

Jane Shore, *Edward IV*, and the Politics of Publicity

JOSEPH MANSKY, *Bard College*

In 1614, the ghost of Richard III gleefully recalled the “peece of *Iustice*” he had inflicted on “Mistresse *Shore*,” the mistress of his brother Edward IV.¹ “Shore’s wife,” as she was also known, first appeared in Thomas More’s *History of King Richard III*. She featured as the only female exemplar in the second edition of the *Mirror for Magistrates* (1563), and through a spate of verse complaints, she continued to tell her story in the 1590s.² All versions follow roughly the same outline: Shore’s wife rises to power as Edward’s favorite mistress and then falls precipitously once Richard seizes the throne. Richard’s ghost, in the 1614 narrative poem by Christopher Brooke, revels in his hypocrisy “when (with a fained hate / To vnchast *Life*) I forced her to goe / Bare-foote, on penance, with deieted *State*.” But this “peece of *Iustice*” seems to have backfired. Shifting from medieval England to early modern London, Richard’s ghost bitterly complains,

But now her Fame by a vild Play doth grow;
Whose Fate, the Women so commisserate,
That who (to see my Iustice on that Sinner)
Drinks not her Teares; & makes her Fast, their dinner?³

On the stage, Mistress Shore attracts not condemnation but intense sympathy. Women playgoers, Richard’s ghost claims, are particularly moved by her specta-

1. Christopher Brooke, *The ghost of Richard the Third* (London, 1614), sig. Fr.

2. For the literary history of Mistress Shore, see James L. Harner, “Jane Shore in Literature: A Checklist,” *Notes and Queries* 28, no. 6 (1981): 496–507; Richard Danson Brown, “‘A Talkatiue Wench (Whose Words a World Hath Delighted in)’: Mistress Shore and Elizabethan Complaint,” *Review of English Studies* 49, no. 196 (1998): 395–415; and Richard Helgerson, *Adulterous Alliances: Home, State, and History in Early Modern European Drama and Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 33–56.

3. Brooke, *The ghost of Richard the Third*, sig. Fr.

cle of suffering. Through a “vild Play,” Shore’s tears and fast nourish an affective community in the playhouse and beyond.

This “vild Play” is (in all likelihood) the two-part history *Edward IV*, generally attributed to Thomas Heywood. *Edward IV* was printed in both its parts six times between 1599 and 1626; the play—and, above all, its heroine—continued to hold the stage well into the seventeenth century.⁴ Heywood’s Jane Shore enjoyed the same popularity in the play’s medieval London as she did in the early modern theater. Commoners and gentry alike describe her not as a cautionary tale but as the protector of the English people—“a special friend to suitors at the court,” “a comforting, minist’ring, kind physician” to the poor (1 *Edward IV* 22.9, 2 *Edward IV* 9.25). Weighing petitions and delivering pardons, Jane restores lands seized wrongfully by the state, defends the commonwealth from unscrupulous profiteers, and saves the innocent from execution. Her popular—and populist—acts of mercy contrast sharply with the tyranny of Heywood’s English kings. In the play’s second part, Richard thus launches a propaganda campaign not only to legitimate his questionable rule but, especially, to turn Jane’s fame into infamy. This propaganda, however, fails utterly. Jane’s suffering instead catalyzes a community of resistance, a “public” of sympathetic citizens united in their pity for Jane—and in their resolute opposition to “tyrant Richard” (2 *Edward IV* 18.130, 19.60, 22.108). So it went too in the playhouse. Heywood’s play, at least according to Brooke, prompted crowds of commiserating women to assert their own public influence in the social, political, and affective life of early modern England.

This article, then, is about the new forms of association, the new ways of being public, that Heywood’s play imagines and instantiates. *Edward IV*’s generic hybridity—at once chronicle history, city comedy, and domestic tragedy—has made the play fertile ground for critics to explore, and to trouble, the opposition between the private and the public, the domestic and the political.⁵ At the same time, re-

4. I return to accounts of Jane Shore’s popularity on the stage at the end of this article. For the play’s early performance history, see Martin Wiggins and Catherine Richardson, *British Drama 1533–1642: A Catalogue*, vol. 4, 1598–1602 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 133; and Thomas Heywood, *The First and Second Parts of King Edward IV*, ed. Richard Rowland (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 5–6, 48. All quotations from the play follow Rowland’s edition, cited parenthetically.

5. Lena Cowen Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 118–25; Jesse M. Lander, “Faith in Me vnto this Commonwealth’: *Edward IV* and the Civic Nation,” *Renaissance Drama* 27 (1996): 47–78; Wendy Wall, “Forgetting and Keeping: Jane Shore and the English Domestication of History,” *Renaissance Drama* 27 (1996): 123–56; Jean E. Howard, “Other Englands: The View from the Non-Shakespearean History Play,” in *Other Voices, Other Views: Expanding the Canon in English Renaissance Studies*, ed. Helen Ostovich, Mary V. Silcox, and Graham Roebuck (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999), 135–53; Helgerson, *Adulterous Alliances*, 44–51; and Orlin, “Making Public the Private,” in *Forms of As-*

cent scholarship on early modern publics, counterpublics, and public spheres has shown how people from all levels of society increasingly participated in political life. From the elite's "public pitches" to the burgeoning print marketplace to the rumors and libels buzzing across England, early modern people were the "makers" and "partakers" of an emergent "public sphere."⁶ This uneven, unlicensed, and often uncivil public sphere little resembles Habermas's "bourgeois public sphere," a discursive space for "rational-critical debate."⁷ Propaganda, slander, and religious polemic were as common as rational argument; passion was at least as decisive as reason. Fragmentary and contentious, the early modern public sphere instead looks more like the public sphere of post-Habermasian critical theory. "A public sphere," Craig Calhoun writes, "comprises an indefinite number of more or less overlapping publics, some ephemeral, some enduring, and some shaped by struggle against the dominant organization of others."⁸ This messy agglomeration of publics and counterpublics leaves room for the kind of affective, embodied expression that proved so powerful in the early modern theater.

The theater itself, as Jeffrey S. Doty points out, is "a late arrival" to discussions of the early modern public sphere.⁹ In just the past few years, however, critics have described the theater as one of its most important media. Paul Yachnin argues that "Shakespeare's theatre was the leading arena of public-making practices and the most potent engine of social and political change in early modern England."¹⁰ Steven Mullaney similarly contends that the stage was "one of the pri-

sociation: *Making Publics in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Paul Yachnin and Marlene Eberhart (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015), 93–114.

6. Peter Lake and Steven Pincus, "Rethinking the Public Sphere in Early Modern England," in *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*, ed. Peter Lake and Steven Pincus (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 1–30; Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); David Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture: Printing, Petitions, and the Public Sphere in Early-Modern England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Bronwen Wilson and Paul Yachnin, "Introduction," in *Making Publics in Early Modern Europe: People, Things, Forms of Knowledge*, ed. Wilson and Yachnin (New York: Routledge, 2010), 1–21, esp. 2.

7. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 51.

8. Craig Calhoun, "Imagining Solidarity: Cosmopolitanism, Constitutional Patriotism, and the Public Sphere," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 162. See Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 109–42; and Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone, 2002).

9. Jeffrey S. Doty, *Shakespeare, Popularity and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 33.

10. Paul Yachnin, "Performing Publicity," *Shakespeare Bulletin* 28, no. 2 (2010): 201.

mary ways in which thoughts and feelings and beliefs could be *made public*,” and András Kiséry calls early modern drama “the most influential secular public medium.”¹¹ For Shakespeare, Doty argues, “the theater was the ideal space to explicate the vital role publicity played in contemporary politics.”¹² Richard II worries about Bolingbroke’s “courtship to the common people,” and once crowned, Bolingbroke recounts how Richard himself was “daily swallowed by men’s eyes”; Julius Caesar performs the rejection of kingship to the delight of the “rabblement,” who applaud “as they use to do the players in the theatre”; Coriolanus begrudgingly goes to the marketplace to solicit the citizens’ voices but resists “showing, as the manner is, his wounds / To th’ people.”¹³ In Shakespeare’s histories and tragedies, for every scene of backroom scheming, there is a moment of public display. The practice of politics takes place in the public eye—and before the eyes and ears of London’s heterogeneous playgoers.

