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Performance as a Historiographic Process in King John and the Winter's Tale

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PERFORMANCE AS A HISTORIOGRAPHIC PROCESS IN *KING JOHN* AND *THE*
WINTER'S TALE

By

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A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of
Mississippi State University
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for the Degree of Masters of Arts
in English
in the Department of English

Mississippi State, Mississippi

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WINTER'S TALE

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The allegorical representations of authority that reveal themselves in Shakespeare's work mirror the political landscape of Elizabethan and Jacobean England. As the audience witnesses these reflections they inherently use them to craft an interpretation of the contemporary political and social world. Yet, Shakespeare's allegorical representations do not simply reflect the political landscape; instead these representations reflect a distortion of reality crafted by Shakespeare. These distortions demonstrate the ability of performance to play a role in the historiographic process, and they illuminate the role of the artist in the shaping of history and memory.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my mother Karen Gray, who always supported me, no matter what.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Gregory Bentley and Dr. Patrick Creevy, for working so hard to help me achieve my goals. From my time as an undergraduate to my years of graduate study, the professors and administrators at Mississippi State University's Department of English have been of the highest quality; I would not be here today without them. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Thomas Anderson for working so closely with me on this project. His dedication to the study of literature scholarship is a constant inspiration to me. I consider myself lucky to have had the opportunity to work so closely with him.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As an audience prepares to witness a performance, each individual will inevitably have experiences that impact how he or she will interpret the performance. Some members of the audience might see the love triangle among Hermione, Leontes, and Polixenes in *The Winter's Tale* as a reflection of their own personal relationship problems. Others might see the refusal of Polixenes to approve the marriage between Florizel and Perdita as a reflection of their relationship with their parents. The unique history of an individual can cause a plethora of interpretations. Yet, performance is itself a collective practice. The gathering together of individuals for a common purpose of viewing a stage play exists because of a collective understanding of certain social rules. Performance can only exist in a societal context. Therefore, while the individual may create a unique interpretation, an audience's collective social and cultural knowledge opens the possibility for the creation of a collective interpretation of performance.

My project seeks to analyze the relationship between these cultural preconceptions of an audience and how performance reflects and shapes this collective knowledge. These cultural preconceptions can be identified as the social memory of a group of people, the history of a society, contemporary

cultural events, and the political landscape during the time of a performance. All of these cultural preconceptions have the power to form a collective knowledge that will be negotiated in performance. Therefore, in my analysis I use these terms interchangeably to identify the collective knowledge of an audience. Prior to viewing a performance, an audience is aware of this contemporary cultural climate that exists within society. It is my argument that the knowledge of contemporary cultural events can shape an audience's interpretation of a performance: culture creates a collective knowledge in an audience that becomes an access point for the audience to interpret a performance collectively. Yet, performance does not only mimic the culture which exists synchronically with it, performance also has the capacity to negotiate how the audience interprets the collective access point: the audience's recognition of culture in performance allows culture to use this recognition to manipulate the audience's interpretation. Thus, performance plays an active role in the formation of history.

Illustrating the relationship between performance and culture requires me to focus on a specific historical time period and its relation to works written contemporaneously. For this purpose, I chose to focus my study on the time period between 1590 and 1610, using Shakespeare's *King John* and *The Winter's Tale* as my case studies. While these two plays are seemingly very different, they share a common access point that makes them accessible and negotiable for the audience. Both plays focus on issues with authority. Throughout the 1590's and into the early 1600's, English society faces the looming end of Queen Elizabeth's reign without a known successor. It is during this time that *King John* was written.

After Elizabeth's death in 1603, King James began his reign and attempted to exert a style of governance that his parliaments felt was absolutist. It is in the middle of this debate between absolutism and limited monarchy that *The Winter's Tale* is written and performed. As I will demonstrate in my coming chapters, the pervading knowledge of these contemporary events allows the audience to access each play. This access will then highlight how the performance of these two plays negotiates the audience's formation of memory and history.

My assertion that an audience interprets a play through the collective access point of authority seems counter to one of Stephen Greenblatt's basic tenets of New Historicism: Greenblatt writes that while "power" can be seen "as the enabling condition of representation itself--it [is] equally important to resist the integration of all images and expressions into a single master discourse" (2-3). In other words, "power," or authority, expresses one accessible point for critical study but "even those literary texts that sought most ardently to speak for a monolithic power could be shown to be the sites of institutional and ideological contestation" (3). While the vocabulary I use throughout my analysis will focus on authority as the "single" collective access point, I would clarify that I am not asserting that authority is a "master discourse." Instead, I am attempting to identify a basic commonality shared among all participating members of an audience. Like each individual member of the audience, an individual performance can be shaped by multiple cultural events. I do not wish to discredit these other factors; I wish only to argue that each individual of the audience can access an interpretation based on that individual's relationship with authority.

Though the audience enters into their relationship to performance as individuals, the collective knowledge formed through their relationship with the monarch creates an interpretive space for a collective negotiation of the performance. The basis for my interpretation of their sense of authority as the basic commonality shared among all audience members comes from my readings of Benedict Anderson. Ironically, Anderson's *Imagined Communities* focuses on the formation of a nationalistic identity *after* the dissolution of monarchial societies such as the societies under Elizabeth and James. Yet, I believe Anderson's model for forming a national identity supports my analysis of the public's concept of authority as a nationalistic identity in Elizabethan and Jacobean England. In summary, Anderson identifies a nationalistic identity as "*imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). This interpretation suggests that the formation of a nationalistic identity comes from a single unifying factor. Though each individual might not share in direct knowledge of his fellow man, he or she is connected through an identification with the nation. In similar fashion, members of English society under Elizabeth and James can all share in their similar connection under the monarch. Their position under the monarch allows individuals to access the events of the day in a similar way: Elizabethan society knows in 1595 that Elizabeth has not named a successor. Jacobean society knows the arguments between James and his parliaments. Moreover, because of their shared position under the monarch, each member of society can interpret these

events in a similar way. Though Anderson meant for his model to be applied to later nation-states, I believe that his analysis of “*imagined*” bonds between individuals illustrates the basic connection among individuals that can be the basis for a collective knowledge.

Through each individual performance, the theater becomes a space which reinforces these shared bonds among the individual members. In my analysis, I will emphasize the importance of the physical space of the theater as a place where the audience can enter into an assigned role that will allow for the recognition of these shared bonds. My interpretation of theater as an enforcer of these shared bonds comes through Paul Connerton’s theories on social memory. Connerton’s analysis in *How Societies Remember* focuses on how societies use repeated cultural practices, or “commemorative ceremonies” (5). Connerton states that these “commemorative ceremonies prove to be commemorative only in so far as they are performative” (5). Connerton illustrates his theory by using national holidays as an example: the repeated ritualized way in which people fly “flags...at half-mast” and place “flowers...on graves” (45) demonstrates a reinforcement of social memories through prescribed practices. For Connerton, members of social groups form social memory through repetitive actions that “automatically impl[y] continuity with the past” (45). Individuals create a connection with their “past,” with an identifiable knowledge of history, by entering into a role that allows them to understand this past through this prescribed role. In appropriating Connerton’s theory, I would make the case that when an audience enters into the theater, they become members of a repeated performative action: they must accept their roles

as viewers in order to make a connection with their “past.” In this case, “past” then becomes the audience’s ability to interpret their relationship with authority that exists contemporaneously: their relationship with the monarch is their “past” and the theater becomes a recognizable place for them to reinforce and understand that relationship. The physical space occupied by the theater allows the creation of an access point for the audience to interpret and negotiate the knowledge of culture.

Using the theories laid out by Benedict Anderson and Paul Connerton, in Chapter II, I will look in depth at the relationship between the contemporary events of Elizabethan England and the events in *King John*. My goal in analyzing *King John* is to demonstrate the viability of this interpretative model. I will focus my analysis on how the awareness of Elizabeth’s looming end is the dominant collective knowledge that exists during the writing of *King John*. The lack of a known successor produces an uncertainty over the future of the kingdom. I will then illustrate how the events in *King John* mirror contemporary culture. *King John*’s focus on the questionable succession of John and the battle that ensues over who is the rightful heir becomes an allegoric representation of life after Elizabeth: the audience’s relationship with Elizabeth, or authority, allows them to access the play as a representation of contemporary culture. In turn, this access point provides the framework to support an analysis of the three characters vying for authority in *King John* as representations of Elizabeth’s legacy. By negotiating the play through the audience’s relationship with Elizabeth, the presentations of the characters of John, Arthur, and the Bastard all appear to have allegorical links

with Elizabeth. Each character appears to represent a different way the audience could possibly perceive their dying queen. By having each of these characters represent a different interpretation of Elizabeth, the performance provides an indication that memory is a negotiable construct that can be shaped through commemorative ceremonies like performance. Moreover, the end of *King John* suggests that the negotiation of memory plays an active role in the formation of history.

While my analysis of *King John* in Chapter II demonstrates the viability of the interpretative model I have put forth and suggests that performance functions as a historiographic process, my analysis of *The Winter's Tale* in Chapter III will illustrate performance's agency in the formation of history. Using the theories of performance's relationship to audience as set out by Stephen Orgel and Louis Montrose, I will illustrate that performance actively attempts to shape the audience's interpretation of history. Through my analysis, I will demonstrate how King James's desires to govern as an absolutist are firmly entrenched in contemporary discourse, and how both James and his opposition attempted to appropriate Elizabeth's legacy for their own political gain. James's belief that a monarch should rule absolutely is established many years prior to his reign as evidenced through his early writings. When *The Winter's Tale* was written and performed in 1610, the debate between James and parliament appears to have established itself within contemporary discourse as evidenced through the failure of the Great Contract of 1610. By providing this cultural context, the historical evidence that illustrates the discourse contemporary to the play's performance

allows the audience to gain an access point in order to view the tyranny of Leontes in Acts I through III as an expression of absolutism. Moreover, the portrayal of Leontes's inability to compromise illustrates an outright opposition to James's absolutism. Shakespeare then contrasts the romantic love of Perdita and Florizel in Act IV with Leontes's tyranny in the first three acts. This contrast illustrates how the model of access and interpretation allows performance to construct history: the debate between James and parliament creates an access point for the first three acts. Then, this negative portrayal of absolutism creates an access point to interpret Act IV as a positive perspective of limited monarchy: the deconstruction of the social hierarchy demonstrated in Act IV coupled with the positive associations with the pastoral and romance suggests an interpretation that governance should be shared between the monarchy and the people. Finally, Act V illustrates that the negotiation of these cultural events comes directly from the performance itself. By having Paulina literally "stage" the return of Hermione, Shakespeare implies that, as in *King John*, the appropriation of Elizabethan legacy will come through performance. Shakespeare uses Paulina's "performance" of Hermione's return to demonstrate that the preceding events of Acts I-IV are negotiated through performance and that performance creates history.

CHAPTER II

NEGOTIATING MEMORY: THE CONSTRUCTION AND CULTIVATION OF ELIZABETH'S MEMORY IN *KING JOHN*

In her 1593 speech at the closing of Parliament, Queen Elizabeth I addressed the mounting fears of a Spanish invasion. Since the sinking of the Spanish Armada in 1588, the Spanish had attempted multiple invasions of the English coastline with little or no success.¹ Despite the unsuccessful nature of these expeditions, a certain segment of the English population feared impending war with Spain. Elizabeth addresses this segment of her population directly in her 1593 speech to parliament:

I have heard say that when [Philip of Spain] attempted his last invasion,
some inhabiting upon the coasts forsook the towns and fled up higher into
the country, leaving all naked and exposed to his entrance.

(Marcus 329)

The desertion of those individuals that “forsook the towns and fled” highlights a fundamental problem facing Elizabeth during the final years of her reign. Though she remains the sovereign head of England, Elizabeth has become aware that there is growing knowledge of her weakening status. By addressing the problem of these deserters, she acknowledges that a portion of her citizens appear to fear the direct dangers associated with the landing of a Spanish invasion force more than the dangers threatened by their

aging sovereign. In an effort to quell a suggestion of her weakness, Elizabeth attempts to reinforce her status as Queen. Directly after her acknowledgement of the deserters that left England “all naked and exposed,” she reminds them if she “knew those persons or may know of any that shall so do hereafter, [she] will make them know and feel what it is to be so fearful in so urgent a cause” (329). Elizabeth recognizes the fact that certain citizens have, perhaps unconsciously, questioned her rule and reminds those individuals that her power remains strong. The dangers to Elizabeth’s sovereignty increase exponentially when she is faced with the reality that she is not actually addressing these deserters but rather addressing Parliament. Her reminder that “any” person who attempts to desert her “hereafter” will be met with something that will cause that person to “know and feel what it is to be so fearful” demonstrates that she is not limiting her threat of reprisal to the average citizen; instead, *anyone*--Parliament, Lords, courtiers, counselors--whose actions suggest a Spanish superiority over Elizabeth’s rule, a lack of control by Elizabeth, runs the risk of serious punishment. Yet despite her rhetorical attempts to reinforce her sovereignty, the reminder itself serves as an implicit acknowledgement that she is a diminished ruler. Her threat of punishment to those who question her illustrates the questioning of her status is a great enough threat that it must be addressed. If Elizabeth were completely confident in her ruling status, she would not be required in some way to address, and threaten, those that feel her position has weakened.

This growing awareness of Elizabeth’s weakening status highlights a fundamental concern for the future of England, a future without Elizabeth. Elizabeth has ruled England since 1558. By 1593, many of her citizens have known no other life except one under Elizabeth. Now, they face a future with the knowledge that she will be gone.

Elizabeth herself is keenly aware of England's future without her, addressing it multiple times near the end of her reign. In the same speech to Parliament in 1593, Elizabeth reminds Parliament that "this kingdom hath had many noble and victorious princes" (329). These words hint at Elizabeth's knowledge that her reign is coming to an end. Her acknowledgement that "many noble and victorious princes" have come before her indicates the temporal nature of the reign of monarchs. She knows that, like that of those who have come before her, her time will end. She again acknowledges her temporal status in her famous Golden Speech of 1601: in this speech, Elizabeth attests that she does not "desire to live longer days than that [she] may see [her kingdom's] prosperity, and that is [her] only desire" (337). She repeats this sentiment later in the speech when she states that it is not her "desire to live nor reign longer than [her] life and reign shall be for [her kingdom's] good" (339-40). In referencing twice that she does not wish to "live longer" than she can be of use to the country, Elizabeth indicates that by 160, in her 68th year, she knows her rule is coming to an end.

