Introduction

> Without the city are some theatres where English Actors represent almost every day Tragedies and Comedies to very numerous audiences; these are concluded with excellent music, variety of dances, and the excessive applause of those that are present ... There is still another place, built in the form of a Theatre, which serves for the baiting of Bulls and Bears, they are fastened behind, and then worried by great English bulldogs ... To this entertainment, there often follows that of whipping a blinded Bear, which is performed by five or six men, standing circularly with whips, which they exercise upon him without any mercy, as he cannot escape from them because of his chain; he defends himself with all his force and skill, throwing down all who come within his reach, and are not active enough to get out of it, and tearing the whips out of their hands, and breaking them.[1]

The German lawyer Paul Hentzner accompanied his tutee, a young nobleman from Silesia, on a three-year European tour beginning in 1597. An account of their journeying was published in 1612 as *Itinerarium Germaniae, Galliae, Angliae, Italiae, cum Indice Locorum, Rerum atque Verborum*. The travellers arrived in Elizabethan England in the autumn of 1598 and Hentzner took his usual meticulous notes on the customs of the country, making time and space here to consider the singular vigour with which the creative industries catered to London audiences. Appetites in the Tudor capital for spectacles of violent blood-letting were easily accommodated in the playhouse and, indeed, at the scaffold. However, there was also any number of historical and crime narratives at the booksellers relating grisly tales; and ancient texts in modern editions were widely accessible in school and university classrooms to tempt the palate, if scenes of butchery were sought. Facing impending doom on the battlefields of Bordeaux, Talbot confesses in *1 Henry VI* that he had originally sent for his son '[t]o tutor [him] in stratagems of war' (*VI*^{1}: IV.v.2); and, for those similarly inclined to travel for a more first-hand experience of hostilities, a constantly changing itinerary might be proposed, linked to sites of violent

contest unfolding across the length and breadth of the early modern continent.

In *The ciuile wars betweene the howses of Lancaster and Yorke* (1609), Samuel Daniel dubbed war an 'impious good, and good impietie . . . foul refiner of a State'.[2] Whatever the ambiguities surrounding the undertaking, it remained a frequent resource of political government in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Frank Tallett relates that this was 'a remarkably bellicose age . . . Between 1480 and 1700 England was involved in 29 wars, France in 34, Spain in 36 . . . in terms of its belligerency the seventeenth century was outstripped only by the twentieth'.[3] The present study turns to early modern England and attends most particularly to the palpable need expressed in both the playhouse *and* the wider political arena for the staging of theatres of conflict that might extend well beyond the realm's borders. Thus, a selection of 1590s history plays as well as political projects promoted by a number of elite figures at Elizabeth I's court are analysed as key interventions in the age's thoroughgoing cultural debate concerning the status and functions of violence.

'the mistress-court of mighty Europe'

There is every evidence that the states of early modern Europe were determined to incorporate Elizabeth's subjects into their vigorous politicking and zealous profession of arms. Philip II himself regularly gave testament of his resolve that England should not be excluded from the continent's brutal struggles to redefine *meum* and *tuum*, as he submitted in a letter dated 1590:

> Everybody knows about the great, continuous and unavoidable expenses that I have incurred for many years past to defend our holy Catholic faith and to conserve my kingdoms and lordships, and how they have grown immensely through the war with England and the developments in France; but I have not been able to avoid them, both because I have such a specific obligation to God and the world to act, and also because if the heretics were to prevail (which I hope God will not allow) it might open the door to worse damage and dangers, and to war at home.[4]

In England itself, history plays of the 1590s, such as those focusing on Henry IV, Henry V and Henry VI by Shakespeare (and his collaborators in the latter case), as well as the political ambitions of significant court favourites, such as Sir Walter Ralegh (1554–1618) and Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex (1565–1601), sought to focus the minds of native audiences

upon armed conflict as an instrument of state policy. This investment in violence articulated regularly in the playhouses and in early modern court culture exposed for public scrutiny the motivations and protocols of those resorting to combat (*ius ad bellum*) as well as the conduct of those at arms (*ius in bello*) and those seeking modes of conflict resolution (*ius post bellum*). In each instance, the waging of hostilities was frequently linked with the overseeing of political continuity or change management, assertions of lordship and/or pressing crises responding to individual or collective insecurities.