Yet the focus on Shakespeare can make it seem like this kind of public politicking was the exclusive business of (largely male) princes and politicians—“an elite political technique,” as Peter Lake puts it.¹⁴ *Edward IV*, by contrast, locates a commoner and a woman at the center of public politics. While antitheatricalists condemned those women who dared show themselves in public at London’s playhouses, Jane Shore defends the commonwealth and wins the people’s love precisely by taking the public stage. But her most powerful intervention comes, paradoxically, only after she has lost her agency altogether. Yachnin, Mullaney, and Doty all contend that affective experience was essential to the “public-making” that went on in the playhouse.¹⁵ Nowhere is this truer than in Heywood’s play. The affective charge of Jane’s suffering creates a public of sympathetic men in the play and (if we are to believe Brooke) a public of commiserating women in the theater.¹⁶ And as these ordinary women and men decisively reject Richard’s propaganda, emotive expression becomes an act of political resistance.

11. Steven Mullaney, *The Reformation of Emotions in the Age of Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 146; András Kiséry, *Hamlet’s Moment: Drama and Political Knowledge in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1.

12. Doty, *Shakespeare, Popularity, and the Public Sphere*, 5.

13. *Richard II*, 1.4.23; *1 Henry IV*, 3.2.70; *Julius Caesar*, 1.2.244, 260; *Coriolanus*, 2.1.232–33; all in William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986).

14. Peter Lake, “The Paradoxes of ‘Popularity’ in Shakespeare’s History Plays,” in *Shakespeare and the Politics of Commoners: Digesting the New Social History*, ed. Chris Fitter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 60; Doty, *Shakespeare, Popularity, and the Public Sphere*, 2–5.

15. Yachnin, “Performing Publicity”; Mullaney, *Reformation of Emotions*, 144–73; Doty, *Shakespeare, Popularity, and the Public Sphere*, esp. 52–64, 123–28.

16. On Jane Shore’s affective power, see Howard, “Other Englands,” 146–48; and Helgerson, *Adulterous Alliances*, 44–51.

“TO SEE AND TO BE SEEN”: POLITICS, PLAYGOING,
AND “MISTRESS SHORE”

These theatrical publics, I argue, relied on the (often gendered) politics of vision. As Yachnin contends, playwrights, players, and playgoers “cultivated practices that made room for ordinary people to be publicly seen seeing and responding to the plays.”¹⁷ These practices paralleled recent developments in Elizabethan political culture. Deploying tactics denigrated as “popularity,” early modern elites increasingly appealed to the people for support in religious and political disputes. Such “public pitch making” situated the people as the arbiters of political legitimacy—and as critical spectators of the theater of state.¹⁸ As commoners flocked to the theaters to see and to be seen, their monarchs were worrying about the growing scrutiny that attended royal actions. Both Elizabeth and James famously compared themselves to actors upon a stage, where, as Elizabeth put it, “the eyes of many behold our actions”; “Kings being publike persons,” James wrote, “are as it were set . . . vpon a publike stage, in the sight of all the people.”¹⁹ Early modern actors and playgoers became their own sort of “publike persons,” displayed to “the sight of all the people” gathered in the theater.

Public display, at any rate, was the aim of certain influential courtiers who staged their own playgoing in the early seventeenth century. To mount their pitches, politicians relied not only on mediated forms of communication—print, manuscript, sermon, rumor—but also on rousing performances before the people. Robert Devereux, the second Earl of Essex and one of the most popular figures of the 1590s, “became famous for impromptu street performances of popularity.”²⁰ According to his secretary Henry Wotton, Essex habitually “committ[ed] himself in his recreations and shooting matches to the publike view of so many thousand Citizens which usually flocked to see him.”²¹

17. Paul Yachnin, “The Reformation of Space in Shakespeare’s Playhouse,” in *Making Space Public in Early Modern Europe: Performance, Geography, Privacy*, ed. Angela Vanhaelen and Joseph P. Ward (New York: Routledge, 2013), 264.

18. Lake and Pincus, “Rethinking the Public Sphere,” 6; see Doty, *Shakespeare, Popularity, and the Public Sphere*, 2–18. On the politics of popularity, see also Ethan H. Shagan, “Protector Somerset and the 1549 Rebellions: New Sources and New Perspectives,” *English Historical Review* 114 (1999): 34–63; Thomas Cogswell, Richard Cust, and Peter Lake, eds., *Politics, Religion and Popularity in Early Stuart Britain: Essays in Honour of Conrad Russell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Peter Lake, *Bad Queen Bess? Libels, Secret Histories, and the Politics of Publicity in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

19. Elizabeth I, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, ed. Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 194; James VI and I, “Basilicon Doron,” in *King James VI and I: Political Writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 4.

20. Doty, *Shakespeare, Popularity, and the Public Sphere*, 16.

21. Henry Wotton, *Reliquiae Wottonianae* (London, 1651), sig. B12v. See Paul Hammer, “The Smiling Crocodile: The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan ‘Popularity,’” in *The Politics of the Public*

At two moments of national crisis, these courtiers took their performances to the theater. On February 7, 1601, the eve of the Essex Rising, a group of the earl's followers commissioned the Lord Chamberlain's Men to perform at the Globe a play "of Kyng Harry the iiiith and of the kylling of Kyng Richard the Second"—likely Shakespeare's *Richard II*.²² These aristocrats, Paul Hammer suggests, "wanted a public audience for their own self-staging as watchers of this particular play."²³ Decades later, in August 1628, the Duke of Buckingham similarly arranged for Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* to be performed at the Globe. Early in the second act, Buckingham and his entourage abruptly left the theater. Thomas Cogswell and Peter Lake argue that Buckingham, a "skilled practitioner of . . . the politics of popularity," was "offering his own account of himself to the popular audiences."²⁴ By staging his sudden exit, the duke sought to represent himself as the play's Duke of Buckingham, a virtuous noble persecuted by the evil councilor Cardinal Wolsey.

Neither exercise in the politics of popularity proved successful. Essex's foray into London ended in his arrest and execution. Buckingham failed to rehabilitate his tarnished reputation, and he met his own bloody end later that month at the hands of a disgruntled lieutenant.²⁵ Nonetheless, these two episodes vividly illustrate a kind of political theater that could be interpreted, and even staged, by anyone who could afford the price of admission to the playhouse.

Edward IV himself, Heywood claims in his *Apology for Actors* (1612), frequented plays for precisely this sort of self-staging. Heywood spuriously attributes to John Stow, "one of our best *English* Chroniclers," an account of Edward's playgoing: "when *Edward* the fourth would shew himselfe in publicke state to the view of the people, hee repaired to his Palace at *S. Iohnes*, where he accustomed to see the *Citty Actors*."²⁶ Heywood imagines Edward IV not only as "a patron of the arts," as Anita Gilman Sherman observes, but also as a canny politician.²⁷ The king attends plays at St. John's just as Essex's followers and the Duke of

Sphere in Early Modern England, ed. Peter Lake and Steven Pincus (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 95–115.

22. Paul E. J. Hammer, "Shakespeare's *Richard II*, the Play of 7 February 1601, and the Essex Rising," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2008): 1.

23. Hammer, "Shakespeare's *Richard II*," 26.

24. Thomas Cogswell and Peter Lake, "Buckingham Does the Globe: *Henry VIII* and the Politics of Popularity in the 1620s," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (2009): 264, 271. On these two incidents, see Joseph Mansky, "'Unlawfully Published': Libels and the Public Sphere in *Titus Andronicus*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (2016): 303–4.

25. Hammer, "Shakespeare's *Richard II*," 3–4; Thomas Cogswell, "John Felton, Popular Political Culture, and the Assassination of the Duke of Buckingham," *Historical Journal* 49, no. 2 (2006): 357–85.

26. Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors* (London, 1612), sig. Eiv.

27. Anita Gilman Sherman, "Forms of Oblivion: Losing the Revels Office at St. John's," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 62, no. 1 (2011): 86.

Buckingham attended the Globe: to show himself in public “to the view of the people.”