Despite her fear that her reign will end in 1593, Elizabeth will reign for another ten years, and, consciously or not, Elizabeth attempts to negotiate between the knowledge of a future without her and a present with her. In her address to Parliament in 1593, Elizabeth claims that "in love, care, sincerity, and justice, [she] will compare with any prince that [England] ever had or *ever shall have*" (329, emphasis mine). When she makes direct reference to the future leaders of England, Elizabeth places herself inside the temporal, linear timeline of succession and at the same time outside sovereignty's temporal dimension. She is like the "many noble and virtuous princes," but she is also better than any that have come before her and any that will come after her in her "love,

care, sincerity, and justice.” By placing herself in these dichotomous modes of thought, Elizabeth demonstrates that, even ten years prior to the end of her reign, she is already attempting to shape an understanding of her own legacy. Her attempt to cultivate the way her people view her, both in the present and in the future, illustrates that her history, and, indeed, her memory can be seen as constructions of her own rhetoric.

By the time Shakespeare writes *King John*, Elizabeth has already used her rhetoric to construct her memory in the eyes of her subjects. She is Good Queen Bess, The Virgin Queen, and Gloriana;² however, the constructed nature of Elizabethan memory opens the possibility for the cultivation of her legacy through other forms of rhetoric. Indeed, The Queen’s struggle to maintain authority in the face of a Spanish invasion illuminates the growth of a legacy that has moved beyond the control of the Queen’s will: during her reign, Elizabeth dealt with the struggles of Protestantism against Catholicism, with the attribution of a the “weak will” due to her femininity, and with the scandal surrounding the execution of her cousin, Mary Queen of Scots. Each of these difficulties illustrates a possible dominant factor in the future of her legacy. Will she be remembered as the Virgin Queen? Will she be seen as the conqueror of the Armada? Or will she be remembered as a weak queen desperate to retain power?

In an attempt to determine how discourse can shape a collective historical memory of the Queen, I turn my attention to Shakespeare’s *King John*. Recognizing the chaotic uncertainty of Elizabeth’s authority that dominates the cultural landscape around the time *King John* is written, I believe an analysis of the play will reveal the competitive claims for Elizabethan legacy. Moreover, the recognition of the representation of these interpretations within the play demonstrates that not only cultural discourse has the power

to shape history, but also that discourse through performance can stake a claim in the historiographic process. In the following analysis, I will focus on the striking similarities between Elizabeth and the characters that represent authority in *King John* and demonstrate how Shakespeare's characterization of them illustrates an attempt to construct and cultivate the memory of Elizabeth. In an effort to understand better if cultural memory links *King John* and Elizabeth, I will first explore how the space inhabited by the performance of play's like *King John* makes accessible a negotiation of memory through a nationalistic, collective identity formed around the authoritative position of monarch. Then I will provide an in depth analysis of how the characters representing authority in *King John* come to associate with a different interpretation of Elizabethan memory. By focusing especially on the significance of the play's final act, I will demonstrate how *King John* pushes the audience toward a specific interpretation of Elizabeth's legacy, and I will speculate on what impact this insistence has on performance's place within the historiographic process.

Performance as Collective Memory

Research on the formation of memory focuses on the abstract formation of memory *after* the remembered event has already passed. Though these studies on memory do not lend themselves directly to the unique situation faced in *King John*, they do provide a critical framework to interpret Shakespeare's negotiations of Elizabeth's memory prior to her death. Memory exists as a present interpretation of the past; yet, the formation of memory begins during the event which will be remembered and is cultivated by subsequent events that shape the interpretation into its present form. While an

individual's memory can branch into an indefinable multiplicity, the formation of a social memory, a collective experience of the past, is based on commonalities shared among a social group. The very act of belonging to a social group indicates that "participants in any social order must presuppose a shared memory" (Connerton 3). These shared memories, then, become the basis to explore how the audience of *King John* will begin to negotiate Elizabeth's legacy.

With this understanding of shared memory within a social group, sociologist Paul Connerton posits that societies reinforce the continuation of social memory through sites of what he refers to as "commemorative ceremonies" (6). These "commemorative ceremonies" are sites where societies perform ritualistic practices to reinforce established memories. Connerton uses the example of the coronation ceremony as an example of a shared ritualistic practice (8). The dynastic transition from one monarch to the next highlights the continuum of the political center as the fundamental connection of all individuals of Elizabethan society. Elizabeth, however, took the ritual of coronation a step further with her institution of the Accession Day celebrations. Elizabeth's formation of this holiday demonstrates Connerton's theory that "*commemorative ceremonies*" are crucial in sustaining a social memory. I would like to make the case that like the repetition of the Accession Day ceremonies, the space occupied by performance also can be seen as an established boundary in which members of society gain access to social memory. The audience enters the theater with an awareness of their specific social obligation to the performance. Though the performances will vary, the audience's position within the "ceremony" of theater remains the same: the audience maintains the role of observer. This static position allows the audience to use their

“presuppose[d]...shared memor[ies]” to negotiate what they see within the performance. By maintaining a ceremony-like relationship between audience and performance, the theater becomes a vehicle for the expression of these socially constructed memories. These socially constructed memories then become the lens through which the audience will negotiate their understanding of the ceremony of performance.

On the surface, Benedict Anderson’s exploration of nationalism might not seem applicable to a study of Elizabethan memory negotiation; however, certain elements of *Imagined Communities* reveal how Elizabethan society established its nation-ness around Elizabeth. Anderson envisions that the formation of a “nation” relies on the concept that the “nation” is “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (6). He bases his assumptions upon the reality that a nation is “*imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members” (6). Instead, they are bound together by an imagined principle of “nationalism” (6). Anderson suggests that nationalism is a modern response to the formation of nations because of the “hierarchical dynastic” model of previous regimes. In other words, an individual would not be identified as a member of a “class” of a nation but rather as belong to a rank within society. As Anderson puts it:

To the question ‘Who is Comte de X?’ the normal answer would have been, not ‘a member of the aristocracy,’ but ‘the lord of X,’ ‘the uncles of the Baronne de Y,’ or ‘a client of the Duc de Z.

(7)

While this linear placement of the individual does provide a more accurate representation of the system in place under Queen Elizabeth, Anderson’s model of a “nation” as a single

community bound under one imagined principle still holds for the previous hierarchical dynastic model. Though the “Comte de X,” or the earl of X, will most certainly be defined in the terms put forth by Anderson, the earl of X cannot escape the linear progression in which he becomes “the subject of A.” Thus, like the “serf of Z” and the “Duke of B,” all individuals in the hierarchical dynastic model fall under the sovereign monarch. Therefore, Anderson’s theories on nationalism can be appropriated: instead of national identity created through the concept of “nationness,” the monarchy creates a monarchial society’s nationalistic collective identification. This guiding principle of how individuals are bound under the prospect of “nationalism” demonstrates that Elizabethan citizens shared the commonality of servitude to Elizabeth. This shared knowledge--nationalism for modern nations, dynastic power for past or monarchial nations--suggests the viability of a national collective memory that can be molded and shaped. According to Anderson, individuals of a social group must have a sustained awareness of a commonality, and I suggest that Elizabeth, as the head of England, provides a focal point for the formation of a common knowledge.

The formation of a nationalistic identity around the position of Elizabeth as head of the monarchy establishes a common knowledge for the early modern theatergoer to access when he enters the space of the theater. By entering into this constructed, ceremonial relationship with the theater, the audience has a place to interpret its shared knowledge. The performance of plays like *King John* can be negotiated through the lens of this shared memory. In *King John*, Shakespeare enables the construction of social memory by cultivating present identifications of Elizabeth through his development of the struggle for authority among John, Arthur, and the Bastard. Shakespeare allegorically

links each of these characters to different interpretations of Elizabeth's legacy. By exploring these allegorical connections, Shakespeare demonstrates that theater's position as a commemorative ceremony can exert an active role in how the audience interprets social memory.

Elizabeth in *King John*

Though largely ignored due to its status as one of Shakespeare's lesser known history plays, *The Life and Death of King John* has seen a reemergence in recent years.³ While many critical interpretations highlight the historical connection between the reign of Elizabeth and *King John*, the construction and cultivation of Elizabeth's legacy has been largely overlooked. However, a number of critics engage the assumptions underlying the construction and cultivation of memory. One assumption that has been analyzed is that a lack order exists within the play. The formation of memory begins during an event; however, the shaping of *how* something will be remembered begins with the awareness of the event's temporality. The construction of memory, therefore, relies on an awareness of change. In *King John*, Shakespeare demonstrates change by illustrating a lack of order produced by questions about John's legitimacy. Like the disorder brought on by the impending end of Elizabeth's reign, the lack of order in *King John* begins the process of establishing the current order as a memory, as history or past rather than present. Multiple critics interpret the questionable validity of authority in *King John*. The "disintegration of order and speech and truth" (150) is a primary focus of Sigmund Burckhardt's seminal text on *King John*. For Burckhardt, the loss of continuity signals that Shakespeare "was or became 'modern'" (134). Burckhardt claims this shift

into modernity is caused by Shakespeare's attributing the motivation of his characters to their own consciences rather than religious doctrine (134-5). Though Burckhardt's attention is on the shifting awareness of the individual consciousness his analysis recognizes that established modes of understanding in *King John*, "order and speech and truth," are "disintergrat[ing]." Like the individual consciousness, the established order of Elizabethan England is subject to change due to a lack of order.

Though Burckhardt does not make a direct connection of the play's connection with Elizabeth, there are other critical interpretations that deal expressly with an unstable present, which is one of the primary connections between Elizabeth's reign and the events in *King John*. Like Burckhardt, Thomas Anderson recognizes the presence of a system in the process of fundamentally changing its old patterns; however, Burckhardt focuses on the modernization of the individual's consciousness while Anderson concentrates on a change within the political system. Anderson links Elizabeth's delegation of authority with the relationship between John and the Bastard to demonstrate that Shakespeare's characterization of the Bastard highlights an "emerging bureaucratic network of authority" ("Legitimation" 36). Anderson's emphasis on a shifting political system within *King John* reinforces the assertion that the system undergoing change deals directly with royal authority. John's delegation of responsibility indicates the weakening status of kingship. Anderson's association of this delegation with Elizabeth's own diminishing political power only serves to further strengthen the awareness that Elizabeth's reign is nearing its end.

The awareness of a system of order in flux helps provide a framework for the assertion that *King John* is a representation of Shakespeare's negotiating the construction

of Elizabeth's legacy; however, the uncertainty of *how* Elizabeth will be remembered also plays an important role in analyzing the negotiation of memory in *King John*. The questions respecting authority and legitimacy that drive the action of *King John* provide an allegorical connection with those regarding the uncertainty of Elizabeth's legacy. Though this allegorical connection between *King John* and Elizabeth's rule has received little study, certain critics do focus their attention on the uncertainty that permeates throughout the play. Larry Champion explores the inability of the events in *King John* to produce any form of closure. Though the play ends with a form of closure with the young Henry taking the throne, the preceding actions and the knowledge of what is to come later (civil war under Henry) cause Champion to suggest that "the cold chill of reality tempers the fire of political patriotism" (179). Champion then suggests that the lack of closure is "an artistic attack upon [the history play] itself and the tendency to provide closure where it is impossible in a corrupt political process" (182). While Champion's assumptions of the meta-functionality of the play seem ripe for further analysis, he relies on a fundamental assertion that the play causes an unsettling awareness of an uncertain future. As Champion puts it, "*King John* has always evoked a baffling variety of responses" (173), and it "refuses to be bound by a particular design or ideology; it is as rich and ultimately contradictory as the motivations that generate human actions" (183). The uncertain and "contradictory" nature of the play reveals a misunderstanding of the present and an uncertainty of how the future will be constructed. Without knowledge of how the present functions and how the future will progress, the cultivation and construction of the present becomes a viable interpretation of the work. Dorothea Kehler's interpretation of *King John* also lends credence to this theory. Kehler's primary argument in her article

“‘So Jest with Heaven’: Deity in *King John*” focuses on the fact that *King John*’s “audience may...interrogate all churches as corruptible temporal powers and ultimately the faith that churches institutionalize” (99). While Kehler’s article deals with the question of whether God exists within the play, she concludes that the “ambivalence regarding the vital religious concerns of the play and of its audience makes for a potentially weak ending” because “heaven and hell can be seen as demystified emblems, constructs shorn of authority, between which kings and would-be kings, graceless men and vulnerable boys, vie for power” (110). The suggestion that previously held belief systems are “demystified emblems” of religious symbology not only supports the underlying assumption of a system in flux but also the uncertainty linked to a future of change.

Though the allegorical connection of the text with Elizabeth’s memory has not been explored critically, the play’s historiographic process of creating history has been explored. In her analysis of *King John*, Marsha Robinson notes that “one of the distinctive stylistic features of the Shakespearean history play is the artful recreation of history as past, present, and future” (29); furthermore, Robinson illustrates that Shakespeare’s “aim in this play is not merely to recreate the past but to dramatize the process by which historical experience is translated into historiographic meaning” (30). Robinson recognizes that Shakespeare is actively constructing an interpretation of history through the blending of past, present, and future. Moreover, Robinson suggests that “in *King John* this mythologizing of history is recognized as a political stratagem” (32). Robinson reveals Shakespeare’s use of historical interpretation as a way in which individuals or groups cultivate the future. Robinson’s awareness of Shakespeare’s

negotiation of memory in *King John* lends credibility to an analysis that hinges on an allegorical interpretation of Elizabeth's legacy. Yet, Robinson's interpretation disallows the possibility that Shakespeare recognizes the formative powers of historiographic construction. Instead, she feels that, because the Bastard's "satiric emplotment...mocks both the historical process and the historiographic one" (38), Shakespeare must be "ridicul[ing] historical interpretation and question[ing] the process by which historical explanation is generated" (33). While the Bastard's seeming disgust with the political maneuverings in *King John* can support such a conclusion, I would argue that the presentation of the historiographic process through political maneuvering does not equate to the questioning of the constructed nature of history; instead, I suggest that Shakespeare's acknowledgement of such a process merely denotes its existence. Therefore the awareness that the process is at work can then provide an avenue for the exploration of how the process is being employed in the play. This would suggest that the possibility of interpreting the play as a tool to negotiate how an historical event--or person--will be remembered is a viable mode of exploration. If the play's contemporary political context is then taken into consideration, the memory of Elizabeth seems a likely candidate for Shakespeare's historical cultivation. A close examination of the play's characters who demonstrate authority within the play may provide a link to the different possible versions of Elizabeth's legacy.

