedy *The Three Lords and Three Ladies of London* appeared about the same time as *The Spanish Tragedy*. A sequel to *The Three Ladies of London*, it is another reflection of England’s fraught relationship with Spain following the Armada. Both Kyd and Wilson treat heraldry as an elite symbolic system with a strong relationship to violence. But while Kyd’s play alerts audiences to the violent politics underlying performative

heraldry, Wilson takes a favorable view of its metatheatrical potential. The conclusive battle of shields in *The Three Lords and Three Ladies* might seem heavy-handed to today's audiences, but Wilson's melding of commercial, military, and ceremonial heraldry throughout the play is actually a nuanced illustration of heraldry's multivalent cultural uses. The play repurposes impresas—traditionally personalized aristocratic devices—to affirm a collective and decidedly populist English identity among its spectators.

Shields borne by English and Spanish lords play a vital role in the play's plot as well as its scenery, and they remain onstage even when not the focus of the action. Whereas early twentieth-century critics opined that the shields were incongruous scenery that took up visual space regardless of the action,³²¹ Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean recently described them as “part of the text of the play.”³²² Indeed, the devices are blazoned multiple times in the text—both in Wilson's stage directions and by the characters in the play's climactic battle—and are accompanied by verbal mottoes to boot. While the shields transcend visual spectacle to become part of the play's language, I would argue that Wilson's escutcheons are more than merely text, props, or scenery: they acquire their own form of agency. In addition to silently symbolizing English patriotism, they also participate in commerce and win a mock battle. Indeed, when separated from their human counterparts, the shields become active agents of economic and military values.

The play's protagonists—Pomp, Policy, and Pleasure—are English lords representing London's patriotic pride in its assets, making them contemporary urban variations on the characters of morality plays. They seek the affections of Love, Lucre, and Conscience, a trio of ladies who endured various tribulations in Wilson's earlier play and went to jail at its conclusion. *The Three Ladies of London* focused solely on the women, who, unlike the lords, embody London's bad qualities as

³²¹ See for example George F. Reynolds, “Some Principles of Elizabethan Staging Part II,” *Modern Philology* 3, no. 1 (1905): 84.

³²² Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, “Dramaturgy,” in *The Queen's Men and Their Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 125.

well as its good ones. But the sequel introduces the prideful English men and juxtaposes them with their Spanish enemies in love and war: Pride, Ambition, and Tyranny. The Spanish pages, Shame, Treachery, and Terror, along with the heralds Simony, Usury, and Dissimulation, rival their Iberian masters in ill intent. English moral superiority over the arrogant Spanish is evident well before a Spanish herald fatefully sneers, “What is England to the power of spaine? / A Molehil” (1724-25).

Wilson’s opening stage directions call for the three English lords and their pages to come out bearing their shields, which bear specific “ymprezes” and “words,” indicating that they are more like ceremonial impresas than coats of arms. Policy displays a tortoise and the motto *Providence securus*; Pomp gets a lily labeled *Glorie sans peere*; and Pleasure bears a falcon accompanied by the words *Pour temps*. Led by Policy, the men each “aduance” their shields “and hang them up,” declaring their actions a challenge to anyone who denies their right to love the London ladies. This gesture imbues the lords with a decidedly medieval character: their goals, they insist, are purely chivalric. Of course, this chivalry will begin to look much like nationalism when the rapacious Spanish emerge as their sole challengers. Before they exit the scene, the lords direct their young pages to “watch and ward” their shields and detain anyone who dares confront them.

With the lords absent, the young men proceed to joke about the impresas’ meanings, providing entertainment for the audience as they spar over whose master is most impressive.³²³ Each page satirizes his fellows’ images, mocking each symbol as potentially embarrassing. Wit asks if Pleasure’s falcon is “a buzzard or a kyte” (113) and Will laughingly threatens, “Looke for my fist, Wit, if ye rap out such treason” (128). Similarly, Policy’s tortoise is described as a “toad in a shell,” a “frog in a well,” and “a great butterfly” (135-37), while Pomp’s lily is “a daffadowndilly” (148). Though they eventually get around to explaining the real meanings of each motto—*pour temps*, for

³²³ Their jesting recalls the scene in *Henry V* (1599) when the French Dauphin describes his excellent horse with increasing hyperbole, leading the Constable and Orleans to poke fun at him. *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd ed., ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 997-98, lines 3.7.3-81.

example, signifies “The best pleasure of all lasts but a time” (168-69)—the pages mostly use the images as inspiration for punning jokes with their bored fellows. The young men do important interpretive work by translating the images into comprehensible forms for the audience. By assigning the images comically pedestrian meanings and then accurately translating them, they allow spectators to laugh at genteel symbols while still participating in the social milieu that produced them. At the same time, the pages’ verbal jousting, including half-hearted threats of violence, transmutes the violence of real war into a friendly battle of wits, suggesting that heraldic interpretation for these youthful servants is a creative outlet—albeit a competitively masculine one.

The pages soon encounter Simplicity the clown, a figure much lower than themselves on the intellectual spectrum. His situation has improved markedly since *The Three Ladies of London*: while in the earlier play he was reduced to begging for food, he has now risen from vagrancy, gotten married, and begun selling ballads in a public marketplace. His facility with vivid insults—like the offensive blazon he created for Fraud in the earlier comedy—may have helped him become a purveyor of ballads, which often drew on local gossip. The enterprising clown enters the town marketplace selling his wares, or at least intending to; however, he is upset to find that the pages and their shields are blocking his merchandise from view. Despite his improved employment situation, the naïve merchant is apparently no longer as heraldically literate as he was in the previous play. Whereas earlier he skillfully parodied heraldic blazon, now, he appears befuddled by the impresas he sees before him. In fact, he mistakes them for vendible goods. When he asks the young men how many shields they would be willing to sell for a goat, they are affronted:

<i>Wealth.</i>	Our wares are not to be sold.
<i>Simplicite.</i>	Not for siluer nor gold? Why hang they, then, in the open market?
<i>Wil.</i>	To be seene, not bought.
<i>Simplicite.</i>	Then, they are like ripe plummes upon a rich mans tree, that set mens teeth a watering, when they are not to be bought. But what call you these things?
<i>Wit.</i>	Scutchions.

Simplicitie. Cushens? Alas, it were pittie to sit on such fine cushens. But come, my boies, if you’l buy any of my wares, her’s my stall, and He open and show strait. (287-97)

Simplicity mistakenly assumes the impresas are merchandise to be bought and sold, even confusing them with humble household furnishings.³²⁴ But the pages immediately and strongly demur, emphasizing that the escutcheons have no utilitarian purpose or price. Clearly, their own impious exchange moments earlier hasn’t denigrated the impresas’ intangible meanings in their eyes. Unlike cushions—or Simplicity’s cheap printed ballads—they are “not to be bought.” Some audience members, aware that coats of arms could indeed be purchased by gentlemen of indeterminate status, may have found this statement laughable. But the play resolutely presents it at face value, distinguishing between high (aesthetic) and low (economic) interests before bringing the two together at the play’s conclusion.

This distinction continues throughout the scene, which depicts Simplicity attempting to sell his *own* verbal and visual wares to the young men. First, he convinces the pages to sing with him in hopes of convincing them to buy his ballads. When they refuse to “buy [his] voice,” he produces for their consideration a metatheatrical commodity: a picture of the beloved comic actor Richard Tarleton. When the play was first performed—probably by Wilson’s company, the Queen’s men—Tarleton had recently passed away. Many of Wilson’s spectators had likely seen him onstage and were saddened by his death. But rather than responding favorably, the page Wealth scoffs, “There is no...finenes in the picture” (369). Simplicity retorts, “The finenes was within, for without he was plaine; / But it was the merriest fellow, and had such jestes in store, / That, if thou hadst scene him, thou wouldst haue laughed thy hart sore” (371-73). The men’s exegesis of the image is twofold.

³²⁴ In “Things With Little Social Life: Henslowe’s Properties,” Lena Cowen Orlin includes an excerpt from Henry Swinburne’s legal treatise, *A Brief Treatise of Testaments and Last Wills* (1590), that alludes to furnishings in heraldic terms. The excerpt specifies that affixed things are considered part of a deceased person’s household, including “not only glass and wainscot, but any other such like thing, affixed to the freehold, or to the ground, with mortar and stone, as *Tables dormant* [emphasis mine], Leads, Bays, Mangers, etc.,” The French syntax of heraldic blazon may have influenced the description of fixed tables. *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama*, ed. Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 108.

Simplicity notes that, unlike the pages' impresas, Tarleton may not have been pretty to look at, but his work pleased his audiences. This distinction nicely encapsulates the play's attitude toward theatrical and heraldic performance. Most audience members likely experienced the pleasures of watching popular comedy, while far fewer had the means to own a coat of arms. Simplicity's insistence on Tarleton's democratic appeal is an endorsement of community feeling; unlike an impresa, the popular clown's image means something to *all* London playgoers, not just a select few.

The exchange also gestures obliquely to the local economy of vernacular portraiture. The picture of Tarleton seems to be one such portrait reproduced for sale in a commercial setting; perhaps it was created by a Painter-Stainer hoping to supplement his income by composing images of notable local personalities. Wealth's observation "there is no...finenes in the picture" thus smacks of condescension toward commercial artistry by local craftsmen, as well as toward the purveyors of such wares. When Simplicity responds that Tarleton the actor was "litle acquainted" (364) with wealth, he highlights the fact that actors—not just peddlers and tradesmen—had to work hard to transform their wares into profit. The fact that the pages refuse to buy Simplicity's picture or ballads highlights the vast social distance between the nobility they represent and the lowly merchant at his stall, as well as between the aristocracy and theater workers. While the pages can mock their masters' heraldic devices without harming their innate nobility, Simplicity's livelihood depends on his salesmanship, just as Tarleton's did. Neither man could afford to devalue his own wares for the sake of a joke.

For the pages, then, heraldry is a social lubricant that fosters friendly competition, while for Simplicity, it resembles merchandise in his local marketplace. For the decidedly chivalric lords, it remains a holdover of martial values: the play's climactic confrontation between the English and the Spanish lords is a clash of emblems rather than of men. Through their herald, the arrogant Castilian lords send a message to their English counterparts indicating they want "a counterview of Pages and

of shields” (1596)—a visual competition, not a physical battle. Following some threatening spear-waving, the rival heralds engage in a sparring contest that consists of blazoning their masters’ coats, in hopes that the valiant imagery will cause their enemies to capitulate. Like the English lords’ impresas at the play’s opening, each Spanish lord’s shield is described in the stage directions. Fittingly, their symbols are more pompous, and generally more violent, than their rivals’. Ambition carries a black stallion with one foot on the globe and one in the sky, accompanied by the phrase *Non sufficit orbis*, glossed in the play text as “the world sufficeth not high Honores thoughtes” (1685). The motto was actually used by Philip II of Spain on the Hapsburg coat of arms; it had been recorded by anti-Spanish propagandist Richard Field in *A Summarie and Discourse of Sir Francis Drake’s West Indian Voyage* (1589) and reprinted in Richard Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations* (1599).³²⁵ For audience members who had read this text, the phrase evoked “not merely a token of Spanish imperial hubris, but, quite as significantly...a figure of essential Spanish depravity.”³²⁶ For viewers unable to read Latin and unversed in Hakluyt, Tyranny’s device makes the point more clearly: it features a naked child speared by a lance along with the motto *Pour sangue* (1702-04), associating him with Herod’s massacre of the innocents. Next, the lords’ pages appear bearing flags with additional images and mottos in various languages—including, according to the stage direction, “a Tygers head out of a cloud, licking a bloody heart” (1546-47). Although the text and images are violent, the bloodshed in this play remains theoretical. Unlike Kyd, Wilson depicts Spanish savagery through performative text and speech rather than actual fighting.

As a case in point, the staged battle between the English and Spanish features more talking than swordplay. The Spanish put on a choreographed show of aggression, marching around the stage in view of the English lords; the Englishmen then march toward the Spanish, who initially

³²⁵ Eric Griffin, *English Renaissance Drama and the Specter of Spain: Ethnopoetics and Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 59-60.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 60.

retreat, then return to their places. The fight was limited to the theatrical space, so the actors may have played up the stage's boundaries to comic effect. In fact, in a coy acknowledgment of theater's physical restraints on battle scenes, the Spanish decline to mount a second attack and ask instead for a heraldic contest. Obliging, Fealty, the English herald, performs an extended ekphrasis of his masters' shields. Shealty, his Spanish counterpart (who, incidentally, bears an Irish name), follows with a narrative barrage of his own. With each side undeterred by the other's verbal weaponry, the English "hordes" attack the Spanish, who retreat. Exultant, Pompe suggests that the English "hang [their] scutchens vp againe... To prooue if that may draw them to some deed, / Be it to batter our ymprezed shieldes" (1798, 1800-1801). The three English lords hang up their shields and hide, hoping to entice the Castilians to attack. The Spanish respond by hanging up their own impresas, which the English gleefully assault. Though the Castilians make "a little showe to rescue" (1806) their emblems of national pride, they retreat almost immediately, this time for good. Lord Policy exults at how the arrogant Spanish have been vanquished by mere objects, the "sillie patient shieldes" (1810) of the English.

This final scene seems likely to have played upon a more ideological and less violent strain of Hispanophobia than *The Spanish Tragedy*. Simplicity's earlier attempt to sell shields to the pages established verbal narration as suspect—i.e., subject to playfulness or profit motives. Correspondingly, the heralds' war of words proves futile, utterly failing to resolve the lords' conflict. Neither is physical violence the answer: because this is a comedy rather than a history or tragedy, it shuns a gory conclusion. Although the English do briefly attack their Castilian enemies, it takes the visual emblems of English pride to strike the final blow against Spanish arrogance. The impresa shields thus transcend their status as props, layering allegory upon allegory: they act as silent stand-ins for the Lords, who are themselves named after London's admirable characteristics.

In this play, London's communal goodness symbolically defeats Spanish venality. The audience can cheer for heraldic images that represent their city's vibrant persona, as the lords' shields have become symbols of community virtues rather than remaining the private property of elite individuals. After briefly mocking heraldry's pretense, Wilson pivots to rally his audience around its production and display, transmuting elite military posturing into enjoyable theatrical and civic spectacle. Both *The Spanish Tragedy* and *The Three Lords and Three Ladies of London* showcase heraldry as an elite symbolic system with a strong relationship to violence. Kyd suggests that despite heraldry's apparent respectability, it can often accompany horrific acts masterminded by the state or individual actors: he highlights heraldry as a tool of dramatic violence both inside and outside the court. Wilson, by contrast, views heraldry's antagonistic role as community-building. Taking a cue from London's livery companies, he uses heraldic images to unabashedly commemorate English history, celebrate London identity, and unify the playgoing audience through the pleasure of theatrical spectacle.

Staging Secrets: *Your Five Gallants and Pericles*

As opposed to Kyd's and Wilson's focus on the pomp and pageantry of martial heraldry, Thomas Middleton's *Your Five Gallants* (1608) places it in a quotidian context. With the Spanish threat faded into the background, Middleton trains his sights on England's internal social politics: the play features a cadre of characters whose identities represent London's big-city foibles. Though it lacks military battles, the play still portrays heraldry as an agonistic force. Middleton uses the heraldic system as a vehicle to critique the social aspirations of immoral pretenders. The five gallants of the title—a broker, a bawd, a cheat, a pickpocket, and a male prostitute—alternately partner with and undermine one another while attempting to win the hand of Katherine, a wealthy orphan who has promised to choose a husband within the month. In the end, they all receive their comeuppance at the hands of Fitsgrave, a gentleman scholar, who in turn earns Katherine's hand. For the play's

climax, Fitsgrave concocts a masque that uses heraldry to expose the gallants' true natures. By firmly distinguishing between visual and textual modes of creativity required to produce this court performance, Middleton highlights the hierarchies within the heraldic economy. In contrast to Wilson's populist vision, Middleton insists that proper heraldic use rests solely within the ambit of the gentle class.

The play casts the five gallants as nefarious strivers. Lacking valid occupations, much less gentility, they instead pursue social advancement using various forms of deception. Late in the play, the "cheating-gallant" Goldstone proposes that he and his fellows present themselves to the lady Katherine "in the best shape" so that she can decide who among them will make the best husband. He suggests that to "make the other suitors appear blanks," they ought to perform "a strange, gallant, and conceited masque" (4.7.219-220, 223).³²⁷ In a show of premature excitement, Frippery exclaims, "For our united mysteries!" (221); editor Gary Taylor glosses "mysteries" as "guilds," suggesting Frippery is referring to the five men's illicit occupations as though they were legitimate trades.

Deciding that composing the masque is beyond their capacity, the gallants decide to ask their scholarly friend Bouser to work it up for them. Unbeknownst to them, Bouser is actually their gentleman rival Fitsgrave, who has disguised himself in order to spy on the men's activities. Setting into motion the play's final conceit, Goldstone asks Bouser/Fitsgrave to use "a little of thy brain for a device to present us firm, which we shall never be able to do ourselves...and with a kind of speech wherein thou mayst express what gallants are, bravely" (4.7.254-57). He asks the scholar to construct the masque as a "device"—a visual story—that also requires "speech," or spoken text. The gallant understands that the performance will require a combination of poetry and theater, although he feels incapable of creating those elements himself.

³²⁷ Thomas Middleton, *Your Five Gallants*, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). All citations of the play come from this edition.

After accepting their request, Bouser/Fitsgrave immediately takes over *all* the planning, becoming not just the masque's author and artistic director, but the casting and props manager as well. Fitsgrave intends to sabotage the obtuse gallants, of course: he informs the audience that the masque request "strike[s] even with [his] wishes" (5.1.71). He tells the comen he'll take care of the visual effects: "For torch-bearers and shield-boys, those are always the writer's properties; you're not troubled with them" (4.7.265-67). He also insists the gallants hire a boy to play Mercury, the god of mischief and Olympus' herald (259). The boy will deliver a framing narrative for the masque, also to be written by Fitsgrave. By creating this extra speaking part, Fitsgrave is taking advantage of a quirk of early modern theatrical labor. Actors often learned their lines independently of their fellow actors, so the gallants will remain ignorant of the boy's speech. Several scenes later, when an observer inquires as to whether the boy narrating the masque is "perfect"—that is, whether he knows his lines by heart—Fitsgrave answers, "That's my credit, sir, I warrant you" (5.1.131-32), suggesting that he alone has rehearsed with him.³²⁸

Like any good composer of court entertainment, the gentleman writer leaves nothing to chance. Like a true masque writer, he ensures his onstage audience's complete attention by including some of its members in the play. In the next scene, still disguised, he encounters courtesans from the local brothel. Throughout the play, the ladies have mistakenly thought themselves the gallants' only romantic interests; thus, they are distressed to hear about the masque and its nuptial aims. Fitsgrave convinces them to attend in a secret capacity that will assist in "mar[ring] the match" with Katherine (5.1.63). "You should be all there in presence," he promises, "See all, hear all, and yet not they perceive you" (58-59). With this maneuver, Fitsgrave manipulates the unwitting courtesans into participating in their own humiliation.

³²⁸ Tiffany Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 66-67.