Kings, however, are not the only public playgoers in the *Apology*. In a prefatory poem, the actor Richard Perkins describes his own playgoing practice in remarkably similar terms. Perkins, of course, is not a politician: he merely wants to vindicate his “recreation” and “modest mirth” from those who uncharitably “raile at me for seeing a play.”²⁸ Yet for both king and commoner, attending plays is a means of public self-fashioning. “Still when I come to playes,” Perkins proudly declares,

I loue to sit,
That all may see me in a publike place:
Euen in the stages front, and not to git
Into a nooke, and hood-winke there my face.²⁹

Perkins, like Heywood’s Edward, goes to plays to be seen in public. Sitting “in the stages front,” this actor is not just a spectator but also a spectacle himself.

It was this publicity that so empowered—or, according to the antitheatricalists, endangered—women in the theater. Surveying the evidence of female playgoing, Andrew Gurr and Karoline Szatek conclude that “the theater was one space where women could most readily determine the collective response.”³⁰ This public, highly visible influence deeply troubled the antitheatricalists. Women come to the theater, they insist, for the same reason as Richard Perkins and Heywood’s Edward IV: “to see *and to be seene*,” as William Prynne puts it.³¹ For women and men alike, the playhouse thus becomes a minefield of visual (and sexually charged) encounters. “What safegarde of chastitie can there be,” asked John Northbrooke in 1577, “where the woman is desired with so many eyes, where so many faces looke vpon hir, and againe she vppon so manye?”³² Subsequent writers repeated this claim ad nauseam. Women playgoers “presse to the fore-front of the scaffoldes . . . to

28. Heywood, *Apology*, sigs. a2v, a3r.

29. Heywood, *Apology*, sig. a3r.

30. Andrew Gurr and Karoline Szatek, “Women and Crowds at the Theater,” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 21 (2008): 167. On women’s influence in the London playhouses, see also Richard Levin, “Women in the Renaissance Theatre Audience,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (1989): 165–74; Jean E. Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1994), 74–93; and Clare McManus and Lucy Munro, eds., “Renaissance Women’s Performance and the Dramatic Canon: Theater History, Evidence, and Narratives,” special issue, *Shakespeare Bulletin* 33, no. 1 (2015).

31. William Prynne, *Histrio-Mastix* (London, 1633), sig. llllll2r.

32. John Northbrooke, *A treatise wherein Dicing, Dauncing, Vaine playes or Enterluds . . . are re-
proued* (London, 1577), sig. l4r.

be as an object to all mens eies"; they come "in open sight themselves to show and vaunt," and to attract "amorous spectators" with their "wanton looks."³³ "Looking eyes, haue lyking hartes, liking harts may burne in lust," Stephen Gosson admonishes the "Gentlewomen Citizens of London."³⁴ These anxieties, as Jean E. Howard argues, make women both spectacles and spectators, both "the object of promiscuous gazing" and "desiring subjects" themselves.³⁵

The result of theatrical publicity, for antitheatricalists and defenders of the stage alike, is thus a virulent "affective contagion."³⁶ Writers such as Gosson imagine a playhouse crisscrossed with the gazes of women and men, actors and audience—a space filled with spectacles liable "to make our affections ouerflow." In Gosson's view, "these outward spectacles effeminate, & soften the hearts of men . . . & those impressions of mind are secretly conueyed ouer to the gazers, which the plaiers do counterfeit on the stage."³⁷ The affective charge circulates promiscuously throughout the theater, promulgating a dangerously "effeminate" transformation. Heywood, like Philip Sidney before him, took issue not with this affective contagion but only with its alleged outcome.³⁸ In his *Apology for Actors*, Heywood argues that the theater's emotional transformations induce not vice but virtue, not moral disorder but social cohesion.³⁹ "Our domesticke hystories," he writes, instill courage in English audiences through "liuely and well spirited action" that "hath power to new mold the harts of the spectators and fashion them to the shape of any noble and notable attempt."⁴⁰ Whereas Gosson claimed that the theater's "spectacles effeminate, & soften the hearts of men," Heywood asserts the opposite: these spectacles fortify English hearts.

For Heywood as for Gosson, female playgoers are decisively implicated in this affective contagion. Near the end of the *Apology*, Heywood sets out to prove that

33. Salvia[n] [and Anthony Munday], *A second and third blast of retrait from plaies and Theaters* (London, 1580), sig. G3r; John Lane, *Tom Tel-Troths message, and his pens complaint* (London, 1600), sig. F3r; Thomas Cranley, *Amanda: or, The reformed whore* (London, 1635), sig. F2r.

34. Stephen Gosson, *The Schoole of Abuse* (London, 1579), sigs. F2r–v, F1v.

35. Howard, *Stage and Social Struggle*, 78, 80. See also Allison P. Hobgood, *Passionate Playgoing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 94–95.

36. Evelyn Tribble, "Affective Contagion on the Early Modern Stage," in *Affect Theory and Early Modern Texts: Politics, Ecologies, and Form*, ed. Amanda Bailey and Mario DiGangi (New York: Palgrave, 2017), 195–212; Hobgood, *Passionate Playgoing*.

37. Stephen Gosson, *Playes Confuted in five Actions* (London, 1582), sigs. F1v, G4r.

38. Heywood, *Apology*; Philip Sidney, "A Defence of Poetry," in *Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan van Dorsten (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), 73–121, esp. 96–97.

39. See Michael McClintock, "Grief, Theater and Society in Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," in *Speaking Grief in English Literary Culture: Shakespeare to Milton*, ed. Margo Swiss and David A. Kent (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2002), 98–118; and Hobgood, *Passionate Playgoing*, 55–57.

40. Heywood, *Apology*, sig. B4r.

plays “haue beene the discouerers of many notorious murders, long concealed from the eyes of the world.” He gives but two examples, both of women who killed their husbands. “Within these few yeares,” Heywood recounts, a “townes-woman” of King’s Lynn in Norfolk attended a play about “a woman, who insatiately dotting on a yong gentleman, had . . . secretly murdered her husband, whose ghost haunted her.” In the middle of the performance the townswoman cried out, “Oh my husband, my husband! I see the ghost of my husband fiercely threatning and menacing me.” Her fellow playgoers “inquired the reason of her clamour,” and the woman promptly confessed to her own mariticide and was condemned by law.⁴¹ This “tale of real punishment let loose from the domain of theatrical play,” as Ellen MacKay terms it, threatens to collapse precisely the “real” and the “theatrical.”⁴² Compelled by “conscience,” the townswoman becomes the involuntary star of her own domestic tragedy.⁴³ Indeed, an earlier version of the anecdote has the woman identify herself not just as a player in this tragedy but even as its playwright. At the sight of the stage ghost, the story goes in *A Warning for Fair Women*, “she cryed out, the Play was made by her.”⁴⁴

“The Play was made by her”: even as the play extracts a confession from the townswoman, she stages herself as its antihero and maker. This anecdote may thus reaffirm the “forensic cliché” of the guilty widow, yet it also casts the widow as the author of her own drama.⁴⁵ In Heywood’s telling, of course, her fellow playgoers, the judicial authorities, and even the widow herself quickly conscript her voice into the service of the moralizing cliché. But there were other scripts of female confession in early modern England. On the scaffold, Frances E. Dolan has shown, the condemned woman was often “presented as using her execution to challenge the church or courts that judge her and to show up the very men who are supposed to govern her.”⁴⁶ Gilbert Dugdale reported that Elizabeth Caldwell, convicted of inadvertently poisoning a child in an attempt on her husband’s life, offered herself as “a warning and example vnto all there present” at her execution. Yet in a letter to her husband (also printed by Dugdale), Caldwell pointedly reminds him that there is plenty of blame to go around: “remember in what a case you haue liued, howe poore you haue many times left me, how long you haue

41. Heywood, *Apology*, sig. Giv.

42. Ellen MacKay, *Persecution, Plague, and Fire: Fugitive Histories of the Stage in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 43.

43. Heywood, *Apology*, sig. Giv.

44. Charles Dale Cannon, ed., *A Warning for Fair Women: A Critical Edition* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), line 2047.

45. MacKay, *Persecution, Plague, and Fire*, 63.

46. Frances E. Dolan, “Gentlemen, I Have One Thing More to Say’: Women on Scaffolds in England, 1563–1680,” *Modern Philology* 92, no. 2 (1994): 177–78.

beene absent from mee."⁴⁷ Caldwell, like the Norfolk widow, threatens to become the author of her own tragic performance.