After the devastations of the Black Death in the fourteenth century, Europe's population in total may well have numbered between 60–70 million in 1500 and perhaps 80–90 million by 1600. In addition, as John Merriman has stressed, '[i]n 1500, Europe was maze of about 1,500 fragmented states . . . Europe's political fragmentation was accompanied by cultural fragmentation, reinforced by the many languages spoken.'[5] Assessing this complex early modern environment, Lisa Hopkins emphasises that 'Elizabeth ruled over less territory than any other monarch since 1066, in spite of the imperial rhetoric that characterized her reign.'[6] Nevertheless, a number of the island's monarchs down the centuries had recognised that the attentions of the continental nations needed to be seized if the realm were to realise its oft-mooted aspirations to imperial greatness. The consuming interest of the late Elizabethan history play and, indeed, of strategic political figures, such as Ralegh and Essex, that the kingdom renew itself politically by expanding its borders, means that the final discussions of this study inevitably turn to England's neighbouring states. Strikingly, when early modern Europe had its own writers attend to the late Tudor kingdom, the cultural driver of violence was radically reinterpreted for audiences across the continent, albeit not in ways that would have gratified any of the figures depicted.

More generally, in each of the chapters which follows, the emphasis remains upon how political and theatrical audiences of the period were repeatedly urged to scrutinise the assertion of English sovereignty in response to scenes of violence and trauma unfolding across the seas – played out before, what Exeter terms in *Henry V*, 'the mistress-court of mighty Europe' (*V*: II.iv.134). When this *mistress-court* produced its own fictions of Elizabeth's court culture in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the focus would remain on the internal, perceivedly erotic politics in operation during the final years of the Tudor century. Thus, if this study begins in the sixteenth century, it closes reflecting on some of the ways in which a whole succession of European generations chose to

remember the age of Elizabeth onstage at home and abroad. Indeed, by the eighteenth century, the enthusiasm to revive the Shakespearean world for new, European audiences was such that Catherine II (the Great) could be found penning adaptations of the bard's plays transplanted to the eastern limits of the continent and rendered in the Russian language.[7]

In the post-war period, a renewed understanding of the complex variety of this early modern continent was ushered in with a whole host of groundbreaking studies, such as Fernand Braudel's *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, Roland Mousnier's *Les XVI et XVII siècles*, Denys Hay's *Europe: The Emergence of an Idea*, John Hale's *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance* and Susan Doran's *England and Europe 1485–1603*.[8] Such studies continue to encourage readers and critics to interrogate the intellectual shorthand involved when we press the term 'Europe' into service. More recently, Gerard Delanty's *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality* and Heikki Mikkeli's *Europe as an Idea and an Identity*, for example, have demonstrated that down the centuries European nations have often been viewed as having a community of interest because they: inhabited a geographical zone with climatic and topographical resemblances; invested in a common intellectual tradition (philosophical, linguistic, legal) from antiquity; belonged to supranational communities of religious confession; and, at the end of the seventeenth century with its greater interest in secular enquiry, participated in a common European cultural discourse, debating *distinctive* political liberties and achieving a *distinctive* societal sophistication.[9]

Certainly, such considerations of cultural origination and difference exercised early modern Europe as much as they have more recent political debate. Nonetheless, a central contention of this study is that in attending to the often spectacular ambitions of some members of the Elizabethan elite, it became impossible to conceive of England's political survival without having a watchful eye beyond the borders of the kingdom.

Violence and Its Discontents: The Critical Debate

If, as Julius R. Ruff argues, '[v]iolence . . . was part of the discourse of early modern interpersonal relations',[10] it was also inevitable that this field of enquiry, particularly in the aftermath of two world wars, would come to dominate many areas of cultural debate in the second half of the twentieth century as greater and greater evidence of acts of inhumanity was uncovered. Diverse social theorists, such as Hannah Arendt, Julien Freund, Wolfgang Sofsky, Slavoj Žižek, Judith Butler, Paul Virilio and

Zygmunt Bauman, to name but a few, have all in their different ways pointed to the difficulties of defining the subject because its extensive proportions appear to exceed the grasp of critical discourse.[11] Nonetheless, the need to engage in such analysis remains pressing because of the very commonplace status which violence continues to claim in our everyday understanding of the world around us.[12] This is all the more urgent, as Véronique Le Goaziou stresses, because if in the past 'le violent a été l'Autre', in more recent times we have come to reconcile ourselves to the fact that 'le violent pouvait être une personne ordinaire, pouvait être nous-mêmes'.[13a]