By bestowing all the creative initiative on a gentleman, Middleton links licit social identities with masque writing, and illicit ones (gallants and courtesans) with actors and audiences. He emphasizes the power differentials within theatrical labor by connecting them with the occupational and social hierarchies that characterize English society at large. Indeed, by commandeering the masque, Fitsgrave becomes a kind of proxy for Middleton. The playwright was familiar with the labor required to produce both masques and popular drama, and he grants Fitsgrave complete creative control over the texts *and* visuals necessary for this meta-production. As indicated by his promise to find “torch-bearers and shield-boys,” Fitsgrave knows that shields and torches are common masque properties. Moreover, like Henslowe, he seems to have contacts with tradesmen who can create them, although their interactions are brief. A Painter makes only a brief appearance onstage, announcing, “Here be five shields, sir.” Fitsgrave is pleased by the workman’s alacrity and promises to “see [his] master shortly” (5.1.76-78), presumably to pay him. This exchange suggests that the young man is meant to represent an apprentice herald painter. As a novice, he may well be tasked with jobs like this one, where the recipient of a painted shield is an actor rather than a soon-to-be gentleman.

Although Fitsgrave masterminds the masque’s content and delivery, he is largely distanced from the material components of the project. As a gentleman scholar and the masque’s creative director, he commissions the shields from a tradesman in a business exchange that takes place mostly offstage. And his labor involves conceptual design rather than carpentry or paints and varnish: while the painter has illustrated the images, Fitsgrave is quick to note, “I have blazed them” (5.1.81). Like Shakespeare and Jonson, he has taken on the role of hired artist by conceiving of an image and motto on behalf of an ambitious performer. Here, the conventional direction of the masque exchange has been ironically reversed to resemble manuscript satire. Instead of a working artist devising a device to honor a courtier, Middleton portrays a gentleman who creates false

impresas to sabotage his social inferiors. Further emphasizing the social chasm between himself and the other characters, the symbolism he chooses for the impresas is entirely pecuniary. For Pursenet the pickpocket, the image is “a purse wide open, and the mouth downward,” with the motto *Alienis ecce crumensis*, meaning “One that lives out of other men’s pockets” (85-89). The device for Goldstone is three silver dice, with the motto *Fratremque patremque*; Fitsgrave’s fellow gentlemanly observer apparently knows Latin, as he exclaims, “Nay, he will cheat his own brother; nay, his own father, I’faith!” (95-97). The shield for Primero, the pimp, says *Occultis vendit honores*, “One that sells maidenheads by wholesale” (101, 103).³²⁹

Immediately following this plotting, the gallants enter the scene, excited to see the shields Fitsgrave has commissioned for them. Unable to read Latin, the men have no idea which belongs to whom, so they request clarification. Naturally, the meanings Fitsgrave provides are entirely fabricated. Pursenet’s open wallet is described as “Your bounty pours itself forth to all men” (148), while Goldstone’s dice are “fortune of my side” (154). The whore-gallant Tailby, whose shield is as new to the audience as it is to him, receives a candle and the phrase *Consumptio victis*. Though Fitsgrave translates it as “My light is yet in darkness till I enjoy her” (160), the intended meaning suggests wasting away from sexually transmitted disease.³³⁰ Frippery is pleased to be told that his cuckoo means “I keep one tune, I recant not.” “I’m like the cuckoo in that indeed,” Frippery muses, “where I love, I hold” (178-80). Here, a heraldically illiterate character doesn’t merely fail to understand a charge’s actual meaning: he actually searches for and finds a personal attribute to fit its false one. Fitsgrave’s innocent response, “Did I not promise you I would fit you?” (181), emphasizes the scene’s comic irony. In this manner, heraldic impresas are turned into mocking revelations of the

³²⁹ William Stanley Hoole offers several possible real-life parallels for Middleton’s burlesque impresas in “Thomas Middleton’s Use of Imprese in ‘Your Five Gallants,’” *Studies in Philology* 31, no. 2 (April 1934), 215-23.

³³⁰ Literally “A consumption of sustenance,” line 5.1.158n.

enterprising gallants' "true" natures, and Latin is used to conceal meaning from unsavory characters whom Fitsgrave (and, we might infer, Middleton) deems unworthy.

The masque takes place in a hall in Katherine's house. The courtesans turn out to be part of the show itself: the stage directions explain that the shield-boys are actually "the whores in boys' apparel." In a parody of a real court entertainment, the shields function as part of a coveted interaction with the noble female spectator: the gallants present their devices to Katherine one by one, and she reads the motto on each shield aloud. She apparently understands Latin, because she is disturbed by their meanings: a stage direction calls for her to "seem distrustful" of the masquers, and she asks them incredulously, "Are you all as the speech and shields display you?" (5.2.24). Fitsgrave soon avails her of the gallants' intentions, and the multiple layers of deception are quickly revealed. Fitsgrave wins Katherine's favor and forces the gallants to wed the prostitutes in lieu of being whipped. While the chaste noblewoman immediately saw through the masquers' attempted con, the ladies from the brothel are fooled by Fitsgrave into marrying men they now find repellent.³³¹ Relieved to have had the truth about the gallants revealed, Katherine observes, "How easily may our suspectless sex / With fair appearing shadows be deluded!" (53-54). This misogynous statement, put in the mouth of the chaste woman admonishing her whorish counterparts, is a massive and misleading understatement, as the men are as apt to be deluded and tricked as are the women.

Fitsgrave thus turns the traditional court masque on its head, though in a less violent manner than Hieronimo in *The Spanish Tragedy*. Rather than presenting idealized versions of courtly figures, he casts conmen and prostitutes; he then secretly lures them into revealing their defects, which run the gamut from moral (the conmen's dishonesty) to bodily (the prostitutes' syphilis). Despite, or

³³¹ Ordering unwanted marriage as punishment for wronging a social superior resembles the ending of *Measure for Measure*, in which the Duke forces Angelo to wed Marina and Lucio to wed his pregnant paramour, a prostitute. When Lucio complains, "Marrying a punk, my lord, is pressing to death, whipping, and hanging," the Duke cites his elite prerogative as justification, responding, "Slandering a prince deserves it"; *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd ed., ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 618, lines 5.1.522-24.

perhaps because of, its inverted function, heraldry's hierarchical "mystery" is perfectly on display. As a sign system, it can both conceal and multiply meaning, and any charlatan who tries to exploit its aspirational function without proper understanding risks embarrassing social exposure. Thanks to Fitsgrave's explanations, its satirical meanings only manage to escape the understanding of the amoral anti-heroes and their female counterparts. Everyone else—from the lady Katherine inside the play to the audience outside it—is in on the joke. Ultimately, Fitsgrave is claiming a victory for gentility, which in the play is synonymous with intellectual creativity and moral rectitude. By acting as an interpreter of heraldic meaning for the audience, he also becomes Middleton's stand-in. Heraldry serves as the perfect vehicle for staging Fitsgrave's unveiling of the gallants' true natures, because Middleton sees it as ultimately immune to abuse by undeserving hacks. Fitsgrave and Middleton—both gentlemen, both playwrights—see heraldic fabrication as a conservative process by which the knowledgeable elite can differentiate themselves from social inferiors and keep them safely in their places.

Shakespeare's *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, also entered into the Stationer's Register in 1608, opens with an incest-based royal riddle that is much more threatening than the heraldic opacity that thwarted Middleton's gallants. In a foreboding prologue, the reincarnated poet John Gower explains that the king of Antioch is committing incest with his daughter. In order "to keep her still and men in awe, / That whoso ask'd her for his wife, / His riddle told not, lost his life. / So for her many [a] wight did die" (36-39).³³² Their taboo relationship is couched in a verbal puzzle that is, arguably, even less legible than an image on a heraldic shield. Indeed, the play is rife with tension between narrative and visual legibility, particularly of the heraldic variety. Shakespeare constantly mediates between performative heraldry and narrative commemoration, suggesting that shared acts of

³³² *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. Evans. All citations of the play come from this edition.

creation, recollection, and interpretation are necessary to structure and sustain Pericles' family, as well as its noble identity.

During *Pericles'* tournament scene—a clear nod to Accession Day pageantry—six knights, including Pericles, prepare to joust in front of King Simonides and his daughter, Thaisa. The tourney will determine Thaisa's suitor, and the princess is immediately taken by Pericles, who “seems to be a stranger” (2.2.42): she finds him alluring despite, or perhaps because of, her inability to visually assimilate him. Her father Simonides, by contrast, expresses his thoughts in terms of linguistic comprehension, allegorizing each individual knight's accomplishments as a book: “Knights... / [To] place upon the volume of your deeds, / As in a title-page, your worth in arms, / Were more than you expect, or more than's fit, / Since every worth in show commends itself” (2.3.1-5). He also acknowledges the imaginative labor that goes into creating these performative emblems, telling Thaisa, “‘Tis now your honor, daughter, to entertain / The labor of each knight in his device” (2.2.14). By referring to the impresas as the fruits of knightly work, Simonides assumes the jousters created them using their gentlemanly familiarity with heraldic conventions.

In keeping with his tendency to read, not just see, Simonides quickly moves Thaisa's observations into the linguistic realm. Despite his apparent deferral to her judgment (“‘Tis now your honor...to entertain”), a complete interpretation of the knights' impresas depends upon an exegesis. Thaisa describes the images and reads aloud the Latin mottoes accompanying each shield, while Simonides occasionally offers partial translations. After she observes that the first knight displays “a black Ethiopie reaching at the sun; / The word: *Lux tua vita mihi*,” Simonides explains, “He loves you well that holds his life of you” (2.2.20-22); editors render the motto as “Thy/Your light is life to me.”³³³ But Simonides declines to take on the full burden of interpretation. Though he translates three of the knights' mottoes into English and reads aloud the Latin for all six, the second and third

³³³ Young, “A Note on the Tournament Impresas in *Pericles*,” 454.

devices receive no vernacular rendering. By interpreting some but not all of the Latin, Simonides—and by extension, Shakespeare—conducts a limited diplomatic exercise, only partially bridging the distance between the knights’ “labors,” his daughter’s opinion, and the audience’s comprehension of the scene. Here and throughout the play, narrative or its withholding is an important motif.

Narrative bridges the chasm between seeing something—e.g., a heraldic device, a gravestone, or a woman’s familiar face—and fully comprehending its significance.

By studying both Pericles’ visage and his device, Thaisa and Simonides are able to see through the young man’s unfortunate “outward habit” to his “inward man” (57). Simonides glosses Pericles’ motto, *In hac spe vivo* (In this I hope I live), as “From the dejected state wherein he is, / He hopes by you his fortunes may yet flourish” (46-47). In turn, Pericles recognizes the proper response from a lowly knight who wants to enter the sphere of the court. He introduces himself in terms familiar to any courtier:

A gentleman of Tyre, my name, Pericles,
My education been in arts and arms;
Who, looking for adventures in the world,
Was by the rough seas reft of ships and men. (2.3.81-84)

By labeling himself a gentleman, Pericles places himself in a familiar social schema, one in which an aspiring nobleman like himself needs training in “arts and arms” to achieve recognition and respect from social peers and superiors. His relationship with Thaisa depends on his gentlemanly narration, not just his actions. Pericles’ tournament prowess, his nobility, and his training in the finer points of courtesy—his visage, actions, and words—thus combine to make him a respectable suitor in both Simonides and Thaisa’s eyes.

The conclusion of the play also affirms the connection between verbal narratives and images, intertwining these two modes in order to bring about Pericles’ reunion with Marina, his lost daughter. The girl’s life is a series of misfortunes, including a shipwreck and presumed death at sea, adoption by a clueless king and terrible stepmother, capture by pirates, and enslavement in a brothel.

Battered by fate, Marina tends to take little narrative initiative, often observing rather than interpreting her situation. As she places flowers on the tomb of her dead nurse, for example, she remarks, “The yellows, blues, / the purple violets, and marigolds, / Shall as a carpet hang upon thy grave” (4.1.14-16). The speech evokes an image—a funeral tapestry woven with bright heraldic colors—rather than a written epitaph. Indeed, images are her primary mode of understanding. She refuses to believe Leonine could be a murderer, observing, “You will not do’t... You are well-favored, and your looks foreshow / You have a gentle heart” (84-86). Clearly, she feels a person’s appearance must match, if not determine, their actions. She expresses this belief once again when Boulton and the Bawd assess her fitness for their brothel. When the Bawd asks, “Why lament you, pretty one?” she answers, “That I am pretty” (4.2.68-69). Foregoing any attempt to reason with her captors, she instead bemoans the inexorable temptation posed by her beauty. The Bawd’s exasperated follow-up question, “What [why] do you stop your ears?” (80-81), shows Marina actively rejecting oral information in favor of visual evidence.³³⁴

Pericles, by contrast, craves stories to confirm appearances and impressions. He is much more intent than his daughter on receiving oral or textual confirmation that what he sees is true. In the opening scene, he has been “drawn by report” to seek out Antiochus’ daughter (1.1.35), and he describes her face as a “book of praises” (1.1.15), implying that it needs additional interpretation beyond its apparent beauty. Like Marina, he visits a grave in Act 4; through one of the play’s many dumb shows, the duplicitous Cleon and Dionyza make him believe it houses his daughter’s body. But unlike the earlier tomb, which was adorned only with Marina’s colorful flowers, this monument

³³⁴ In contrast to my focus on Marina’s acceptance of sensory evidence, Amy J. Rodgers argues that Marina uses her own speech to redirect her audiences’ interpretations. Rodgers writes, “Marina herself becomes an instrument of spectatorial discipline. Like the play itself, Marina impels her onlookers towards another, more complex way of interpreting what they see by redirecting their focus on her physical presence through language,” in “The Sense of An Audience: Spectators and Spectatorship in Early Modern England” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2009), 126.

bears an inscription. The engraved narrative, which Gower reads aloud, helps convince Pericles it is indeed his daughter's resting place:

The fairest, sweetest, and best lies here,
Who withered in her spring of year.
She was of Tyrus the King's daughter,
On whom foul death hath made this slaughter.
Marina was she call'd... (4.4.34-38)

Pericles' trust in written accounts does not serve him well in this instance: as the audience is well aware, Marina is very much alive. But father and daughter will eventually reunite, thanks paradoxically to Pericles' sharp eyes and Marina's willingness to accede to his desire for an oral narrative. In the play's final act, Marina is brought on board a ship in order to comfort a man she thinks is a stranger. She has no previous visual experience to help her connect his features with her own past, so his presence raises no suspicions in her. Pericles has retained his memories, however, and combined with his observations, they leads him to suspect Marina is his daughter. He notes the girl's resemblance to Thaisa, her "square brows," "silver-voice" and "jewel-like" eyes (4.4.108, 110). These are visual signs of her identity, and with their focus on geometric shapes and colorful details, they depict her in a blazoning fashion—both poetically and heraldically.

After father and daughter reunite, Pericles gives a speech in Act 5 that brings Thaisa, the last missing relative, back into the familial fold. Urged by a vision to visit Diana's temple (5.3.240-49), Pericles kneels at the altar and briefly describes the years of turmoil that eventually led him to his "maid-child call'd Marina" (6). Here again, Pericles describes his daughter and the temple priestess in heraldic terms, observing they are both clothed in Diana's "silver livery" (5.3.7). Livery was the unique clothing worn by servants of a noble's household, and it was often adorned with the noble's heraldic devices. But as with a tournament impresa or a heraldic shield, Thaisa's mere appearance isn't enough for Pericles to confirm her identity: he needs her to support her visual presentation

with a verbal explanation. Luckily, after recognizing his “voice and favor” (5.3.14)—both his words and appearance—the high priestess reveals herself as Thaisa, the wife he thought had died long ago.

The play’s unifying conclusion thus sublimates the sensory ambivalence that pervades the play by staging a reunion of both voices and visages. With its heraldic descriptions of Marina and Thaisa, *Pericles*’ engagement with heraldry builds on its earlier depiction in the tournament scene. The initial scene used heraldic imagery and language as populuxe adornment for an audience-pleasing tournament scene, but it also required interpretation by both characters within the play and by Shakespeare’s audience. In the final act, Shakespeare explicitly turns heraldic language into a mode of social recognition. The interpretive skills that Simonides and Thaisa used to interpret the knights’ impresas—their attention to shape, color, and form, and willingness to both request and supply explanation—are the same skills required for social maintenance and familial unity. Ultimately, then, Shakespeare places the ideological work of heraldry squarely within a traditional schema, linking it with genealogical truth that leads to gratifying self-discovery. By contrasting and then uniting Marina’s and Pericles’ visual and verbal interpretive modes, he implies that heraldic imagery and genealogical narrative are complementary. In doing so, he treats the labor required for heraldic self-fashioning as a salutary process that results in proper recognition by and for the truly noble.

Shakespeare, the Upstart Crow

Though *Pericles*’ tournament scene might seem to provide evidence of Shakespeare’s prowess in devising heraldic impresas, he actually culled the emblems and mottoes from multiple textual and visual sources. Three of the devices can be found in a 1591 translation of Paradin’s *Devises heroïques*, an emblem book, while another appears in the shield gallery at Whitehall—a venue that Shakespeare’s company, the King’s Men, had probably visited. Alan Young suggests the device Shakespeare gives Pericles may be a reference to a tournament impresa Philip Sidney composed for himself circa 1577. Sidney’s device also featured a half-dead tree, and its accompanying verses

bemoaned the fact that Sidney had been “Waynd...from the hope wch made affection glad,” though he had once been “in deserts.”³³⁵ Whether or not Shakespeare was directly inspired by Sidney, the fact that he drew his ideas from various illustrated and textual sources is undisputed. Like the real and fictional courtiers who paid poets to compose their devices, Shakespeare also borrowed from others—both artists and courtiers—to lend his performances greater heraldic verisimilitude.

Shakespeare’s alternately wistful and celebratory treatment of heraldry and genealogy in *Pericles* suggests that his difficult quest for a family coat had a deep and lasting impact on his oeuvre. As a creator of real heraldic devices and a borrower of fictional ones, he generally declined to mock heraldic pretension. Though relatively few of his biographical details survive, we know that with the help of the Garter King of Arms William Dethick, he eventually procured a coat of arms on behalf of his father. William’s father John had begun the process of applying for a coat after becoming Bailiff of Stratford-Upon-Avon in 1568. He ran into financial troubles, however, and no grant was made until 1596, apparently after William revived the application process [Figure 21].³³⁶

The circumstances surrounding the grant clearly bothered some heraldic officials. The award cited John Shakespeare’s ancestors’ “valiant and faithful service” to “the most prudent prince King Henry the Seventh”—a claim that was, in one critic’s words, “tantalizingly vague.”³³⁷ Moreover, Dethick had gone over the heads of his superiors to grant it.³³⁸ Clearly, William’s persistence and creativity were equally crucial in earning the grant. But they could only go so far: he attempted to combine the new coat with that of his mother’s prominent family, the Ardens, apparently without

³³⁵ Young, “A Note on the Tournament Impresas in *Pericles*,” 454-55.

³³⁶ Samuel Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 38. Katherine Duncan-Jones, citing the many “erasures and inconsistencies” in early drafts of the coat, believes that “both the initiative and the shaping ideas” for the final design—which bore the motto “Non Sans Droict” (Not Without Right)—“came from the younger Shakespeare,” *Shakespeare: An Ungentle Life*, 105-6.