So too did Mistress Shore. In the sixteenth century, her adultery and fall could offer a clear moral lesson. Heywood himself lists "Mistresse *Shore*" among those stage characters through whom "the vnchaste are . . . shewed their errors."⁴⁸ Yet from her first appearance in verse, she had a different story to tell. In Thomas Churchyard's "Shore's Wife" (1563), she (like Elizabeth Caldwell) reserves much of the "blame" for her male relatives, for those "frendes" who "my youth . . . did abuse": "I was entyste by traynes, and trapt by trust," Shore's wife complains, "besieged" by a king and fatally misled by kinsmen who married her off too young.⁴⁹

Churchyard's heroine still does present herself as a warning to "both maide and wyfe." She concludes her lament, "Defye this world, and all his wanton wayes, / Beware by me, that spent so yll her dayes."⁵⁰ But she does not seem to have spent her days so ill at all. In his *History of King Richard III*, More describes in detail how the royal mistress used her power for good. "For many that had highly offended," he recalls, "shee obtained pardon. Of great forfeitures she gate men remission. And finally in many weighty sutes, she stode many men in gret stede."⁵¹ Expanding this account, Churchyard imagines her as the protector of the commonwealth:

To purchase prayse and winne the peoples zeale,
Yea rather bent of kinde to do some good,
I ever did vpholde the common weale,

...

My power was prest to ryght the poore mans wrong.⁵²

Whether she aims to win the people's love or simply to "do some good," Churchyard's Shore is a benevolent ruler, a defender of the poor and oppressed.

This, I argue, is the Jane Shore who takes the stage in Heywood's *Edward IV*: populist politician and champion of the commons. Poets and playwrights—including Heywood himself—often branded her "an example for all wicked women," to quote the title page of *The True Tragedie of Richard the third*.⁵³ But

47. Gilbert Dugdale, *A True Discourse of the practises of Elizabeth Caldwell* (London, 1604), sigs. Div, Civ. See Dolan, "Gentlemen," 170–71.

48. Heywood, *Apology*, sig. Giv.

49. Lily B. Campbell, ed., *The Mirror for Magistrates* (1938; New York: Barnes & Noble, 1960), 377, 378.

50. Campbell, *Mirror for Magistrates*, 386.

51. Thomas More, *The History of King Richard III*, ed. Richard S. Sylvester, in *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, 15 vols. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1963–97), 2:56.

52. *Mirror for Magistrates*, 380.

53. *The True Tragedie of Richard the third* (London, 1594), sig. A2r.

in the verse complaints of the later sixteenth century, “Shore’s wife” (Heywood was the first to name her “Jane”) also came to tell her own story. “And so step I on the stage,” she introduces her lament in the 1587 edition of the *Mirror for Magistrates*. Her story grew still more varied: hers was a tale of “beawtie dishonoured,” of sin punished, of ingratitude suffered—or even of populism and popularity.⁵⁴ Intentionally or not, Heywood’s Jane Shore curates her popularity as did those canny politicians Essex, Buckingham, and (so Heywood claimed) Edward IV.

But these practices were not the sole property of princes and politicians. From rumors to libels, protests to playgoing, commoners launched their own public interventions in early modern society and politics.⁵⁵ Scholars have shown that ordinary women participated in—and sometimes led—such collective actions as group petitioning and food riots.⁵⁶ The theater, as we have seen, was a prime site for this commoner publicity. Playgoers such as Perkins and the “gentlewomen citizens” condemned by Gosson hazarded—or, rather, exploited—the affective perils of the playhouse to fashion their own public identities. And if Jane Shore affected these citizens as powerfully as Brooke’s ghostly Richard complained she did, then the antitheatricalists were surely right to worry about the emotional transformations of the early modern theater.

HEYWOOD’S JANE SHORE AND THE POLITICS OF POPULARITY

The first part of *Edward IV* initially seems to realize the antitheatricalists’ acute anxieties about women being seen in public. Matthew Shore predictably laments that his wife, pursued by King Edward, has become what Anthony Munday derisively calls an “object to al mens eies.”⁵⁷ “Keep we our treasure secret,” Matthew asks, “yet so fond / As set so rich a beauty as this is / In the wide view of every gazer’s eye?” (17.149–51). And just as Gosson feared, “looking eyes, haue lyking

54. *Mirror for Magistrates*, 372. See Anthony Chute, *Beawtie dishonoured written under the title of Shores wife* (London, 1593); Thomas Deloney, “The Garland of Good Will,” in *The Works of Thomas Deloney*, ed. Francis Oscar Mann (Oxford: Clarendon, 1912), 302–4; Thomas Churchyard, *Churchyards Challenge* (London, 1593), sigs. T1r–X1v; Michael Drayton, *Englands heroicall epistles* (London, 1597), sigs. 11v–14r; *The True Tragedie of Richard the third*, sigs. E1r–E3v.

55. Andy Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002); John Walter, *Crowds and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); David Cressy, *Dangerous Talk: Scandalous, Seditious, and Treasonable Speech in Pre-Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Chris Fitter, ed., *Shakespeare and the Politics of Commoners: Digesting the New Social History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

56. R. A. Houlbrooke, “Women’s Social Life and Common Action in England from the Fifteenth Century to the Eve of the Civil War,” *Continuity and Change* 1, no. 2 (1986): 171–89; Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 380–94; John Walter, “Grain Riots and Popular Attitudes to the Law: Maldon and the Crisis of 1629,” *Crowds and Popular Politics*, 27–66.

57. Salvian [and Munday], *A second and third blast*, sig. G3r.

hartes, liking harts may burne in lust." Edward's "proud, saucy, roving eye," as he himself terms it, quickly fixates on Jane (16.120). Liking then turns to lust: the king resolves that his "greedy eyes" must "find rest, where heart's desire doth bide" (17.37-38).

But *Edward IV* itself undermines this antitheatricalist lesson. Jane Shore's publicity, Heywood suggests, is as good for England as the king's "promiscuous gazing" is bad for it.⁵⁸ As Lena Cowen Orlin argues, the play unequivocally locates "agency for immorality in men."⁵⁹ The play's first part begins in the aftermath of an earlier act of royal lust. Apparently on a whim, the king has just married the widow Elizabeth Woodville even as Warwick, "that like a column propped the house of York," is in the midst of marriage negotiations in France (1.30). Edward's mother, the Duchess of York, is horrified: "Son, I tell ye, you have done—you know not what!" the play begins (1.1). While the king is busy cracking bawdy jokes, his mother (prophetically, for anyone who knew their English history) demands, "Is't possible your rash, unlawful act / Should not breed mortal hate betwixt the realms?" (1.22-23). "Rash" and "unlawful," Edward's lust proves not just unwise but even tyrannical.

The same is true when the king's eyes set upon their latest victim. Edward finds little success when he tries to seduce Jane Shore: his loyal subject offers her king everything save for "mine honour, which I cannot grant." "I may not wander," she later reiterates (17.98, 19.94). So Edward turns from seduction to command, from the conditional mood and future tense, "that thou *mightst* our affection know" and "straight the gladsome morning *will* appear" (19.86, 93; italics added), to the imperative: "Thou must, sweet Jane, repair unto the court" (19.103). The king then invokes his royal authority to preclude choice altogether:

His tongue entreats, controls the greatest peer;
His hand plights love, a royal sceptre holds;
And in his heart he hath confirmed thy good;
Which may not, must not, shall not be withstood.

(19.104-7)

As "may" becomes "must" becomes "shall," Edward brings his power to bear not on "the greatest peer" but on an ordinary subject.