If critical debate continues to emphasise that violence need not necessarily manifest itself solely in physical terms, Robert Paul Wolff is a representative voice in broadly defining the phenomenon as 'the illegitimate or unauthorized use of force to effect decisions against the will or desire of others'.[14] This focus on compelling trauma upon resisting subject(s) is further developed in a number of recent studies regarding the matrix of human relationships which frame the performance and reception of the act: thus, in addition to the author(s) and the victim(s), we are left to conjure with the roles of witness(es) and judge(s).[15] Nowhere, of course, is this more apparent than in Shakespearean performance, where all too often audiences (on- and off-stage) are forced to reflect upon their own ethical integrity – nay, complicity – in bearing witness to the unfolding cycles of horror: anticipating the tortures about to be enacted, Cornwall advises Edmund in *King Lear*, 'Leave [Gloucester] to my displeasure. Edmund, keep you our sister company. The revenges we are bound to take upon your traitorous father are not fit for your beholding' (III.vii.6–8). The prolific early modern author, Anthony Munday, argued that, unlike the evils committed which 'pollute the doers onlie', theatre audiences 'saie nought, but gladlie looke on, they al by sight and assent be actors'.[16] Conversely, more recently, W. J. T. Mitchell has pointed to the ways in which 'beholding' violence may bring with it self-protective 'processes of temporal and spatial displacement' or detachment that render the observer and/or interpreter 'neither a perpetrator nor a victim'.[17] This volatile state of attaching/detaching, acting/beholding, anticipating/judging is something with which Shakespearean audiences remained all too familiar. Moreover, as the stage is visited with one trauma after another, we

[a] 'the violent [one] has been the Other'; 'the violent [one] could be an ordinary person, could be ourselves'.

are presented with the thorny problematisation of violations in the past and of failing political systems in the present.[18]

The construction of Self and Other through the enactment, narration and remembering of violence remains as apposite to the analysis of the early modern age as it does to our own. During the Elizabethan military campaign in Ireland, it was reported in the autumn of 1599, to a highly receptive Privy Council, that there had been

> Many execrable murders and cruelties upon the English, as well in the county of Limerick, as in the counties of Cork and Kerry, and elsewhere; infants taken from the nurse's breast and the brains dashed against the walls; the hearts plucked out of the body of the husband in the view of the wife, who was forced to yield the use of her apron to wipe off the blood from the murderers' fingers.[19]

In accounts of early (and late) modernity, it quickly becomes evident that the appetite for violence during perceived states of emergency generates its own forms of logic and craves extravagantly polarised accounts of moral adversaries, of superlative victims and of fugitives bereft of succour. Nonetheless, Burghley himself had protested earlier in the 1590s that 'It is no marvel that the [Irish] people have rebellious hearts, for the Flemings had not such cause to rebel by the oppressions of the Spaniards as it is reported the Irish people have.'[20] State correspondence, legal records, ballads, print culture, street entertaiments, rumour . . . all might respond during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to this consuming interest in brutality. However, as Emmanuel Bruno Jean-François has argued, such narratives markedly fail to take account of the complexity, fragility and reversibility of the relationships of persecutor, persecuted and beholder.[21]

Acknowledging a rich heritage of judicial debate surrounding the status and function of violence in the twentieth century, Walter Benjamin addressed this enquiry in terms of a breach, or the healing of a breach, in a culture's moral and legal consensus: 'All violence as means is either law-making or law-preserving. If it lays claim to neither of these predicates, it forfeits all validity.'[22] It was this very question of legitimation that later came to dominate Hannah Arendt's meditations on the practice. Construing it as 'the severe frustration of the faculty of action' in failing political states, Arendt contended that '[v]iolence can destroy power; it is utterly incapable of creating it'.[23] In such ways, critical debate in the post-war period urged us to interrogate at length whether the practice of violence denoted an interruptive or provisional intervention, an engagement in deviance, and/or an ethical failure.[24] Subsequent generations of

thinkers have often remained less sanguine in their analyses than Arendt. They have exposed how contemporary society has vainly tried to comfort itself by asserting the diminishing purchase that violence has on our 'civilising' society and by refusing to consider the sobering functionality which the practice can assume in our collective lives. Querying the protocols concerning the battlefield's bodycount, Shakespeare's Fluellen submits 'Is it not lawful, an't please your majesty, to tell how many is killed?' (*V*: IV.viii.111–12).[25] Like many voices in this critical debate, Xavier Crettiez trains attention on the grim possibility that 'La violence rapporte à ceux qui la pratiquent' and may excite a 'plaisir individuel' for those who participate in (and witness) the practice.[26a] Indeed, Jean Baudrillard went further, insisting that rather than scorning brutality as a practice, 'il faut voir que c'est notre modernité elle-même, notre hypermodernité, qui produit ce type de violence, et ces effets spéciaux dont le terrorisme fait partie lui aussi'.[27b] In an apocalyptic conclusion which synchronises remarkably with the dramatic discourse of the Shakespearean history plays under discussion, Baudrillard envisaged a world saturated with hatred – a punishing investment from which we cannot desist and which provokes in us a vexed longing for the end of this world where such conditions of existence cease to obtain.