Allegorical Representations of History

As early as 1561, the fears of a future without a successor began to divide the country (Haigh 20). Elizabeth was keenly aware that England had "their eyes fixed upon

that person that is next to succeed” (22). Elizabeth refused to marry and refused to name a successor; thus, past child-bearing age, Elizabeth causes the future of England to be called into question: using the awareness of Elizabeth’s uncertain legacy, my analysis of Shakespeare’s characterizations of John, Arthur, and the Bastard in *King John* provides strong comparisons between three different interpretations of the Queen’s legacy. In order to establish the validity of this argument, I will draw a close connection between each of these characters and the historical Elizabeth. Each character highlights three different versions of her memory: the Virgin Queen, submissive to her Parliament; the weak, ruthless leader, desperately holding onto power; or the glorious, fearless ruler, inspiring jingoistic praise. Shakespeare pits these three characters, and versions of memory, against each other, vying for power within the play--though the Bastard does not vie directly for the crown, his strong presence and central role place him in a position of power. This struggle for supremacy reveals the cultural anxiety over what version of Elizabeth’s legacy will eventually become the dominant historical representation of the Queen.

In his representation of Arthur, Shakespeare seems to be suggesting that the cultural representation of Elizabeth as the Virgin Queen is one of the three ways Elizabeth’s legacy might be shaped. Shakespeare’s portrayal of John as illegitimate in authority, as ruthless in his desire to retain power, but ultimately as weak in his representation of Kingship suggests a memory of Elizabeth that focuses on the historical representation of Elizabeth with the same connotations. Finally, in the Bastard Shakespeare presents a royal character with cunning, fearlessness, and savvy political rhetoric. The Bastard’s survival and subsequent support of young Henry suggest a belief

that Elizabeth's legacy will be that of a fearless leader and savvy politician.

Of all the characters vying for power in *King John*, Arthur appears the weakest. His youth and innocent nature prevent him from claiming royal authority on his own; instead, he must rely on King Philip of France to fight for his claim to the English throne. While Arthur's role in *King John* is rather diminutive, Shakespeare's portrayal of his innocence provides a strong connection with the historical representation of Elizabeth as the Virgin Queen. Elizabeth herself cultivated the image of her virginity as early as 1559 when she told Parliament if she never married then her tombstone should read, "Here lies interred Elizabeth, / A virgin pure until her death" (Marcus 60). Louis Montrose notes in his analysis of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that while "Protestantism did away with the cult of the Virgin Mary[,]...a concerted effort was in fact made to appropriate the symbolism and the affective power of the suppressed Marian cult in order to foster an Elizabethan cult" (63). This appropriation of iconography and ritual surrounding the Virgin Mary⁴ demonstrates an Elizabethan association of the Queen with "chastity, constancy, and wisdom" (McClure 39). The development of an Elizabethan cult that aligns Elizabeth with the Virgin Mary promotes a version of her legacy that hinges upon these virtuous qualities. In similar fashion, Shakespeare constructs Arthur using Christ-like connotations. Constructing an Arthur-Christ comparison provides a correlative to the contemporary connection between Elizabeth-Mary. Moreover, Arthur can be seen as the allegorical progeny/legacy of Elizabeth, and Christ can be said to have a similar relationship to Mary. This connection provides even further evidence to support the suggestion that an Arthur/Christ connection establishes a link between Mary and Elizabeth. Shakespeare most vividly demonstrates Arthur's symbolic link to Christ in Act

IV scene I. When faced with his own mortality, Arthur suggests that he would “be as merry as the day is long” (4.1.18) if only he “were out of prison and kept sheep” (4.1.17). Shakespeare aligns Arthur with the shepherding of sheep, a possible reference toward Christ. Shakespeare reinforces this comparison by having Arthur preface this statement with the exclamation, “by [his] christendom” (4.1.16). The inclusion of the word “christendom” would provide the audience with a suggestive clue to link Arthur’s desires to shepherd sheep with Christ. Shakespeare continues the allusion toward Christ when Arthur declares that he “will sit as quite as a lamb” (4.1.79) while Hubert burns out his eyes. Not only does Shakespeare compare Arthur to a “lamb,” he also writes that Arthur will “forgive” Hubert (4.1.82) for the wrong he will commit. Arthur’s forgiveness of his aggressor again suggests Arthur’s connection with Christ and Christian doctrine. The connection of Arthur to Christ demonstrates his role in the play as representing royal authority through purity and “innocence” (4.1.64). The cultivation of Elizabeth’s identity as the chaste, Virgin Queen as one interpretation of Elizabeth’s legacy relies on the same connotations as Shakespeare’s Arthur. Arthur’s literal attempt to gain power in the play then can be seen as an allegorical representation of this version of Elizabeth’s legacy vying for prominence as historical fact.

Shakespeare’s characterization of John provides a framework for an allegorical representation of Elizabeth’s tentative hold on power that consumed much of her reign. In John, Shakespeare creates a character consumed by the fear of losing authority. Shakespeare lays the groundwork for connecting Elizabeth and John by establishing many basic similarities. Both are current monarchs of England. Both face familial threats to their power from cousins: Elizabeth’s claim to the throne is threatened by Mary Queen

of Scots; John's claim is threatened by his young cousin Arthur Plantagenet. Mary and Elizabeth trace their mutual lineage back to Henry VII, Elizabeth's grandfather and Mary's great-grandfather. In similar fashion, John and Arthur trace their mutual lineage back to Richard the Lionheart, John's father and Arthur's grandfather. While Mary and Elizabeth's relationship is once removed compared to that of John and Arthur, the correlation between the generational gaps is striking. Both relationships share a one-generational gap with their mutual relation. This similarity in generational gap reinforces the claim that John can symbolically represent Elizabeth, further providing a basis for John as an allegorical representation of Elizabeth's legacy.

Another way Shakespeare connects a historical representation of Elizabeth with his characterization of John is through their unrelenting desire to retain power. Both Elizabeth and John recognize the threat to their power, and both are willing to fight to retain that authority. Shakespeare establishes John's fear of losing authority early in the play by describing John's questionable claim to the throne of England. In Salic Law, the oldest son holds the title of heir to the throne. Shakespeare demonstrates John's false claim to the throne during John's discussion of the legal heir to the Falconbridge name. John recognizes that Robert Falconbridge is the younger brother and that therefore he has no right to the Falconbridge title when he asks the Bastard, "Why, being younger born, Doth [Robert] lay claim to *thine* inheritance?" (1.1.71-2, emphasis mine). John recognizes that the title inherently belongs to the Bastard because he is the older brother: it is *his* "inheritance," not Robert's. In doing this, John demonstrates that the law holds that the oldest brother, and therefore the progeny of the oldest brother, holds claim to title and inheritance: if the oldest brother dies without an heir, the next oldest brother has

claim to the title, and his children would have subsequent claim to the title. Shakespeare represents John's illegitimate claim to the throne because John is not the heir or the progeny of the oldest son. Ignoring, for now, the reality that the Bastard is the only living son of Richard, then by John's logic Arthur holds stronger claim to the throne than John. Like John's claim to power, Elizabeth's legitimacy is questioned throughout her reign.⁵ In 1570, Pope Pius V issued the papal bull *Regnans in excelsis* renouncing Elizabeth's claim to the throne in favor of her cousin Mary Queen of Scots (Haigh 192). While Elizabeth, a protestant and leader of the Church of England, does not follow Catholic doctrine, the Pope's disavowal of Elizabeth demonstrates that she, like John, must make a concerted effort to fight off claims against her authority. Shakespeare's inclusion of John's illegitimate status highlights the connection between John's reign and Elizabeth's. When taken within the historical context surrounding the play's creation and the context of the competing claims of authority between John, Arthur, and the Bastard, this connection between Shakespeare's John and the real life of Elizabeth provides further evidence of Shakespeare negotiating how Elizabeth will be remembered.

Another connection Elizabeth and John share is illustrates through their attempts to retain power by murdering their cousins. Eleanor reminds John that his claim to the throne is based more on his "strong possession much more than [his] right" (1.1.40). Eleanor is openly aware of John's illegitimate claim to the throne of England, while John, consciously or not, makes clear indications his claim to power is weaker than Arthur's. Eleanor demonstrates her fear of a loss of her hold on power when she states that John's illegitimacy can cause everything to "go wrong [for John] and [herself]" (1.1.41). The recognition that John's illegitimacy can cause their destruction leads to their unrelenting

attempts to retain power. When the French ambassador, Chatillon, lays the claim for Arthur's kingship, John responds with a declaration of war: "Be thou as lightning in the eyes of France, / For ere thou canst report, I will be there; / The thunder of my cannon shall be heard" (1.1.24-6). When John's position of authority is questioned his response turns violent. John will take his country to war in order to protect his claim to sovereignty. In similar fashion, Elizabeth faced several military conflicts that arose due to the questioning of her authority. While both John's and Elizabeth's fearlessness to go to war demonstrates their ruthless nature, their relationships with their cousins demonstrate a stronger representation of their ruthlessness. Both John and Elizabeth openly denounce the murder of their cousins. When confronted by the Lords Salisbury and Pembroke about the death of Arthur, John positions himself as guiltless in Arthur's murder because John does not "bear the shears of destiny" nor the "commandment on the pulse of life" (4.2.91-2). John attempts to show that because he did not murder Arthur with his own hands he is blameless for the death. He denies culpability and instead blames Hubert for taking his words out of context: "it is the curse of kings to be attended / By slaves that take their humours for a warrant / to break within the bloody house of life" (4.2.209-11). Like John, Elizabeth also attempts to shift the blame for the execution of Mary Queen of Scots from herself to her Lords. On Oct 6th 1586 Elizabeth penned a letter to Mary informing her that Mary will face trial for her "most horrible and unnatural attempt" to kill Elizabeth (Marcus 288). However, just six days later, Elizabeth wrote her counselor William Cecil informing him to stay Mary's execution "until such time as [Cecil] shall have made [his] personal return to [Elizabeth's] presence and report to [her] of [his] proceedings and opinions" (Marcus 289). Though these letters precede Mary's death by

four months, they signal an indication that Elizabeth desired to cultivate an uncertainty about her role in the execution of Mary. Indeed scholars have found evidence that Elizabeth secretly desired to end Mary's life prior to her trial and execution. Yet after Mary's death, Elizabeth openly disavowed the execution of Mary (Anderson, *Performing Early Modern Trauma* 62). In similar fashion, John diverts blame to Hubert for Arthur's death but gives Hubert orders, though perhaps indirectly, to kill Arthur:

King John:

Good Hubert, Hubert, Hubert, throw thine eye
On yon young boy. I'll tell thee what, my friend,
He is a very serpent in my way,
And wheresoe'er this foot of mine doth tread,
He lies before me. Dost thou understand me?
Thou art his keeper.

Hubert: And I'll keep him so
That he shall not offend your majesty.

King John: Death.

Hubert: My Lord.

King John: A grave.

Hubert: He shall not live.

King John: Enough.

(3.3.59-66)

While John does not directly ask Hubert to kill Arthur, Shakespeare makes Hubert's provocation implicit. Moreover, the noblemen's reaction to Arthur's death correlates with

the speculation surrounding Elizabeth after Mary's execution. Upon finding Arthur dead, Salisbury, Pembroke, and Bigot openly claim John murdered Arthur: Salisbury asserts that Arthur's death is "the practice and the purpose of the King" (4.3.63), and Pembroke and Bigot announce their agreement with him in unison as they declare that their "souls religiously confirm [Salisbury's] words" (4.3.73). In similar fashion, speculation around Elizabeth's role in Mary's death is widely discussed during her reign. Thomas Anderson highlights the connection between Elizabeth's role in Mary's execution and the similar events in *Richard II* (*Performing Early Modern Trauma* 58). This connection causes so much speculation the Queen acknowledges, "I am Richard II. Know ye not that?" (*Performing Early Modern Trauma* 58). The Queen's own acknowledgment of the allegorical connection demonstrates the speculation in English society over Elizabeth's role in Mary's death. The similar events leading to the deaths of Arthur and Mary and the speculation surrounding the role John and Elizabeth played in the deaths demonstrate an allegorical correlation between John and Elizabeth. When faced with threats to their sovereignty, both John and Elizabeth demonstrate they will attempt to retain their power through any means necessary, even killing relatives. If John is then taken as an allegorical representation of Elizabeth's legacy, then it would appear that one interpretation of Elizabeth's legacy will cultivate a memory of a ruthless, cunning monarch.

Yet, despite John's ruthless struggle to retain power, he ultimately is a weak representation of kingship. When faced with the revolting population at Angers, John demonstrates an inability to make his own decisions. After the citizens refuse entry to both France and England twice, the Bastard persuades John to join forces with France and lay siege to Angers (2.1.373-400). John's yielding to the Bastard signifies a

usurpation of authority. If John is king, John should make the decisions, yet he relies on his counselor to make the difficult decision for him. While a reliance on advice from others does not necessarily indicate a lack of authority or power, the use of advisors does indicate a lack of complete trust in one's own opinion: advice is not inherently bad, but reliance on it shows a lack of confidence. John's lack of confidence is magnified by his vacillation immediately following his commitment to level Angers. Before the two kings, John and Philip, can level Angers, the citizen asks for a stay in the violence and requests a compromise. John immediately answers, "Speak on with favour; we are bent to hear" (2.1.423). John's willingness to hear the compromise of the citizens of Angers after he proclaimed his desire to "lay this Angers even with the ground" (2.1.399) demonstrates an inability to commit to a decision. John's inability to commit suggests a weak representation of kingship.