"If you enforce me," Jane responds, "I have nought to say" (19.108). Yet she has plenty to say when she next takes the stage. As her husband prepares to embark on his self-imposed exile, Jane Shore enters, "ladylike attired, with diverse supplica-

58. Howard, *Stage and Social Struggle*, 78.

59. Orlin, "Making Public the Private," 99.

tions in her hand; she unpinning her mask, and attended on by many suitors" (22.2 s.d.). Matthew, who has not yet recognized his wife, learns that this lady "of no mean countenance" is "Mistress Shore, the King's beloved: / A special friend to suitors at the court" (22.4, 8–9). As in *More and Churchyard*, Jane Shore quickly acquires a reputation for helping the helpless. Matthew, however, thinks only of the reputation his wife has lost. He bitterly recalls that "when she with me was wont to walk the streets, / The people then, as she did pass along, / Would say 'There goes fair, modest, Mistress Shore'" (22.13–15). Matthew's nostalgia reveals the impossible demands of his bourgeois ideology: he wants to show off his wife's chastity in the streets, yet he earlier blamed her adultery on that same display "in the wide view of every gazer's eye."

Jane, however, has her own agenda. Surrounded by petitioners, she publicizes neither the chastity nor the sexuality that obsess her husband but instead her mercy and justice. She quickly secures a pardon for the son of Thomas Aire; she vows to restore the lands of Palmer and Jockie, seized wrongfully by "his highness' officers" and by a rapacious neighbor, respectively (22.40). The suitors let loose a chorus of praises: "God's blessing light on that gudely fair face!"; "God bless the care you have of doing good"; "Pity she should miscarry in her life, / That bears so sweet a mind in doing good" (22.54, 56, 57–58). Heywood's audiences evidently had a similar reaction. "Thy good deeds done doth spread thy fame," an early seventeenth-century ballad informs Jane Shore, and "thousands thanke thee for thy paine."⁶⁰ For Brooke's ghost of Richard III, it was Shore's miserable "fate" that so moved the playgoers. This ballad, however, attributes her fame not only to her suffering but also to her "good deeds." In the theater and in print, Heywood's Jane Shore found an eager audience of "thousands"—just as Essex, that paragon of early modern "popularity," would appear "to the publike view of so many thousand Citizens."

Jane even wins her popularity in the same way as Essex did his: by answering the people's petitions. In the wake of Essex's execution, Francis Bacon listed among the earl's "points of popularitie" his habit of giving "audience to suters."⁶¹ Heywood himself, in *The Fair Maid of the West*, depicts Essex in dumb show meeting "petitioners . . . with papers" and handing them "bags of money."⁶² Jane Shore

60. *A most sorrowfull Song, setting forth the miserable end of Banister*, Pepys Ballads 1.64–65, EBBA ID: 20265 (registered in 1600; this version c. 1630); dating in Hyder Edward Rollins, ed., *The Pepys Ballads*, 8 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929–32), 2:128–29.

61. Francis Bacon, *A declaration of the Practises & Treasons attempted and committed by Robert late Earle of Essex and his Complices* (London, 1601), sig. Brr.

62. Thomas Heywood, *The Fair Maid of the West, Parts I and II*, ed. Robert K. Turner, Jr. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), 1.4 s.d. See Alexandra Gajda, *The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan Political Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 168; Doty, *Shakespeare, Popularity, and the Public Sphere*, 36–43.

displays the same generosity as she grants her suitors' supplications. But it is her rejection of the final petition that cements her reputation as the protector of the commons. Prompted by the merchant Rufford, she turns to his request "for a licence to transport corn / From this land, and lead to foreign realms" (22.62–63). This petition would have been deeply unpopular, to say the least, at the time *Edward IV* was written and first performed. From 1594 to 1597, a series of poor harvests sparked "the 'crisis' of the 1590s": food shortages, rampant inflation, and onerous taxation.⁶³ At least nineteen food riots broke out between 1594 and 1598; libels circulated widely, in London and beyond.⁶⁴ In 1597, a rumor accusing the mayor of hoarding grain spread through the capital, and in 1600, "vile and odious libels, and bruits" attacked Lord Treasurer Buckhurst for granting licenses to export grain.⁶⁵ Early modern historians blamed exports for the skyrocketing prices. Stow, for instance, records that in 1595, "by meanes of the late transporting of graine into forraine countries, the same was here growen to an excessiue price."⁶⁶

The export of lead and of other metals used in the manufacture of ordnance was hardly more popular. The infamous Dutch Church Libel, found on the wall of the Dutch Churchyard, Broadstreet Ward, in May 1593, complained that foreigners and their "Machiavellian Marchant" export "our Leade, our Vittaille, our Ordenance" and import only "gawds good store."⁶⁷ In 1592, a royal proclamation prohibiting the export of ordnance without license noted that "it is most evidently seen by daily experience that by such unlawful transportations her majesty's enemies are either directly or indirectly furnished for the most part with such ordnance."⁶⁸ And when a bill to the same effect was introduced in the parliament of 1601, Thomas Fettiplace asserted that if the queen "would but fforbid the transportacion of ordynance but ffor vij^{en} yeares yt would breed suche a scarsitye in the Spanyard that we might have him where we would."⁶⁹

63. M. J. Power, "London and the Control of the 'Crisis' of the 1590s," *History* 70 (1985): 371–85; Ian W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 9–14.

64. John Bohstedt, *The Politics of Provisions: Food Riots, Moral Economy, and Market Transition in England, c. 1550–1850* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 30–31; Buchanan Sharp, "Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* and the Crisis of the 1590s," in *Law and Authority in Early Modern England: Essays Presented to Thomas Garden Barnes*, ed. Sharp and Mark Charles Fissel (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), 48–50.

65. Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds., *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, 3 vols. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1964–69), 3:216. See Sharp, "Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*," 49.

66. John Stow, *The annales of England* (London, 1600), sig. Pppppir.

67. Dutch Church Libel, lines 5, 18, 17, transcribed in Arthur Freeman, "Marlowe, Kyd, and the Dutch Church Libel," *English Literary Renaissance* 3, no. 1 (1973): 50–51.

68. Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, 3:107.

69. T. E. Hartley, ed., *Proceedings in the Parliaments of Elizabeth I*, 3 vols. (London: Leicester University Press, 1981–95), 3:443. On anxiety about England's arms trade, see Matthew Dimmock,

Rufford's petition, then, would have aroused the people's ire not only against greedy merchants but also against the royal officials—all the way up to the queen—who licensed their abuses. Imbued with the righteous anger of the commons, Jane rips the supplication to pieces and threatens Rufford with the same treatment:

I had your bill, but I have torn your bill;
 And 'twere no shame I think to tear your ears,
 That care not how you wound the commonwealth.
 The poor must starve for food to fill your purse,
 And the enemy bandy bullets of our lead?
 No, Master Rufford, I'll not speak for you—
 Except it be to have you punished.

(22.64–70)

Jane invokes not the kingdom but the “commonwealth,” a term that here denotes both the common good and, above all, the good of the commons.⁷⁰ “The poor,” she suggests, are particularly vulnerable to the profiteering of unscrupulous merchants like Rufford—a claim few in the audience would have disputed during the grain scarcities of the 1590s. Echoing the populist, at times xenophobic discourse of late Elizabethan England, Jane shows herself to be the true champion of the common people.

As Jane Shore's popularity grows—in both medieval London and the early modern theater—her king only squeezes more from his poorest subjects. Hobs the tanner speaks for the commons when he remarks (to Edward himself in disguise), “we fear we shall be troubled to lend [the king] money, for we doubt he's but needy” (13.32–34). Hobs proves all too prescient. To fund his invasion of France, the king sends officers to extract money from the people. Because Edward's “coffers are unfurnished,” the officers inform the commons, “He prays his faithful loving subjects' help / To further this, his just, great enterprise” (18.10, 13–14). Hobs comically translates the officers' “long purgation” into a blunt demand: “the King wants money, and would have some of his commenty” (18.16–

“Guns and Gawds: Elizabethan England's Infidel Trade,” in *A Companion to the Global Renaissance: English Literature and Culture in the Era of Expansion*, ed. Jyotsna G. Singh (London: Blackwell, 2009), 215–18.

70. On the meanings of “commonwealth,” see William H. Sherman, “Anatomizing the Commonwealth: Language, Politics and the Elizabethan Social Order,” in *The Project of Prose in Early Modern Europe and the New World*, ed. Elizabeth Fowler and Roland Greene (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 104–21; Phil Withington, *Society in Early Modern England: The Vernacular Origins of Some Powerful Ideas* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), 134–68.