All such lines of reasoning seem to have haunted the development of human society since earliest times. In the *Confessions*, Augustine related how his friend Alypius had formerly become addicted to the 'immanissimis voluptatibus' of the Roman Games: 'ut enim vidit illum sanguinem, immanitatem simul ebibit et non se avertit, sed fixit aspectum et hauriebat furias et nesciebat, et delectabatur scelere certaminis et cruenta voluptate inebriabatur'.[c] Taking up specifically this intellectual challenge for early modern enquiry, Cynthia Marshall argues forcefully that 'We need a way to account for an audience's pleasure in projected suffering such as that portrayed in violent Renaissance literature. A focus on pleasure is far from denial of literature's seriousness: providing pleasure may well be the most subversive of tactics.'[28] Marshall's timely emphasis upon the role of the witness (or audience member) in the enactment of violence remains key

[a] 'Violence yields benefits to those who engage in it'; 'particular pleasure'.
[b] 'we must recognize that it is the very essence of our modernity, our hypermodernity, which produces this kind of violence and these particular effects in which terrorism also should be counted'.
[c] 'monstrous gratification', 'For when he saw that blood, he drank deep of its barbarity and did not turn himself away but fixed his gaze and drank in the torments and was unaware, and found gratification in the wickedness of the contest, and became drunk on the pleasures of blood' – Augustine, *Confessions*, ed. and trans. Carolyn J.-B. Hammond (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press/Loeb Classical Library, 2014), pp. 264–5 (VI.8.13).

and connects with a much broader emphasis in the present study concerning whether we are held in the (en)thrall of such traumatic experiences. The theorist Willem Schinkel makes the uncomfortable point that 'The love of fictional violence may be a love of *fictional* violence; it is also a *love of violence*.'[29]

Despite Thomas Lodge's contention in *A Fig for Momus* (1595) that 'All things are chang'd, the meanes, the men and armes,/Our strategems now differ from the old', the textual inheritance of antiquity continued to shape his age's cultural interrogation of warfare.[30] This is a theme regularly taken up by Shakespeare's Fluellen in *Henry V*. Indeed, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, when in *Dell'arte della guerra* (1519/20) Machiavelli turned to the subject of armed hostilities, he wrote for 'the satisfying of those who are louers of auncient actes'.[31] The key military tracts from antiquity, Vegetius's *De Re Militari* and Frontinus's *Strategemata*, had circulated in manuscript in the medieval period prior to wider dissemination by print culture in subsequent centuries. Moreover, as Robert Appelbaum has justly pointed out, there was a whole range of European publications that considered the relative merits of recourse to violence: from la Boétie's *Discours sur la servitude volontaire* (Latin: 1574; French: 1576), Hotman's *Franco-Gallia* (1573), de Bèze's *De jure magistratuum* (1574), Buchanan's *De jure regni apud scotos* (1579) and the *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* (1579) to Mariana's *De rege et regis institutione* (1598) and Naudé's *Considérations sur les coups d'états* (1639).[32] One of the first English-language interventions in Tudor print culture treating the ancients' arts of war was Alexander Barclay's translation of Sallust's *famous cronycle of the warre* (1522). This was followed in 1544 by Anthony Cope's rendering of Livy in *The historie of two noble capitaines of the worlde, Anniball and Scipio*. Notable examples of this genre from the second half of the century include Arthur Golding's *eyght bookes of . . . Caesar* (1565), Thomas North's rendering of Plutarch's *Lives* (1579) and Henry Savile's translations in the 1590s of the *Histories* and the *Life of Agricola* by Tacitus. Indeed, John Hooker's prefatory letter, dedicated to Ralegh, at the opening of Holinshed's *Second volume of Chronicles* (1586) reminded readers that Caesar himself 'in his wars searched the ancient bookes and histories of the citie of Rome: and did . . . thereby draw a paterne for his owne direction, both for his ciuill and his martiall affaires'.[33]

