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Rules of Misrule

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Honors Final Thesis

The Rules of Misrule
An Analysis of Carnival Culture in Renaissance Football and Theater

"If all the year were playing holidays, to sport would be as tedious as to work."
– William Shakespeare

It is no coincidence that for centuries societies all over the world have been decidedly conflicted with regard to the development of their own sports culture. Governments, spectators and players alike will agree that sports, no matter what type, are much more than a pastime. Sport has the power to explain, undermine and sustain the economic, social and political dynamics within its respective societies. It serves, not only as a window into that particular society, but also has the ability to act as a porthole to the entire world. Sport, despite its capacity for chaos and violence and its overall carnivalesque atmosphere and behavior, serves to reinforce authority by providing a controlled outlet for social release.

Sport is a stage that encourages controlled celebratory and/or often fanatical rebellion. Through specific rules structure is provided and sport becomes an entity of controlled chaos that ultimately reinforces societal constraints if not providing an even greater sense of clarity than even the government or ruling class has created for society. Whether one is participating or simply assuming the role of the spectator the impact of sports culture is experienced and felt just the same. Indeed, Gregory Semenza, a scholar and respected authority on the politics of sport explains that

> One could plausibly argue that sport –like religion or mythology-satisfies a human desire for an orderly and meaningful cosmos. The rules of sport are clearer and, in many ways, more satisfying than those which govern our ordinary lives…Most sports offer a version of the world in absolute terms, allowing their participants to achieve a recognizable goal through performance of clearly defined tasks (Semenza, 19).

Unlike many other pastimes sport simplifies the world in which we live while at the same time creating an even more complex cultural climate. It is the only social outlet that utilizes a chaotic and volatile atmosphere in order to restore order to its fans and to the state. Indeed, according to Pierre Bourdieu, sport's greatest virtue lies in its "power to reveal *a contrario* the complexity of the reality that [it simplifies]. In other words, sport can help us sustain the belief that we are in control of our own lives" (Semenza, 19). Sport allows both spectators and players to live out their own myth for as long as the games last and the crowds still linger.

To be clear, when referring to sports culture and sport in general, participatory sport and spectator sport are both equally important to our discussion. It is widely understood that sports culture is constructed around fostering a connection between the players and their spectators. Indeed the two are mutually dependent upon each other for survival and their relationship can be portrayed as the player acting as an extension of the spectator. The player is able to carry out the reality that the spectator only dreams he/she could be able to. Indeed most sports in Renaissance England were open to public or private spectators. For example, football was a sport that used to bring entire rival towns together to watch in hopes of their

town pulverizing the opposition. Obviously this link between player and spectator still exists today and is still as vital to the existence of sports culture as it was back in the Renaissance.

However, throughout history, governments and their people have been simultaneously cursed and blessed with the ability to understand the world through sport. This diverse nature of sports is most interestingly depicted throughout the Renaissance period in England, especially during the reign of the Elizabethan monarchy. The emergence of sports and how the government dealt with them led to divisions among the ruling and noble classes within England.

Sports were seen as liminal parts of what was, for the most part, a very rigid social structure. This liminality is what allows sport to act as a constant and controlled form of carnival behavior within the state. Carnival is associated with misrule and a temporary topsy-turvy political, economic and social climate in which rigid everyday rules are not welcome. Thus, overturning class distinctions and challenging the natural order of the state in anyway is to be understood as an element of carnival. Sport essentially is a stage where controlled carnival is always alive, even if it is only fleeting.

Despite the danger associated with its liminal quality, the development of sport culture in England became increasingly popular and appealed to many ruling elites because they viewed sports as a seemingly unconventional yet effective form of social control. Indeed, many members of the ruling class saw the main function of sports in a well-ordered society as "bridg[ing] the chasm between the unrestrained disorderliness of Carnival and the orderliness of all rule-bound phenomena" (Semenza, 13). On the other hand, many feared the consequences that could arise if this fragile bridge were to break and release a flood of disorder all over society. Philip Stubbes, in his *Anatomie of Abuses in England*, condemns an

array of sports from tennis to football to plays to wicked books stating that they are the manifestations of sinfulness. He asserts "there is a great Lord present amongst them, as superintendent, and Lord over their pastimes and sportes, namely, Sathan" (Semenza, 56). As a result, Renaissance England sought to control sports culture the same way it did its people: they constructed a hierarchy of sports.