18). Still, the collectors insist that although Edward “might have exacted or imposed a tax, / Or borrowed greater sums than we can spare,” he merely “doth entreat / Our kind benevolence”—not a “loan or tribute” but a freely given “gift” (18.22–23, 25–26, 33). Yet when Master Hadland, a commoner recently forced to sell his land, begs them not to “rack my purse,” the officers demand a portion of the proceeds: “Then you have money; let the King have part” (18.40, 42). And when Harry Grudgen reluctantly concedes a mere 40 pence, they rail at him and threaten to have him “soundly plagued” (18.99). The king’s “benevolence” looks less and less benevolent.

Benevolences—like their close cousin, the forced loan—had long been unpopular in Heywood’s England. According to Holinshed, the victims of Edward’s benevolence grumbled that it was in fact a “maleuolence.”⁷¹ In the 1590s, several benevolences and loans were levied to finance the Spanish wars; in 1599, the year *Edward IV* was first published, the crown solicited a benevolence to fund Essex’s disastrous expedition to Ireland.⁷² As Michael J. Braddick points out, although benevolences “rested on consent, that consent could not be withheld without denying the necessity for the appeal” and thus directly opposing the monarch.⁷³ “Here’s old polling, subsidy, fifteen, soldiers, and to the poor,” Grudgen complains, comparing the benevolence to “other forms of compulsory taxation” that fell heavily on the needy (18.73–74).⁷⁴

If Edward’s benevolence is just a tax by another name, Jane offers a true benevolence to the poor and oppressed. The second part of *Edward IV* begins with war in France, but before too long we are back in England—and we immediately witness Jane Shore’s most recent act of charity. Hers are the first lines spoken on English soil. “Have you bestowed our small benevolence / On the poor prisoners in the common gaol?” she asks Jockie, now her devoted servant (9.1–2). Unlike Edward’s benevolence, Jane’s really is a gift—and one given to, not taken from, the poor. This charity, Sir Robert Brackenbury notes, has earned her a reputation as “a comforting, minist’ring, kind physician, / That once a week, in her own person, visits / The prisoners and the poor in hospitals” (9.25–27). Jane grows only more popular as the play’s second part continues. Brackenbury seeks a pardon of his own for a sea captain (Brackenbury’s kinsman) and his crew, and Jane, of course,

71. Raphael Holinshed, *The Third volume of Chronicles* (London, 1587), sig. Ttt3v.

72. Michael J. Braddick, *The Nerves of State: Taxation and the Financing of the English State, 1558–1714* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 84–87, and *State Formation in Early Modern England, c. 1550–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 244–45; Charles W. Crupi, “Ideological Contradiction in Part I of Heywood’s *Edward IV*: ‘Our Musicke Runs . . . Much upon Discords,’” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 7 (1995): 224–26.

73. Braddick, *State Formation*, 245.

74. Heywood, *Edward IV*, 18nn73–74.

gets him one. Once again the praise flows: “God save the King, and God bless Mistress Shore,” the prisoners cry in unison (12.126). “Mistress Shore” challenges the king himself for pride of place in the hearts of the English people.

At least in Heywood’s telling, however, it isn’t much of a competition. While Edward is off frolicking with the tanner of Tamworth and fighting wars (at his subjects’ expense) in France, Jane Shore has become “an eloquent spokeswoman and advocate for the commons.”⁷⁵ That popular advocacy is decidedly public, and even theatrical. The pardon for the sailors, for instance, arrives at the last possible moment: Matthew Shore (disguised as Flood and one of the prisoners) has already ascended the gallows when Jane enters “in haste, in her riding cloak and save-guard, with a pardon in her hand” (12.119 s.d.). Public pardons were among the most compelling spectacles of power deployed by the Tudor monarchs. As K. J. Kesselring has shown, both rulers and ruled recognized “the scripted, performative nature” of these displays.⁷⁶ In 1517, for instance, the secretary to the Venetian ambassador wrote of one particularly elaborate scene of royal pardoning, “it was a very fine spectacle and well arranged, and the crowd of people present was innumerable.”⁷⁷ Heywood displaces the king and instead, against the admonitions of the antitheatricalists, locates a “gentlewoman citizen” at the center of such spectacles. Jane’s public mercy thus rebuts—and even rehabilitates—the misogynistic model of “promiscuous gazing.” As the focal point for the citizens of London, Jane Shore acquires the power to defend the commonwealth and, as Heywood would later write in the *Apology*, “to new mold the harts of the spectators.”

RICHARD, JANE, AND THE EARLY MODERN PUBLIC SPHERE

Jane, then, is not only the champion of the commons but also a skilled practitioner of the politics of popularity. She answers petitions, delivers pardons, and visits the impoverished and imprisoned—all before a popular audience. When Edward dies and Richard seizes power in the play’s second part, the infamous tyrant tries to consolidate his rule through similar, if far more strident, tactics. Richard issues a proclamation against Jane, and he endeavors “to prove the lawful issue of [Edward], / Got out of wedlock, illegitimate” through a public sermon “at Paul’s

75. Nora L. Corrigan, “The Merry Tanner, the Mayor’s Feast, and the King’s Mistress: Thomas Heywood’s *1 Edward IV* and the Ballad Tradition,” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 22 (2009): 39.

76. K. J. Kesselring, *Mercy and Authority in the Tudor State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 161.

77. Rawdon Brown, trans., *Four Years at the Court of Henry VIII: Selection of Despatches Written by the Venetian Ambassador, Sebastian Giustinian*, 2 vols. (London: Smith, Elder, 1854), 2:75. See Kesselring, *Mercy and Authority*, 159–60.

Cross" (19.5–6, 4)—one of those platforms that early modern pitch makers used to reach “a wide, non-elite audience.”⁷⁸ Lake and Pincus argue that these elite appeals invoked, and even helped constitute, a “post-Reformation public sphere”: “A variety of media—print, the pulpit, performance, circulating manuscript—was used to address promiscuously uncontrollable, socially heterogeneous, in some sense ‘popular,’ audiences. Such activity implied the existence of—indeed, notionally at least called into being—an adjudicating public or publics able to judge or determine the truth of the matter in hand on the basis of the information and argument placed before them.”⁷⁹ At issue here is audience response. The propaganda emanating from the Elizabethan regime created publics to the extent that it began rather than ended popular debate. Shakespeare’s plays, scholars have recently suggested, did precisely this work: they “advanced the political agency of private people”; they “made playgoers aware of themselves as members of a public”; they enabled “a certain sort of spontaneously popular thinking about the political realm, and the role of the theatre-going classes within it.”⁸⁰ In the theater, audiences learned to be “promiscuously uncontrollable.”

Richard’s proclamation against Jane meets with just such an audience: one that refuses to obey and even actively resists its message. Several years earlier, in the anonymous *True Tragedie of Richard the third*, the king’s proclamation had been a complete success. This Richard imposes “open penance” on “Shores wife” and issues a proclamation “that none shall releuee her nor pittie her . . . for as her beginning was most famous aboue all, so will I haue her end most infamous aboue all.” In the next scene, Shore’s wife begs for alms but finds no charity. The same men whose suits she had furthered now shrink in fear of Richard’s “straight proclamation” and brand her “the dishonour to the King,” “the shame to her husband, the discredit to the Citie,” “my Kings enemy.”⁸¹ No one relieves her or even pities her; her fame has become infamy.

Heywood’s Richard has the same goal, but this time the English people prove far less tractable. As Brackenbury, now Jane’s loyal friend, relates,

the King in every street
Of London, and in every borough town,
Throughout this land hath publicly proclaimed,
On pain of death, that none shall harbour you,

78. Mary Morrissey, *Politics and the Paul’s Cross Sermons, 1558–1642* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 2.

79. Lake and Pincus, “Rethinking the Public Sphere,” 6.

80. Yachnin, “Reformation of Space,” 264; Doty, *Shakespeare, Popularity, and the Public Sphere*, 28; Lake, “Paradoxes of ‘Popularity,’” 62.

81. *The True Tragedie of Richard the third*, sigs. E1r, E2r, E2v, E3r.

Or give you food, or clothes to keep you warm;
 But, having first done shameful penance here,
 You shall be then thrust forth the city gates,
 Into the naked, cold, forsaken field.
 I fable not; I would to God I did.
 See, here's the manner of it, put in print;
 'Tis to be sold in every stationer's shop,
 Besides a number of them clapped on posts;
 Where people crowding, as they read your fall
 Some murmur, and some sigh, but most of them
 Have their relenting eyes e'en big with tears.