Elizabeth was also notorious for her oscillations in policy; as Christopher Haigh puts it, "Elizabeth was resolute only in her irresolution" (77). Just one example of her many contradictions comes from her courtship of Alençon of France. In the span of two days, Elizabeth sent two letters to Sir Francis Walsingham, her French ambassador. In the first letter, Elizabeth claimed that she "cannot find ourselves void of doubt and misliking to accept this offer" (Marcus 208) of marriage; however, in the second letter she suggests that the possibility for marriage remains open (Marcus 209-10).⁶ While some scholars make the point that Elizabeth's vacillation was a strategic move to help her retain power, Shakespeare's portrayal of John's vacillation only suggests weakness, especially when John's later actions are taken into account. John further demonstrates a representation of weak kingship when he succumbs to papal authority in order to protect

his sovereignty (5.1.1-16). In submitting to papal authority, John literally and symbolically recognizes the authority of another governing body over him. He physically “yield(s) up” (5.1.1) his crown to Pandolf who then returns it to him only “as [a] holding of the Pope” (5.1.3). While Elizabeth does not literally submit to the authority of another, her courtship with Robert Dudley demonstrates Elizabeth willingly and unwillingly demonstrates to outside influences.. According to Haigh, “in mid-January 1561, the Spanish ambassador was told by a Dudley ally that the Queen and Robert would move towards the restoration of lines with Rome if Philip II would support their marriage and help them deal with any consequences” (16). While Haigh indicates that the Queen might not have had a hand in this possible realignment with Catholicism, the effect remains the same: the plot is leaked to the public, and there is public outcry against the marriage of Elizabeth and Dudley (16-17). The effect of this event is two-fold: if Elizabeth indeed was willing to submit to Papal authority in order to marry, then she demonstrates herself as a sovereign willing to submit to another’s authority; however, regardless of the truth of the story, the outcome demonstrates that Elizabeth must submit to popular opinion.

Shakespeare provides several possibly connections between his fictional representation of the life of King John and the life of Queen Elizabeth. Like these many examples indicate, if the Queen is seen as a representation of John, then her legacy will be that of a frightened, ineffective tyrant. If the Queen is to be remembered like Arthur, then her memory will hinge upon her innocence and a complete submissiveness to the authority of her counsel. Yet, both John and Arthur are dead. If Shakespeare is attempting to negotiate which memory of Elizabeth’s legacy will eventually reign, then it would seem neither the controversial Queen or the Virgin Queen are the lasting representations

of Elizabeth's legacy. However, John and Arthur are not the only representations of authority and power within *King John*: Shakespeare's portrayal of the Bastard's authoritative role suggests the Bastard also provides a representation of authority. Shakespeare aligns the Bastard with authority in a variety of ways. The Bastard becomes the right hand of the King through the course of the play, even providing him with counsel during the battle for Angers in Act II. He plays the role of peacemaker in Act IV between the noblemen and Hubert. He gives orders and stands up to Louis the Dauphin of France in the final act. Moreover, Shakespeare gives the Bastard the final lines of the play, signifying the importance of his role to the young King Henry. The Bastard has all the hallmarks of an authoritative figure. If the Bastard can be placed in the allegorical role of Elizabeth, then his survival suggests that his jingoistic national pride provides a lasting interpretation of Elizabeth's legacy.

The Bastard's protagonist role and authoritative voice throughout the play indicate he is symbolic of power, yet his alignment with Elizabeth requires further examination. Shakespeare provides several connections between the Bastard and Elizabeth. The most basic of these connections is the suggestion of bastardry itself. Elizabeth's mother was accused of treason and beheaded (Haigh 1). Her father, Henry VIII, had his marriage with Elizabeth's mother, Anne Boleyn, annulled causing Elizabeth to become a literal bastard (Haigh 1). Shakespeare's Bastard is also, allegedly, the bastard son of the King, Richard the Lionheart; however, the Bastard's mother was never actually Queen. While the way Elizabeth and the Bastard became bastardized is different, this similarity provides support for an allegorical connection. Moreover, the Bastard's and Elizabeth's bastardy links them in another way. Elizabeth was known to "sometimes

[use] Anne Boleyn's falcon badge (Haigh 3). The last name of the Bastard's estranged family is Falconbridge. Both Elizabeth and the Bastard are associated with the falcon. While this connection of bastardy alone does not prove the Bastard as an allegorical interpretation of Elizabeth, it does provide evidence for further interpretation.

If the Bastard is to be seen as an allegorical interpretation of Elizabeth, then it seems less than coincidence that his well-analyzed commodity speech (2.1.562-99) comes in response to a politically motivated marriage. Throughout Elizabeth's early reign, the question of her marriage drove a large part of political discourse. Indeed it became such an issue that in 1566 she "instructed Parliament not to debate the problem" (Haigh 21). In 1559 the House of Commons petitioned Elizabeth to marry. Elizabeth's response to this petition demonstrates the political tightrope she had to walk in order to maintain her power. First, Elizabeth insinuated that she would not marry because she is "already bound unto a husband, which is the kingdom of England, and that may suffice [the Commons]" (Marcus 59). Yet in the same speech she suggests that the possibility of her marrying is not completely off the table:

Nevertheless, if God have ordained me to another course of life, I will
promise you to do nothing to the prejudice of the commonwealth, but as
far as possible I may, will marry such an husband as shall be no less
careful for the common good, than myself.

(Marcus 59)

Note Elizabeth's careful wording: she leaves the possibility of a marriage open but only if it will be advantageous, "no less careful for the common good," for her country.

Elizabeth's careful political maneuvering suggests she was keenly aware of the political

power her marriageability wielded. She did not wish to relinquish the power and status she had gained as sovereign leader (Haigh 19), but, instead of dismissing marriage outright, she recognizes it could be used as “diplomatic manoeuvres for political advantage” (Haigh 17). Elizabeth turned her marriage and future succession into a commodity that could be used as leverage, yet she also appears to be aware of the dangerous nature of using marriage and succession intrigue as a tool for gain. During Elizabeth’s sister Mary’s rule, because Elizabeth was the known successor, there were plots to place her in power (Haigh 22). Because of this, Elizabeth was imprisoned. In prison Elizabeth wrote a poem lamenting her difficult position and illustrating her burgeoning cynical attitude toward political pressures that stem from greed:

O Fortune, thy wresting, wavering state
Hath fraught with cares my troubled wit,
Whose witness this present prison late
Could bear, where once was joy flown quite.
Thou causedst the guilty to be loosed
From lands where innocents were enclosed,
And caused the guiltless to be reserved,
And freed those that death had well deserved,
But all herein can be naught wrought,
So God grant to my foes as they have thought.

(Marcus 45-6)

In this poem, Elizabeth demonstrates her recognition of a world that allows the guilty to be free and the innocent to be imprisoned all because of political motivations. She

appears to show no remorse for those that she feels deserve to die, and she wishes that her enemies would suffer the fate that they would wish on her. Elizabeth's early imprisonment hardened her to the politically motivated world that she would soon be at the very center of. If we couple this cynical attitude to her own political maneuverings in regards to her marriage, then it would appear that Elizabeth recognizes the negatives of greed, or gain; however, she also recognizes that marriage can be used as a weapon in the fight to retain power.

Prior to the Bastard's commodity speech, King John and King Philip of France as proxy for Arthur attempt to assert rightful ownership over Angers. When the citizens refuse to recognize either authority, the Bastard convinces the kings to join forces to destroy the town and assert their dynastic authorities. However, the citizens of Angers broker a marriage "deal" that would join together Louis the Dauphin and Blanche, the "niece to England" (2.1.425) in order to prevent the town's destruction. While the Bastard expresses his disgust for these political negotiations, at the end of the commodity speech he cynically recognizes the power of "gain": "Since kings break faith upon commodity, / Gain, be my lord, for I will worship thee" (2.1.598-9). Like Elizabeth, the Bastard recognizes the power commodity and gain have over authority, and he also recognizes the corrupting power of greed. The use of marriage to lead the Bastard to his ultimate conclusion in the commodity speech appears then to be a viable link between Elizabeth and the Bastard. Both Elizabeth and the Bastard recognize the political dangers associated with marriage. The Bastard rails against John because "to stop Arthur's title in whole, / [John] hath willingly departed with a part" (2.1.563-4). While Elizabeth recognizes that to marry "would compromise her claim to exceptional status, undermine

the images upon which she had based her rule, and weaken her authority over her male subjects” (Haigh 19). Yet through marriage, they both see how commodity can be used as political gain. If this connection then associates with the allegorical cultivation of Elizabeth’s legacy, then Shakespeare appears to recognize Elizabeth’s own political savvy in the face of a corrupt political system.

It seems important that Shakespeare goes to great lengths to connect Elizabeth and the Bastard. Their shared bastardry provides an allegorical base for the audience to begin the formation of this connection. Then the Bastard’s savvy negotiations in the face of a corrupt politically motivated marriage strengthen his connection with Elizabeth because of Elizabeth’s own dealings with this problem during her reign. Yet, despite the Bastard’s early cynicism in the face of greed, his jingoistic language in the final two acts reveals a character destined to be remembered for upholding the monarch and the country. This jingoistic pride ultimately demonstrates an interpretation of Elizabeth’s legacy that will overcome uncertainty and weakness and instead will focus on her centralizing force as monarch.

Performance as a Historiographic Tool

The concerns over Elizabeth’s succession during the latter part of her reign cannot be overstated. Without a known heir to the throne, English citizens were forced to face a future inundated with political greed that could destroy the sanctity of the monarch. It is from this fear that Elizabeth’s legacy begins to emerge. The construction of Elizabeth’s legacy began not after Elizabeth’s reign had ended but when the temporality of her reign became known. This construction and cultivation of the future allegorically represented

in *King John* signals the power allegory has to negotiate the memory of Elizabeth.

Using the connections Arthur, John, and the Bastard have with Elizabeth, my analysis reveals how Elizabeth's legacy will eventually be constructed. The symbolic representation of Elizabeth in the character of Arthur demonstrates itself to be the weakest of the interpretations. Arthur is the representation of purity that Elizabeth attempts to cultivate for herself during her reign. His submission to more powerful authority highlights a memory of a queen more reliant on her state. However, if this allegorical interpretation holds true, then Shakespeare illustrates that the perception of Elizabeth as the Virgin Queen will be unable to sustain the test of time. Arthur's literal leap of faith in Act IV scene III provides a suggestion of what will hinder this particular version of Elizabeth's legacy. Arthur apostrophizes to the earth itself: "Good ground, be pitiful, and hurt me not" (4.3.3). Arthur literally throws himself down to the mercy of the world. This appears to indicate that this interpretation of Elizabeth's legacy comes without qualification. However, Shakespeare indicates that such an interpretation will succumb to another: "O me! My uncle's spirit is in these stones." (4.3.9). Arthur's association of the "stones" with his "uncle's spirit" suggests that the legacy of the Virgin Queen cannot escape the world's interpretation of Elizabeth that is associated with John. The allegorical interpretation of John would then seem to provide a stronger claim over Elizabeth's legacy than the allegorical interpretation of Arthur. Shakespeare represents John as a fearful King, using any means necessary to retain power. It seems apt then that John is poisoned in the end of the play. John's death by poisoning suggests a two-fold representation of Elizabeth's legacy. Elizabeth legacy as represented through John will forever be tainted, literally poisoned, by the problems associated with it. John's

poisoner's status as "a monk" (5.6.30) could suggest that Elizabeth's legacy will forever be shrouded in the tumultuous events of the Reformation.

As the primary actions of the play suggest, the struggle to retain power in the face of illegitimacy and political greed dominates the character of John. The symbolic connection between how Elizabeth handles the situation with Mary Queen of Scots and how John handles the situation with Arthur demonstrates a ruthless power that causes political iniquity and scandal. The poisoning of Elizabeth's legacy comes predominately from the scandal associated with her attempt to retain power. However, Shakespeare once again appears to suggest that this representation of Elizabeth will be overtaken by another. John seems keenly aware that he is only a temporary representation of kingship: "I am a scribbled form, drawn with a pen / Upon a parchment, and against this fire / Do I shrink up" (5.7.32-4). Shakespeare appears to be suggesting that the problems associated with John will not hold the test of time. They are words on paper that can be and, in John's case, will be destroyed. Instead of suggesting that John's ill-fated legacy will survive the test of time, Shakespeare uses the Bastard's language to suggest the Bastard as the ultimate representation of Elizabeth's legacy. After John has died the Bastard addresses him and says, "Art thou gone so? I do but stay behind / To do the office for thee of revenge" (5.7.70-1). The Bastard's acknowledgement that he will stay behind and "revenge" John seems to suggest that Elizabeth's legacy will eventually be released of John's negative influence. Therefore, instead of hinging on the religious unrest and the questioning of her authority that she dealt with during her reign, Elizabeth's legacy will hinge on her upholding national unity. An analysis of the Bastard's final lines suggests that this version of Elizabeth's legacy will openly acknowledge the problems associated

with religious and political unrest during her reign but will ultimately focus on her ability to maintain the sovereignty of England in the face of foreign invaders:

Bastard [*rising*] O, let us pay the time but needful woe,
Since it hath been beforehand with our griefs.
This England never did , nor never shall,
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror
But when it first did help to wound itself.
Now these her princes are come home again,
Come the three corners of the world in arms
And we shall shock them. Naught shall make us rue
If England to itself do rest but true.

(5.7.110-18)

The Bastard claims that English independence only came into question when political infighting controlled political discourse. However, ultimately England will remain strong when it presents a unified front against foreign pressures. Shakespeare dramatizes Elizabeth's lasting legacy: he highlights the struggles associated with her authority through the use of the Bastard's jingoistic language, yet ultimately Shakespeare demonstrates that Elizabeth's legacy will be vindicated from negative associations because of her ability to maintain national unity in the face of foreign pressures such as the attempted Spanish invasions. Therefore, through his representations of Arthur, John, and the Bastard, Shakespeare appears to be mapping out how Elizabeth's legacy will be constructed after her reign.

Shakespeare's negotiation of what interpretation of Elizabeth's legacy *should be*

remembered implies that performance stakes a claim in the historiographic process. This claim, however, relies on theater's existence as a commemorative ceremony, a constructed relationship the audience can identify and use to access an understanding of socially constructed memory. In turn, the audience can, within this construct, interpret how social memory is reflected within performance. By working within this constructed model, Shakespeare's representation of the events in *King John* exerts an active role in shaping the way societies remember. Just as Elizabeth attempted to shape her own legacy through her political discourse and through her celebration of her own Accession Day, Shakespeare's negotiation of Elizabeth's legacy through the performance of *King John* shows that performance is itself a historiographic tool.