In order to understand the various categories of sport within the monarchy's hierarchical system it is important to note that in Renaissance England the term sport and its daily usage was not at all like the way in which we use the term today. In fact the word sport encompassed not only activities that demanded physical strength, but the term was also used in reference to those activities that required discipline with respect to mental and artistic performance. The breadth of the term sport contributed to the creation of a unique and often topsy-turvy sports culture. Indeed, the word sport was used to describe pastimes as different as football (soccer) and plays. In fact, both football and plays were considered and referred to as sports during this period. This range allowed sport culture to penetrate much deeper into the lives of the English people. In effect, "Sport's unusual flexibility as a term and concept and its ability to encompass radically different activities made it an extremely useful and powerful signifier in the Renaissance" (Semenza, 13). Indeed, the flexible use of the term sports in Renaissance England allowed all sorts of activities considered sports to exist as models of order and disorder concurrently.

Thus, sports were a powerful yet controversial element to the English nation-state. In fact, sports were categorized into two distinct types: lawful sports and unlawful sports. The separation of sports into these two categories was the response the ruling class took in order to quell any fears they had about the potential disorder and excess surrounding the ever

increasingly popular development of sports culture in England. Renaissance England, despite its outward acceptance of sport culture, was still very much a government entrenched in tradition and took pride in their legacy of upholding order and class distinctions.

Yet, while there were distinct rules and class divisions on one hand, the definition of sport during the Renaissance undermined that system as the "lines between noble and plebeian sports constantly blurred in the Renaissance" (Semenza, 38). This blurring of class lines is an element of what is known as carnival culture in which the state's order is suspended for some time so that her people can experience a sort of relief from social constraints. Certainly Elizabethan England did whatever was in its power to keep the nobility and commonality separate within the sport culture. For example, many books were published to inform people as to which sports were considered aristocratic and which ones were considered common. Semenza explains that within particular books from the (in this case he mentions *The Governour*, written by Thomas Elyot), Renaissance "Sports are hierarchically arranged in *The Governour* according to their class associations, the status of their participants, and their degree of exclusivity" (Semenza, 37). The goal of categorizing and assigning a specific status to certain sports was to maintain and reinforce a clearly divisive line between different social, economic and political classes. The hope was that those sports considered lawful, which conveniently included many of the sports deemed exclusively aristocratic, would be adopted only by those of the noble or elite classes, whereas those sports deemed unlawful, which were also supposedly common, would be adopted by the lower classes or better yet not practiced at all for fear of possible pandemonium throughout society.

Certainly, for those among the ruling class elite, sport was seen as both a threat and an advantage to the state. The English noble class made every effort to mold sport culture to fit

their vision of how English people should behave and how society should be run. The governments' main concern with sports dealt with how these activities could influence the English gentleman. The ruling elite acknowledged that "The practice of sport…was central to Renaissance conceptions of both the ideal English gentleman and the ideal English nation-state" (Semenza, 13). Thomas Elyot, in *The Governour,* emphasizes sport's ability to better the English gentleman by becoming nobler.

Yet, as in much of the literature from the Renaissance, little is written about the common man, or what Shakespeare would call the "Jack Falstaffs" of the world and their ability to become better men through sports. The focus on the English gentleman's role in society through the practice of sports is most likely due to the fact that for a long time the nobility was seen as the life blood, or dominant class in England and thus its preservation was vital to the stability of the state. In the following passage Semenza explains the central importance of the English gentleman within popular sport culture and the state's need to secure distinct class identities:

> As Humphrey's *Nobles* makes clear, the stability of the social order had traditionally depended on the ability of contemporaries to separate noble and ignoble sports -- the ability to define clearly the differences between the noble and the popular lifestyles. Peter Burke's landmark study, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, calls attention to the reality that "upper-class participation in popular culture…was an important fact of [Early Modern] European life." The fact that both gentles and peasants participated in sports…was

> particularly troubling to Renaissance lawmakers, aristocrats, and conservative polemicists (Semenza, 43).