(18.99–113)

Richard, like the pitch makers of the Elizabethan regime, publishes his proclamation not only across England but also across the available media: it is at once “publicly proclaimed” and “put in print.” Heywood’s history of print is somewhat anachronistic, given that the first proclamation was not printed in England until decades after the reigns of Edward IV and Richard III.⁸² The play thus situates Richard’s proclamation in a recognizably Elizabethan print marketplace, “sold in every stationer’s shop.” (In 1599 this proclamation would have been sold alongside the poems and play texts, including Heywood’s own, that told a very different version of Jane Shore’s story.⁸³) Although the king’s proclamation tries to stigmatize Jane, it achieves exactly the opposite effect: “clapped on posts,” the copies of the proclamation have drawn crowds of people who “read [Jane’s] fall” and weep, “their relenting eyes e’en big with tears.” Far from ostracizing Jane, Richard’s multimedia campaign has instead produced a national community of sympathetic readers and listeners.⁸⁴ The English regime—whether Ricardian or Elizabethan—might address, command, appeal to the people, but try as it might, it could not dictate their affective attachments.

In *Edward IV* affective attachment leads to political resistance. Banished from the city, Jane welcomes “lack of meat, and lack of friends,” and complains to herself that “all things that breathe, in their extremity / Have some recourse of suc-

82. Peter W. M. Blayney, *The Stationers' Company and the Printers of London, 1501–1557*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1:113.

83. Heywood evidently ignores the fact that royal proclamations were not typically sold in stationers’ shops. See Alan B. Farmer and Zachary Lesser, “What Is Print Popularity? A Map of the Elizabethan Book Trade,” in *The Elizabethan Top Ten: Defining Print Popularity in Early Modern England*, ed. Andy Kesson and Emma Smith (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 26.

84. Lander argues that the play itself has a similar aim: to articulate “a particular civic culture to and for the nation”; “Faith in Me,” 50.

cour; thou hast none" (20.37, 40–41). But she is soon proved wrong. A procession of friends comes with "succour": Sir Robert Brackenbury with a prayer book and food; Master Aire with a purse; Matthew Shore (still in disguise) with food and wine; Jockie and Jeffrey with bread, cheese, and ale (20.56–278). Jane has become, if anything, even more popular in the wake of Richard's proclamation. Her "woeful spectacle" or "pageant" of suffering, as her husband calls it, disseminates a transformative affective charge (20.133, 18.228). Moved to "pity," Matthew finds that "the sparks of old affection long ago, / Raked up in ashes of displeasure, kindle" (18.235–37). The English people are no less affected. As they openly defy Richard's proclamation, the grateful citizens become not just spectators but also active participants in the pageant of Jane Shore. Pity thus unites this counterpublic against the official propaganda of the crown.

Richard's public relations campaign, then, fails utterly. The pitch making of the political elite cannot disrupt the affective ties of ordinary citizens; sympathy proves stronger than fear. Jane's sympathizers gladly pay the price for their kindness. The corrupt merchant Rufford, now tasked with enforcing the king's proclamation, catches Jockie giving Jane bread and cheese and sends him to be whipped. When Aire and Matthew Shore come to her aid, Rufford apprehends them too. Jane's husband sarcastically appeals to Richard's mercy: "God save the King, a true heart means no ill. / I trust he hath reclaimed his sharp edict, / And will not that his poorest subject perish" (20.292–94). Richard, of course, means all sorts of ill. The king actually does repeal his "heavy sentence 'gainst Shore's wife," but only after her death—"else I ne'er had spoke such words," he sneers in an aside (23.58, 62). As Matthew Shore makes clear, the people's civil disobedience is an indictment of Richard's tyranny.

Richard's proclamation has thus unwittingly motivated an adjudicating public—and this public quickly makes its judgment clear. Yet in the play as in Heywood's theater, elite politicians are not the only pitch makers. Matthew Shore, in a curious scene toward the end of the play, demonstrates how commoners themselves might join in the pitch making of the post-Reformation public sphere. When Rufford brings Matthew before the king and accuses him of relieving Jane, Matthew counters with his own accusation against Rufford. "I do know the man," he informs Richard, "Which doth abet that traiterous libeller, / Who did compose and spread that slanderous rhyme / Which scandals you, and doth abuse the time" (21.52–55). This is a puzzling claim. Matthew knows that Rufford is guilty but not of libel: Matthew has just witnessed the merchant procuring "counterfeit letters patent" for the export of corn and hides (20.214 s.d., 221). The invocation of "that traiterous libeller," however, arouses in Richard—and likely in Heywood's audience—a potent cultural memory of libelous publicity. "What libeller? Another Collingbourne?" the king anxiously inquires, "That wrote: *The Cat, the Rat, and Lovell, our Dog, / Do rule all England, under a Hog?*" (21.56–58). Collingbourne's

couplet, “one of the most widely disseminated verse libels in manuscript and print of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,” shows how popular doggerel could shape the reputations of kings long after their deaths.⁸⁵

Libels, scholars have shown, were a vital part of England’s popular political culture. They were not only “a form of crisis communication between rulers and ruled” but also a means for commoners to negotiate normative political and economic life with their superiors.⁸⁶ In early modern London, libels intervened in what Andrew Gordon calls the “contested arena” of the city’s surfaces.⁸⁷ Collingbourne’s verse did the same in fifteenth-century London: according to the chroniclers, his libel was “fastened and set vpon diuerse doores of the cathedrall church of saint Paule” or, in a different version, “fastenyd vpon the Crosse In Chepe & othir placys of the Cyte.”⁸⁸ On doors and posts, walls and crosses, proclamations—such as the one that Richard has “clapped on posts”—competed with libels for the attention of passersby. Savvy libelers across England repurposed these civic surfaces for their own subversive messages. In 1611, for instance, several men “pasted and fixed” a libelous verse to the market cross at Highworth, Wiltshire. One of the libelers decided that the text “was not sett up publiquely enough,” so he asked a local resident “uppon which poste of the crosse [the king’s] proclamacions used to be sett and there” posted the libel “in open viewe of the towne.”⁸⁹ Libels were the seditious double of proclamations: a speech drafted for Lord Keeper Puckering in 1593 condemned them as “proclamations and trumpets of sedition.”⁹⁰ If royal proclamations addressed the English people as subjects, libels appealed to them as political agents.

Matthew Shore invokes this popular agency when he publishes a sequel to Collingbourne’s libel in Richard’s court—and in Heywood’s theater. The king makes the mistake of asking Matthew to recite the libel of this second Collingbourne, and he is eager to oblige:

85. Steven W. May and Alan Bryson, eds., *Verse Libel in Renaissance England and Scotland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 7121.

86. Pauline Croft, “Libels, Popular Literacy and Public Opinion in Early Modern England,” *Historical Research* 68 (1995): 270. See also John Walter, “Public Transcripts, Popular Agency and the Politics of Subsistence in Early Modern England,” *Crowds and Popular Politics*, 196–222.

87. Andrew Gordon, “The Act of Libel: Conscripting Civic Space in Early Modern England,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 32, no. 2 (2002): 387.

88. Holinshed, *The Third volume of Chronicles*, sig. Cccc5v; A. H. Thomas and I. D. Thornley, eds., *The Great Chronicle of London* (London, 1938), 236. See also Stow, *The annales of England*, sig. Eee6v.

89. PRO, STAC 8/240/26, quoted in Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 316.

90. British Library, Harley MS 6849, fols. 325–28, quoted in Croft, “Libels, Popular Literacy,” 270.

*The crook-backed Boar the way hath found
 To root our Roses from our ground.
 Both flower and bud will he confound,
 Till king of beasts the swine be crowned.
 And then the Dog, the Cat, and Rat,
 Shall in his trough feed and be fat.*
 "Finis," quoth Master Fogge, chief secretary and counsellor to
 Master Rufford.