³³⁷ Scott-Giles, *Shakespeare’s Heraldry*, 29.

³³⁸ Wagner, *Heralds of England: A History of the Office and College of Arms in London* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1967), 202-3. For an account of John Shakespeare’s occupations and apparent financial difficulties, see Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare*, 31-44.

success.³³⁹ Worse, the Shakespeare grant would be challenged in 1601 by Ralph Brooke, the contentious York Herald. In an attempt to remove his rival Dethick from the College, Brooke accused him of making nearly two dozen grants to “mean persons” “for lucre.”³⁴⁰ One of these grants was the Shakespeare arms. Fittingly in light of the coat’s adamant motto, its legitimacy was ultimately upheld.

Nonetheless, Shakespeare’s belated heraldic acquisition made him a pretender in the eyes of some observers. Brooke’s rejection of Dethick’s grant to the Shakespeares indicated that, in terms of his lackluster pedigree, William could be considered one of the “mushroom gentlemen” decried by contemporary writers. Given these circumstances, Shakespeare must have known his status as an arms bearer was relatively fragile. Perhaps he felt a personal, familial stake in maintaining heraldry’s reputability, or at least in not diminishing it.³⁴¹ Though he never attended university, he clearly attained some heraldic knowledge on his own. He read the chronicle histories of Edward Hall and Raphael Holinshed, and through these sources, he learned about the heraldic badges used by medieval kings. The history plays, for example, refer to the red and white roses of the Yorks and Lancasters, the sun of Richard II, and Richard III’s tusked boar.³⁴²

In 1592, several years before the arms were granted, playwright and university wit Robert Greene famously called Shakespeare an “upstart crow.”³⁴³ Though Shakespeare’s crest didn’t yet exist when Greene’s insult first appeared in pamphlet form, his avian reference now calls to mind

³³⁹ Scott-Giles, *Shakespeare’s Heraldry*, 33, and Duncan-Jones, *Shakespeare: An Ungentle Life*, 118.

³⁴⁰ Wagner, *Heralds of England*, 188.

³⁴¹ Scott-Giles opines that “the sentiment towards heraldry which [Shakespeare’s plays] reveal appears to be not that of a man of high station, born to symbols of honour and taking them for granted, but rather that of a man of middle class, valuing these tokens the more because he has known the lack of them,” *Shakespeare’s Heraldry*, 25.

³⁴² Scott-Giles, *Shakespeare’s Heraldry*, 18-20.

³⁴³ *Greenes, groats-worth of witte, bought with a million of repentance* (London, 1592), STC (2nd ed.) 12245, sig. F1v. Some scholars argue that the printer, Henry Chettle, also wrote the pamphlet, though he may have ventriloquized Greene to some degree. See John Jowett, “Johannes Factotum: Henry Chettle and *Greene’s Groatsworth of Wit*,” *Publications of the Bibliographical Society of America* 87, no. 3 (December 1993): 453-86.

the falcon that sits atop the Shakespeare arms.³⁴⁴ Greene's diatribe is generally cited as a hostile indictment of Shakespeare's plagiaristic tendencies and/or his social ambition. But recent critics point out that the two writers often borrowed ideas from one another and seem to have contributed to several of the same plays. Moreover, Greene, like Shakespeare, was of decidedly middle-class origins: though he received a Cambridge education, his father appears to have been either a saddler or a cordwainer.³⁴⁵ Even if Greene resented the creative initiative that led to Shakespeare's success, he himself owed his celebrity to the demand for populuxe prose and theater: his pamphlets and drama were mostly courtly romances fit for public consumption.³⁴⁶ Given their similar backgrounds and livelihoods, perhaps Greene's harangue was a tongue-in-cheek roast of a fellow middle-class writer who had worked hard to escape anonymity—if not exactly a friendly riposte, then not necessarily a bitter attack on a hated rival.

³⁴⁴ As Duncan-Jones puts it, "the hateful image of a black and presumptuous 'upstart Crow' was now officially replaced with a bird of noble, even royal connotations," *Shakespeare: Upstart Crow to Sweet Swan 1592-1623* (London: Methuen Drama, 2011), 111. In a more speculative vein, she notes that the arms patents were drawn up on the same day a new printer acquired the right to reprint the Green-Chettle pamphlet, and suggests that Shakespeare's choice of a falcon for his crest may have been a direct response to the revived insult, 103-7.

³⁴⁵ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, s.v. "Greene, Robert," by Laurie H. Newcomb, accessed August 5, 2013, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/article/11418>, and Hanspeter Born, "Why Greene Was Angry At Shakespeare," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 25 (January 2012): 133-73. Born argues that Shakespeare made changes to the character Ethenwald in Greene's *A Knack to Know a Knav*e to sweeten the part for himself or a fellow actor, angering Greene and leading him to insult Shakespeare's presumptuousness.

³⁴⁶ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, s.v. "Greene, Robert."

FIGURES

Figure 14. Page of paint recipes from a manuscript by herald John Guillim, Folger ms V.b.447

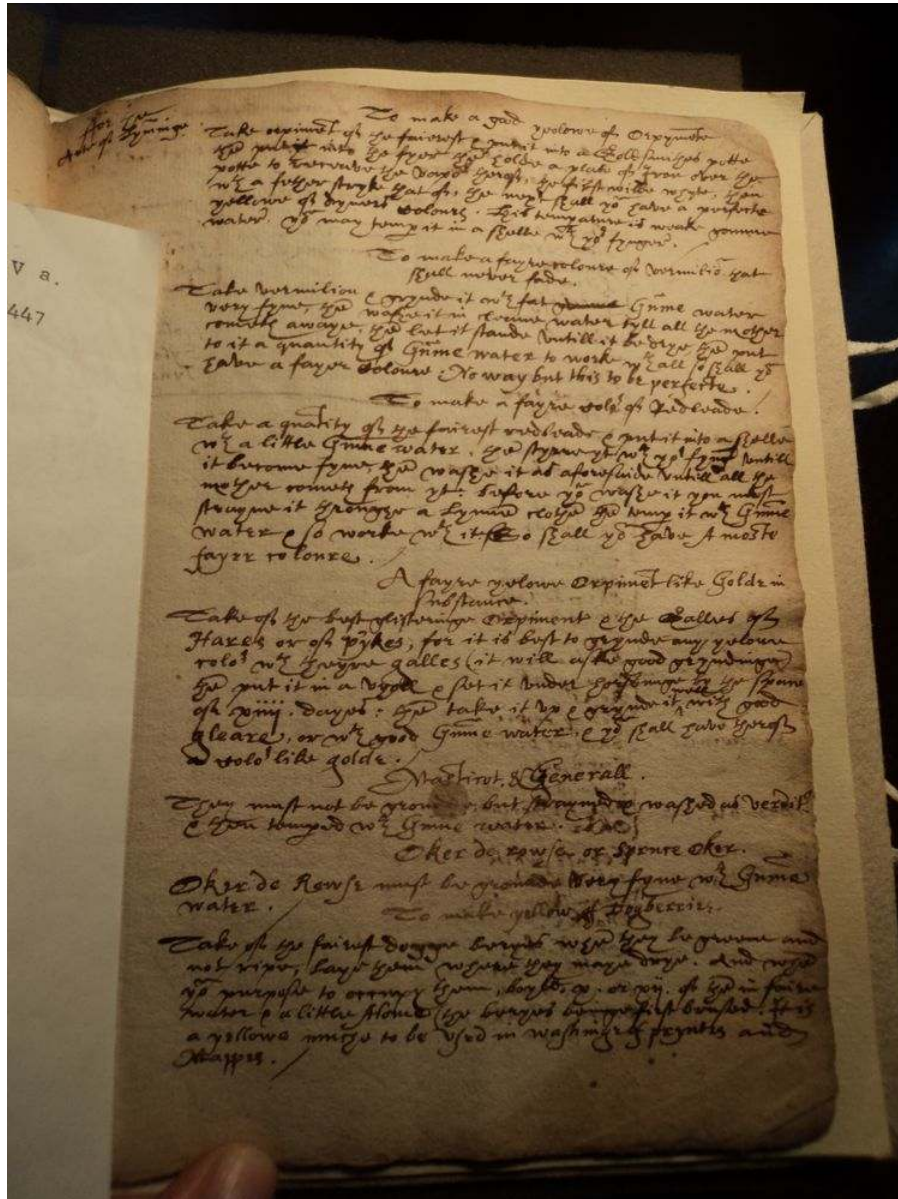


Figure 15. Ermine Portrait of Queen Elizabeth (1585)



Figure 16. A coat from John Bossewell's *Works of Armorie* featuring "a Crosse engrailed Ermyne"



Figure 17. Anonymous portrait of Henry VIII and family with heraldic tapestry backdrop



Figure 18. Tilt portrait of Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex (Hilliard, 1587)



Figure 19. Tilt portrait of George, third Earl of Cumberland (Hilliard, 1590)



Figure 20. John of Gaunt's coat of arms



Figure 21. Edmund Earl of Kent's coat of arms

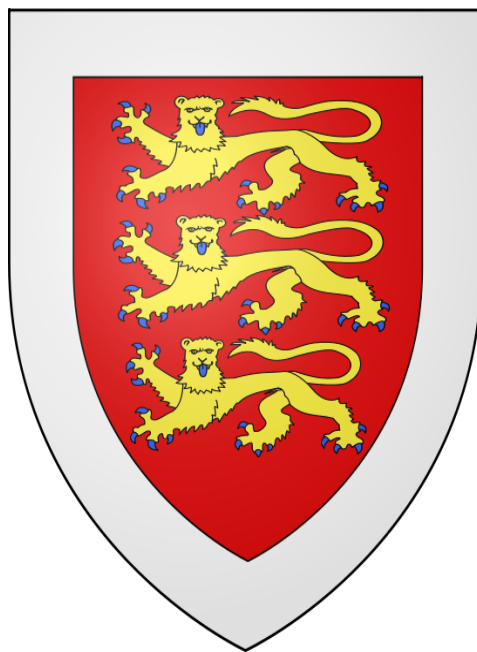



Figure 22. 1615 title page of *The Spanish Tragedy* featuring an illustration of Horatio hanging in the arbor

The Spanish Tragedie:
OR,
Hieronimo is mad againe.

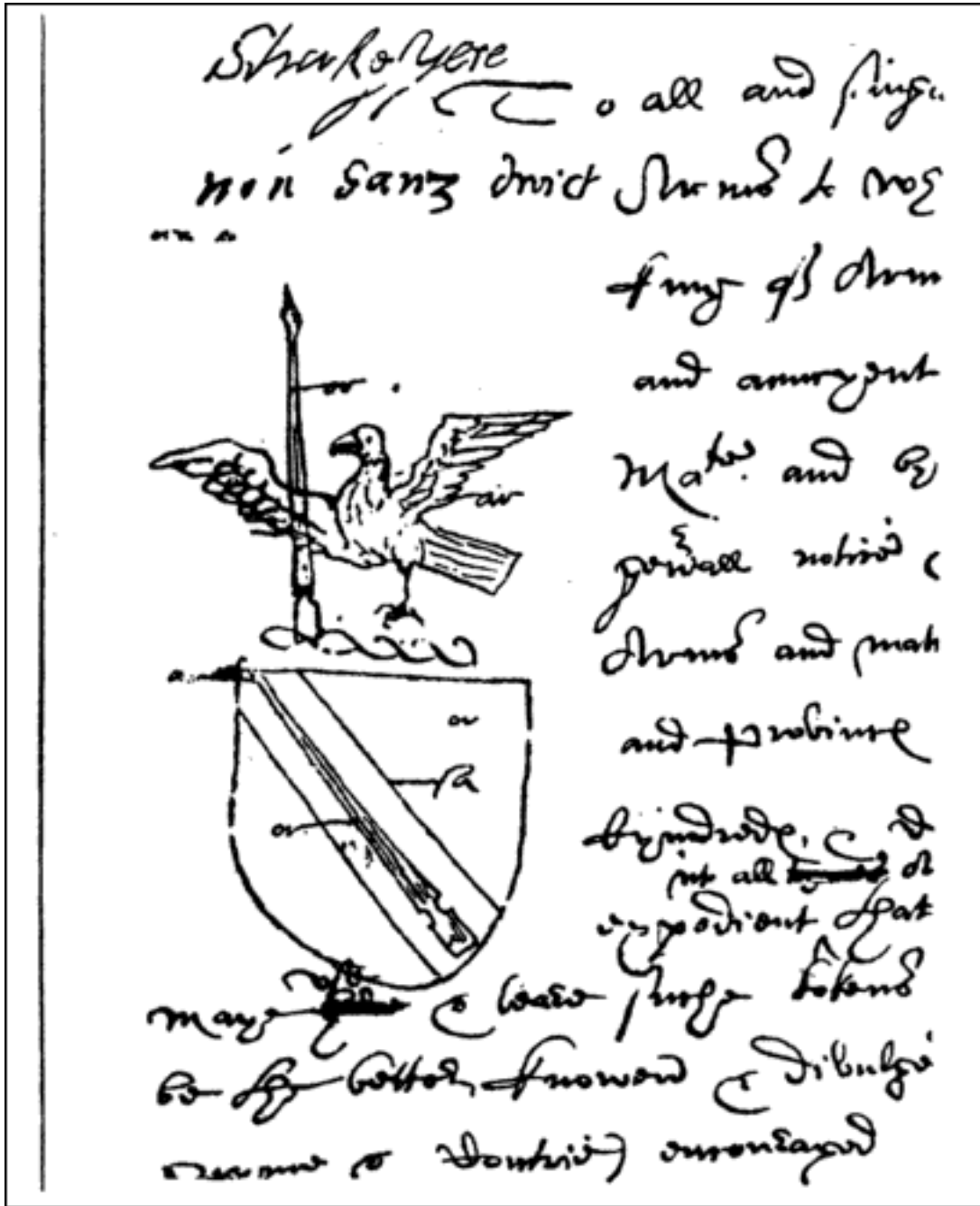
Containing the lamentable end of *Don Horatio*, and
Belimperia; with the pittifull death of *Hieronimo*.

Newly corrected, amended, and enlarged with new
Additions of the *Painters* patt, and others, as
it hath of late been diuers times acted.



LONDON,
Printed by W. White, for I. White and T. Langley,
and are to be sold at their Shop ouer against the
Sarazens head without New-gate. 1615.

Figure 23. Second draft of Shakespeare's coat of arms



CHAPTER FOUR
“Heraldry in Their Mouthes”:
Anglo-Welsh Historiography in *The Valiant Welshman*,
Shakespeare’s Second Tetralogy & *The Merry Wives of Windsor*

Like many English history plays, *The Valiant Welshman, or, The True Chronicle History of the Life and Valiant Deedes of Caradoc the Great, King of Cambria, now called Wales* (1615) opens on a note of proud nationalism.³⁴⁷ Unlike most of those plays, its pride is Welsh rather than English. As the performance begins, Fortune descends dramatically from the heavens to bestow her blessings on Caradoc, an ancient British chieftain—and to rebuke her English spectators:

Be dumbe you scornefull English, whose blacke mouthes
Haue dim’d the glorious splendor of those men,
Whose resolution merites Homers penne:
And you, the types of the harmonious speares,
Call with your siluer tones, that reuerend Bardh,
That long hath slept within his quiet vrne,
And let his tongue this Welshmans Crest adorne. (1.1.17-23)³⁴⁸

Taking up the cause of Welsh historiography, Fortune preemptively silences potential protests against her impending account of Caradoc and his “glorious splendor.” She regrets that the English often speak ill of the Welsh, given that revered classical writers consider their accomplishments worthy of commemoration. She then summons a “reuerend Bardh,” or Welsh poet, from the spheres, calling him out of his heavenly hibernation to lavish praise on his countryman. Though the

³⁴⁷ Though the themes I discuss in this chapter are present in many early modern plays, including *Cymbeline*, *King Lear*, and *The Welsh Ambassador*, I have chosen to focus on these four, which feature nominally Welsh characters who engage explicitly with English historiography and heraldry.

³⁴⁸ R.A., Gent., *The Valiant Welshman, or, The True Chronicle History of the Life and Valiant Deedes of Caradoc the Great, King of Cambria, now called Wales*, ed. Valentine Krebs (Erlangen & Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1902). The play has been tentatively attributed to Robert Armin, though this remains under dispute. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, s.v. “Armin, Robert (1563–1615),” by Martin Butler, accessed 12 Dec 2013, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/article/647>, and J.P. Feather’s introduction to *The Collected Works of Robert Armin*, vol. 2 (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1972), n.p.

Welsh bards celebrated valiant deeds in verse, they were also associated with prophetic poetry. This connotation imbues the character with a mystical aura, but it also allows him to function as a chorus figure: throughout the play, he previews the events of each act before they occur. In the process of calling this proleptic poet forward, Fortune elides distinctions between oral, visual, and written modes of history. After reprimanding the English “blacke mouthes” and praising the Bard’s “siluer tones,” she asks the Bard to make his words worthy of “adorning” the “Welshmans Crest.” In seven short lines, she represents history in three forms: as oral narrative; as speech; and as visual (specifically, heraldic) symbol.

The Valiant Welshman celebrates Caradoc’s victories over treacherous homegrown enemies and invading Romans. Marisa R. Cull argues that the play posits Welsh history positively, as a forerunner of contemporary English kingship: she calls Caradoc a “theatrical double” for Prince Henry, who had been endowed with the long-idle title of Prince of Wales in 1610. By presenting Caradoc as a model “Welshman that need not be assimilated,” Cull writes, the play creates “a version of heroism that endorses the ancient past and its Welsh roots as a suitable model for a future heir.”³⁴⁹ Her argument is compelling; however, it is important to note that the Henryesque king isn’t the only Welsh figure in the play. Caradoc’s cousin Morgan, a Welsh captain, is a boisterous, stereotypical stage Welshman. Unlike his genteel kinsman, Morgan “is cleverly segregated via dialect and serves as an ethnically-defined repository for needed martial savagery, while the titular Welsh hero and other nobles are reinscribed as ostensibly (and ahistorically) English.”³⁵⁰ While Caradoc speaks unaccented English, Morgan replaces his *b*’s with *p*’s and employs “her” as a universal pronoun. Caradoc is calm, measured, and trusting; Morgan is bombastic, voluble, and violent.

³⁴⁹ Marisa R. Cull, “Contextualizing 1610: *Cymbeline*, *The Valiant Welshman*, and the Prince of Wales,” in *Shakespeare and Wales: From the Marches to the Assembly*, ed. Willy Maley and Philip Schwyzer (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2010), 131, 135, 132.

³⁵⁰ Alison M. Outland, “‘Ridden with a Welsh Goat’: Parson Evans’ Correction of Windsor’s English Condition,” *English Literary Renaissance* 41, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 302.

Though the play presents an idealized image of a historical Welsh warrior as a model for English rule, it undermines that model by juxtaposing it with a modern-day caricature of Welsh absurdity.