The idea of class mixing was terrifying to many powerful leaders in Renaissance England. The idea of breaking down the traditional social order led many to fear the onset of anarchy. As a result, leaders targeted the noble class, mostly through literature, by exploiting their fears of being considered less noble or less of a stately gentleman. However, there were a few sports that appear to have been without a designated class or lawfulness, which included activities such as fencing, archery, and wrestling. These sports were thought to be necessary for both gentlemen and commoners to practice due to the fact that in times of war the state would need the help of both classes.

Yet, for the purposes of our argument, we are interested in the supposedly "unlawful" sports of football and stage plays during the Renaissance. Understandably, besides being dubbed "unlawful" forms of sport, the connection between these two pastimes may seem unclear. However, during the Renaissance, and arguably even now, the "One characteristic that unites sports as different as football and [plays] is their perceived capacity for excess…both can be manipulated, logically and simultaneously, by polemical opponents to exemplify the conditions of order and disorder in Renaissance culture" (Semenza, 15). The theater and football during the Renaissance are certainly stages, in which the masses are able to enjoy copious amounts of merry-making (understood as a carnivalesque atmosphere), but they are also institutions that reinforce the social, economic and political policies of the authoritarian governments they exist in. Arguably, they may even improve policy.

Thus, what I intend to prove through the specific case studies of Renaissance football and theater is that, although these two sports allow and even nurture carnivalesque behavior

in which order is suspended and replaced with festive mayhem, despite their capacity for subversion of the state, these "unlawful" sports are necessary to the preservation of the monarchy. Through the extreme excesses of violence and mirth that shape these two pastimes comes a rebirth of the English nation-state every time a match is played and every time a play is performed on-stage. The two sports provide a venue for the masses to participate in controlled carnival experiences that also allow for the redefinition of the English gentlemen in relation to the state and his lower class (merchants and peasants) counterparts. Football and theater are two forms of sport that through their propensity for bedlam give rise to English nationalism and help shape modern England. In fact, any sentimental English hooligan, whether he is from Tottenham or Chelsea, is living proof of the permanent power of sport culture within English society.

The Sport of Theater: Plays, Play-acting and Play-going in Renaissance England

Every government must allow for a bit of saturnalia from time to time or else face a future of uncertain political power and dominance over its people. Elizabethan carnival culture allowed for people to rebel and reunite with the collective state of society. In addition, Elizabethan theater acted as the controlled outlet for that carnival experience, while at the same time becoming immersed in the culture of the plebeian class. The state's ultimate resistance to the theater was in part due to its traditions of patronage and the belief in maintaining social class distinctions in order to prevent chaos and rebellion from spreading throughout society. However, Shakespeare presents to his audience a hero in Prince Hal, a man who flirts with walking the fine line between the world of the theater and the world of the state. Thus, in his role he manages to keep principles suspended while creating and

fostering a symbiotic relationship between the stage and the state. In many ways Hal is presented as a modern-day leader bridging the gap between order and disorder.

The following is a description by William Harrison of a moment of Elizabethan carnival indulgence, taken from *Holinshed's Chronicles*:

> There is such heady ale and beer in most of them [Englishmen of all classes] as for the mightiness thereof among such as seek it out is commonly called 'huffcap,' 'the mad dog,' 'Father Whoreson,' 'angels' food,' 'dragon's milk,' 'go-by-the-wall,' 'stride wide,' and 'lift leg,' etc. And this is more to be noted, that when one of late fell by God's providence into a troubled conscience, after he had considered well of his reachless life and dangerous estate, another, thinking belike to change his colour and not his mind, carried him straight away to the strongest ale, as to the next physician. It is incredible to say how our maltbugs lug at this liquor, even as pigs should lie in a row lugging at their dame's teats, till they lie still again and be not able to wag. Neither did Romulus and Remus suck their she-wolf or shepherd's wife Lupa with such eager and sharp devotion as these men hale at 'huffcap,' till they be red as cocks and little wiser than their combs (*A Description of England,* Harrison).

Harrison's description of society amid carnival celebrations is too familiar. It is rather interesting how closely Elizabethan carnival culture mirrors our own culture of carnival, affectionately known as Spring Weekend, on UConn's campus. In fact, the same logic used

to justify Elizabethan outbursts of carnival can be used to describe our modern participation. The literary critic Michael Bristol employs a brilliant metaphor to explain the function of carnival culture within both Elizabethan and modern society: "By depleting reserves and leaving everyone bruised and sore, a collective binge brings on a collective hangover and sets the stage for vows of sobriety and getting back to work" (34, Bristol). Indeed, this explanation of carnival directly correlates with Barber's interpretation of the pattern of saturnalia, also quoted by Bristol, that states, "participants are released from the routines of productive labor, and from the rules of a hierarchically organized society with its demands for the decorous observance of precedence and social position. Release---separation from the everyday---leads to merrymaking proper" (31, Bristol).