(21.62–68)

This rhyme appears to be Heywood's own invention, recited by Matthew Shore, who in turn attributes it to Master Fogge. Authorship, as was so often the case for early modern libels, remains elusive: these verses could equally be the work of Fogge (aided and abetted by Rufford), of Matthew Shore, or of some anonymous critic from any level of society.⁹¹ Matthew orally republishes the libel and then conjures the threat of even wider scribal circulation. Rufford's doublet, he falsely alleges, is "stuffed with trait'rous libels"—bursting with scraps of writing ready to be scattered throughout the city (21.82). The king has Rufford searched; only the forged letters patent are found, but these are enough for Richard to order his lackeys, "Lovell and Catesby, go: / Command the sheriffs of London presently / To see [Rufford] drawn, and hanged, and quartered" (21.98–100). If Richard wants to forget about the libel, Heywood's audience surely would not have forgotten: Catesby the "Cat" and Lovell the "Dog" are among its prime targets, second only to Richard "the crook-backed Boar" himself. The libel thus answers Richard's manipulative appeals to the people with open mockery. On the stage and in print, *Edward IV* dramatizes—and participates in—the multimedia communication networks of a genuinely popular (and decidedly contentious) public sphere.

The play's, and its heroine's, appeal to the people culminates in the moving spectacle of Jane and Matthew reunited in death. "O, dying marriage! O, sweet married death!" Jane exclaims, expiring in a ditch with a kiss from her husband (22.102). As Matthew follows her to their humble grave, he distills their public message of defiance, crying, "Now, tyrant Richard, do the worst thou canst: / She doth defy thee!" (22.108–9). So too have the people of England defied their king, responding to his proclamation with mockery, public displays of pity, and even brazen disobedience. In some of the play's final lines, this popular resistance memorializes Jane and Matthew Shore. As Catesby relates,

91. On libels and anonymity, see Gordon, "Act of Libel," 385–92; Alastair Bellany, "Railing Rhymes Revisited: Libels, Scandals, and Early Stuart Politics," *History Compass* 5, no. 4 (2007): 1136–79; and John Walter, "'The Pooremans Joy and the Gentlemans Plague': A Lincolnshire Libel and the Politics of Sedition in Early Modern England," *Past and Present* 203 (2009): 29–67.

The people, for the love they bear to her
 And her kind husband, pitying his wrongs,
 For ever after mean to call the ditch
 Shores' Ditch, as in the memory of them.

(23.71–74)

Located in the northern suburbs of London, Shoreditch housed several of the city's public theaters.⁹² Heywood, as Wendy Wall argues, "identifies the audience with the play's citizenry and thus enjoins them to reflect on the potential power of everyday practices"—including playgoing—"for challenging official proclamations and acts."⁹³ The people gathered in Heywood's theater witness the people of medieval England defy their king and reshape the urban landscape. Like Collingbourne's libel, the name Shoreditch endured in early modern England, a testament to the Shores' affective power—and to the political agency of the publics that it constituted.

Jane, however, has lost that agency altogether. If she before defended the English people from royal oppression, she now ends her life as the martyred victim of Richard's tyranny. Jane thus becomes a Lucrece figure, the victim of a peculiarly English version of the "republican rape topos."⁹⁴ In both stories, a woman's rape and subsequent death spark resistance to tyranny. Sexual violation perversely invests these violated women with a certain political agency, yet the women must then transfer that agency to a larger group.⁹⁵ For Lucrece, in Heywood's own play *The Rape of Lucrece*, only suicide can expiate "my blot, my scandall and my shame." She gathers her male kinsmen and, even before disclosing her rape, commands, "Swear youle reuenge poore Lucrece on her foe"; as soon as these Roman lords have vowed to prosecute "the iust reuenge / Of this chaste rausht Lady," Lucrece kills herself.⁹⁶ Her life ends with the birth of a republican—and exclusively aristocratic and male—community united in the pursuit of revenge.

92. Helgerson, *Adulterous Alliances*, 49; Wall, "Forgetting and Keeping," 140.

93. Wall, "Forgetting and Keeping," 146.

94. Oliver Arnold, *The Third Citizen: Shakespeare's Theater and the Early Modern House of Commons* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 102, cited in Stephanie H Jed, *Chaste Thinking: The Rape of Lucretia and the Birth of Humanism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 2.

95. Helgerson, in *Adulterous Alliances*, describes this trajectory in *Edward IV* as "canonization": "Jane's very powerlessness is transformed into a beneficent, wonder-working power" (48), a power that (he contends) the play ultimately conscripts to "an emerging bourgeois cult of home and community" (50). As Orlin argues, however, this community is far more "radical" than Helgerson gives it credit for: Jane Shore suggests how "the domestic and the female" could "make the public" and "contribute to a discourse of resistance" ("Making Public the Private," 111–12).

96. Thomas Heywood, *The Rape of Lucrece* (London, 1608), sigs. H1v, H2r, H3r.

In Heywood's English revision of the "republican rape topos," Jane Shore stubbornly refuses to forfeit her political agency. Jane anticipates the Lucretian trajectory when, near the beginning of the play's first part, she tells her husband, "These hands shall make this body a dead corse / Ere force or flattery shall mine honour stain" (8.30–31). But, of course, that's not what happens. Jane and Matthew, like Heywood's Lucrece, fret about "this badge of obloquy," "thy dishonoured life," "the scandal of my name" (1 *Edward IV* 20.89, 22.84; 2 *Edward IV* 9.35). Instead of committing suicide, however, Jane enjoys an extended career in public politics across the play's two parts. And when she finally does die, it is not by her own hand. Still, Richard's tyranny ultimately deprives Jane of the agency that she had retained for so long. Yet the resistant community created by Jane's suffering and death could hardly be more different from the aristocratic male revenge pact that Lucrece inspires. Whereas "revenge," a word they repeat incessantly, motivates those martial Romans, "pity" moves the English citizens of *Edward IV* to action. Pity spurs not revolution but nonviolent resistance; pity proves to be a radically inclusive emotion, affecting men and women, commoners and gentry alike. And pity, in Brooke's 1614 account, is also the emotion that generated a counterpublic of commiserating women in the London theater.

It is impossible to say with certainty how Heywood's play shaped the publics of the early modern theater over the course of its long career on the stage and in print. Thanks to several contemporary references, however, we can do much more than speculate. Brooke, I have argued, aligns the female playgoers with the citizens who defy Richard's tyranny and pity Jane. By publicly expressing their emotion, these women register their affective—and political—commitments for all to see. Writing in 1609, an anonymous satirist was amazed

to see a Crowd
Of *Ciuill Throats* stretch'd out so lowd:
(As at a *New-play*) all the Roomes
Did swarme with *Gentiles* mix'd with *Groomes*.
So that I truly thought, all *These*
Came to see *Shore*, or *Pericles*.⁹⁷

Gentles and grooms mix indiscriminately in the "swarme" of bodies. Such crowds, this account claims, flocked to see Jane Shore onstage in the early seventeenth century. Whereas Brooke describes the affective response of a particular group of playgoers, these anonymous verses depict a noisy, socially heterogeneous audience united only in their approbation of the play.

97. *Pimlyco. Or, Runne Red-Cap* (London, 1609), sig. C1r.

Perhaps the most suggestive account of the play's spectators comes at the beginning of Francis Beaumont's *Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607). A citizen interrupts the prologue, climbing up onto the stage and demanding a play "in honour of the commons of the city."⁹⁸ He insists that the play feature "a citizen . . . of my own trade," a grocer; not to be left out, his wife soon joins him onstage, and the two are seated in view of the audience. "I was ne'er at one of these plays, as they say, before," his wife admits, "but I should have seen *Jane Shore* once."⁹⁹ Even as he mocks the class pretensions and theatrical tastes of these citizens, Beaumont offers a clear picture of their playgoing habits. They want to see a populist drama in which they, the citizens of London, are represented onstage—and they want to be onstage themselves, seeing and being seen. It is not hard to imagine many such citizens among the swarms of gentles mixed with grooms, among the crowds of commiserating women. The citizen and his wife, I would suggest, epitomize the classed and gendered publics of Heywood's play. *Jane Shore* and her politics of popularity showed the power that publicity might hold for ordinary men and, most radically, women.

98. Francis Beaumont, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, ed. Sheldon P. Zitner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), lines 25–26.

99. Beaumont, *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, lines 29–30, 50–52.