In the wake of Caesar's death and the flight of the conspirators to Asia, the most favoured ancient writer in the early modern period, Cicero, wrote in 44 BC to C. Cassius Longinus, one of the prime instigators of the

initial conspiracy: 'quid enim est quod contra vim sine vi fieri possit?'[34a] This thorny dilemma continues to weigh heavily in more recent exchanges on the subject: René Girard, for example, insisted that 'On ne peut se passer de la violence pour mettre fin à la violence. Mais c'est précisément pour cela que la violence est interminable.'[35b] Indeed, following in the footsteps of classical forebears, the early modern age might associate the very act of cognition with the performance of violence. Trained in rhetorical argumentation, speakers seeking to flex their faculty of memory might summon up mentally a harrowing scene of trauma in order to excite their powers of recall: the destruction (slaughter, suicide, violation) of something/someone thus triggered the mind into effective oratory.[36] The present study considers how much more tremendous might be the result amongst the serried ranks of the audience in a theatre, or even that of the political nation when worked upon with powerful evocations of killing and mutilation. As we have seen, war all too frequently ravaged the landscape of early modern Europe, a phenomenon that Carl von Clausewitz encapsulated later as 'an art of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our will'.[37] In the *Naturales Quaestiones*, responding keenly to the anti-Carthaginian sympathies of his fellow Romans, Seneca had composed an all too persuasive portrait of an *ungovernable* Hannibal, who 'as an old man . . . did not stop searching for war in every corner of the world. So, he could endure being without a country, but he could not stand being without an enemy.'[38] Figures like Walter Ralegh would resist such characterisations in their own accounts of the Carthaginian general, but discussion returns repeatedly in this study to the enduring early modern fascination with those who command over scenes of butchery and those who recall them for wider consumption in times of crisis.

The central role of language in mythologies of belonging and alterity had been recognised in antiquity where the Athenian state demonised those who could not decipher the Ancient Greek language (*barbaros*) and who, thus, seemed to communicate with empty mouthings – 'bar bar'. Ralegh is not unrepresentative for the early modern period in rehearsing such expectations in his prose writings. When he sought to establish a portrait of the unharnessed belligerence of the Barbarian, he returned to the thematic emphases of ineloquence, nomadism, political anarchy and occult practices described in antiquity, most readily identifiable in

[a] 'What can be done against violence except by violence?' See 'Cicero to Cassius, Rome, soon after 2 October 44', in Cicero, *Letters to Friends*, III.144–5 (345 (XII.3)).
[b] 'Only violence can put an end to violence, and that is why violence is self-propagating.' See René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 27.

Herodotus's *Histories*, Pliny's *Natural History* and Strabo's *Geography*. Moreover, in Ralegh's own *History of the World* (1614) and in intrigues performed in the early modern playhouse, we bear witness repeatedly to the ways in which verbal violence precedes the enactment of physical trauma: Aumerle argues in *Richard II*, for example, 'let's fight with gentle words/Till time lend friends and friends their helpful swords' (III.iii.131–2). If Shakespearean scholarship has often devoted much time and energy to detailing the highly transformative role which language itself may assume in shaping our appreciation of stage action,[39] more troublingly, Slavoj Žižek has queried in a more general exploration of the subject, 'What if . . . humans exceed animals in their capacity for violence precisely because they *speak*?'[40]

At the opening of *1 Henry IV*, the figures of perceivedly remote, barely legible Welshwomen butchering English male corpses are summoned up for consideration by audiences on- and off-stage. Such highly charged accounts seek to reproduce English moral and political purpose in opposition to fantasied narratives of blood-letting and disfigurement displaced onto a dangerously proximate, yet verbally opaque *Other*. Shakespeare's histories are fully implicated in probing the ways by which speech acts may figure forth and excite antagonisms, bloodlusts. Nonetheless, the soundscapes of such plays also test strategically the limits of their social visions: in the punishing political conditions of the histories, speaking is intimately linked to the processes of social incorporation and social haemorrhaging. If the French princess Katharine will declare her love for Henry V 'soundly', then the latter will grant her leave to speak 'brokenly with [her] English tongue' (*V*: V.ii.305). The Duchess of York declares more roundly in the earlier *Richard II*, 'The chopping French we do not understand' (V.iii.122). Theorising how such specifically linguistic modes of hierarchisation are imbricated in schema of social (dis)placement, Dick Hebdige has stressed that '[s]ubcultures [may be seen to] represent "noise" (as opposed to sound): interference in the orderly'.[41] In all kinds of ways, Shakespeare's histories engage with such thinking and turn to the fractious exchange of words, rather than to pitched battles, to problematise the filiation of political contest and cultural priority.

If painfully attritional interactions between Self and Other often characterise the intrigues of Shakespeare's history plays, such powerplay can evolve equally perplexingly into even-handed combat between predators. In his seminal study *La violence et le sacré*, René Girard acknowledged that our enduring desires for morally polarised accounts of human interaction may all too often break down in performance, in the theatre of Greek tragedy (and beyond): 'S'il n'y a pas de difference entre les antagonistes