Notes

1. See Christopher Haigh's *Elizabeth I: Profiles In Power* for an in-depth analysis of the military campaigns between England and France throughout Elizabeth's reign. 130-48.
2. Several critics have discussed the Queen's identification with saint-like qualities that verge on cult-like worship that developed throughout her reign. For further discussion see Helen Hackett's "Rediscovering shock: Elizabeth I and the cult of the Virgin Mary" and Peter McClure's "Elizabeth I as a second Virgin Mary."
3. Sigmund Burckhardt's 1966 article, "*King John*: The Ordering of this Present Time," is one of the few early analysis of *King John* to receive large critical citation. Since then however, Deborah T. Curren-Aquino's 1989 collection of essays, *King John New Perspectives*, has brought analysis of *King John* into the present, opening the conversation to a number of critics in the 1990s and beyond.
4. See Hackett and McClure.
5. See Haigh for a further discussion of the question of Elizabeth's legitimacy.
6. Leah S. Marcus's collection dates these two letters two days apart while Christopher Haigh indicates the letters were four days apart.

CHAPTER III

THE CYCLE OF ACCESS AND INTERPRETATION: PERFORMANCE'S AGENCY IN CONSTRUCTING HISTORY IN *THE WINTER'S TALE*

On April 16, 1604, just over one year after the death of Queen Elizabeth, King James I sent a proposal to the House of Commons asserting that England and Scotland should be joined together under the title of "Great Britain" (Akrigg 224). Yet in a letter to his counselor Robert Cecil, James indicates that Parliament is apprehensive about the merger because it fears it would make the present laws of England void:

Forget not adjure the judges, upon their consciences to God and their allegiances to me, to declare the truth if I may not at this time use the name of Britain, warranted by Act of Parliament, without the direct abrogation of all the laws.

(Akrigg 225)

In spite of Parliament's uncertainty about the joining of the two nations, on October 24, 1604 James declares himself "King of Great Britain" without Parliamentary approval (Akrigg 225). Parliament's objections to an "abrogation of all the laws" suggest that it fears the power that could possibly come to James if its laws were to become null and void. Though the two countries would not officially be unified until the Act of Union of 1707, James's insistence upon the joining of the two nations underscores the argument

between absolutism and limited monarchy that dominated the first half of the 17th century in England, culminating in the overthrowing of James's son and successor Charles I.

From an early age, James made clear his desire to rule absolutely. In promoting absolutism, James and his counsel attempted to promote a legacy of his predecessor, Queen Elizabeth I, that aligned Elizabeth with absolutist doctrine. Critical scholarship often recognizes the expression of tyrannical absolutism in Elizabethan policy. These absolutist policies reveal themselves in large part through her handling of religious matters: her compulsory Protestant religious worship, her persecution of Catholics, her suppression of the Corpus Christi plays, and her unyielding demands for conformity among the Protestant clergy all provide indication that Elizabeth chose to rule as she saw fit.¹ Elizabeth's reaction to a member of her court returning to England with a title from another country exemplifies her absolutist tendency: she said, "My dogs wear my collars!" (qtd. in Haigh 55), indicating her need for control over her subjects. James and his counsel attempted to align themselves with Elizabeth's absolutist political ethics. John Watkins highlights how James and his counsel used the attempted assassination of James during the 1605 Gunpowder Plot to suggest the continuity between James and his predecessor. While this particular plot was also an attempt to destroy Parliament, as Watkins notes, the assassins' alignment with Catholic Rome placed James in the role of Protestant ruler similar to Elizabeth. Watkins illustrates how this attempted continuity between regimes reinforces a legacy of Elizabeth that focused on her role as an absolute monarch.

Despite James's desire to control Elizabeth's legacy, his opposition, those in favor of a limited monarch, also appropriated her legacy for their own purposes. Many scholars have also noted the period's insistence that Elizabeth was a "limited" monarch. Her place as a woman put her at odds with the traditional patriarchal mold; therefore, this interpretation suggests that she conceded much of her power to men. The evidence that suggests her passive rule comes from her heavy reliance on her privy counselors such as the infamous Cecils.² Moreover, many of her public speeches focuses on the frailty of her feminine body, opening the possibility for the interpretation that she only ruled by the approval of Parliament and her counsel.³ This particular interpretation "exalt[ed] Elizabeth as a champion of moderation and common sense" and placed "her reign" in opposition "to the autocracy of her first two Stuart successors" (Watkins 10). Regardless of which interpretation of Elizabeth--a marginalized, subservient Queen or an authoritative monarch--is accurate, the ability of both sides to appropriate her legacy demonstrates how vital her legacy would be in determining the eventual outcome in the debate between absolutism and limited monarchy.

Throughout the seventeenth century Queen Elizabeth's legacy became a commodity which both the monarchy and its opposition fought to control and manufacture to suit their own purposes. These appropriations of Elizabeth's legacy demonstrate the power and function of constructing social memory through repeatable cultural practices. As Watkins points out in his study of the impact of Elizabeth's legacy on Stuart England, Elizabeth's "popularity rested less on the 'truth' of what she actually accomplished than on competing interpretive traditions, which make her legacy available to constituencies across a wide political spectrum" (2). This appropriation of Elizabeth's

legacy by “competing interpretive traditions” highlights how the construction of history through discourse impacts society.

Prior to the debate over the ownership of Elizabeth’s legacy, Elizabeth cultivated her own legacy through discourse through the use of her Accession Day celebrations: Elizabeth’s repetition of this ritualized cultural practice, what John Connerton calls “commemorative ceremonies” (5), demonstrated Elizabeth’s awareness of the power and function of such practices to negotiate how a society will interpret history. In similar fashion, the reign of James I suggests his own awareness of exerting authority through the creation and sustaining of cultural practices, particularly through the transmission of print media. Kevin Sharpe highlights James’s governance using the written word in his foreword to *Royal Subjects: Essays on the Writings of James VI and I*: “with the 1603 issues of the *Basilikon Doron* and *True Law* as well as the 1616 *Workes*, James had become firmly converted to ‘publication as a means of government’” (20). The most prominent example of James attempting to shape his kingdom through the creation of a unified nationalistic identity is his translation and creation of the King James Version of the Bible. In translating the Bible into English, James took the most basic doctrine associated with the Christian faith and made it accessible to a much wider audience. Yet his translation not only ensured his subjects access to the religious text, it also produced a standardization in how the text was translated, a standardization he had control over. Though the release of the King James Version of the Bible may not seem like a repeating cultural phenomenon such as the celebration of the Accession Day, I would argue that it had the power to exert a regulating force over an individual’s religious practices: the repetition of weekly religious services reinforces morals and prescribed functions of a

community. By standardizing this practice and making it more accessible, James had the capacity to emphasize his own interpretation of religious doctrine. Such a regulating force suggests a concerted effort to enforce prescribed cultural practices. By dictating how his people gained access to religious doctrine, James demonstrates he can centralize and standardize historical narrative through constructed commemorative ceremonies.

Through their interventions in repeated cultural practices, James and Elizabeth demonstrate the importance the construction of history has on society. Elizabeth's formation of a national holiday and James's standardization of the Bible also highlight that a commemorative ceremony can create a collective memory through a single unifying factor. The basic commonality exhibited in commemorative ceremonies, I believe, characterizes the function of theater as a commemorative practice that exerts an active place in the formation of history. Louis Montrose notes that even during Elizabeth's reign there was an awareness of theater's ability to affect social upheaval.⁴ Yet Montrose's analysis indicates that during the beginning of Shakespeare's career theater remained a marginalized activity, still being associated with a "hodgepodge of popular entertainments" (19). However, as scholars such as Stephen Orgel highlight, a little over a month into James's reign, he takes over patronage of Shakespeare's company, resulting in the company being renamed The King's Men (83). James's recognition of commemorative practices coupled with his need to express his interpretation of Elizabeth's legacy signals the emergence of an active recognition of the theater's force as a commemorative practice. Theater's new found agency infuses Shakespeare's later plays with reflections of and cultural that permeated current

discourse. Moreover, they begin to demonstrate themselves as active participants in the defining of history.

In this chapter, I will illustrate how one of Shakespeare's so-called problem plays, *The Winter's Tale*, inserts itself into this debate between absolutism and limited monarchy. By examining the scholarship surrounding performance's ability to construct history and by examining the contemporary cultural discourse surrounding the production of *The Winter's Tale*, I will demonstrate how Shakespeare's late romance creates an allegorical representation of the debate between absolutism and limited monarchy. In creating this allegory, Shakespeare's play inserts its own and performance's agency in the historical process.

Accessing Performance

When Camillo attempts to defend Hermione's honor against Leontes's accusations of infidelity, Leontes can only interpret the interactions between Hermione and Polixenes as signs of a sexual relationship:

Is whispering nothing?

Is leaning cheek to cheek? Is meeting noses?

Kissing with inside lip? Stopping the career

Of laughter with a sigh?--a note infallible

Of breaking honesty. Horsing foot on foot?

(1.2.286-90)

Leontes enters into this scene with two pieces of information: Polixenes has been in Sicilia for nine months, and Hermione is nine months pregnant. Having these two pieces

of information, Leontes interprets the performance he sees before him--the interaction between Hermione and Polixenes--as signs of infidelity. Leontes can only view the “whispering,” “kissing with inside lip,” and “horsing foot on foot” through the lens created by the information that he has when entering into the scene. The growth of Leontes’s jealousy demonstrates how the interpretation of a performance--be it the interaction between two individuals, the speech of a monarch, or the production of a play--cannot be separated from the historical context that shapes the viewing audience.

My primary goal in analyzing the performative nature of the early modern stage is to understand the relationship between performance’s agency in constructing cultural and historical interpretation and the theater-goer’s role that is structured within performance’s system of interpretation. My analysis attempts to investigate the impact Shakespeare’s work has on an audience that exists synchronically with a particular work’s performance. Therefore, the performance of a particular work, such as *The Winter’s Tale*, functions in a reciprocal relationship with its audience: an audience’s historical and cultural preconceptions imbue the performance with a set system of signs that allow the performance space to negotiate how the audience will collectively understand the performance’s model of interpretation. In my exploration of this reciprocation, I will first analyze Stephen Orgel’s recognition of the instability of a text and of a performance that suggests the impact cultural identifications have on interpretation. Then, by using Louis Montrose’s analysis of *Hamlet*, I will demonstrate how performance creates a filter through which an audience can gain access to an understanding of how a performance reflects and shapes culture and history.

In *The Authentic Shakespeare*, Stephen Orgel questions the authoritative nature of an “authentic” text.⁵ He concludes that an authentic text cannot be pinpointed and instead suggests that “what we want is [...] an authentic Shakespeare, to whom every generation’s version of the classic drama may be ascribed” (256). In doing so, Orgel’s exploration reveals and appears to champion, at least in some form, theater’s function as a filter through which an audience can interpret historical and cultural contexts. Orgel’s breakdown of how successive generations appropriate and shape the text and theatrical presentation of Shakespeare’s work hinges on the relationship of and audience to a text. If the play itself is an “unstable, infinitely revisable” (256) entity, then the play is recognized for its diachronic relationship to history. Moreover, Orgel’s recognition that the play functions at a specific place and in specific way for a particular generation of players and audiences highlights the synchronic impact performance has on the individual cultural of a given generation.⁶

I would argue that Orgel’s understanding of the instability of text bolsters my claim that an individual performance has the capacity to shape the historical and cultural context of a particular time. If the text of a play remains a stable constant, then each successive generation would experience the performance in a similar fashion, in an “authentic” way; yet, as Orgel demonstrates, each generation interprets a play based on their synchronic understanding. My goal is not to analyze the changing interpretation of Shakespeare throughout successive generations; instead, my goal is to look at the relationship between the history contemporary to a particular play and the way in which that generation interprets both the history and the play. Orgel’s model proves that the play itself is an unstable production, yet it also demonstrates the possibility for agency

behind the play's initial construction. While such an agency cannot be truly surmised because of our lack of records discussing audience's response in detail, the recognition of the link between a generation's interpretation and that play's contemporary construction can allow for the formation of ties between a play's initial production and contemporary cultural events through an allegorical context. Such ties demonstrate that a performance can be an active participant in the formation of cultural and historical identity.

Louis Montrose uses the example of Shakespeare's character Hamlet to interpret Shakespeare's possible understanding of the function of theater. Montrose points out that "Hamlet is Shakespeare's personification of the elite audience for his own plays" (42). For Montrose, Hamlet's role as a "learned and courtly *reader* and *auditor*" (42) demonstrates a recognition by Shakespeare of an intellectual audience's capacity to recognize theater's ability to "imprint exemplary images of virtuous and vicious behavior [...] disposing [the audience] to emulate virtue and to repudiate vice" (43). Montrose's analysis endows Shakespeare with a keen awareness of the power his plays have over the early modern theater-goer. The space occupied by theater becomes privileged by the fact that it can act as an interpretative model for its audience to construct their understandings of society. Montrose links the theater's capacity for the reinforcement of morals to its possible role in this interpretative model: "because the stage play is both the product of a particular time and place and a circumscribed and reflexive space of representation, it may simultaneously exemplify and hold up to scrutiny the historically specific 'nature' that it mirrors; it bears the pressure of the time's body but it may also clarify the form of the age" (43). Theater becomes not only a moral compass, it functions as a filter: the audience's synchronic preconceptions of contemporary events are transported into the

model of interpretation presented by the performance and subsequently filtered through said model, coloring the audience's analysis of events. Thus Montrose's suggestion that the "stage play" can "clarify the form of the age" could perhaps be altered slightly to state that the theater can also *cloud* "the form of the age," depending on how the playwright and his audience choose to negotiate the relationship between the social/political world and the theater.