With its intertwined references to historiography, prophecy, and heraldry—and its swift segue from rebuke to praise—Fortune’s encomium points to the richly connected yet complex relationship between England and Wales during the late Tudor and early Stuart eras. As Philip Schwyzer has shown, narratives of Welsh glory were popular among late sixteenth-century English writers and dramatists, who used them to generate a British rather than strictly English nationalism. Indeed, Schwyzer writes, “British nationalism took most of its facts, many of its tropes, and even much of its tone from Welsh sources.”³⁵¹ The two nations also had a vibrant contemporary relationship. By the 1590s, the Tudors—a Welsh family—had held the throne of England for over a century.³⁵² Thanks to Henry VIII’s Acts of Union, Wales and England were united politically, and Welsh people of all social stations, from gentry to the very poor, had voluntarily migrated to England and been assimilated into English culture.

In other words, unlike migrants from the Continent, the Welsh didn’t constitute an alien population in England. Nonetheless, throughout Elizabeth’s and James’ reigns, many English writers made a point of emphasizing their Cambrian neighbors’ differences. To borrow Marjorie Rubright’s formulation, the relations between the English and Welsh during the early modern period were structured by “paradoxes of proximity.” Given the countries’ geographic closeness, as well as the great numbers of Welsh living in England, English writers often held the two cultures’ differences in

³⁵¹ Philip Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism, and Memory in Early Modern England and Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 6. By contrast, Andrew Escobedo argues that Shakespeare makes a case for a nationalism founded on new beginnings. In “From Britannia to England: *Cymbeline* and the Beginning of Nations,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (Spring 2008), Escobedo writes that Shakespeare “suggests that the realm can shift from Britannia to England—can begin to reimagine itself as a community we might call a ‘modern’ nation—but only by losing an ancient and dignified ancestry,” 63. In his view, the England depicted in Shakespeare’s late play recognizes that “modern nationhood” might require a dialectic rather than a resolution, an “oscillation between the dream of purity and the acknowledgment of comparative identity,” 85.

³⁵² Rory Loughnane, “‘I myself would for Caernarfonshire’: The Old Lady in *King Henry VIII*,” in *Celtic Shakespeare: The Bard and the Borderers*, ed. Willy Maley and Rory Loughnane (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), 192.

productive tension rather than dismissing them as fundamentally “other.”³⁵³ For many English writers, the Welsh in their midst reminded them of their own fondness for ancient narratives of Brutus’ founding of the British nation. This culturally persistent origin story strongly influenced English representations of Welsh people in print and onstage. English writers also acknowledged that Welsh people of all social stations, from gentry to craftsmen, were vital participants in modern-day English culture—not just quasi-fictional characters in its claim to an ancient past.

Indeed, just as important as the two nations’ intertwined histories were the different ways in which contemporary English and Welsh people narrated their family histories. English forms of genealogical and aspirational display tended to keep specifics to a minimum. A grand-looking coat of arms could hide a new gentleman’s lack of a truly venerable pedigree, and heraldic impresas—used to highlight a person’s goals in a courtly context—were often most effective when they remained incomprehensible to certain audiences, at least initially. By contrast, thanks to a longstanding vernacular Welsh tradition, Welshmen were viewed as prone to declaiming their worth orally and at length. English commentators satirized Welshmen, particularly those of lower station, as volubly open with both their lineages and aspirations, portraying them as simultaneously obsessed with their genealogical roots and prophetic predictions of future glory. However, both lineage and prophecy remained vital components of the English gentry and nobility’s individual and collective mythologies well into the seventeenth century. Given this context, English critiques of Welsh self-regard show writers trying to contend with the challenges the Welsh posed for English historiography, as well as for contemporary English approaches toward social advancement and legitimation.

Welsh Mythology and Gentility

A Welsh-centered narrative of English history was endorsed by early modern English writers from Holinshed to Spenser. This mythical tradition held that the Britons, ancient natives of Troy,

³⁵³ Marjorie Rubright, *Doppelgänger Dilemmas: Anglo-Dutch Relations in Early Modern Drama* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, forthcoming 2014), 3.

had settled Albion before the Romans. It had been popularized in English in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historiae Regnum Britanniae*, written c. 1136 and reprinted in English in 1587, and propounded by English writers throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Still, the legend was losing historiographic force by the beginning of the seventeenth century. In his chorographic tome *Britannia* (1600), William Camden is circumspect about how strongly he believes the Welsh were descended from Brutus. He notes that the legend originated with Geoffrey of Monmouth, having appeared nowhere in Roman histories, and he freely acknowledges that other historians reject the story entirely.³⁵⁴

Along with the legend that Britain had been founded by Brutus, some chroniclers and poets endorsed a legendary Merlinic prediction that the Welsh were awaiting the return of a successor to the great King Arthur, who would someday rise to overtake the English throne. Although many well-to-do Welshmen embraced this story, it also held great force for the English as an explanation for their own struggles with Wales. According to one sixteenth-century Welsh chronicler, Elis Gruffydd, "the English were more interested than the Welsh in Arthur."³⁵⁵ Indeed, from the twelfth century onward, English historiography had linked Arthurian prophecies with Welsh rebelliousness. Geoffrey of Monmouth's translation of the prophecies from Welsh sources gives details for a long sequence of events; according to one section, "Kambria shall be filled with joy and the Cornish oaks shall flourish. The island shall be called by the name of Brutus [Britain's legendary Roman founder] and the title given to it by the foreigners shall be done away with."³⁵⁶ As a result, Edward II's biographer explained, "the Welsh frequently revolt in the hope of fulfilling the prophecy."³⁵⁷ This

³⁵⁴ Graham Parry, "Ancient Britons and Early Stuarts," in *Neo-Historicism: Studies in Renaissance Literature, History and Politics*, ed. Robin Headlam Wells et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 153-78; and D.R. Woolf, *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England: Erudition, Ideology, and 'The Light of Truth' from the Accession of James I to the Civil War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 117. See also Andrew King, "'Howsoe'er 'tis Strange... Yet is it True': The British History, Fiction and Performance in *Cymbeline*," in *Shakespeare and Wales*, 161-65.

³⁵⁵ Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism, and Memory*, 21n25.

³⁵⁶ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin Books, 1966), 175.

³⁵⁷ Quoted in John Davies, *A History of Wales* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 183.

forecast and others were reproduced in Hall's *Union of the Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and Yorke* (1548), the *Mirroure for Magistrates* (1559), and Holinshed's *Chronicles*, the latter two of which Shakespeare used as sources for his history plays.³⁵⁸ According to Holinshed, a famous prophecy involving a "moldwarp," or mole, influenced the rebellion by Owain Glyn Dwr and two other English rebels against Henry IV. He writes, "[The division of England] was doone (as some haue said) through a foolish credit giuen to a vaine prophesie, as though king Henrie was the moldwarpe, curssed of Gods owne mouth, and they three were the dragon, the lion, and the wolffe, which should diuide this realme betweene them."³⁵⁹

Both historical and contemporary conditions in Wales contributed to English notions of the Welsh as a restive, rebellious people. This reputation had originated partially in the Welsh people's impressive resistance following the Norman conquest; after 1066, they were mostly successful at repelling French encroachment. Groups led by charismatic Welsh leaders also rose up against English rule multiple times during the following centuries.³⁶⁰ The Welshman Owain Glyn Dwr's rebellion against Henry IV in the fifteenth century is probably the most well known among readers of English history, having been memorialized by English chroniclers and Shakespeare's second tetralogy.³⁶¹ The fear of imminent insurrection by well-to-do Welshmen continued to plague English kings as late as 1531: that year, Henry VIII executed Rhys ap Gruffydd, a prominent landowner, accusing him (falsely) of plotting with James V of Scotland to overthrow him.³⁶² Holinshed's

³⁵⁸ Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism, and Memory*, 6-7. Howard Dobin notes that Shakespeare used Holinshed as his main source, but the latter "defers to Hall concerning Glendower's magical and prophetic powers," *Merlin's Disciples: Prophecy, Poetry, and Power in Renaissance England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 231n18.

³⁵⁹ Hall's account reads: "Here I passe ouer to declare howe a certayne writer writeth that this earle of Marche, the Lorde Percy and Owen Glendor wer vnwisely made beleue by a Welsh Prophecier, that king Henry was the Moldwarpe, cursed of Goddes owne mouth, and that they thre were the Dragon, the Lion and the Wolffe, whiche shoulde deuide this realme betweene them, by the deuiacon and not deuinacio[n] of that mawmet Merlin," *The vnion of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancaster [and] Yorke* (London, 1548), sig. C6r.

³⁶¹ Davies, *A History of Wales*, 107-8.

³⁶¹ Glanmor Williams, *Recovery, Reorientation and Reformation: Wales c. 1415-1642* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 3-6.

³⁶² Williams, *Recovery, Reorientation and Reformation*, 256; Davies, *A History of Wales*, 223; and Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (Trowbridge, UK: Redwood Press, 1971), 398.

Chronicles (1577) includes an account of Welsh women's atrocities against English soldiers following a battle, and Camden describes Wales as "a verie warlike nation."³⁶³ Rory Loughnane observes that to the early modern English, Wales seemed simultaneously vulnerable and dangerous. It was "both penetrable (for foreign armies) and potent (as a bordering launchpad for rebellion)"; at the same time, it "was considered irrevocably wild and ungovernable,"³⁶⁴ as its people still relied on subsistence agriculture and its lagging infrastructure remained unable to support city centers.³⁶⁵

Despite this dim view of Wales itself, most Anglo-Welsh interactions within England were cooperative rather than contentious, largely because many Welsh had made their way to England and assimilated into its culture. The 1485 accession of Henry VII, a Welsh king, seems to have encouraged Welsh migration to London. In the city, well-to-do young Welshmen enrolled at Oxford, Cambridge, and the Inns of Court, and Welsh farmers left behind struggling homesteads to seek alternative forms of employment.³⁶⁶ In 1535, Henry VIII formally annexed Wales through the Acts of Union, banning its laws, language, and customs while granting its gentry seats in the English parliament.³⁶⁷ The incorporation further encouraged friendlier relations between the two countries. More Welsh people migrated to England, and Welsh soldiers participated in English wars, including the Earl of Essex's expeditions to the Azores, Cadiz, and Ireland in the 1590s.³⁶⁸ Many Welsh gentlemen, or *uchelwr*, became London lawyers, participated in English governance, and married English wives. Welsh women also sought employment in Britain's largest city.³⁶⁹ Still, despite

³⁶³ William Camden, *Britain: or, A Chorographicall description of the most flourishing Kingdomes, England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the Ilands adioyning* (London, 1610), sig. K1r; quoted in Cull, "Contextualizing 1610," 29.

³⁶⁴ Loughnane, "I myself would for Caernarfonshire," 190.

³⁶⁵ Emrys Jones, "From Medieval to Renaissance City," in *The Welsh in London, 1500-2000*, ed. Emrys Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), 35-36.

³⁶⁶ W.P. Griffith, "Tudor Prelude," in *The Welsh in London*, 13.

³⁶⁷ W.J. Hughes, *Wales and the Welsh in English Literature From Shakespeare to Scott* (London: Hughes & Son, 1924).

³⁶⁸ A. H. Dodd, "North Wales in the Essex Revolt of 1601," *The English Historical Review* 59, no. 235 (September 1944): 359, 361.

³⁶⁹ Griffith, "Tudor Prelude," 14. Indeed, some Welsh Londoners may have felt their kinsmen had assimilated *too* completely: Griffith reproduces a poem by John Owen that criticizes "Davis," a Welshman, for jettisoning his Welsh heritage, 31n125.

Henry's proscriptions, many Welsh localities continued to retain their cultural and linguistic heritage. Megan Lloyd points out that within Wales, "many officials, those who enforced English law and managed church and parish, remained monoglot Welsh," and official proclamations continued to be read in the ancient language well into Elizabeth's reign.³⁷⁰

Welsh migrants to England brought with them a vibrant oral tradition, fostering an English view of the Welsh as musical, talkative, and genealogically inclined. For centuries, Welsh bards had celebrated their rulers' lineages in song and verse, and the parallel bardic tradition of prophetic prediction relied upon genealogical information, as well.³⁷¹ Geoffrey of Monmouth's history of English kings and the *Brut* chronicles were probably based more upon Welsh oral history than written records.³⁷² This aptitude for genealogical storytelling eventually extended beyond the nobility and the artistic classes to include lay Welsh citizens, making the poetic celebration of Welsh community a vernacular tradition. D.R. Woolf notes that Gerald of Wales, the twelfth-century Norman-Welsh chronicler, had been "impressed by the ability of the Welsh to commit their royal genealogies to memory."³⁷³ This was helped by the fact that bardic poetry was a steadfastly vernacular genre: writers ensured that it remained free of regional idioms so people from every part of Wales could understand it.³⁷⁴ As more Welsh became anglicized, some bards put their skills to use in their new cultural milieu. Several of the first Welsh men deputized to act as heralds in England's

³⁷⁰ Megan Lloyd, "Rhymer, Minstrel Lady Mortimer and the Power of Welsh Words," in *Shakespeare and Wales*, 65. See also Lloyd, "To Speak Welsh: Nonsense and Subversion in Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part I*," in "*Speak it in Welsh*": *Wales and the Welsh Language in Shakespeare* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 1-21, and Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 77, 162.

³⁷¹ See R. Wallis Evans, "Prophetic Poetry," in *A Guide to Welsh Literature, II: 1282-c.1550*, ed. A.O.H. Jarman and Gwilym Rees Hughes, rev. ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), 256-74; and Glanmor Williams, "Prophecy, Poetry and Politics in Medieval Wales," in *British Government and Administration*, ed. H. Hearder and H.R. Loyn (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1974).

³⁷² D.R. Woolf, "'The Common Voice': History, Folklore and Oral Tradition in Early Modern England," *Past and Present* 120, no. 1 (August 1988): 28, and Thorpe, "Introduction," in *The History of the Kings of Britain*, 14-19.

³⁷³ Woolf, "'The Common Voice,'" 28.

³⁷⁴ Williams, *Recovery, Reorientation and Reformation*, 149.

College of Arms were also bardic poets, suggesting a strong connection between their native verse tradition and their heraldic pursuits.³⁷⁵

The Welsh bardic tradition helped transmit a broad cultural sense of ancient gentility to the Welsh people—a sense that remained strong even among migrants who had only been lately recognized as gentlemen in England.³⁷⁶ The rules for land inheritance in Wales were more equitable than England's, meaning that a sizable proportion of Welshmen were able to earn the 15-40£ annually from land income that was a precondition for a coat of arms in England as of 1530. These well-to-do Welsh gentry supported the remaining bardic poets, who in turn praised their patrons' origins in song and verse, even those whose lineage narratives had been recently created and featured noticeable gaps.³⁷⁷ At the same time, nearly half of Wales' native residents—regardless of whether they earned any land income or bore a coat of arms—claimed gentility based on their supposed descent from the Trojans who had accompanied Brutus when he invaded Britain.³⁷⁸ As historian John Davies observes, “the majority of the Welsh belonged to the degree of gentleman, and families who did not rise to the rank of squire would remember for generations to come that their lineage was as honorable as that of more fortunate families.”³⁷⁹ Even after the annexation—and perhaps because of it—Welshmen who migrated to England took special pride in both their individual and collective origins.

³⁷⁵ Michael Powell Siddons, *The Development of Welsh Heraldry*, vol. 1 (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 1991), 303-321. Lewys Dwnn, a deputy who conducted visitations in Wales from 1585-1614, is the “most important and authoritative source for Welsh pedigrees and heraldry,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. “Dwnn, Lewys (b. c.1545, d. in or after 1616),” by Michael Powell Siddons, accessed February 12, 2014, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/article/8340>. Siddons explains that Dwnn's manuscripts “need reading with great care, being written in a very untidy fashion, and in a curious mixture of Welsh, and English spelt phonetically in the Welsh manner,” *The Development of Welsh Heraldry*, 309-11. For a discussion of Michael Drayton's citation of Welsh bardic tradition, see John E. Curran, Jr., “The History Never Written: Bards, Druids, and the Problem of Antiquarianism in *Poly Olbion*,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (Summer 1998), 498-525.

³⁷⁶ Schwyzer notes that “excessive pride in birth and absurd claims to gentility were staple attributes of the early modern stage Welshman,” but this characterization clearly extended beyond the stage. “Thirteen Ways of Looking Like a Welshman: Shakespeare and His Contemporaries,” in *Shakespeare and Wales*, 23.

³⁷⁷ Williams, *Recovery, Reorientation and Reformation*, 98-99.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 96-97; Davies, *A History of Wales*, 265.

³⁷⁹ Davies, *A History of Wales*, 268.

English Derision

Though the Welsh bardic tradition was dying out by the late sixteenth century, its impact remained strong enough to create a chasm between the concept of gentility in England and its counterpart in Wales. The acquisition of arms in England was a relatively secretive process that hinged on an applicant's individual consultations with heraldic officers, and privacy could be particularly advantageous if a person's pedigree was questionable or fraudulent. Exposure of an improper grant was possible, but unlikely: the only real risks of discovery lay in heralds' attacks on each others' methods, which were inconsistent, or in visitations, which occurred once per generation at most. As earlier chapters showed, these events could result in embarrassing or high-profile retractions, but the majority of pedigrees went unchallenged.³⁸⁰ The reticence surrounding English arms creation contrasted strongly with the Welsh poetic tradition, which openly celebrated the lineages of its socially and geographically mobile countrymen. The oral tradition that honored newly created Welsh gentlemen was especially different from the quiet heraldic striving of an Englishman like Shakespeare, who would in 1599 discreetly finagle his way into a coat of arms and was loathe to parade it too openly lest it be challenged. Ironically, England's most famous bard declined to leave behind public accounts of his newly earned familial device: we have only a few heralds' records and an engraving on his tombstone to document the transaction.

Outside the College of Arms, the Welsh fondness for trumpeting genealogy was expressly disdained by the English as they began to incorporate the Welsh gentry into their own system of heraldic honor. In English society, as we have seen, "lineage unsupported by adequate wealth was increasingly considered insufficient to maintain the status of gentleman"; a true gentleman needed not only to obtain armigerous status, but to maintain it through the acquisition and display of concomitant goods, from the tangible (a livery, heraldic plate, property) to the intangible (chivalric

³⁸⁰ See, e.g., the account of how Ralph Brooke fooled Sir William Segar, Garter King of Arms, into granting arms to a "common hangman of London," Chapter 1, p. 47.

behavior, genteel bearing, and other evidence of a good education). Given the demanding economic standards of their new English milieu, not all Welshmen who held land and bore arms in their own country could afford to maintain the more stringent standards of the English gentry. As a result, among the educated English gentle class, “the genealogical pride of a poor Welsh *uchelwr* (gentleman) was an object of derision.”³⁸¹

Indeed, English writers—who were usually gentlemen themselves—often mocked Welsh pride as ignorant pretentiousness. One commonplace book compiled circa 1630 features hundreds of recopied books, maxims, ballads, and poems, many of them satirical. One of these handwritten sets of verses, “The Languages,” describes half a dozen European nationalities and their idiosyncrasies in traditionally ethnocentric early modern fashion. The first stanza paints a portrait of the Welsh as inordinately fond of cheese and leeks, and prone to making ludicrous claims about their ancestry:

See See where a welchman approacheth
Hark what strange language hee broacheth
Hee deriues his pedegree, as far as from old Adam
And sayes that his great grandmother, was a mighty madam
Besides he hath an antient house, built on a mountain steep
Where hee feeds on leeks and geese, and a load of toasted cheese
And frolick now and then, feeds on an English sheepe.³⁸²

This stereotype circulated in a wide range of texts, from anonymous manuscripts to the works of well-known English writers. In his 1616 character book *A Wife*, Thomas Overbury includes an entry succinctly mocking England’s assimilated outsiders. The relevant character sketch, titled “A Braggadocio Welshman,” reads in its entirety: “Loues an Herrald, and speakes pedigrees

³⁸¹ Davies, *A History of Wales*, 258.