In order to better understand the previous statements, imagine a world without any elements of carnival. That means there are no sports, no parades, no dances, no strip clubs, no bars/watering holes, no feasts, no holidays, no movies, and no plays! Instead of offering all of those things previously listed, the world consists of waking up, working, eating and sleeping. What kind of a world would that be? Would one accept that kind of life or rebel against it? Could one even survive? In response to the previous questions posed, I argue for the necessity of controlled forms of carnival to exist within societies, both modern and Elizabethan, in order for the state to maintain a successful existence.

I center my argument on the theory that no successful nation-state is able to maintain order and dominance over its people without allowing a bit of saturnalia every once in a while. To begin my case, I assert that Elizabethan London is made up of two worlds: the stage and the state. I present the theater as a place of controlled carnival, a world of collectivity, also a world influenced by the vibrant culture of the lower classes and one that is

much more than just a source of art, but also an outlet for political means. The state shall be depicted as an authority of order and obedience dominated by the influence of the elite classes. My argument seeks to analyze specific roles of carnival and theater within society, and the tension that those roles create between the stage and the state. Indeed, as far as the stage and the state are concerned, there is an abundance of information that must be left to the purposes of different, more in-depth discussions. This is not to say that those topics are less important, but rather that there is not time to address other closely related issues within this essay.

Now, in Elizabethan London the school of carnival was the theater. The following is an excerpt from the Anatomy of Abuses, written by the Puritan, Philip Stubbes, describing the carnival atmosphere in theater performances:

> If you will learn falsehood, if you will learn, cozenage, if you will learn to play the hypocrite; to cog, lie, and falsify…to jest, laugh, and fleer, to grin, to nod…if you will learn to play the vice, to swear, tear, and blaspheme both heaven and earth. If you will learn to become a bawd, unclean, and to devirginate maids, to deflower honest wives…to murder, slay, kill, pick, steal, rob, and rove…to rebel against princes, to commit treasons, to consume treasures, to practices idleness, to sing and talk of bawdy love and venery…to deride, scoff, mock, and flout, to flatter, to smooth; if you will learn to play the whoremaster, the glutton, drunkard…to become proud, haughty and arrogant…to commit all kind of sin and mischief, you go to

> no other school, for all these good examples may you see painted before your eyes in interludes and plays (McDonald, 352).

The excerpt describes a world of misrule that was celebrated and carried out on the Elizabethan stage. Indeed, the theater was a daily release, a diurnal form of saturnalia, which allowed people to escape the mundane of every-day life, to become part of a community, and to hope for a better future. Essentially, the theater served as a constant stage for carnival behavior. Once patrons stepped into the theater the rules of the outside world were suspended and replaced with the rules of misrule and/or carnival on-stage. So, why would an institution that seems to prevent society from spiraling out of control into the depths of utter anarchy be in contention with the state apparatus? In other words, why wouldn't the State celebrate Carnival and theater?

Yet, before addressing the preceding queries, it is important to distinguish between Elizabethan theater and Shakespearean theater. When Stubbes describes the theater in the Anatomy of Abuses he is making a general reference about Elizabethan theatrical productions. In general, the Elizabethan stage was a venue for all things topsy-turvy, to include everything from jester-like stock characters to whores to the deceit and lust of love triangles and beyond. A great example of a carnival atmosphere rich with topsy-turvy plots intertwined is Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*. The story line follows an honest shoemaker, Simon Eyre, as he ascends the "thrown" of London and it chronicles all the different classes he encounters along the way. The mood of the play is merry and captures England in its heyday.

To be clear, Stubbes is not specifically concerned with the plays and productions of Shakespeare. Certainly, Hamlet and other plays of a similar dramatic caliber are not the main targets for the debauchery that Stubbes is protesting. However, that is not to say that Shakespeare's plays do not contain elements of carnival often found within other Elizabethan stage plays that Stubbes does lash out against.