While Montrose's analysis of *Hamlet* concedes the limiting factor of an "intelligent" audience, Montrose also investigates theater's power over the minds of what could be considered the "uninformed" viewer. If my suggestion is plausible that theater functions as an agent in the shaping of a collective cultural identity and history, then I must examine how theater impacts these uninformed viewers. Montrose indicates that many people of authority held beliefs of "antitheatricalism" (52) for a diverse number of reasons.⁷ What Montrose finds significant about the antitheatrical fears is they all recognize the fact that "the Elizabethan theater may have exercised a considerable but unauthorized and therefore deeply suspect affective power upon those Elizabethan subjects who experienced it" (45). Montrose also identifies the alternate perspective of Thomas Heywood, who argues that the goal of theater is to "exemplify in vivid word and action the moral lessons inscribed in the state homily 'concernyng Good Ordre and Obedience to Rulers and Magistrates'" (45). In other words, whether designed to prop up or dismantle social stability, the theater is recognized as a powerful force in filtering a collective and an individual interpretation of history and culture. While Montrose's analysis of *Hamlet* looks at how the "intelligent" audience will use a performance to shape their interpretations of history, I would attempt to make the case that the

uninformed viewer, the less “learned and courtly,” can also identify and interpret history through the filter provided by the theater.

Shakespeare’s last romance becomes a case study for this cultural reciprocation. In *The Winter’s Tale*, the King of Bohemia and the King of Sicilia both become identifiable representations of power. The structure of theater allows for the fulfillment of socially constructed roles. Individual characters not only reflect history, they fall into the parameters set by the social order. The theater and the theater-goer work in tandem: the theater filtering and coloring the theater-goer’s understandings of their contemporary world and the theater-goer fulfilling their role by externalizing their position within the social hierarchy onto the play. In recognizing this constructed relationship of access and interpretation, I argue that Shakespeare’s plays demonstrate an understanding of how to manipulate this relationship and exert agency within it.

James’s Absolutism

The Winter’s Tale exerts a force within the production of cultural and historical understanding due in part to the relationship between performance and audience; yet, the way theater constructs such an interpretation must inevitable be negotiated through the set system of signs that control societal discourse. From the first scene, Shakespeare sets up a dichotomy between two opposing parties, Sicilia and Bohemia. By placing this dichotomy in the cultural context, my interpretation allegorical links the two sides as symbols for James and his opposition. In the opening exchange between Camillo and Archidamus, Shakespeare’s phrasing aligns Sicilia with a greater authority than Bohemia. Archidamus, a Bohemian Lord accompanying Polixenes to Sicilia, regards Bohemia as

subordinate in stature to Sicilia. Archidamus states that Bohemia's "entertainment shall shame" (1.1.7) Bohemia and that Bohemia is "insufficien[t]" (1.1.13) in comparison to Sicilia. In this scene, Shakespeare creates two opposing forces that represent authority; yet, the scene also aligns one side, Sicilia, with greater authority. The unbalanced representation of authority created in this scene allegorically links the authoritative Sicilia with James and the slightly less authoritative Bohemia with his parliamentary opposition. Shakespeare reinforces the connection between James and Sicilia even further when he has Camillo and Archidamus discuss Leontes's son, Mamillius. The two Lords call Mamillius as "a gentleman of the greatest promise" (1.1.30-1) and as a "gallant child; one that, indeed, physics the subject, makes old hearts fresh" (1.1.33-4): The portrait of Mamillius can be symbolically linked to James's son Prince Henry who was at the height of popularity in 1610 and 1611.⁸ While it would be difficult to suggest that such an opening scene would immediately elicit a connection between the play and the contemporary political and cultural events, the opening scene, to use the terms of performance, sets the stage for the interpretation of the play as an allegorical representation of the debate between absolutism and limited monarchy that pervaded within the contemporary culture of early Jacobean England.

In order to access how *The Winter's Tale's* shaped contemporary history, I must examine the historical context that created the cultural preconceptions the audience used to negotiate its understanding of the play. Primarily, I must examine James's connection with absolutism and the parliamentary opposition to his position. Such an interpretation relies on a demonstration of evidence that James's views on absolutism, and parliamentary opposition, are firmly entrenched in contemporary discourse. This debate

over absolutism provides the context for the attempted appropriations of Elizabeth's legacy and the context that allows the performance of *The Winter's Tale* to negotiate its audience's understanding of the play.

Like Leontes's refusal to accept any other interpretation of the events of Acts I-III, James's views on the powers of a King have primarily been interpreted in one way--absolute. While the discourse over James's relationship with his English citizens has vacillated between a negative perception and a positive one over the past four centuries,⁹ scholarship remains unchanged on James's views on the divine right of monarchical rule and absolutism. Scholarship also demonstrates that his view was not hidden from public perception. Peter Herman notes that "by at least 1580, James thought that a king should be absolute, ruling by divine right, and he expressed these views to Walsingham at their first meeting in 1583" (74). James open admission of such a viewpoint twenty years prior to taking the throne of England suggests a higher probability that his views were disseminated throughout English society. Despite Herman's note that Walsingham "roundly rebuked" James for his desire for absolute authority (74), the more important factor seems to be the survival of the encounter itself: this meeting between Walsingham and James in 1583 was recorded for posterity, deeming it worthy of remembrance. The record's persistence heightens the cultural ambivalence toward James's views on absolutism. Moreover, the record provides an indication that James's views were already permeating society prior to his accession to the throne.

Another indication that James's views on absolutism are a part of cultural discourse is his 1598 publication of *The True Law of Free Monarchies*. Mark Fortier succinctly identifies the primary argument behind *The True Law*: "the authority of kings

over their subjects is given them by God, and in consequence they need answer to no one but God” (275). Five years prior to ascending to the throne of England, James writes and publishes this document, extolling his belief in divine right, the belief he had discussed with Walsingham fifteen years earlier. While the preservation of James’s conversation with Walsingham suggests that James’s views were publically known, the publication of *The True Law* makes clear James desired to rule without the impediments of parliamentary intrusion. Yet what the publication of *The True Law* also seems to suggest is James’s knowledge that opposition to his opinions on absolutist rule are also within the public discourse. Again, Herman’s note that Walsingham disagreed with James’s views also supports the awareness of an opposition to James; yet, Fortier makes the point that “*The True Law* is a justification of James’s absolute authority” (274, emphasis mine). By publishing this document, James attempts to make the case for absolutism. In attempting to justify it, James inherently creates an awareness that there is an opposing opinion worthy of rebuttal. The publication of *The True Law* not only provides evidence that James’s views on absolutism were within the public discourse, it also highlights the growing debate between the two viewpoints.

The meeting with Walsingham and the publication of *The True Law* both indicate that James’s opinions on absolutism existed within the public discourse; yet the strongest evidence that the debate over absolutism exerted a powerful force in the mind of *The Winter’s Tale*’s audience—*The Winter’s Tale*’s first performance has been pinpointed to late 1611¹⁰--is the argument between James and Parliament resulting in the failure of the Great Contract of 1610. The Great Contract of 1610 was “a scheme by which [James] would give up certain traditional rights in return for a settled parliamentary revenue and

thus at last solve his perennial financial problems (Sommerville 296). James's willingness to give up certain rights might in some way indicate a relinquishing of his absolutist views; yet, several critical interpretations of the failed contract highlight how James's dealing with Parliament in 1610 reinforced his alignment with absolutism. As Simon Wortham points out, "the famous 'bargain' James offered Parliament turned out to be no bargain at all, the king in the final analysis proving unwilling to forego certain royal prerogatives, refusing to exchange them as saleable items for funds he felt in any case were rightfully his" (188). Wortham's analysis illuminates the extent to which the Great Contract caused James's absolutism to become further engrained in public discourse: James presents to Parliament a "bargain" that would, at least in some way, curtail royal authority; yet his eventual denial of this bargain demonstrated to Parliament his desire to retain an authoritarian government. James's royal prerogative as expressed in *The True Law* dictated that "subjects could never resist tyrannical kings; they must be obeyed unless their orders contradicted God's. There is little evidence to suggest that James had changed his mind on this vital issue by 1610" (Sommerville 300). James's own words toward parliament helped little in hiding his thoughts on divine right from the public: "in the March speech he declared that laws in Parliament 'are properly made by the King onely; but at the rogation of the people, the Kings grant being obtained thereunto'" (Sommerville 298). Johann Sommerville's quotation of the king's speech indicates that James had an almost disdainful attitude toward Parliamentary authority: James reminds Parliament that only the king is allowed to make laws and that any laws Parliament might make are only laws *because* the king *allows* them to be laws. The reception of such an attitude can only serve to widen the gap between James and his

opposition. A letter from John Chamberlain to Sir Ralph Winwood dated May 24, 1610 in regards to James's speeches to Parliament demonstrates the public's perception and fear of James's absolutism:

to see our monarchial power and regall prerogative strained so high and made so transcendent every way, that yf the practise shold follow the positions, we are not like to leave our successors that freedome we receved from our fore-fathers, nor make account of any thing we have longer than they list that govern.

(Ashton 70-1)

As Chamberlain's letter illustrates, growing fears that James's exertion of power would reduce or even eliminate Parliamentary power are a part of the cultural discourse that existed prior to the 1611 production of *The Winter's Tale*. While an indication of Shakespeare's awareness of this debate is difficult, near impossible, to determine, the multiple examples of speeches--James is recorded as saying to Parliament in October of 1610, "you have a king, not only one whom I suppose ye have all cause to love, but a king whom God requires you to obey" (Ashton 74)--dealing with the debate and the failure of James to commit to his own concessions provide a strong suggestion that such an issue would be known by Shakespeare and a large section of the populace.

The relationship between James's views on absolutism and his parliamentary opposition seems to be a factor in how the contemporary culture would come to understand a play such as *The Winter's Tale*. As my close analysis of the play will indicate, the representation of absolutism for Shakespeare's audience is also colored by the attempted appropriations of Elizabeth's legacy by the two opposing factions. After

four decades of rule, there can be little doubt that Elizabeth's ideologies had become fixed within English culture. Such a legacy would not simply fade with the arrival of a new monarch; instead, an awareness of Elizabeth would permeate throughout the culture. As John Watkins points out in his study of Elizabethan legacy, "throughout the seventeenth century, literary and extraliterary forces transformed Elizabeth, the aristocratic head of an absolutist state, into the subject of a bourgeois fantasy" (2). This "fantasy" suggested that "James I and Charles I autocratically enlarged the royal prerogative, and Parliament reacted by defending an Elizabethan balance of power" (3). Watkins's analysis demonstrates that Elizabeth's legacy played a large role in shaping the century after her death. While his analysis indicates that throughout the seventeenth century Elizabeth's reign became idealized as a model of a limited constitutional monarchy, Watkins goes to great lengths to dispel the belief in a complete and total appropriation of Elizabeth's legacy by either side, particularly during James's early reign. In doing so, Watkins demonstrates that, like his opposition, James attempted to appropriate Elizabeth's legacy. As previously discussed, James's government used the 1605 Gunpowder Plot as a means of connecting James with Elizabeth. While Watkins's primary focus is the way in which this connection demonstrated an attempt to highlight religious continuity,¹¹ the extent to which James's government went to express stability between the two regimes can also provide evidence that James desired to appropriate Elizabeth's legacy for his absolutism: It seems highly unlikely that James would promote religious continuity between Elizabeth and himself and not also suggest that his views on divine right were not also consistent with Elizabeth's. Clearly James wished to promote an absolutist viewpoint. As Watkins illustrates, James's government went to great lengths

to promote continuity between the two monarchs. Therefore, I argue that James also wished to claim his absolutist viewpoint was consistent with Elizabethan policy--a policy which in fact was very similar to James's policy in its relationship to Parliament.¹²

James in *The Winter's Tale*

The cultural discourse created through the context of lingering Elizabethan legacy and its relationship to the debate over absolutism makes the events portrayed in *The Winter's Tale* accessible to its first audiences. By using this cultural context as a set of constructed signs for the audience, this lens of synchronic culture cultivates a particular understanding of *The Winter's Tale*; in effect, the play works within the system provided for it to actively participate in the formation of history. As my close analysis will demonstrate, this "active participation" results in the upholding of one side of the issue, the side of limited monarchy. In order to illustrate how *The Winter's Tale* "chooses sides" in the argument over the appropriation of Elizabeth's legacy and the debate between absolutism and limited monarchy, I will analyze three distinct events within the play: the tyrannical jealousy of Leontes in the first three acts, the breaking down of the hegemonic order in Acts IV, and the "staging" of Hermione's return by Paulina in Act V. Through a close interpretation of these three events, my analysis of the play demonstrates a rejection of absolutism and absolutism's appropriation of Elizabethan legacy and instead suggests that the "staging" at the end aligns Elizabeth's legacy with limited monarchy. Moreover, this final "staging" illustrates performance's role in dictating this alignment.

The triangular relationship Shakespeare establishes among Leontes, Polixenes, and Hermione in Act I scene II continues to shape the allegorical link to the

contemporary cultural discourse. The relationship between Leontes and Hermione allegorically represents James and Elizabeth. In the argument over who controls the discourse of Elizabethan legacy, James has a distinct advantage: James is the successor of Elizabeth. Like Elizabeth before him, James is the sovereign head of England. Therefore, James and Elizabeth, in some sense, are coterminous in contemporary discourse. The relationship between man and wife that Hermione and Leontes share places them within the same boundaries. They exist as King and Queen together. While I am not suggesting that Elizabeth and James exist as simultaneous King and Queen, James's status as monarch *marries* him to the legacy of Elizabeth.

The actions in Act I scene II strengthen even further this dichotomy between James/Leontes and Elizabeth/Hermione. Leontes's irrational fear that Polixenes has usurped Leontes position by making him a cuckold allegorically links to James's fears of Parliament attempting to reduce his authority. As previously discussed, James's publications, speeches, and politic moves in the early part of his reign illustrate an active attempt to maintain absolutism in the face of a perceived, if not all too real threat, to his power. The "paddling palms and pinching fingers" (1.2.117) and "practiced smiles" (1.2.18) between Polixenes and Hermione in scene II reinforces the cultural association of Elizabeth's close relationship to her people: Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen, the supposed yielding sovereign, and the future symbol for constitutional monarch, had, in her forty year reign, established herself, in the eyes of some, as being a symbol that could be appropriated by the supporters of a limited monarch (Watkins 8). If Polixenes is a representation of parliamentary authority, then this close relationship can provide evidence for James fears that Parliament wishes to appropriate Elizabeth's legacy.

Hermione's use of verbal force to persuade Polixenes also suggests an allegorical link between Polixenes/Parliament and Hermione/Elizabeth. After sweet gestures and aggrandizements, Hermione finally tells Polixenes he must stay in Sicilia:

.....Verily
You shall not go. A lady's 'verily's
As potent as a lord's. Will you go yet?
Force me to keep you as a prisoner,
Not like a guest

..... How say you?
My prisoner? or my guest? By my dread 'verily',
One of them you shall be.