³⁸² *Poetical Miscellany*, Commonplace book (no author), Curteis manuscript (c. 1630), Folger manuscript V.a.345. The poem is also recorded in Manuscript 239/27, p. 81, at Philadelphia’s Rosenbach Museum & Library under the title “A Song of Nations.” Union First Line Index of English Verse, accessed 10 February 2014, <http://firstlines.folger.edu/detail.php?id=241413>.

naturally.”³⁸³ Given the entry’s title, the observation was a double-edged compliment. The anecdote suggests that heralds and the Welsh share a common language. The “pedigrees” that emanate from mouths of men in both communities are, in essence, a foreign tongue. Implicitly, Overbury links the complicated vocabulary of blazon with the Welsh language, which the English are notoriously unable to comprehend. Anything spoken “naturally” by the Welsh requires work for an Englishman to understand. Moreover, Overbury’s portrayal of Welsh exuberance, even if good-natured, is condescending, implying that Welsh people’s conception of their own past is hyperbolic, at times even fanciful. The Welshman’s familiarity with pedigrees results from longstanding oral tradition, an inferior mode of knowledge to the rigorous textual study supposedly conducted by English gentlemen. Similarly, John Earle’s *Microcosmographie* (1627-28) describes the herald as “an Art in England, but in Wales Nature, where they are borne with Heraldry in their mouthes, and each Name is a Pedegree.”³⁸⁴ By applying the art/nature binary to heraldic knowledge, Earle makes an explicit distinction between vernacular Welsh tradition and the refined education that English gentlemen ostensibly gained through the study of genealogical and heraldic texts.

Jokes about Welsh pride in their own genealogies also extended to their surname tradition. During the sixteenth century, many Welsh men in England continued a medieval patronymic naming custom by linking themselves to as many as nine previous ancestors using the word *ap*, meaning “son of”: as Holinshed writes, “the Irish & Welsh...call not anie man by the name of his familie or nation as is vsed in England: but by the name of difference giuen to his father.”³⁸⁵ The system likely stemmed from the fact that, until Henry VIII passed the Acts of Union, Welsh law

³⁸³ Thomas Overbury, *A wife now the widdow of Sir Thomas Overburie Being a most exquisite and singular poem of the choice of a wife. Whereunto are added many witty characters, and conceited newes, written by himselfe and other learned gentlemen his friends* (London, 1614), sig. D8r.

³⁸⁴ John Earle, *Micro-cosmographie, or, A peece of the world discovered in essayes and characters* (London, 1628), sig I9v.

³⁸⁵ Raphael Holinshed, *The Second volume of Chronicles: Containing the description, conquest, inhabitation, and troblesome estate of Ireland* (London, 1586), sig. B1v.

allowed men with common ancestors to hold land jointly.³⁸⁶ Naturally, English writers couldn't resist seizing upon the tradition's comic potential. An epigram by Sir John Harington, written during the 1590s, concerns two Welsh gentlemen traveling together to Westminster. At the end of the poem, the men seek lodging at an inn. When the chamberlain asks how many guests are in their party, they reply, "Heer's Iohn ap rice ap Iones ap Hew / And Nicholas ap Steev'n ap Iyles ap Davy." The man turns them away, thinking their party is much larger than two: "Your worships might haue had a bed or twain, / But how can that suffize so great a trayn?"³⁸⁷ Anthony Munday used the same conceit several years later in *The Life of Sir John Oldcastle*: after a judge breaks up a fight between Owen and Davy, two brawling Welshmen, he asks them who will provide their bail. Davy's answer features the catch-all Welsh pronoun "her" and a roll of forebears: "Her coozin ap Ries, ap Euan, ap Morrice, ap Morgan, ap Lluellyn, ap Madoc, ap Meredith, ap Griffen, ap Dauy, ap Owen ap Shinken Shones." Taken aback, the judge replies, "Two of the most, sufficient are ynow," prompting the bystander Sheriff to clarify: "And't please your Lordship these are al but one."³⁸⁸ These scenes efficiently combine a trio of English jests about Welsh eccentricities. In their neighbors' eyes, the Welsh are so obsessed with pedigrees that they incorporate a laundry list of ancestors into their contemporary surnames. These names take a long time to say, compounding the reputation of the Welsh for loquaciousness, and they prove nearly as confusing to English listeners as their Welsh neighbors' accented and grammatically confusing speech.

The middle- or lower-class Welshman who lived in England and claimed an ancient family undoubtedly irritated a certain type of English gentleman—the kind with a nagging sense that his own gentility was vulnerable to contempt or even denial by his peers. Plenty of English nobility and

³⁸⁶ Prys Morgan, "Keeping up with the Joneses," *Historian* 72 (Winter 2001): 38.

³⁸⁷ In a jab at their Catholicism, he describes the travelers as "Noble in bloud, discended of his house / That from our Ladies gown did take a lowse." Besides alluding to ongoing recusancy in North Wales, the line's similarity to the heraldic references in the opening scene of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, which I discuss below, is intriguing. I am grateful to Dr. Gerard Kilroy for pointing out the potential correlation.

³⁸⁸ Anthony Munday, *The first part of the true and honorable historie, of the life of Sir Iohn Old-castle, the good Lord Cobham* (London, 1600), sig. A4r.

aspiring gentry, often with the help of heralds at the College of Arms, manufactured origin narratives in order to gain armigerous status. Many even claimed Welsh ancestors in hopes of proving their existence since “time immemorial.”³⁸⁹ Such behavior was subject to public derision, as the proliferation of poetry and drama satirizing the arrogance of English “mushroom gentlemen” demonstrates. Thus, some texts poking fun at Welsh pretentiousness are blatant examples of the English pot calling the Welsh kettle black. John Harington, author of the Welsh-mocking epigram above, is a case in point. Harington fought with the Earl of Essex during his 1599 Irish campaign and was knighted by Essex, along with many others. But the Earl was subsequently reprimanded for bestowing honors without Queen Elizabeth’s permission, and Harington scrambled to distance himself from Essex lest he be viewed as scrounging for undeserved favors.³⁹⁰ This biographical detail adds some wry nuance to Harington’s comic derogation of Welsh gentlemen. The writer may have been fearful that public outcry would characterize his status as a lucky coincidence rather than the result of true nobility: unlike the Welshmen he satirized, he had no lineage about which he was willing to boast.

Recall that English historiography itself was changing during the period, and that consulting documents had become increasingly important as a method for verifying history.³⁹¹ For historians and antiquarians like William Camden and St. Loe Kniveton, oral evidence had become less acceptable than that of a documentary or material variety, even though heraldic tradition had long

³⁸⁹ William Sherman notes, “Whereas the Italians fashioned their noble genealogies with reference to the ancient Romans...Tudor genealogists turned to the ancient Welsh,” *John Dee: The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 227n54. For an explanation of the phrase “time immemorial,” see Chapter 1, p. 35.

³⁹⁰ *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Second Series, vol. 136, Sixteenth-Century British Nondramatic Writers, ed. David A. Richardson (Farmington Hills, MI: The Gale Group, 1994), s.v. “Sir John Harington,” by D.H. Craig, 185-92.

³⁹¹ M.T. Clancy writes that as late as the fourteenth century, written documents weren’t considered representative of historical “truth” in the modern sense. Rather, they were often forged, altered, or duplicated to justify the claims of involved parties. In other words, “documents were created and carefully conserved so that posterity might know about the past, but they were not necessarily allowed to accumulate by natural accretion over time nor to speak for themselves, because the truth was too important to leave to chance,” *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066-1307* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 119-20.

relied on spoken claims.³⁹² In England, the mere fact of owning a coat of arms—possessing material evidence of one’s nobility—was increasingly more important than the story behind it. Although a bevy of heralds’ drafts, manuscripts, and print texts justified English noblemen’s pedigrees, there was no equivalent of the Welsh bardic tradition to assimilate new English gentility through a widespread vernacular discourse. The tension between written history and contemporary heraldic practice thus began to reveal itself in writers’ attention to the voluble nature of Welsh historiography. Whereas Welshmen viewed their familial roots as stories to be widely shared, their genteel English counterparts hid their insecurities behind heraldic icons, whose meanings could both inform and deceive gentle and ungentle viewers alike.

English Prophecy & Politics

The English nobility were loathe to admit that they shared with their proud brethren a reliance on prophetic politics. Although many writers insisted otherwise, the use of ancient British prophecy as a serious political tool was hardly confined to Welsh rebels. Ancient and contemporary predictions played a role in English politics from at least Henry VII onward, not only focusing the efforts of those who sought to displace kings but influencing the behavior and policies of monarchs themselves.³⁹³ Merlin’s prophecies may have inspired multiple Welsh rebellions, but they were used to rationalize dissent within England as well. His predictions were circulated to prop up the claims of both the Yorks and Lancasters, and they played a role in every rebellion that arose during the Tudors’ reign.³⁹⁴

Given prophecy’s subversive potential, English monarchs took both favorable and ominous predictions with more than a grain of salt. Henry VII’s parliament made prophetic proclamations a felony, and his successors took similar steps to end the practice: a decade after the Gruffydd uprising,

³⁹² See Chapter 2, pp. 64, 71-72.

³⁹³ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 398.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 397.

from 1541-47, Henry VIII formally prohibited the declaration of “any false prophecy” without benefit of clergy.³⁹⁵ Queen Elizabeth, vexed by noble rebellions in the northern part of England, passed a similar ban in 1563, fearing that such statements provided malcontents with both motivation and justification for rising up against her government.³⁹⁶ Even as they legislated against new prophecies, however, the Tudor monarchs interpreted old ones to their own advantage. As Paul Strohm has observed, while predictive prophecies are most appealing to those seeking to effect change, those in power tend to cite prophecy retrospectively in order to justify their successes.³⁹⁷ Thus Henry VII promoted himself as the second coming of King Arthur, claiming to embody the fulfillment of Merlin’s prophecy that a British prince would one day reclaim England’s throne. Henry made a point of incorporating the Welsh red dragon into his royal heraldry: in the words of the legend, the red dragon (the Britons) would drive the white dragon (the Saxons) out of England.³⁹⁸ Henry also received the support of the Welsh bards, who placed him in the bloodline of Brennus, a legendary British conqueror,³⁹⁹ and praised him as “the ‘son of prophecy.’”⁴⁰⁰ Queen Elizabeth received similar validation from John Dee, the noted mathematician and astrologer. Dee, who was demonstrably proud of his own Welsh descent, used prophetic history to confirm and campaign for the Queen’s desires; at one point, he conveniently traced her genealogy back to the age of King Arthur in order to justify her dominion over Ireland.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁵ Statute 33 Henry VIII, c. XIV, cited in Rupert Taylor, *The Political Prophecy in England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1911), 105.

³⁹⁶ Statute 5 Elizabeth, c. XV.

³⁹⁷ Paul Strohm, *England’s Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399-1422* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 13.

³⁹⁸ Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism, and Memory*, 21.

³⁹⁹ Philip Schwyzer, “British History and ‘The British History’: The Same Old Story?,” in *British Identities and English Renaissance Literature*, ed. David J. Baker and Willy Maley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 15.

⁴⁰⁰ K.J. Kesselring, “Deference and Dissent in Tudor England: Reflections on Sixteenth-Century Protest,” *History Compass* 3, no.1 (January 2005): 9. Kesselring notes that on its face, such a device presented Elizabeth as beneficently linked with her subjects and their localities, but it also figuratively deprived her of control over her own actions.

⁴⁰¹ Sherman, *John Dee*, 7; Dobin, *Merlin’s Disciples*, 3. Dee’s influence was and is widely thought to be the impetus for the Merlin episode in the third book of Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queen*. The poem mythologizes Dee as Merlin and Elizabeth as Britomart; see Dobin, *Merlin’s Disciples*, 5-8 and 134-54. While Dee trumpeted her reign as the culmination of British legend, she also benefited from the trope’s local mode during visits England’s provinces. During her summer

Though both the English and Welsh gave credence to prophetic mythologies, the English sought to create a qualitative distinction between their own pursuits of honor and uses of prophecy and the equivalent efforts of the Welsh. English writers sought to differentiate their own social striving from Welsh tradition, which they portrayed as laughable, and to disentangle English pursuits of contemporary honor from prophetic Welsh visions of future glory. Even though the genre had influenced behavior and policy at the highest levels of the English court, chronicle writers tended to ascribe belief in predictive prophecy specifically to the Welsh. Holinshed refers to Merlin's moldwarp prediction as the "blind and fantasticall dreames of the Welsh propheiers." Similarly, Hall declares that the failure of Glendower's rebellion—the "confusion destruccion and perdition of" the credulous rebels—constitutes evidence that Welsh prophecies are mere "vnprofitable practises" and "diabolicall deuises," i.e., riddles or tricks that mislead their believers.⁴⁰²

Chroniclers and anti-prophetic writers also linked belief in and dissemination of prophecies with deficiencies in social status and education, insisting that they were nonsense spread by uneducated troublemakers. While discussing Joan of Arc's death, Edward Hall writes that King Henry VI sent a letter to his fellow princes verifying her demise. In the letter, he instructs them to "admonishe all rude and ignorant persones, in all other countries, to refraine, from the credite and belefe of the saynges, of suche prophane prophesies, and craftie imageners."⁴⁰³ As Hall would have it, only the "rude and ignorant" are prey to mistaken beliefs, while their princes protect them from those beliefs.⁴⁰⁴ Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton likewise refers to prophetic faith as an infirmity afflicting "the simple and unlearned"; his opinion may have been influenced by the fact

visits to noble estates, some of her hosts staged entertainments that positioned the Queen's visit as the fulfillment of a preordained plan. See Rachel Kappelle, "Predicting Elizabeth: Prophecy on Progress," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 24 (January 2011): 83-105.

⁴⁰² Hall, *The vnion of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancastre [and] Yorke*, sig. C6v.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, sig. T3r.

⁴⁰⁴ Alternatively, they are said to have the foresight to believe in the prophecies that, in retrospect, justify their actions.

that his own brother was executed for circulating an unwelcome prediction.⁴⁰⁵ In *A Discoursiue Probleme Concerning Prophecies* (1588), John Harvey asks whether any noted theologians, mathematicians, philosophers, or “famous professors of other liberall sciences and faculties” have ever given credence to “such rauing, and senselesse conceits”:

doth it not manifestly appéere as well by histories, and chronicles in all languages...that none of the learned were euer addicted to the maintaining, fostering, or fauouring of any such paultry; as matters commonly repugnant and opposite to all good learning, and to the very grounds of Arte? The smaller skil, the greater credulitie: the lesser knowledge, the more passio[n]: Ignorance in many cases the moother of Deuotion: Simplicitie is soone perswaded, and beguiled: nothing more easie, than to blind the rude multitude...⁴⁰⁶

Indeed, to emphasize the “simplicity” of these tales, English writers disparage the zoological imagery that pervades prophecy (and which serve as avatars in heraldic signs) as the puerile stuff of fables. Holinshed pointedly demystifies the heraldic avatars—the moldwarp, lion, wolf, and sheep—of Merlin’s Welsh prophecy as “blind and fantasticall dreames.” Harvey dismisses the episode in an even more sarcastic tone:

When I see a beare blowing a trumpet: or heare a cocke crowing out of the region of the Moone; or vnderstand a white rauen talking to a greyhound; then, and in those daies will I also *per buon* companie begin to esteeme *Merlin* for a great prophet, and regard his writings for true prophesies. Untill which time *Merlin* and all *Merlinists* must be faine either to pardon such incredulous persons, as I am, or else to yeeld sounder prooffe of their monstrous *Heraldicall* blazonings, than yet appéereth.⁴⁰⁷

Harvey’s counterfactual turns the allegorical animals of the myth into straw men. The wolf, dragon, and lion with regal aspirations are mere fantasies meant to gull imbeciles; they are as implausible as bears blowing trumpets, and safely confined to the realm of “fabulous traditions, and vaine rumors” circulated by communities of ignorant, loquacious people—namely, the poor, the uneducated, and the Welsh. Paradoxically, however, Harvey’s conclusion contextualizes those “vaine rumors” using an allusion to heraldry—an accepted allegorical system still respected in contemporary English

⁴⁰⁵ Henry Howard, *A Defensative Against the Poyson of Supposed Prophecies* (London, 1583), 119, quoted in Kesselring, “Deference and Dissent in Tudor England,” 9.

⁴⁰⁶ John Harvey, *A discoursiue probleme concerning prophecies how far they are to be valued, or credited* (London, 1588), sig. B3r-B3v.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, sig. H4r.

culture. His protest against “monstrous Heraldicall blazonings” acknowledges a connection between Welsh prophecy and the heraldic discourse and imagery that structure and perpetuate contemporary ideals of English gentility.

Indeed, each royal proscription specifically prohibited predictions whose animal imagery could be interpreted as applying to particular people. Although the earliest prophesies had used arbitrary symbols, the rise of heraldry as a personal identification system spurred a change in the prophetic vernacular. Prophecy had long described the future actions of humans using animal avatars; those avatars became threatening omens when they corresponded with the heraldic beasts depicted on real people’s arms. The lion of Scotland’s royal arms came to represent multiple generations of Scottish kings; the leopard did the same for the English; and the red dragon—initially used by the legendary British king Cadwallader, and later incorporated into the English royal arms by Henry VII—signified Welsh nobility.⁴⁰⁸ Henry VIII and Elizabeth thus warned against writing or printing “any fond, fantastical or false prophecy, upon or by occasion of any arms, fields, beasts, badges or such other like things accustomed in arms, cognizances or signets” in an attempt to foment “rebellion, insurrection, [or] dissension.” Under Elizabeth, such action faced a 10£ fine and a year in prison.⁴⁰⁹ These policies accorded heraldic signs an unprecedented level of signifying power. Not only could a person be punished for improperly using royal images on a shield, as the Earl of Surrey was in 1546, but the mere citation of seemingly-heraldic images—ones that predicted an event that might occur but hadn’t—became grounds for legal action. As Keith Thomas notes, “so long as the monarchy and peerage used such emblems, they could be plausibly applied to fit contemporary events,” and history had shown that English royalty couldn’t afford to take any chances.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁸ Taylor, *The Political Prophecy in England*, 113-14.

⁴⁰⁹ Statute 5 Elizabeth, c. XV and Statute 33 Henry VIII, c. XIV.

⁴¹⁰ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 274.