In fact, most of Shakespeare's plays include some element of misrule either within the plot structure or more often than not in his characters. One of the most famous "Kings of Carnival" is Falstaff, a self-proclaimed hero of the "everyman," he schemes his way into the hearts of Prince Hal, in *Henry IV Part I,* and his audiences. He is a celebrated and lovable glutton, liar, and mischief-maker. A second example of misrule is depicted in both the plot and character of *Macbeth.* The play addresses elements of misrule, including treason, blasphemy, and murder of a king (overthrow of government/ order). Macbeth serves as the main protagonist and personification of the traits of carnival behavior. In fact, Macbeth is an example of what can occur when the elements of carnival and/or misrule go too far and creates a disruption of the natural order within a state. Ironically the play offers a good argument for the ruling class to exploit in order to keep the carnival culture controlled and confined to specific rules, standards and outlets of social release, like the theater and other forms of sport.

Elizabethan London was staged like a great Shakespearean production. The theater and the state functioned in the same way that Shakespeare's 'plays within plays" did: the state acted as the main production while the theater sought to amplify, challenge and, often times, mock the actions of the state. Elizabethan London was a state of numerous social conditions.

The political climate in Elizabethan London was tense due to its inability to establish a clear initiative of authority, especially when it came to the issues revolving around the theaters and their companies of players. However, first, for purposes of discussion, it is important to understand the make-up of Elizabeth's government. The government power structure was "made up of a coalition of aristocratic and bourgeois elements, concerned above all to defend their position of economic and political advantage. The popular party…consists of the peasants and artisans" (Bristol, 50). Thus, as stated earlier in the discussion, Elizabethan London was divided into two separate worlds politically, economically and socially. On one side of the Thames was the world of the stage, including the Jack Falstaffs of Elizabethan London, but also, and more notably, the hardworking craftsmen and artisans who represented a new emerging middle class. On the other side of the Thames and surrounding the heart of the Old City lived the stately world of elegance, wealth, privilege and elite courtly culture. One world ruled while the other world was ruled over.

Elizabeth's government was mainly concerned with enforcing order and obedience within society. Elizabeth and her Privy Council feared anarchy and viewed the theater and its carnival atmosphere as a force that could not be predicted or controlled. Indeed, although the queen herself was a fan of plays, she acknowledged the potential chaos that carnival and theater could cause if taken too far. In fact, her Privy Council viewed the theater as "a seditious prelude to put into the people's heads boldness and faction" (Shapiro, 124).

One of the most important aspects to the character of Elizabethan society was the rigid class system that made up her hierarchy. In fact, the state used religious propaganda from *The Great Chain of Being* in order to justify the need for a hierarchical system, emphasizing, "God had created the universe according to a system of hierarchies" (319, McDonald). In

Elizabethan London class systems were to be strictly adhered to, and the separation of classes was inherent to a proper establishment of the social order. As a result, the theater's willingness to dismantle hierarchical values and blur the lines between classes and even encouraging the intermingling of the classes, made it one of the biggest threats to the Elizabethan state.

To those of us used to living in a democratic system of government, it is hard to comprehend the reasons as to why the Elizabethan government would be so adamant in its defense of the preservation of societal inequalities. Certainly, our democratic system would applaud the dismantling of stringent class barriers, and encourage individuals to climb the political, economic and social ladders of society. Yet, Europe, especially London at this time in her history, and even today to a certain extent, "belongs to a social world where everything is invested with a sacred character, but only intermittently. Every detail of practical reality has a sacred meaning in that it refers to the existence of that 'moral being'…that 'moral being' is experienced…in the sheer everydayness and crude practicality of social existence" (53, Bristol). Consequently, the state apparatus fears any attempt at blurring the boundaries between the theater world and the world of the government or between people-types and social classes.