(1.2.50-57)

As Christopher Haigh points out in his chapter on Elizabeth's relationship to Parliament, Elizabeth used rhetoric to manipulate Parliament to her will: "Elizabeth adopted a ton of condescending superiority toward her Parliaments, confident that if she explained things often enough and slowly enough, the little boys would understand" (111). Hermione's verbal coercion of Polixenes follows a similar path. She will have her way no matter what his response, so his only option is to concede. While the audience of *The Winter's Tale* might not readily know such a similarity between Hermione and Elizabeth, the clever rhetoric of Elizabeth would still be within the contemporary discourse, reinforcing the suggestion of a link between the character and the monarch. The allegorical lens that colors the audience's understanding of the relationship that exists among Leontes,

Hermione, and Polixenes in Act I scene II illustrates James's desires to retain his power and appropriate Elizabeth's legacy.

The actions in Act I set up the symbolic cultural and political discourse through which the audience can negotiate the performance. In Act III, Shakespeare's representation of Leontes demonstrates how performance can become an active participant in constructing an interpretation of the cultural and political discourse. Shakespeare begins this process by exhibiting the mentality of Leontes. Leontes's dictatorial, tyrannical expression of authority can be linked with an absolutist form of government. In Act II scene I Leontes is faced with opposition of his opinion that Hermione is guilty. Leontes's response to this opposition highlights the rule of an absolutist:

Why, what need we

Commune with you of this, but rather follow

Our forceful instigation? Our prerogative

Calls not your counsels, but our natural goodness

Imparts this; which, if you--or stupefied

Or seeming so in skill--cannot or will not

Relish a truth like us, inform yourselves

We need no more of your advice. The matter,

The loss, the gain, the ord'ring on't is all

Properly ours.

(2.2.163-72)

In this speech, Leontes shows his belief that no other authority can challenge his will, his authority. His revelation that he “calls not your counsels” highlights the absolutist view that a king should rule without regard for the opinions of others. Leontes’s belief in his “natural goodness” also demonstrates another key aspect of James’s views on absolutism: as previously discussed, James’s publication, *The True Law*, showed James believed a monarch should rule through divine right. Leontes believes his interpretation is accurate because it is naturally given, given by a “higher authority,” connecting Leontes’s view with James’s. Leontes final statement that he “need[s] no more...advice” because “all / [is] properly ours” reinforces the principal that the king is in complete control of his own country and his own prerogative.

Shakespeare culminates Leontes’s representation of an unbending absolutist monarch with his description of Leontes’s reaction to the Oracle of Delphi’s pronouncement of Hermione’s and Polixenes’s innocence. In Act II scene II, Leontes remarks that he has sent for a judgment from the “*sacred* Delphos, to Apollo’s temple” (2.2.185, emphasis mine). Leontes’s use of the word “sacred” indicates that the Oracle holds a relationship that is beyond the level of humans. Indeed, the Oracle’s location at the temple of Apollo, a Greek mythological god, further reinforces an awareness that Leontes is requesting a judgment from a “higher authority.” Such a connection to a “higher authority” once again connects Shakespeare’s portrayal of Leontes’s religious understanding and James’s concepts of divine rule. Yet, when the Oracle’s judgment is returned, Leontes refuses to believe it: “there is no truth at all i’t’h’ oracle. / The [trial of Hermione] will proceed. This is mere falsehood” (3.2.138-9). In the rejection of the Oracle’s decision, Leontes demonstrates that he believes himself to be the absolute

authority, above God and man. While such a claim that James believed himself to be above God is unclear (though he did see fit to rewrite the Bible in the English tongue), the implication is clear: ruling with complete absolutism is akin to the belief of a status higher than God.

Leontes's rejection of the Oracle's judgment and his tyrannical orders in Acts II and III, Shakespeare shape a negative perception of an absolutist viewpoint. Prior to the arrival of the Oracle's judgment, Leontes pledges the deaths of Camillo and Polixenes, threatens to kill his infant daughter, orders the same infant daughter to be abandoned in the wilderness, and sentences his wife to death. With each of these actions, Shakespeare shapes Leontes into a tyrant consumed by his own passions. While it is overzealous to suggest Shakespeare intended for the audience to perceive James's reign in such tyrannical terms, Leontes's association with an absolutist government and Shakespeare's portrayal of Leontes's tyranny promote an audience interpretation that such a way of ruling produces negative results. The actions continues to demonstrate the negative consequences of absolutist rule with the supposed death of Hermione. Immediately following the Oracle's judgment, Leontes is informed that both Hermione and Mamillius are dead. The immediacy of the deaths of both his wife and son cannot be overlooked in an analysis of an absolutist, dictatorial rule: their deaths suggest that the consequences of absolutism is the complete loss of the future: the loss of the son means the loss of the continued legacy of the monarch; the loss of the wife means the loss of the means to produce an heir to continue the legacy. Though Leontes repents for his rash decisions after the fact, the results remain the same. Mamillius and Hermione, for now, are still dead, and the monarchy appears to be in ruins. The impact of these negative

consequences strongly suggests that Shakespeare symbolically rejects absolutism. Such an advocacy illustrates that the performance of *The Winter's Tale* has the capacity to shape a similar viewpoint in its audience.

“I am gone for ever!” (3.3.57)--with Antigonus’s final line, and Shakespeare’s famous stage direction, *Exit, pursued by bear*, the tone of *The Winter's Tale* shifts remarkably from the dark tragedy of the first three acts to the comedic romance of the final two. This shift and the resulting actions of the final two acts reveal a favorable view of a limited monarchy emerges to counter the absolutist ethic so prevalent in the play’s opening acts. The final two acts upend the traditional hegemonic order, suggesting an opposition to James’s absolutist doctrine. The most prominent example of the displacement of the established social order comes from the positions taken by Florizel and Perdita. In Act IV scene IV, Florizel and Perdita enter, and the audience is made aware of the love between them. Moreover, the two characters establish that they come from different classes: Perdita understands that “th’ power of the King” (4.4.37) is against their union. Though Perdita is in fact royalty herself, Florizel, Perdita, and the audience are not aware of her royal heritage at this time. Florizel’s love for Perdita suggests a social dichotomy where authority, at least in some way, submits to the will of the lower classes. However, this counter to absolutism does not completely displace tyranny in *The Winter's Tale* or the symbolically represented government of limited monarchy. Polixenes eventually enters the scene and refuses to accept the match; like Leontes, Polixenes espouses an absolutist doctrine as illustrated through his threats to hang the old shepherd (4.4.08-10) and to disfigure Perdita (4.4.13-14). Yet, in the face of absolutist reprisal, Florizel persists in his determination to marry Perdita: “I am but sorry,

not afeard; delayed, / But nothing altered. What I was, I am” (4.4.451-2). Therefore, though the scene demonstrates the struggle over power and tyranny will still exist even within a limited monarchy, unlike the unyielding monarchial representations of the first three acts, Florizel’s refusal to submit to Polixenes signals that resistance of absolutist power is possible. Florizel’s resistance demonstrates a traversal of the social order, bolstering this contradiction of absolutism: Florizel’s desire to marry a commoner metaphorically marries the monarchy to the people, a dissolution of absolute power.

In addition to Florizel’s refusal of Polixenes’s order, Shakespeare’s representation of Florizel holds a unique position within the system of signs established by the cultural discourse: he is both a representation of authority and yet under authority as well. His unique position allows him to function as an accessible signifier for the play’s audience: he is a part of the monarchy, yet his position is that of future king. He will one day be in a position to rule, and, when he does, his displacement of the standard hegemonic order will place him in a role that accepts counsel from those beneath him. While Polixenes’s role in Act IV tempers a rhetoric unabashed in its praise of limited monarchy, Florizel’s position suggests the positive nature of limited monarchy and indicates an anticipation of such a leadership. In addition, the return of Hermione only takes place after the reconciliation of the opposing factions. This reconciliation only takes place after the marriage of Florizel and Perdita, suggesting an alignment of Elizabethan legacy with limited monarchy. The position of Florizel allows the performance of *The Winter’s Tale* to use the cultural discourse of the time to create such a perception within its audience.

Despite Polixenes’s alignment with absolutist power, he also plays a part in shaping an allegorical interpretation that supports a limited monarchy. Shakespeare again

sets up a contrast of the absolutism in the first three acts by allowing his characters to symbolically traverse the social order. While Florizel and Perdita accomplish this breaking down of the hegemonic order through their love, Polixenes traverses the social order through the use of disguise. Polixenes and Camillo scheme to go to the house of the “homely shepherd” (4.2.33) “not appearing [as they] are” (4.2.41) “to get the cause of” (4.2.43) the time Florizel is spending there. Polixenes ends the scene with the exclamation that he and Camillo “*must* disguise [them]selves” (4.2.47, emphasis mine). Polixenes’s belief that disguise is necessary counters Leontes’s tyrannical will of the first three acts: in his fits of rage, Leontes feels no need to disguise himself to access the truth. He is the king; he makes the truth. He is absolute in his understanding. Like Leontes, Polixenes has his fears, but he must seek the truth before making judgment. While Polixenes’s desire to seek the truth in itself contrasts Leontes’s absolutist thinking, Polixenes also understands that he must relinquish the outward appearance of his position in order to gain the truth. This understanding that they “*must*” be disguised suggests that the only way to effectively discover truth is by comingling on an equal plain with the public, contradicting absolutism. Polixenes eventually casts off his disguise, tempering an idyllic notion of the perfection of limited monarchy, and reclaims his tyrannical absolutist position; however, his willing to disguise his dominance in order to seek the truth illustrates a shift from the unrelenting absolutism of Leontes.

Shakespeare continues to upset the hegemonic order by making the audience aware that the “homely shepherd” is “a man, / they say, that from very nothing, and beyond the imagination / of his neighbours, is grown into an unspeakable estate” (4.2.33-5). Polixenes recognizes in the old shepherd a power that has grown from nothing, a

power that has no perpetuated source in the hegemonic order. Such an acknowledgement of wealth with no paternal source demonstrates a concession in absolutist thinking, but, moreover, such a wealth, a wealth “beyond [...] imagination,” would seem to dictate that when Polixenes and Camillo enter the scene in disguise they will position themselves in a subservient position in a hierarchy with the shepherd. This role reversal, and the indication that such a reversal is necessary, destabilizes the prescribed social order, countering the absolutist claims of the first three acts. Shakespeare creates in the audience an understanding that Leontes’s actions of the first three acts are tyrannical. In creating this understanding, Shakespeare forces the audience to interpret the need for disguises by Camillo and Polixenes through the previously witnessed tyranny of Leontes. Now the audience sees a monarch who is willing to change in order to find truth. In the light of the first three acts, such a change elicits an interpretation of a different form of rule, a limited form of rule.

Shakespeare also uses the relationship created by these disguises to suggest the comingling of the monarch and the people is beneficial to society and a part of the natural order. Shakespeare creates this positive perception through Polixenes’s and Perdita’s discussion of “gillyvors” (4.4.82), or “multicolored carnations” (Greenblatt 2932n3) that are created by “unit[ing] a cutting from a highly cultivated plant to the stem of a lesser one [...] cause[ing] the lesser plant to bring forth a highly cultivated flower” (Greenblatt 2932n5). Perdita claims that she “care[s] not / To get slips of them” (4.4.84-5), but Polixenes extols the virtues of the crossbreeding and tells Perdita to “make [her] garden rich in gillyvors” (4.4.98). These contrasting viewpoints seem to align Polixenes with the perception that the mingling of the “wildest stock” (4.4.93) with the “nobler race”

(4.4.95) will not diminish the nobility, but only serve to increase the beauty of the “baser kind” (4.4.94). Though Polixenes will later on remove his costume and resume his position in the hegemonic order, while in disguise he promotes the allegorical concept that a monarchy’s power will not be diminished through “marrying” power to the people, but instead will enrich society as a whole, making the “baser kind” more noble. Shakespeare reinforces the positive nature of this comingling by having Perdita suggest that “some [might] call [gillyvors] nature’s bastards” (4.4.83), existing outside the prescribed boundaries of social order and then by having Polixenes correct her and tell her that she should “not call them bastards” (4.4.99). These flowers, these cominglings of high and low, are not bastards: they exist within the natural order. By having Polixenes express the virtue of comingling while disguising his authority, Shakespeare traverses the boundaries established in the first three acts by Leontes’s rage and illustrates that the monarchy working together, through “marrying” or “crossbreeding,” is positive and natural.

From the very beginning, the play’s events demonstrate a relationship to the cultural discourse that exists during its production. The play’s performance allows the audience to use these events as an interpretative model to negotiate an understanding of the cultural discourse. When viewed through this cycle of access and interpretation, Leontes’s tyrannical mandates of Acts I through III allegorically represent a negative perspective of absolutism. Then the play’s shift into the pastoral in Act IV becomes negotiated through the tyranny of Leontes, causing a recognition of a disruption of the social order that seems to uphold a positive viewpoint of limited monarchy. Though Polixenes attempts to reclaim an absolutist rhetoric in Act IV, his contradictory actions

while in disguise weaken his attempted reclamation, upholding a rejection of absolutism and simultaneously tempering an idyllic rhetoric that sees perfection in the system of limited monarchy. When the audience reaches the final act, the stage has been set to allow the audience to see that the reunion of the monarchs and their families can only take place after a rejection of tyranny, of absolutism, and a joining together of the monarch and the people. Yet, Shakespeare does not end his play with the simple unification of the two families; instead, he ends the play with the mythic return of Hermione. As previously discussed, the contemporary cultural discourse and Shakespeare's representation of Hermione in Act I provide the audience with the capacity to recognize Hermione as an allegorical representation of Elizabeth. This interpretation that formed early in the play suggests that Shakespeare associates true Elizabethan legacy with limited monarchy. However, more important than the actual return of Hermione is the way in which the performance negotiates her return: in having Hermione's return come only through a "staging" by Paulina, Shakespeare appears to be suggesting that performance exerts its own agency in the production of history. Shakespeare's presentation of the first four acts demonstrates that performance can act as a cultural practice that can cultivate a specific interpretation of history. Even greater than the positive allegorical connections between love and the upheaval of the social order in Act IV and the negative allegorical connection between Leontes's tyranny and absolutism in Acts I through III, the final "staging" provokes an awareness that theater is exerting agency in creating an interpretation. By setting the stage to allow the return of the allegorical Elizabeth, Shakespeare simultaneously associates Elizabeth with a

representation of limited monarchy and demonstrates the power and function of theater as a historiographic process.