Despite being verbal rather than visual, early modern English prophecy shared some of heraldry's emblematic qualities. It relied on the continued cultural circulation of a set of familiar images and its accompanying vocabulary. But whereas a gentleman's heraldic device visually condensed his origin story, a prophecy *multiplied* potential meanings through metaphor and riddle: it could apply to different people at different times, and serve the needs of those employing it to justify their political desires. Prophecy combined heraldic images with threats to the social order, leading English writers to link prophecy with rebelliousness, and to a lesser degree, with Wales' distinctive oral culture. Though elite Welshmen were beginning to abandon it—along with the bardic tradition—as they assimilated into English culture, prophecy remained part of a proud vernacular that celebrated social mobility rather than naturalizing elite status in a static symbol. And to the dismay of some English elites, heraldic coats of arms allowed many Welshmen to visually supplement their already strong personal and national identities with images that signified familial and cultural pride.

Onstage, Shakespeare's Welsh characters bring to light the ways the intertwined discourses of heraldry and prophecy pervaded interactions between the Welsh and English in contemporary English culture. Though the plays' settings are medieval, Shakespeare's Welsh characters are consummately early modern. While Shakespeare's English nobles tend to be skeptical—if not fearful—of conversations that challenge the opaque symbols of inherited nobility, the Welsh react to fluid political circumstances by openly displaying—and welcoming discussions about—their Welshness. They embody a model of social identity based not upon an emblematic, exclusive system, but on narratives that link past and present, producing both tension and grudging cooperation. By alternately melding and contrasting Welsh and English characters' oral and visual traditions, Shakespeare showcases his own theater's participation in the creation of Anglo-Welsh historiography.

Welshness, Heraldry, and Prophecy in *1 & 2 Henry IV*

Shakespeare's *1 Henry IV* is permeated with commentary on England's vexed relationship with Welsh prophecy. Shakespeare consulted both prose and verse histories for his portraits of the English and Welsh figures in the play, but his primary source was Holinshed's *Chronicles*.⁴¹¹ Scholars have fully outlined the play's historical contexts and its faithfulness to its sources, including providing details that differentiate the real Welsh rebel, Owain Glyn Dwr, from his fictional counterpart, Owen Glendower.⁴¹² But Shakespeare's portrayal of the prophetic discourses of the English and Welsh deserves greater attention. Despite their shared goals, the rebels Hotspur and Glendower express divergent attitudes toward historiography and prophecy. While Glendower adapts his level of prophetic belief—or at least its expression—to each new circumstance, Hotspur is committed to the ideology of othering that pervades English views of the Welsh.⁴¹³

Though Shakespeare depicts the Welsh as a restive people, he rejects the chronicle writers' suggestion that they are unusually violent. He portrays Welsh rebelliousness from a distance, having characters describe it through reports rather than showing it onstage, and toning down those reports in comparison to their original sources. At the play's opening, the atrocities committed by the Welsh women are relayed in secondhand fashion, through Westmoreland's report. Members of Shakespeare's audience who had never read the *Chronicles*—that is, most of them—would be unlikely

⁴¹¹ For *1 Henry IV*, Shakespeare consulted Holinshed, Edward Hall's *Union of the two noble and illustre families of Lancaster [and] Yorke* (1548), John Stow's *Chronicles* (1580) and *Annals* (1592), Thomas Phaer's verse portrait of Owen Glendower from *A Mirror for Magistrates* (1559), and Samuel Daniel's poem *The Civile Wars Between the Two Houses of Lancaster and Yorke* (1595). See Herbert Weil and Judith Weil's introduction to William Shakespeare, *The First Part of King Henry IV*, rev. ed. (1997; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 21-2. For a comprehensive discussion of historiography's role in the play, see Barbara Hodgdon's "Historiography and the Uses of History," in *The First Part of King Henry IV: Texts and Contexts*, ed. Hodgdon (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997). In *The End Crowns All: Closure and Contradiction in Shakespeare's History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), Hodgdon theorizes Shakespearean historiography proleptically. She argues that the "Shakespearean play" comprises texts created during performance as well as before it and "can be reconfigured progressively" to create meaning at various points in time, 538.

⁴¹² For the differences between the historical and fictional Welsh rebels, see David J. Baker, "Glyn Dwr, Glendouer, Glendourdy and Glendower," in *Shakespeare and Wales*, 43-58; and Rees Davies, "Shakespeare's Glendower and Owain Glyn Dwr," *Historian* 66 (Summer 2000): 22-25.

⁴¹³ Howard Dobin discusses the role of Welsh prophecy in the histories, including *1 Henry IV*, in Chapter 4 of *Merlin's Disciples*, 154-83. His theoretical framework is poststructuralist rather than historical, and he focuses on Shakespeare's portrayal of the fulfillment of Tudor royalist myth.

to recall that text's description of a similar battle that ended with the Englishmen's penises stuffed into their mouths and anuses.⁴¹⁴ Unlike Holinshed, Shakespeare's earl declines to provide such gory details; instead, he delicately demurs, "Such beastly shameless transformation...may not be / Without much shame retold or spoken of" (1.1.44, 46). Some of Shakespeare's English audience members may have held such stereotypes about the Welsh, and his Welsh spectators may have personally fallen victim to them, but he didn't expect viewers to know or recall such historical minutiae. Consequently, in this and other scenes, the English become entirely responsible for characterizing their Welsh antagonists, a tactic that raises some doubt about the veracity of their accounts. The Welsh's tactics may or may not have been "beastly," as Westmoreland explains; his brief account may say more about his own desire to go to war than accurately reflect the Welsh's provocative behavior.

Still, because Westmoreland is a member of the king's inner circle—a nobleman and a trusted councilor—Henry takes his word as truthful enough to go to battle. We are quickly shown how vastly his standard of belief depends upon the identity of the messenger, as he responds differently to Henry Percy/Hotspur several scenes later. Like Westmoreland, Hotspur tells King Henry a tale of Welsh violence after the fact. His uncle, the Lord Mortimer, has married Owen Glendower's daughter, raising questions about his loyalty and angering the king. To prove Mortimer's continued allegiance, Hotspur insists that Mortimer once fought the Welshman in single combat. Hotspur's defense is markedly more detailed than Westmoreland's earlier report; his gleeful account of his kinsman's "charging hardiment with great Glendower" (1.3.100) is nearly twenty lines long (92-111). In his retelling, the man-to-man combat was so brutal that it bloodied the nearby Severn River, suggesting the English Mortimer is as vicious as the Welsh rebel; unlike in the earlier

⁴¹⁴ Jean Howard includes this observation in her footnote on Westmoreland's comments in *The History of Henry the Fourth*, ed. Jean E. Howard, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Greenblatt, et al. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), line 1.1.44n. All citations of the play come from this edition.

Welsh attack, both parties are doing violence to one another. But the King not only brushes off Hotspur's evocative description; he utterly refuses to believe his defense, responding, "Thou dost belie him, Percy...He never did encounter with Glendower" (112-13).⁴¹⁵ The King is apparently wary of convenient oral narratives, particularly those told by upstarts with a vested interest in continuing conflict.

Shakespeare continues his softened treatment of the Welsh through his portrayal of Glendower. In Holinshed, the Welsh rebel plunders English towns and encourages his followers to kill Henry by booby-trapping his bed.⁴¹⁶ By contrast, Shakespeare's Glendower, in Mortimer's estimation, is "a worthy gentleman; exceedingly well-read...and valiant as a lion" (3.1.162-63). This description squares with Owain Glyn Dwr's actual biography: he was a member of the Welsh gentry, and like many of his fellow *uchelwr*, sought his education in London at the Inns of Court. But Shakespeare's Glendower is still viewed as strange and frustrating by both friend and foe, having been reputed to excel at using some sort of vaguely defined magic. The Earl of Westmoreland introduces him as "irregular and wild" in the opening scene, and King Henry calls him "that great magician, damned Glendower" (1.3.82). Falstaff, citing rumor, describes him as "he of Wales that gave Amamon the bastinado, and made Lucifer cuckold, and swore the devil his true liegeman upon the cross of a Welsh hook" (2.4.278-80). Even Mortimer is puzzled by his father-in-law's duality: while he grants Glendower the title "gentleman," in the same breath he calls him "profited / In strange concealments," referring to his claim to possess occult powers.

Contributing to Glendower's reputation as an enigmatic magus—and emphasizing the role of English speculation in fostering that reputation—is the fact that he is absent from the stage for

⁴¹⁵ Some critics have suggested that Hotspur is a figure for the Earl of Essex, who had a strong Welsh following during his military expeditions, as well as in his attempted rebellion of 1601. In a precursor to Essex's failure to fully utilize his Welsh "power-base" during his ill-fated uprising, Hotspur fails to fully embrace his Welsh ally's opportunistic worldview. See Dodd, "North Wales in the Essex Revolt of 1601," and Janet Dickinson, *Court Politics and the Earl of Essex, 1589-1601* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012), 110-111.

⁴¹⁶ Herbert Weil and Judith Weil, "Appendix: Shakespeare and Holinshed," in *The First Part of King Henry IV*, 232.

the first half of the play. He doesn't appear in person until the third act, when he consults with his new allies, the English rebels. Even then, his bearing and speech suggest he is no provincial Welsh countryman. Shakespeare's text declines to replace the *b*'s in his dialogue with *p*'s, suggesting that he lacks a Welsh accent. And rather than boasting of his ancient British heritage, he insists to his English allies that he is "not in the roll of common men" (3.1.40). His declaration alludes to the rolls of jousters' arms drawn up by heralds at medieval tournaments, as well as to the more recent practice of visitations, in which heralds recorded the arms of provincial gentry in books. In other words, the roll participates in the English emblematic mode of historiography by recording symbols of lineage and status, eschewing description in favor of documentation. Glendower explicitly insists his name does not require such a document as proof of his greatness. Indeed, rather than linking himself with the Welsh or English, he intends to separate himself from *all* other men: even those with armorial status and privilege are included in his all-encompassing dismissal. In contravention to the historical Glyn Dwr, who received an English education, Glendower insists he has not received tutelage from any master (43), nor does his distinction stem from his family. He rejects the binary set forth by English heraldic writers who insist that nobility is either based on one's ancient lineage or earned through one's actions. Dismissing the notion that he owes anything to his education *or* his ancestors, Glendower insists that he is a singularity: nature itself "[has] marked [him] extraordinary" (38).

His proof of this grand statement comes from the cosmos' apparent reaction to his birth. Glendower twice mentions the "fiery shapes" from heaven that greeted his nativity (12, 35), and says that the earth trembled at his arrival. However, the evidence he provides is situational rather than prophetic: he never refers to Merlin or the ancient Welsh legends, suggesting that the other characters' conceptions of Glendower as a prophecy-obsessed wildling may be the product of

imagination rather than reality.⁴¹⁷ Audience members familiar with Holinshed's account may have known that Glyn Dwr sought to fulfill the magus' ancient predictions, but some would have been unaware of the chronicle history, and Glendower himself never suggests that Merlin lies behind his actions. For all his loquacity, in this scene he behaves like an English-educated Welsh gentleman, not a foolhardy believer. By omitting any mention of the Arthurian lore that early modern British writers insisted was the cause of Welsh pride, Shakespeare distances Glendower from the English historiography that emphasizes the importance of prophesy to Welsh history and identity.

When Glendower proudly expounds on the celestial wonders of his birth, Hotspur, an Englishman, brings him back down to earth. The young rebel speaks metaphorically of a mother earth in his refutation of the Welshman's fantastical account:

Oft the teeming earth
Is with a kind of colic pinched and vexed
By imprisoning of unruly wind
Within her womb, which for enlargement striving
Shakes the old beldam earth, and topples down
Steeple and moss-grown towers. At your birth
Our grandam earth, having this distemperature,
In passion shook. (3.1. 25-32)

Rejecting the Welshman's account of his own cosmically-ordained eminence, Hotspur creates a terrestrial mother for Glendower, and indeed for all of humanity. Hotspur's own status as a rebel distances him somewhat from conventional narratives of English lineage, but he doesn't dismiss them entirely: his evocative metaphor borrows from both the vernacular Welsh and emblematic English modes. He creates a mystical origin story for Glendower, yet like the Welshman, he rejects Arthurian prophecy in favor of a generalized mythology. Like many English, he connects the Welshman with the wildness of nature; by calling earth "our grandam" and speaking of her "womb," he constrains Glendower within a pseudo-genealogical framework. He also creates a strikingly

⁴¹⁷ Joan Fitzpatrick makes a similar observation in "Celtic Alterity and the Force of Prophecy: *1 Henry 4*, *2 Henry 4*, and *Macbeth*," in *Shakespeare, Spenser and the Contours of Britain: Reshaping the Atlantic Archipelago* (Hertfordshire, UK: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2004), 129-30. Her chapter focuses on rumor and report in the plays.

feminine, even pagan paradigm that associates Glendower with a mystical, feminized Welsh mother, declining to link him with the patrilineal system of ancestry and inheritance used by English nobility.⁴¹⁸ But with his observation that “steeples and moss-grown towers” fail to withstand the ravages of time and nature, his description also hints at the potential transience of two of England’s traditional institutions—the church and the monarch. His imagery subtly hints that the material symbols of England’s past are ephemeral. Somewhat paradoxically, then, Hotspur’s description of decadent English emblems compounds the force of Glendower’s personal narrative. Whether or not he intends to do so, the English rebel suggests that tangible history is no match for powerful storytelling.

Given Hotspur’s unique position as an English rebel against an English king—a man in league with the Welsh, but not *of* them—his subsequent complaint about prophecies can be read as an attempt to maintain a degree of politic distance from his Welsh allies. After Glendower exits, Hotspur grumbles his displeasure with the old man’s ramblings:

[...] Sometime he angers me
With telling me of the moldwarp and the ant,
Of the dreamer Merlin and his prophecies,
And of a dragon and a finless fish,
A clip-winged griffin and a moulted raven,
A couching lion and a ramping cat,
And such a deal of skimble-skamble stuff
As puts me from my faith. I tell you what:
He held me last night at least nine hours
In reckoning up the several devils’ names
That were his lackeys. I cried ‘Hum,’ and ‘Well, go to!’
But mark’d him not a word. (3.1.142-53)

This scene is inspired by Holinshed’s account of the three rebels who gather to divide up England before they actually succeed in conquering it. Holinshed writes that the men foolishly acted on

⁴¹⁸ For recent work on the feminization of Wales in Shakespeare, see Loughnane, “I myself would for Caernarfonshire”; Lisa Hopkins, “The Marches: *Henry IV* and *Henry V*,” in *Shakespeare on the Edge: Border-Crossing in the Tragedies and the Henriad* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005), 15-17; and Kate Chedgzoy, “Shakespeare’s Welsh Grandmother,” in *Shakespeare and Wales*, 7-20.

Merlin's prophecy that "king Henrie was the moldwarpe, cursed of Gods owne mouth, and they three were the dragon, the lion, and the wolfe, which should diuide this realme betweene them."⁴¹⁹

By muddling prophetic emblems, written history, and oral memory, the speech highlights Hotspur's reliance on both Welsh and English modes of historiography. On one hand, he is an Englishman patronizing Welsh prophecy as patently absurd. The historical Glyn Dwr did, in fact, bear the sign of the dragon as a heraldic symbol: the creature was also associated with King Arthur and Cadwallader, the last British king.⁴²⁰ But Hotspur's account fails to verbally link the images he cites with specific people, instead relying on the associative power the animals presumably have for his English audience. Shakespeare's audience finally hears Merlin's name and is meant to link Glendower with the magician's occult predictions. Spectators unfamiliar with the precise mythology would understand they were meant to consider it "skimble-skamble stuff": ridiculous, childish, and doomed to failure.

On the other hand, though Hotspur means to mock Welsh prophesies, he also participates in them, mirroring the English tendency to repurpose ancient history into convenient narratives about Welsh inferiority. Hotspur insists that the old man often brags about his starring role in Merlin's predictions, and provides convincing detail of his most recent diatribe—yet he also admits that over the course of Glendower's ostensible nine-hour pontification, he "mark'd him not a word." Hotspur's evocative animal catalogue may, then, be as much a comment on the persistence of English mythology as a critique of its Welsh counterpart. Moreover, Hotspur's bestiary of heraldic animals includes some that don't appear in the Merlinic prophecy he cites. The griffin, lion, fish, raven, and cat (panther) are all common symbols on English coats, and the terms "ramping" and "couching" place them explicitly within the linguistic framework of heraldic blazon. These

⁴¹⁹ Keith Thomas explains that the prophecy "had been used by the Percies in their rising against Henry IV in the early fifteenth century, and despite obvious difficulties with chronology, was...brought into action [by Catholic sympathizers] to combat Henry VIII," *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 399.

⁴²⁰ Henry Weil and Judith Weil, eds., *The First Part of King Henry IV*, line 3.1.145n.

images would be familiar to many in Shakespeare's sixteenth-century audience, but they would more likely call to mind contemporary heraldic objects than a specific prophecy. Thus, while Hotspur attempts to highlight his English superiority over the Welshman by mocking his national myths, he also alludes to their continuing presence in contemporary English culture.

The speech also emphasizes Hotspur's loquaciousness and general hot-headedness—qualities that would normally apply to his Welsh foil. His dismissal of “skimble-skamble stuff” brings to mind the term “pribble-prabble,” used often by stage Welshmen to refer to quarrels or trivial rhetoric.⁴²¹ Like such characters, Hotspur is prone to blustering speeches: when Sir Walter Blunt asks him to describe “the nature of [his] griefs” against the king (4.3.44), he takes 50 lines to do so (54-90, 92-107). As in his account of Mortimer's battle with Glendower, the particulars of his narrative are questionable, and his narration tires his listener just as Glendower's does: Blunt responds, “Tut, I came not to hear this” (91). Hotspur's insistence on differentiating himself from the Welshman also comes out in his aggressive insistence on his linguistic superiority. Glendower never speaks with a foreign accent in Shakespeare's text; however, in the aftermath of Glendower's description of his birth, Hotspur responds, “I think there's no man speaketh better Welsh” (3.1.48), implying both that Glendower is impossible to understand and that his superstitious Welshness is showing. After spending some time listening to his compatriots' native language—Mortimer's wife speaks in Welsh, and the lady *actually* sings in Welsh during stage performances—Hotspur observes, “Now I perceive the devil understands Welsh” (3.1.226).⁴²² His observations, made in the midst of

⁴²¹ In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, the Welsh parson Hugh Evans advises, “It were a goot motion if we leave our pribble and prabbles”; *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Greenblatt, et al., lines 1.1.46-7. In R.A.'s *The Valiant Welshman*, STC (2nd ed.) 16 (London, 1615), Morgan asks, “Cousin Caradoc, well, in all these pribble prabbles, how dooth our vnclē Cadallan?” sig. B3r. And in *Newes from Wales or, The Prittish Parliament* (London, 1642), Morgan Loyd writes in Welsh dialect, “Her welch Parliament shall make a cood law and order, that when her comes to markets or Fairs, and fall to pribble prabble with her country man, her may soundly past his pody and preak his crown without fear of being carryed pefo[rc]e,” sig. A4r.