Now, in order to understand the relationship between carnival and theater, it is important to define the elements of Carnival. Bristol describes Carnival as "a time of festive abundance and overindulgence; meat is consumed in large quantities, there is much drinking, and special foods such as pancakes…along with lavish consumption of food, Carnival encourages drunkenness, disruptive behavior and symbolic disorderly conduct. There is also actual misrule, including increased sexual promiscuity, street violence and civil

commotion…Carnival is the occasion for masquerade, disguise and processions, often featuring role reversal, and gender switching, together with special performance activities featuring both topical dramas and traditional narratives" (40, Bristol). Certainly, the world of carnival is a topsy-turvy realm of existence in which anything goes. In Elizabethan London, Carnival was most closely associated with "Shrove Tuesday, a day of license, an unofficial holiday on which London's apprentices often ran wild, vandalizing brothels and occasionally theaters" (73, Shapiro). In rituals of Carnival, time was suspended, law was abandoned, rules were ignored, and the excess of sinful pleasures or enormities was celebrated to the greatest enjoyment of most.

Although Carnival seems to represent a threat to the order within a society, its elements of misrule actually consolidate the elements of rule by "reinforcing social order and in promoting feelings of communal or corporate solidarity…people who are oppressed, expropriated, or in some way constrained by an unwelcome social discipline are permitted to release their accumulated resentment at regular intervals so that they may then be reincorporated within the repressive regime" (Bristol, 27). In order to better grasp this concept one may refer back to the scenario described in the beginning of the paper, involving a world without any outlets of controlled carnival. It seems that, in an oppressive atmosphere like the one imagined before, the people would simply partake in carnival culture anyway. Thus, they rebel against the states of order and obedience within their society despite the risk of being punished for their retaliation against a higher authority. Now, certainly, carnivalesque behavior can be taken too far, but in controlled settings, like the theater, one is able to escape the demands made upon them by the state, and in a sense rebel in a way that allows the state to control how much and how often that rebellion or release takes place.

Carnival and theater: the two form a special relationship that becomes inherent to Elizabethan popular plebeian culture. Even the location of the theaters points to the state's ultimate disapproval of the ties between the theater and carnival culture. In fact, theaters in Elizabethan London were built outside the walls of city due to their "sinful" acts. Indeed, "the Bankside had a reputation for freewheeling independence. It was notorious for its criminality, prostitution, inns, theaters, and blood sports – both bull- and bearbaiting…Some of this local color began finding its way into Shakespeare's plays" (108, Shapiro).

As a result of its location outside the walls of London, the theater was immersed in popular plebeian culture. The theater allowed for a trust to be formed between the players and their audiences, not only on the stage but offstage as well, as the theater productions serve to simultaneously release and reintegrate the individual back and forth into collective society. Bristol represents traditions of carnival in theater as embodying an ideology of negatives and positives, stating "There is, first, a negative critique that demystifies or 'uncrowns' power, its justificatory ideology, and the tendency of elites to undertake disruptive radicalizations of traditional patterns of social order, and to introduce novel forms of domination and expropriation. In addition, there is a positive critique, a celebration and reaffirmation of collective traditions lived out by ordinary people in their ordinary existence" (Bristol, 4). Thus, theater becomes the carnival of the 'every-man,' allowing him to realize his own power and potential for a moment in time.

In a sense, the theater creates a myth for the "every-man" to hope for in the future. Indeed, Shakespeare acknowledges the function of theater as a realm of deceptive clarity in *Henry IV Part I* when Hal asks Falstaff the following: "Or is it fantasy that plays upon our eyesight?.../We will not trust our eyes/ Without our ears. Thou art not what thou seem'st."

(lines 130-132; Act V, Scene V). Thus, the theater sets itself up to be a realm in which deception becomes truth and truth becomes deception, a topsy-turvy inversion of the state. As a result, truth and deception become ambiguous elements of time, creating a paradox, it seems, only to be appreciated by the most suave politicians.

Unfortunately, what the state did not seem to realize as it attempted to suppress the increasing power of the theater is that "A wish to discourage or ignore manifestations of popular culture will not of itself cause that culture to disappear" (45, Bristol). In fact, the power gained on the Elizabethan stage symbolized a turning point in Elizabethan society from a medieval society to a modern, pre-capitalist market system. As a result, Montrose explains, the newly created tensions between the opposing classes created by a strong theatrical presence:

> Thus, the social origins of those who created the professional Elizabethan theatre were, like Shakespeare, of the middling sort and were, specifically; artisanal…it was from these same social groups that much of the audience of the public theatres was drawn. Thus, the Elizabethan theater was sustained by a frequently advantageous but inherently unstable mixture of two theoretically distinct modes of cultural production: one, hierarchal and deferential, based upon traditional relations of patronage and clientage; the other, fluid and competitive, based upon market relations (58, Montrose).