Shakespeare insinuates that Act V is attempting to allegorically represent the place the performance has in constructing the audience's interpretation. When the royals first arrive at Paulina's home, Leontes's comments reveal the similarity between the royal's viewing of the status of Hermione and the audience's viewing of the play:

O Paulina,

We honour you with trouble. But we came
To see the statue of our queen. Your gallery
Have we passed through, not without much content
In many singularities; but we saw not Leontes's
That which my daughter came to look upon,
The statue of her mother.

(5.3.8-14)

In this scene, Shakespeare literally stages the physical separation between art and spectator, between audience and stage. Leontes has passed through the "gallery" of art and viewed "many singularities." Leontes's literal viewing of the art in Paulina's gallery positions him and the rest of the royals in line with the audience. Moreover, the pronouncement that they "saw not / that which [his] daughter came to look upon" further aligns the royal characters with the audience: like Shakespeare, Paulina controls what her audience can or cannot see. She has not yet allowed Leontes or his daughter to view the statue of Hermione. By having Leontes make Paulina's control over how he can access

Hermione known to the audience, Shakespeare illustrates the authoritative position that performance can take within the cultivation of history.

A more overt insinuation of the presence of performance within the construction of history occurs through the literal “performance” of the unveiling and reanimation of Hermione by Paulina. The reunited and reconciled royals gather at Paulina’s home to witness the unveiling of a statue of Hermione. In this scene, Paulina places the statue of Hermione behind a curtain. Paulina then reveals the statue--“Behold, and say ‘tis well” (5.3.20)--to the amazement of Leontes and Perdita. The royals are then brought to a frenzied pitch in response to Paulina’s presentation of the statue: Perdita exclaims, “Dear Queen, that ended when I but began, / Give me that hand of yours to kiss” (5.3.45-6), and Polixenes laments, “Let him that was the cause of this have power / To take off so much grief from you as he / Will piece up in himself” (5.3.54-6). In response to these lamentations, Paulina goes to close the curtain but Leontes begs her, “Do not draw the curtain” (5.3.59). Paulina reveals the statue, and then, after it elicits an emotional response within her audience, she acts as if she will take it away, heightening her audience’s fear that they will lose the “royal piece” (5.3.38) of art Paulina has provided for them. Paulina then provokes her audience even more: immediately after her first attempt to draw the curtain, she suggests that they should not “gaze on’t” (5.3.60) too long “lest [their] fancy / May think anon it moves” (5.3.60-1), causing Leontes to see “veins / [... that] bear blood” (5.3.63-4) and Polixenes to see an “eye [with] motion in’t” (5.3.67). Again Paulina builds her audience up through her presentation of her “art” and then again heightens the tension higher by threatening to “draw the curtain” (5.3.68). She repeats this process again by suggesting that her audience is “almost so far transported

that / [They'll] think anon it lives" (5.3.69-70), whipping them further into a fervor over the statue. When she repeats her threat for a third time, "Shall I draw the curtain?" (5.3.83), Paulina has successfully pushed her audience to the point where they will consent to viewing the statue through her interpretation: to bring the statue to life, Paulina declares that "it is required / You do awake your faith. Then, all stand still" (5.3.94-5). The declaration that the audience must "awake[n] [their] faith" illustrates that the audience must allow performance to guide them in their understanding of what they are witnessing. Her second command, "then, all stand still," demonstrates that the audience must submit to the authority of the performance. In submitting to performance's authority, the audience can then access their position within the boundaries constructed by performance and negotiate the performance's interpretation of events. By building the tension leading up to the reanimation of Hermione, Paulina creates a "performance" for her audience. Through this staged performance, Shakespeare creates an understanding that the return of Hermione, and the control of Elizabeth's legacy, can be shaped through the repeated cultural practice of theater.

Shakespeare drives home performance's agency as a historiographic commemorative ceremony in Paulina's speech that reanimates Hermione. After bringing her audience to emotional apex, Paulina calls for music and commands the statue to move: "Music; awake her; strike!" (5.3.98). The call for music heightens the performative nature of the events witnessed by both the royal audience and the play's audience. When Paulina then commands the statue to "descend. Be stone no more. Approach" (5.3.99), Shakespeare appears to be bringing to life not just the statue of Hermione but the play itself: like the statue, the play is no longer "stone" set on a page,

but an act that enters into the social realm with the audience. The performance is no longer set apart from the historiographic process, but rather an active participant in the contemporary culture which it is attempting to mirror and shape. The performance simultaneously recognizes that history, like the legacy of Hermione and the legacy of Elizabeth, is not gone, but still within society, constructing and cultivating cultural discourse and contemporary events and that performance acts within the same boundaries as a force of construction. Shakespeare creates in the performance of *The Winter's Tale* the ability for the audience to access contemporary cultural events that will inevitably impact how they come to interpret both the performance and the culture it represents. The debate over absolutism and limited monarchy and the debate over who has control over Elizabethan legacy become a catalyst for the audience to interpret the tyranny of Leontes in Acts I through III. This negative perception of absolutism then shines a positive light on the subversion of the social order in Act IV, suggesting an alignment of the play with limited monarchy. The ultimate conclusion of the play reveals that performance has the power to dictate the “winner” of the debate over which form of governance is “right” and who will ultimately control Elizabethan legacy.

Notes

1. For a detailed discussion of Elizabeth's policies toward religious dissent see Christopher Haigh's *Elizabeth I: Profiles in Power* and Chapter One, "The Reformation of Playing," in Louise Montrose's *The Purpose of Playing*.
2. See Haigh, Chapter 3, "Elizabeth and her Counsel" and Chapter 4 "Elizabeth and Her Court."
3. See Marcus, Leah S's *Elizabeth I Collected Works* for detailed account of Elizabeth's many speeches to her Parliaments where she emphasizes her gender as a factor in her ability to rule effectively.
4. In Chapter Two, "A Theater of Changes," in *The Purpose of Playing* Montrose highlights the fears of some officials that players have the ability to disrupt the prescribed social order (35).
5. See Orgel, Stephen's *The Authentic Shakespeare* Chapters One, Two, Three, Nine, and Fifteen.
6. See Chapter Fifteen "The Authentic Shakespeare" of Orgel's *Authentic Shakespeare* for Orgel's examination of the shaping of the interpretation of *Macbeth* through multiple generations.
7. Montrose states in *The Purpose of Playing* that authority figures' "antitheatricalism" stems from fears of licentiousness among the audience (45-6), fears of "leveling of the hierarchical distinctions of honor and authority, the protocols of precedence" (48), fears of the theater acting as a "alternative source of authority...radically different...from that which sanctioned the dominated institutions of church and state" (50) and even fears of the economic mobility of the players (51).
8. See Orgel, Stephen for examples of how Prince Henry's popularity grew in the years leading up to his death in 1612 (73-5).
9. See Watkins, John's "Introduction" in *Representing Elizabeth in Stuart England* for a detailed account of the changing historical interpretations of James's reign.
10. *The Norton Shakespeare* records a firsthand account of a performance of *The Winter's Tale* by Simon Forman on May 15, 1611 (2881).

11. Watkins chapter “James I and the fictions of Elizabeth’s motherhood” in *Representing Elizabeth in Stuart England* focuses on how James’s government connected the Gunpowder Plot as “a re-enactment of Catholic treachery against Elizabeth” (18). Watkins provides an in-depth analysis of how James attempted to connect this plot with Elizabeth’s victory over the Armada and create continuity between their reigns.
12. Chapter six, “The Queen and The Parliament” in Christopher Haigh’s *Elizabeth I Profiles in Power* examines Elizabeth’s tumultuous relationship with her Parliaments. As Haigh pointedly notes, to “Elizabeth, parliamentarians *were* little boys--sometimes unruly, usually a nuisance, and always a waste of an intelligent woman’s time” (111).

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Without direct evidence, the impact an individual performance has on its audience can only be parsed out by available textual evidence. This evidence comes in many forms but ultimately must begin and end with the plays themselves, the performances. In my previous chapters, I looked closely at the texts of *King John* and *The Winter's Tale* in hopes that I could discover how the viewing of these plays would affect their contemporary audiences. The close analysis of these plays led me to recognize the close allegorical relationship between performance and contemporary representations of authority, the monarchies of Queen Elizabeth I and King James I. This link between authority and performance guided me to focus on how an audience would negotiate an interpretation of authority as represented in these plays. My study of this audience reaction has revealed the ability of the individual performance to shape how an audience interprets their contemporary society: performance functions as a historiographic process. Moreover, the textual evidence in *King John* and *The Winter's Tale* suggests Shakespeare's awareness by of his authority in shaping history.

When I began this project I wanted to understand how a performance could work as a historiographic tool by establishing a collective memory for its audience. By using the theories of sociologist Paul Connerton I discovered that societies use repeated cultural events to reinforce previously established memories. I used Connerton's theories to

suggest that the act of entering into the prescribed role of the “audience” becomes a way for society to create social memories. As my close readings indicate, performance acts as a reflection of contemporary historical events; therefore, when the audience enters into this prescribed role, they recognize within the performance the reflection of history. Though the performances change, the audience’s position does not, allowing performance to act as a repeating cultural event that reinforces the reflected history. However, more importantly, Connerton’s theory indicates that when a society attempts to interpret new events, they will use these same prescribed, repeated cultural tools to negotiate how they interpret these new events. By recognizing that the theater works as a place of collective memory, then each individual performance can use its role to shape a new interpretation of history: performance becomes a historiographic process because it has the capacity to be recognized as a repeatable cultural event. Thus, a close study of *King John* and *The Winter’s Tale* demonstrates that the allegorical links with authority allow the audience to negotiate an interpretation of history based on how the texts shape these interpretations.

By starting with the texts themselves, I found that performance begins to function as a historiographic tool through a process that originates with the performance’s allegorical representations of authority. In *King John*, the debate over royal authority exposes the audience to an unstable monarchy. The instability in *King John* mirrors the contemporary problems of royal succession that permeated through Elizabethan society of 1595. Elizabeth’s refusal to name a successor placed English society in a quagmire that threatened the continuity of the monarch. The allegorical representations of Elizabeth are reinforced by Shakespeare’s portrayal of his characters: John’s attempt to kill Arthur with plausible deniability reflects Elizabeth’s execution of Mary Queen of Scots. Arthur’s

innocence and inability to rule elicits a connection with Elizabeth's virginal status and her perceived reliance on Parliament. The Bastard's jingoistic fearless pride suggests a connection with Elizabeth's fearless Armada speech delivered just seven years before. Each of these connections to royal authority reinforces an allegorical reading of authority in *King John*. These connections lead to the possibility of an audience interpreting their contemporary historical situation through the play. Moreover, by using Benedict Anderson's concept of nationalism, I recognized that each member of the audience has the capacity to interpret the play through this connection with royal authority because each member can identify collectively as a royal subject. This connection provided the basis for the performance's negotiation of the memory of Elizabeth by her people, *King John*'s collective audience. The audience's negotiation of Elizabeth's memory in *King John* provides the framework for establishing that performance functions as a historiographic process.

Using this relationship between audience and royal authority established in *King John*, my close analysis of *The Winter's Tale* revealed that performance becomes a historiographic process by shaping how the audience interprets history. First, I saw the unyielding authority of Leontes in *The Winter's Tale* and looked into the contemporary history of 1610. I discovered that Leonte's refusal to take advice mirrored the debate between King James I and parliament over James's desire to rule absolutely. When Shakespeare then turned to the idyllic, pastoral romance of Act IV, the hegemonic traversals by Polixenes, Florizel, and Perdita contrasted with the absolutism of Leontes in the first three acts. This strong contrast of absolutism established a connection with the argument for limited monarchy. Yet *The Winter's Tale* does not simply reflect the debate

between limited monarchy and absolutism; instead the play appears to be making a choice. In the first three acts, Leontes's rage causes the death of his son, the possible death of his wife, and the apparent death of his infant daughter. In Act IV, there is a festival of dancing and singing, there is unyielding young love, and there are comedic interludes brought on by Autolycus. The dark connotations associated with the first three acts suggest that the audience should look negatively on its allegorical connection with absolutism, and the romantic, comedic nature of Act IV suggests a positive connection with limited monarchy. What the contrast between Acts I-II and Act IV demonstrate is that a performance not only reflects allegorical representations of history but also shapes how an audience interprets the reflected history.

The framework established in *King John* allowed me to see that events in the first four Acts of *The Winter's Tale* demonstrate that performance can act as a historiographic tool. However, Act V of *The Winter's Tale* suggests that the process that allows performance to act as a historiographic tool is also known to Shakespeare. As the end of my last chapter illustrated, Paulina's literal staging of Hermione's return pushed the audience to acknowledge performance's place in the creation of history. Without Paulina's theatrical performance, Hermione, the allegorical representation of Elizabethan legacy, could not return: this implies both an awareness that performance has a stake in the creation of history and Shakespeare's own awareness of this process that performance goes through to become a historiographic tool. By implying that he *knows* the process through which performance becomes accessible to the audience so that the audience can in turn create and negotiate an interpretation of the reflected history, Shakespeare appears to be establishing the role of art and the artist in the creation of history. Like the authority

figures themselves, the artist can exercise control over collective memory. Though the artist does not necessarily create history, through the creation of art, in this case performance, the artist can shape the collective understanding of how to view the historical events.

Shakespeare's manipulation of the public's perception of contemporary events was not unprecedented; both Elizabeth and James were also acutely aware of how public perception can be shaped by the way events are portrayed. Elizabeth used her Accession Day celebrations and public speeches in an attempt to craft a specific image of herself. James, in similar fashion, used the translation of the Bible to push religious observation in a direction he desired, and he used the Gun Powder Plot to align himself with his own interpretation of Elizabethan legacy. Shakespeare, it seems, is attempting to add himself to the pantheon of those who shaped English history and, in doing so, making a place for art and the artist in the formation of history.

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