⁴²² Perhaps someone is playing the harp, a national pastime in Wales. The harp appears as a symbol of historical myth in *The Tempest* as well. In the second act, as the shipwrecked courtiers of Naples explore their unfamiliar surroundings, their interpersonal tensions come to the fore. Gonzalo, the “honest old counsellor,” is held in contempt by his younger

friendly interactions with his new allies, seem like excessive protest. His failure to fully reject Welshness emerges in his defensive responses to the rebels' oral performances, not just their prophecies.

The play's other English characters prudently eschew any traces of Welsh mysticism in their own interactions, confining heraldic images and prophetic language to the more palatable context of human activity. Hotspur's wife Lady Percy, concerned about her husband's future, expresses her worries using the language of curses and portents. But the foreshadowing she refers to is decidedly flesh and blood rather than abstractly prophetic: her husband has been exhibiting "curst melancholy" (2.3.40) and is fighting battles in his sleep (41-56). Later, King Henry uses prophetic language while chastising his wayward son, but he cites ostensible public disappointment with Hal rather than Welsh prophecy. Telling his son, "The hope and expectation of thy time is ruined, and the soul of every man / Prophetically do forethink thy fall" (3.2.36-38), Henry projects his own displeasure onto public opinion. The widespread mistrust of Hal Henry alludes to is fostered not by any Merlinic prediction, but by Hal's observable bad behavior.

Despite his earlier rejection of prognostications, Glendower's faith in them ostensibly prevents him from joining his fellow rebels in battle. Scrope, Archbishop of York and a member of Mortimer's uprising, reports to his friend Sir Michael that the old Welshman "comes not in, overruled by prophecies" (4.4.18), leaving the exasperated English to fight King Henry's forces on their own. As Christopher Highley notes, Holinshed's account makes no mention of Glendower skipping the battle due to his prophetic visions.⁴²³ His refusal to appear onstage in Shakespeare's

acquaintances, who find his observations tiresome. The men quibble on the location of Carthage and Tunis, and Antonio sneers to Sebastian that Gonzalo's mistaken historical geography "is more than the miraculous harp," lines 2.1.85-86. Antonio alludes to a classical myth about the harp of Amphion, whose lyrical music helped ease the building of the walls of Thebes. Welsh bards also played harps while reciting prophetic poetry, and common wisdom held that Welsh people enjoyed playing the instrument. Though the *Tempest* reference doesn't cite the Welsh context, it may have held this association for some viewers. If so, the harp in this scene becomes a multilayered symbol, signifying the overlapping presence of multiple mythical histories.

⁴²³ Christopher Highley, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Crisis in Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 97.

play thus takes on an ambiguous dramatic significance. Scrope's brief report deepens the sense that the English, eager to blame a scapegoat, default to stereotypes of absurd Welsh credulity. In reality, Glendower may have been governed by practical military considerations, not the premonition of loss. Perhaps the prophecies by which he was "overruled" were actually self-fulfilling; he may have decided the assault was a lost cause regardless of Merlin's opinion on the matter. Whether prophetic or not, his strategy keeps him alive, at least temporarily. Scrope's report is the last we hear of him in this play, save for King Henry's concluding vow to pursue him and Mortimer throughout Wales in order to root out rebellion once and for all (5.5.40-41).

The unfortunate Hotspur bears the mortal brunt of Glendower's absence. Despite his clear attempts to distance himself from his Welsh compatriot, the young Englishman understands too late that he ought to have more strongly rejected his rebellious comrade. As he lays dying, he seems to argue against the foretelling of human history. Observing that "time...must have a stop" (5.4.81-82), he tells Hal, "O, I could prophecy, / But that the earthy and cold hand of death / Lies on my tongue" (82-84). Earlier, he insisted that the "grandam earth" was as indifferent to Glendower's birth as that of any other man. Now, he rejects the chance to influence the future through his own dying speech: he admits that Henry has won "proud titles" from him (78), and his victories will surely influence the historical record more than an eleventh-hour prediction. This fact galls Hotspur more than the earth's apathy toward his demise (77-79).

Though Hotspur will never know it, the play's sequel will acknowledge Glendower's death through a single line of secondhand report (*2 Henry IV*, 3.1.98).⁴²⁴ In a final rejection of the Welsh threat, Glendower's rebellious, prophetic verbosity will be neutralized in a single moment of English brevity. The English rejection of prophecy in *1 Henry IV* is even more notable given that in the play's sequel, King Henry admits that an ambiguous prophecy foretold the place of his death. At

⁴²⁴ William Shakespeare, *The Second Part of Henry the Fourth*, ed. Jean E. Howard, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Greenblatt, et. al., line 3.1.98. All citations of the play come from this edition.

multiple points during Shakespeare's second tetralogy, the King insists he must make a trip to Jerusalem. He is set upon a holy crusade, or at least a pilgrimage, though the constant rebellions keep delaying his hoped-for trip. In another Holinshed citation in the fourth act of *2 Henry IV*, Henry reveals that years ago, a prediction led him to believe he would die in the Holy City: "It hath been prophesied to me many years, / I should not die but in Jerusalem, / Which vainly I supposed the Holy Land" (4.5.236-38). In lieu of this glorious death, however, he finds himself drawing his final breaths at home in England, in an abbey chamber called Jerusalem. He acknowledges wryly that the amphibolic prophecy has led him to this moment: to use Steven Mullaney's phrase, it "return[s] willfully" to challenge, not "the security of the state itself," but Henry's own self-perception.⁴²⁵ By taking the prophecy literally, he wrongly perceived providential sanction for his ambitious actions, including wresting the crown from Richard and quelling the domestic and foreign rebels that threatened his power. The prophecy thus becomes an ironic postscript that retrospectively—and belatedly—shapes Henry's understanding of his earlier actions rather than demonstrating any predictive force.

Notably for a play based in English historiography, heraldic imagery plays a relatively minor role in its symbolic economy. When it does appear, Shakespeare declines to privilege it over spoken narrative, and even seems to emphasize its vulnerability to abuse. We have already seen that, despite Hotspur's general allusion to Merlin's bestial prophecies, he never links the heraldic creatures directly with present circumstances. Indeed, these images seem to function as contemporary symbols only for King Henry and his allies. While recalling his own rebellious efforts against Richard, Henry refers to "turn[ing] head against the lion's armed jaws" (3.2.102), the lion serving as a symbol for the former king. No matter who is on the throne, the English monarch will always be associated with the lion, the heraldic beast borne on the English royal coat of arms. In using this terminology, even

⁴²⁵ Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage*, 120.

the formerly rebellious Bolingbroke insists upon the indissolubility of English symbols of honor. But later, in the knight Falstaff's hands, the noble lion is ironized as a deferential character who provides him with a defense of his own cowardice. In the play's second act, Falstaff is robbed by a disguised Prince Hal. Confronted with his cowardice, he produces a maxim from an old moral tale. Noting, "The lion will not touch the true prince" (2.4.224-25), the old man insists he can consider himself the former, and Henry the latter (226-27). Hal responds that Falstaff's accomplices Bardolph and Peto must be lions as well, since they also fled on instinct (247). The notion is laughable, but it is also trenchant heraldic satire: when placed in these cynical men's hands or mouths, conventional heraldic symbols of English nobility become corrupted and ironic.

Indeed, for a knight, Falstaff is decidedly dismissive of heraldic emblems. On the eve of battle, Falstaff sardonically degrades "honour," arguing that it cannot save a man's life. He asks rhetorically, "What is honour? A word" (5.2.133), calls it "insensible" (imperceptible and ineffectual), and concludes that it "is a mere scutcheon" (138). In Falstaff's eyes, honorable action is subject to dishonest historiography: it is both a matter of discursive persuasion—"a word" applied after the fact by one's admirers—and a potentially deceptive emblematic show. A heraldic coat displayed on a funeral hearse is entirely performative, and notably silent regarding any flaws or faults displayed by its bearer during life. Falstaff's unqualified dismissal of honor as a scutcheon fundamentally rejects the notion that iconography alone can serve as a viable form of historiography. His eventual humiliation and death in the subsequent plays suggests that those who willfully abuse, misinterpret, or reject myths of English honor—particularly its emblems—will fail to gain its rewards. But whether this outcome constitutes Shakespeare's support of that perspective remains an open question. According to the Hostess, who recounts Falstaff's death in *Henry V*, "he's in Arthur's / bosom, if ever man went to Arthur's bosom" (2.3.9-10). Her elegy connects the sardonic

knight with the ancient British king, giving Falstaff a vernacular memorial history worthy of envy by the English royals who covet a prized place in the historical record.⁴²⁶

The Family of Britain in *Henry V*

Where *Henry IV*'s portrayal of Anglo-Welsh history is ultimately ambiguous, *Henry V* takes direct steps to diminish the tinge of rebelliousness, ignorance, and prophetic mysticism that hangs about the Welsh in the English imaginary. Fluellen, a loyal and efficient soldier, has both his personal honor and King Harry's interests at heart. Though he is prone to occasional flashes of violence, his vocal outbursts serve to emphasize the union between Welsh and English, not challenge it; by championing both English chronicle and Welsh orality throughout the play, he represents Shakespeare's uniquely theatrical addition to the Anglo-Welsh historical tradition.

As his dedication to the customs of St. David's Day indicates, Fluellen follows his country's popular traditions. But as a captain in Harry's army, he is also well-read and highly trained. When he describes blind Fortune in great detail (3.6.26-33), he reveals his gentleman's education in the complex discourse of emblematic representation. Phyllis Rackin calls him "a great student of history"⁴²⁷; indeed, he cites military history both offhandedly—by recalling the battles of Pompey the Great and broader military law (4.1.66-74)—and pointedly: after both the French and English kill their prisoners, Fluellen fumes, "'Tis expressly against the law of arms" (4.7.1-2). Fluellen also compares Harry's spurning of Falstaff to Alexander the Great's killing of his best friend (4.7.25-32, 35-42). Soon after, he recalls that he read about the wars of Harry's grandfather Crispian and great-uncle Edward the Black Prince "in the chronicles" (4.7.84-87), anachronistically referencing their stories as though they'd been told by early modern English historiographers.

⁴²⁶ Though the Hostess intends to cite the Biblical Abraham, her mistake seems meaningful. Maurice Hunt argues that it denotes the absence of Christian salvation in Falstaff's death: "Rather than to Abraham's salvific bosom, Falstaff in the Hostess's confused mind goes to that of a patron of secular chivalry"; "The Hybrid Reformations of Shakespeare's Second Henriad," *Comparative Drama* 32, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 181. For arguments that Falstaff is indeed reformed on his deathbed, see Christopher Baker, "The Christian Context of Falstaff's 'Finer End,'" *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 12 (1986): 81-83; and J. Dover Wilson's introduction to *Henry V* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947), 142.

⁴²⁷ Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History: Shakespeare's English Chronicles* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 175.

Ironically, if Fluellen has indeed read Holinshed's chronicles, he is likely familiar with its derogations of the Welsh people. But rather than aligning himself with those texts, he contradicts them by making his Welsh soldier a model representative of his country. In giving the lie to the chroniclers' denunciations of Welsh rebelliousness, Shakespeare challenges medieval English historiography and creates a portrait of a relatively anglicized early modern Welshman. Though Holinshed makes no mention of it, many Welsh soldiers fought with Henry V against the French; some may have been motivated by the thought of having their exploits memorialized in bardic poetry.⁴²⁸ But unlike these early recruits, Shakespeare's Fluellen doesn't seek personal glory; as a dedicatee of the cause at hand, he is dependable, thoughtful, and arguably more reliable than Harry. And contrary to Holinshed's portraits of sadistic Welsh rebels, aside from his participation in battle, he only inflicts violence when Englishmen set him up or provoke him. In two instances, Englishmen are the clear antagonists who demonstrate a casual disrespect for unity among the ranks. First, King Harry tricks Fluellen into taking his place in a fight he instigated with a soldier named Williams. The naïve soldier attacks the surprised Fluellen before discovering his quarrel is actually with the king (4.8.5-17). Harry's bait-and-switch is strangely disrespectful toward Fluellen, a man he claimed kinship with only a scene earlier. The king's scorn contrasts with Fluellen's generous pity: though he remains in the dark about what caused the conflict, the Welshman attempts amends by offering Williams money to supplement the pittance Harry offers him (58-61).

Fluellen also defends his country's traditions in the face of English disdain. He grumbles to his companions that the ensign Pistol has been taunting his observance of St. David's Day—a holiday commemorating Wales' patron saint—including the fact that he was sporting David's traditional emblem, a leek. Fluellen can hardly be blamed for responding angrily to Pistol's chauvinist taunts: after Pistol raises the specter of historical English prejudice by calling Fluellen

⁴²⁸ Williams, *Recovery, Reorientation, and Reformation*, 166-71.

“mountain-squire” (32) and “base Trojan” (28), he refuses to enact penance “for Cadwallader and all his goats” (5.1.25). Impressively, Fluellen is able to “code-switch”: he refuses to be victimized by facile English insults, but he is also able to draw on the terminology of English social legitimacy in his retort. Adopting the language of status, he vows to make Pistol “a squire of low degree” (33) before he knocks him to the ground and forces him to eat the leek. The Englishman is forced to literally consume the badge of Wales as payback for his refusal to acknowledge the cultural legitimacy of its traditions.⁴²⁹ The English captain Gower—Fluellen’s social and military equal—takes the Welshman’s part, asking Pistol, “Will you mock at an ancient tradition[?]” (62-63). The scene paints a portrait of an ideal relationship between the English and Welsh captains, both of whom are gentlemen and elite military officers. When Gower advises Pistol that he egged on “this gentleman” and wrongly assumed that “because he could not speak English in the native garb, he could not therefore handle an English cudgel” (66-69), he is not only chastising him for his prejudice: he is warning him to respect his social superiors, Welsh or otherwise.

The moments in which Fluellen briefly surrenders his self-control stand in sharp contrast to his ability to define his social place and those of his comrades. The play arguably puts him in a position of narrative power even over the king. Fluellen’s musings on Alexander and Pompey influence the audience’s view of Harry and his choices, demonstrating that—despite jests about Welsh ignorance—Fluellen can fluidly integrate academic textual study with interpretation and genealogical recitation. Notably, the lineage Fluellen recites for Henry is incorrect. As Patricia Parker observes, it omits an entire generation between Harry and Edward the Black Prince, thus linking Henry more closely with the father of Richard II than with the “usurping Lancastrian line.” Fluellen’s charitable memory (or strategic forgetting) of the chronicle gives Fluellen discursive

⁴²⁹ Parker argues in “Uncertain Unions” that “this final scene of Welsh leeks—iterating the forceful figure of incorporation or ‘digestion’—suggests (in an ostensibly simply comic mode) the difficulty of incorporating even the apparently ‘model’ borderer Wales,” 96. In my reading of the scene, Shakespeare faults the English their failure to accept the Welsh rather than the Welsh for their failure to assimilate.

authority over an English text. His mis-recitation gives the King a measure of unearned legitimacy, and perhaps a better reason for Fluellen to fight on his behalf.⁴³⁰

Fluellen also links his own Welsh homeland with Harry's birth, placing the young king in the modern geography of Wales rather than characterizing his rise to the throne as the prophesied success of a British prince. Indeed, Fluellen—not the king—is the first to observe that Harry actually hails from Wales. Early in 4.7, Fluellen tells Gower (in his strong Welsh accent) that Harry “was born at Monmouth” (9); the assertion comes directly from Holinshed, who writes that Henry was “borne in Wales at Monmouth on the riuer of Wie.” Later, speaking with Henry, Fluellen observes that all the water in the Wye couldn't wash the Welsh blood out of Harry's body, and hopes he is willing to “wear the leek upon Saint Tavy's day” (93-94). Harry confirms he is amenable, remarking, “I am Welsh, you know, good countryman” (96). If the king can claim Welsh kinship, as well as natal ties to the land, he may feel a stronger interest in protecting his Welsh comrades along with their territory.

Fluellen's chronicle citation and persistent, localized narrative of Henry's Welshness give him substantial historiographical control. By contrast, the stereotypically Welsh belief in prophecy is entirely missing from Fluellen's arguments: he maintains a sense of his cause by looking to the past rather than betting on the future. Fluellen's approach doesn't constitute his rejection of his Welsh identity, but rather his adoption of a hybrid social approach that expands to include multiple British cultures. He cites English chronicles—important origin texts—and wears an emblematic badge of his origins, while simultaneously expressing pride in his Welsh upbringing and demanding respect from those around him in the voluble manner often associated with stage Welshmen. By speaking repeatedly of Henry's Welsh identity, he demonstrates an archetypal Welsh understanding that the *act* of trumpeting both one's own and others' honorable origins can be socially beneficial, even if the

⁴³⁰ Parker, “Uncertain Unions,” 91, 86-87.

stories themselves are questionable or even false. Unlike the English writers who denigrate his culture, he embraces the notion that “speaking Pedigrees naturally” is more expedient than bearing legitimate arms, at least in terms of forging immediate political community.

Comic Heteroglossia in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*

Shakespeare’s second tetralogy suggests that he understands the utility of disclaiming belief in prophecy in some circumstances and embracing it in others. That same utilitarian attitude is equally evident in his portrayal of Parson Hugh Evans in the bourgeois comedy *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. In this play, though Hugh Evans embodies a bevy of Welsh stereotypes, he resembles the excitable Fluellen more than the mysterious Glendower. The opening scene sidesteps the specters of Welsh rebellion and prophetic history in favor of highlighting the less threatening aspects of the Welsh presence in England. Superficially, Evans appears to be a repository of Welsh stereotypes, but he also comically pokes at English gentlemen’s status anxieties: he deflates a pretentious character’s claims to ancient genealogy by strategically misusing heraldic language.

The second tetralogy and *Merry Wives* were written in close proximity to one another, but they may have had different audiences, at least for certain performances. Some scholars believe *Merry Wives* was written specifically to accompany a court feast celebrating George Carey’s election to the Order of the Garter, while others note that its topical references would have held plenty of satirical force for audiences outside the court.⁴³¹ In any event, the play concludes with a mock Garter

⁴³¹ James Gibson writes, “In addition to the topical references to the Garter celebrations, Shakespeare also incorporated further references to recent events, including satire of William Gardiner and his stepson William Wayte in the characters of Shallow and Slender (100), satire of Frederick, Duke of Wurttemberg (formerly Count of Mompelgart) in the references to “cozen-germans” and stolen horses, (101) and satire of the Cobham family, now directed at Henry Brooke, the new 11th Lord Cobham”; “Shakespeare and the Cobham Controversy: The Oldcastle/Falstaff and Brooke/Broome Revisions,” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 25 (2012): 113. In *Unediting the Renaissance: Shakespeare, Marlowe and Milton* (London: Routledge, 2002), Leah Marcus distinguishes between the citizen-focused tenor of the *Merry Wives* quarto and the “courtly ethos” of the folio, but cautions against using these differences to distinguish the audiences for each version, 97. Marcus also observes that Lord Cobham and Count Mompelgard were well-known figures in the 1590s, so courtly and popular audiences of either version “would readily have interpreted both [references] as *ad hominem* whether or not they were so intended,” 91. Alternatively, Andrew Gurr has argued that Shakespeare set *The Merry Wives* at Windsor partly because of a theatrical rivalry. See “Intertextuality at Windsor,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (Summer 1987): 194-200.

celebration and alludes to several contemporary events and individuals. If the play was initially written for a royal occasion, Shakespeare may have decided to aim for humor and avoid references to the Tudor court's Welsh connections. The play's lighthearted opening offers a counterpoint to the air of solemn inevitability that pervades the *Henry* plays. From the opening scenes, Parson Hugh Evans is a constant presence throughout the action. Resembling in many ways the quintessential comical stage Welshman, Evans provides a lighthearted contrast to the intimidating and uncomfortably historical Glendower. Evans' Welsh accent is unmistakable—he replaces his *b*'s with *p*'s, his *l*'s with *d*'s—and his garrulousness lends itself to pedantic Latin lessons (4.2), not prophetic speeches.⁴³²

Though he seems to represent a common Welsh caricature, Evans' heraldic malapropisms show Shakespeare paying close attention to the Welsh oral mode. The first scene finds Evans trying to pacify Justice Robert Shallow, who is angry that Falstaff has “beaten [his] men, killed [his] deer, and broke open [his lodge]” (1.1.93-94). The magistrate pompously refers to himself as “Robert Shallow, esquire,” and his cousin Abraham Slender concurs, calling him “a gentleman born...who writes himself Armigero” (1.1.8-10). The justice is himself a caricature of new English gentility: unlike the ideal, discreet English gentleman, he eagerly expounds on his gentility in casual conversation as well as in writing. Indeed, in a likely sign of protesting too much, Shallow insists that his lineage stretches back three hundred years and is represented by a coat of arms that features a dozen white luces, a type of small fish (10-11, 14).

In a competing show of pretentiousness, Parson Hugh Evans uses Shallow's boast as an opportunity to display his own heraldic aptitude. Evans' blazoning technique, however, is full of malapropisms. First he refers to the heraldic fish as maggots, noting, “The dozen white louses do become an old coad well” (16). Then, in an apparent misapplication of conventional heraldic

⁴³² William Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, ed. Walter Cohen, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Greenblatt, et. al. All citations come from this edition unless otherwise noted.

attitudes, he describes the louses as *passant* (walking): “It agrees well passant: it is a familiar beast to man and signifies love” (17-18). When Slender observes that Shallow may *quarter* (heraldically join) his own coat with his wife’s once he marries (21), Evans responds, “It is marring indeed if he quarter it” (22), suggesting he intends “quarter” to mean “cut in pieces.” Evans seems to be punning on “coat” as a garment at this point, and the proverb “marrying is marring” was a standard maxim at the time, giving the joke vernacular force.⁴³³

On its face, the scene reads (and could be played as) a satire of the Welsh penchant for spoken genealogy, one that becomes particularly trenchant when juxtaposed with the English love of heraldry. Evans possesses the consummately Welsh ability to describe and crow about lineage, but his attempt to blazon his fellow’s coat seems to fail. His heraldic description shows his incomplete assimilation into his friends’ milieu, which prizes the symbols of gentility—including the ability to verbally display one’s knowledge of heraldic terms—nearly as highly as the familial history behind them.

Alternatively, the scene could be read not as straightforward insult, but as an example of what Lynne Magnussen, building on Bakhtin, calls “Shakespeare’s comic heteroglossia”—his portrayal of linguistic multiplication, collision, and mistakings across all social levels. In Shakespearean comedy, “comic barbarities of language of one kind or another are displayed by virtually every social group,” including those in the higher classes. Shallow’s arrogant rhetoric about his coat of arms falls into this category, and Evans’ response, consciously or otherwise, “expose[s] the overblown excesses” of his fellow Englishman with its devaluation of the heraldic symbols Shallow holds dear. Indeed, given his Welsh accent, Evans’ apparent malapropisms may result not from heraldic misunderstanding, but from Shakespeare’s appreciation for linguistic differences within English usage. Evans’ oral Welsh heritage, in other words, allows him to become a “maker of

⁴³³ William Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, ed. Georgio Melchiori (Cambridge University Press, 2007), line 1.1.20n.

social division” whose response to Shallow highlights the absurdity of English obsession with heraldic terminology.⁴³⁴ Indeed, the scene could be staged to suggest that Evans purposely mocks Shallow’s affected blazon, both by turning it into commonplace discourse and by misrepresenting his heraldic beasts as vermin.

Viewed one way, then, Evans’ apparent blazoning incompetence strips him of the main skill the Welsh were purported to possess, painting him as one of the heraldically illiterate “lewd sotes” from which English gentlemen had become so eager to distinguish themselves. English viewers lacking sophisticated heraldic knowledge could poke fun at such a character for spectacularly failing the linguistic standards expected of English gentlemen. But for a diverse audience composed of non-aristocratic spectators—London craftsmen and merchants, some of whom were probably Welsh migrants—the depiction could serve as an exercise in parvenu mockery. In particular, Welsh spectators might have been pleased to find in Evans a character whose intellectual abilities included on-the-spot heraldic satire of his English neighbors. Like the history plays, *The Merry Wives* is enlivened by depictions of England’s many competing contemporary prejudices, particularly those setting Welsh against English, upstart gentlemen against established nobility, and oral narratives against visual and written history. In all four plays, the Welsh characters demonstrate a historiographic opportunism that contrasts markedly with the heraldic and documentary single-mindedness of their English fellows. As theatrical historiographers, the Welsh merge oral, emblematic, and textual narratives not to pay homage to an idealized Welsh history, but to demonstrate a measure of individual agency in the fraught English present.

⁴³⁴ Lynne Magnussen, “Language and Comedy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Comedy*, ed. Alexander Leggatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 160-62.

EPILOGUE

By the sixteenth century, coats of arms in England were rarely used during war. Instead, for nobles, gentlemen, and strivers of the middling sort, they betokened a measure of economic and social success, while for civic corporations, they constituted a seal of royal approval. As heraldry's use expanded, its imagery acquired a multitude of meanings, most of which symbolized an individual's relationship to a collective. A coat of arms signified the bearer's nobility—a status purportedly based upon his or her demonstrated descent from an ancient family, whether English, Welsh, or some combination of the two. Similarly, corporate coats awarded to trade groups gave tradesmen a visual method for expressing collective pride in their occupations. And heraldic devices allowed courtiers to distinguish themselves from their peers during courtly tournaments and performances. Heraldry was, in other words, a visual and linguistic system or idiom that signified among individuals and communities at multiple social levels.

For years, historians have argued that “the Elizabethan troubles”—including heraldic infighting, spurious arms grants, and angry public opinion—shook heraldry's foundations in rigorous genealogical research and nearly destroyed it as a system of noble privilege. In a superficial sense, this synopsis is correct: by the 1630s, heraldry had largely lost its credibility as proof of a person's highborn origins. But this teleology of loss assumes that heraldry was always and only intended to serve that purpose. In reality, the system had always adapted to social circumstances, first transforming from a battlefield convenience into a visual genealogical record, then into a sign of group identity or a prize for reaching middling- to upper-income status. As English social

boundaries became more flexible, heraldry adapted along with them, and new forms of language and imagery developed to assimilate the system's additional users.

Given the dearth of scholarship on the topic, ample room exists for future research into heraldry's meanings in early modern English literature and culture. In particular, the artistic work involved in heraldic production and interpretation is ripe for exploration. I briefly discuss the connection between heralds and portrait painters in my third chapter, but future literary analyses could more fully integrate art historians' work on these and related topics. One potential point of entry involves the uses and meanings of heraldic colors in medieval and early modern England, an art historical approach that has thus far eluded literary scholars, myself included.⁴³⁵ Early modern heraldic artists also deserve greater attention than I have afforded them here. Thanks to the increasing professionalization and entrepreneurialism of herald painters during the seventeenth century, printed heraldry books after the 1630s became more expansive, colorful, and image-driven than ever before, ushering in a new era of heraldry as an art form whose standards provoked discussion and debate, just as its linguistic rules and regulations had during the previous century. These gloriously colored folios—including Thomas Blount's *The Art of Making Devises* (1646), Matthew Carter's *Honor Redivivus; Or an Analysis of Honor and Armory* (1655), and Sylvanus Morgan's *The Sphere of Gentry* (1661) and *Armilogia* (1666)—deserve as much attention as the work of preceding generations of heralds and amateur armorial writers.

Heraldic imagery also played an important economic and political role in other texts not traditionally considered literary, particularly as elements of paratexts (e.g., printers' marks, title pages,

⁴³⁵ Sample work by art historians includes John Gage, "Colour-Language, Colour-Symbols," in *Color and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 91-128; M.J. Huxtable, "The Medieval Gaze at Grips with a Medieval World," in *Progress in Colour Studies*, vol. 1, *Language and Culture*, ed. C.P. Biggam and C.J. Kay (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2006), 199-218; and Anny Crunelle Vanrigh, "Illuminations, Heraldry and King Edward III," *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* 25, no. 3 (June 2009): 215-31.

and frontispieces) and on maps. Paratexts have spawned excellent critical work in recent years,⁴³⁶ as have the ideologies of maps, cartography, and early modern spaces,⁴³⁷ but the connections between the heraldic and cartographic communities have yet to be fleshed out. In particular, a fuller picture of the heraldic economy and its participants could be gleaned by tracing the political, artistic, and financial processes underlying the printing of heraldic imagery on early modern maps. The herald William Smith, for example, was a surveyor and mapmaker before he became an officer of arms; he even created a comprehensive set of English county maps that never made its way into print. The contrast between Smith's pre- and post-College output suggests that officers had an incentive to keep certain heraldic information private, and presents yet another example of the ways heralds' civic duties could conflict with their own goals for personal advancement.⁴³⁸

Though scholarly work on heraldry remains relatively scarce, heraldic images enjoy a ubiquitous presence in modern life. They tend to garner excitement and attention in connection with the English royal family, but heraldic images also blend into our daily lives as elements of brand identity. Thanks to their adaptable iconography, armorial crests and heraldic beasts have become *de*

⁴³⁶ On paratexts in early modern English texts, see David Scott Kastan, "From Playhouse to Printing House," in *Shakespeare and the Book* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 14-49; Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Adam G. Hooks, "Shakespeare at the White Greyhound," *Shakespeare Survey* 64 (2011), 260-75; and Stephen B. Dobranski, "Fair Milton's Counterfeit," in *Milton, Authorship, and the Book Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 82-103. Continental studies include Benito Real Costas, *Print Culture and Peripheries in Early Modern Europe: A Contribution to the History of Printing and the Book Trade in Small European and Spanish Cities* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); and Inga Elmquist Söderlund, *Taking Possession of Astronomy: Frontispieces and Illustrated Title Pages in 17th-Century Books on Astronomy* (Stockholm: The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, 2010).

⁴³⁷ On maps and cartography, see Valerie Traub, "The Nature of Norms in Early Modern England: Anatomy, Cartography, *King Lear*," *The South Central Review* 26, nos. 1-2 (Winter-Spring 2009): 42-81; Donald Kimball Smith, *The Cartographic Imagination in Early Modern England: Re-writing the World in Marlowe, Spenser, Raleigh and Marvell* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2008); Rhonda Lemke Sanford, *Maps and Memory in Early Modern England: A Sense of Place* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); and Bernhard Klein, *Maps and the Writing of Space in Early Modern England and Ireland* (New York: Palgrave, 2001). For an overview of the spatial turn in early modern studies, see Sarah Dustagheer, "Shakespeare and the 'Spatial Turn,'" *Literature Compass* 10, no. 7 (July 2013): 570-81. Notable works in this genre include Steven Mullaney's classic *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Jean Howard, *Theater of a City: The Places of London Comedy, 1598-1642* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); and Julie Sanders, *The Cultural Geography of Early Modern Drama, 1620-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁴³⁸ Smith's original manuscripts include *The Alphabet or blazon of arms* (1597), Folger manuscript V.b.217, and *The particular description of England, 1588*, ed. from the original manuscript in the British Museum (Hertford: S. Austin & Sons, 1879). He also wrote and published a play called *The Hector of Germanie, or, The Palsgrave Prime Elector* (London, 1615).

rigueur for conveying the tradition and prestige behind commercial organizations, which often use them to reflect their company's or product's history. The logo for the German-made Porsche, a luxury sports car, is based on the arms of Württemberg-Baden, a former state in Weimar Germany; the design also includes the arms of Stuttgart, where the company was founded, in an *inescutcheon* [Figure 24]. And the brand logos for Saab (Swedish) and Peugeot (French) automobiles consist of formidable heraldic animals: a crowned griffin and a stylized *lion rampant*, respectively [Figures 25 & 26].⁴³⁹

Heraldry's historical role in competitions, wars, and tournaments has also made it a natural choice for sports team logos. Many European soccer teams' badges are essentially heraldic devices that incorporate elements from their home city's coat of arms, or otherwise allude to the team's origins. Manchester United's crest cites the ship on Manchester City Council's shield, and the Byzantine double-headed eagle in A.E.K. Athens FC's logo honors the club's founding by refugees from Constantinople [Figures 27 & 28].⁴⁴⁰ Most American soccer clubs, though they lack the longevity of their European counterparts, also use shield shapes in their logos, e.g., D.C. United, the San Jose Earthquakes, and Philadelphia Union, whose badge includes civic, colonial, and Revolutionary War allusions [Figure 29].⁴⁴¹ One of the most recognized national brands in America, the National Football League, also uses a shield as its logo, and NBC has chosen a similar image to mark its coverage of the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia [Figures 30 & 31]. Elements of heraldry crop up in individual athletes' brands, as well. Miami Heat star LeBron James, dubbed

⁴³⁹ Peugeot has transformed its logo many times over the years; its original image of a walking lion became a heraldic *lion rampant* in 1948, and at times it has been encased in a heraldic shield. "Peugeot," Famous Logos, accessed 6 February 2014, <http://www.famouslogos.us/peugeot-logo/>.

⁴⁴⁰ The club explains that the double-headed eagle is "gazing with pride to both East and West"; "A.E.K. FC History," A.E.K. FC website, accessed February 6, 2014, http://www.aekfc.gr/index.asp?a_id=3025. For a brief summary and explanation of the Premier League team logos, see Alice Rawsthorn, "The British Knights of Soccer: Teams' Crests Fall Short in Aesthetics But Excel in Imagination and History," *International Herald Tribune*, August 13, 2012, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/docview/1033108171?accountid=14667>.

⁴⁴¹ "Club History," Philadelphia Union website, accessed February 6, 2014, <http://www.philadelphiaunion.com/club/history>.

“King James” by the media and fans, recently designed a line of Nike-brand clothing featuring a heraldic *lion rampant* with a tail curling into the shape of the number 6 [Figure 32]. The logo refers to James’ team number and motto, “Heart of a Lion,” and—at least to those who study English history—obliquely references the royal nickname given to him while he was still a high school player.⁴⁴²

These organizations have learned that heraldic logos imbue their product or service with an aura of cultivated authority and respected tradition—a feat few other graphic design elements can accomplish.⁴⁴³ Still, the paradoxes that characterized early modern heraldic meaning and usage continue to be relevant in the modern marketplace. While some companies use heraldic images as signs of elite individual status, others emphasize their role as emblems of a civic or corporate collective. For sports teams, coats of arms are profoundly democratic: they have essentially reverted to their pre-medieval function as group identity markers. Soccer and football fans can prove they belong to a community—or even a mini-culture—simply by purchasing clothes or other items bearing the markings of their chosen team. Acquiring the team’s identity requires very little financial investment and is usually based on geographic location or family tradition; it tends to be inclusive rather than exclusive. Conversely, for luxury car buyers, the primary criterion for membership—or more accurately, ownership—is wealth. The advertisements for these companies tend to flatter their customers’ elite tastes and desire to set themselves apart from the masses: their commercials generally consist of well-dressed men driving their cars at high speeds down solitary roads. The

⁴⁴² New Jersey media were referring to him as “King James” as early as 2002, when he was 17; see “LeBron James,” *Courier Post*, December 19, 2002, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/docview/436977000?accountid=14667>. On the logo, see Lance Madden, “LeBron James’s ‘Heart of a Lion’ Brand Now Legitimized,” *Forbes*, June 22, 2012, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/lancemadden/2012/06/22/lebron-james-heart-of-a-lion-brand-now-legitimized/>. Another writer calls the image “generic” and points out its resemblance to the lion on Mossimo and Express brand polo shirts. Kyle Munzenrieder, “LeBron James Gets Generic New Lion Logo,” *Riptide* (blog), *Miami New Times*, October 10, 2011, http://blogs.miaminewtimes.com/riptide/2011/10/lebron_james_gets_generic_new.php.

⁴⁴³See John M.T. Balmer, “Corporate Heritage Brands and Precepts of Corporate Heritage Brand Management: Insights from the British Monarchy on the Eve of the Royal Wedding of Prince William (April 2011) and Queen Elizabeth II’s Diamond Jubilee (1952-2012),” *Journal of Brand Management* 18, no. 8 (June 2011): 517-44.

differences between the brands' aims and audiences are apparent in their logo designs, as well. Porsche's sharply imposing heraldic imagery stands in marked contrast to the bright, almost cartoonish NFL emblem, which is itself a citation of the most populist of American symbols, the national flag.⁴⁴⁴

Whether they market individualism or collectivism, brands that use heraldic images do so to distinguish themselves in a competitive capitalist marketplace. In an article in *The Journal of Brand Management*, Judith Lynne Zaichkowsky observes, "Brands need to be identified with single manufacturers to distinguish themselves from competitors in the cluttered retail environment." Through a variety of visual appeals—not just heraldic ones—brands can boldly announce their identities and attract loyal customers: "One can think of colour and brands as the modern form of heraldry," Zaichowsky writes.⁴⁴⁵ Her metaphor is striking in that it turns heraldry itself into a marketing phenomenon: in her formulation, brands and products actually become sought-after markers of distinction. Consequently, the brand becomes a commodity that a company seeks to protect and consumers want to purchase. Sports teams sell gear bearing their logos to legions of eager fans, but they also zealously guard those images from trademark and copyright infringement. Luxury car companies charge hundreds of thousands of dollars for their vehicles, supporting the notion that their product is meant only for people with impeccable taste (i.e., deep pockets). In both cases, however, the brands are essentially selling identity and prestige in the form of their own collective brand image. Consumers become part of either a capacious or an exclusive community, while sellers profit both from the immediate sale and from the brand publicity each buyer generates. For luxury companies like Porsche, the only potential downside is prole drift—but for populist brands like the NFL, any consumer will do.

⁴⁴⁴ Of course, even up-market companies like Porsche need to strike a balance between exclusivity and making as much revenue as possible.

⁴⁴⁵ Judith Lynne Zaichkowsky, "Strategies for Distinctive Brands," *Journal of Brand Management* 17, no. 8 (July 2010): 555, 553.

FIGURES

Figure 24. Porsche logo



Figure 25. Saab logo



Figure 26. Peugeot logo



Figure 27. Manchester United logo



Figure 28. A.E.K. Athens FC logo



Figure 29. Philadelphia Union logo



Figure 30. NFL logo



Figure 31. NBC 2014 Sochi Olympics logo



Figure 32. LeBron James' "Heart of a Lion" logo



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