The power gained by the theater despite the stifling pressure from the state to suppress such a popular outlet of misrule set the stage for one of the most exciting battle scenes, between the stage and the state, ever witnessed by an Elizabethan audience.

The theater was an emerging social institution reuniting the individual with a collective experience. Yet, at the same time, the theater threatened the traditions of established authority through its ability to transform rule into misrule, and dismantle order to breed disorder. Theater became one of the only controlled institutions in which one could participate in the violent felicity of being witness to scenes, described by Shapiro, in which "rich men's throats [were] cut and then poor men should be rich…did pray up rising and down lying to God to take away the Queen's Majesty, and that she would be one that should help to cut the rich men's throats…and help the Queen's enemies" (Shapiro, 124). Indeed, the theater's tradition of 'uncrowning' power in order to, in the end, restore power to the rightful owners flirted along the boundary between anarchy and carnival release.

Yet, ultimately, the theater became a way to document the lives of everyday citizens in Elizabethan London. It was an outlet for commentary on relevant political issues of the time, but most importantly, it was a stage that gave a voice to the 'every-man.' Through its celebration of the carnivalesque, the theater had the effect of unifying the classes and bringing cohesiveness to the social order within Elizabethan London. In fact, theater reinforced the social customs enacted by Elizabeth and her Privy Council.

Bristol argues that the reason the theater, although initially an outlet for retaliation, is ultimately an institution of civil reform is due to the fact that in order for society to exist, "Society [must exist and live] only in and through individuals. If the idea of society were extinguished in individual minds and the beliefs, traditions, and aspirations of the group were

no longer felt and shared by the individuals, society would die" (28, Bristol). Indeed, it is absolutely vital to the life of a government "that people continue to celebrate in conformity…"(Bristol, 29). It seems almost insane to encourage controlled carnival, but what is the alternative? Anarchy? Mass rebellion?

In fact, Falstaff, in *Henry IV Part I* warns Hal against the danger in banishing those that inhabit the popular carnival realm of existence. In his famous "banish plump Jack, and banish all the world" speech, Falstaff seems to emphasize the important role that plebeian carnival culture and its people play in maintaining rule through misrule within society. Indeed, Falstaff's proclamation confirms Shapiro's assertion that the "theater was counted on for its political and topical edge on both sides of the Channel" (Shapiro 48). Without the distraction provided by the 'play within the play' the individual would break down from exhaustion and untimely burn out. Thus, the ultimate message of the main production, in this case, the state, would be absolutely lost upon him/her. Surely, the state would flop.

So, there is this world of order and this world of theatrical release. The question becomes: How to keep the two in coexistence? How to exert control without igniting rebellion? It is at this point in the discussion that I am reminded of the Brueghel painting of the Battle between Lent and Carnival in which both civil Lenten policy and Carnival rebellion come alive together. Yet, it is interesting to note that the two depictions of rule and misrule never collide within the painting. Instead, the two principles remain suspended, except for the image of one couple holding hands, which could be an ironic symbol of the natural union existing between the two principles of carnival and lent within society. However, the deliberate isolation of carnival and Lent could suggest the danger of combining the two worlds simultaneously. Therefore, Brueghel could be suggesting that the suspension of both

carnival and Lenten principles, within the same context of time, are essential to the successful existence of both the stage and the state.

Football: the Sport of the Unruly English Gentleman

In Renaissance England the sport of football was closely associated with principles of the carnival atmosphere. Renaissance football was played much differently than what the world is used to seeing from the football leagues of today. Elyot, in *The Governour,* describes the sport as "a friendly kinde of fight, then a play or recreation; A bloody and murthering practise, then a felowly sporte or pastime" (Semenza, 56). Football was essentially a mob sport with an unlimited amount of players on each team. For the most part towns and villages would play one another much like the English football league operates today. There was no set ending to a game and there were very few rules governing the conduct of the sport. Elizabethan football would be most comparable to a modern day rugby match, although the possibility for extreme violence was more acceptable in Elizabethan England. That is not to say that violence in football today is absent. In fact, it is ever present, most famously among the English league hooligans. Semenza provides a great example of the excess and violence that was very common to football during the Renaissance, below is an excerpt from a Middlesex County coroner's report after a football match results in death:

> Nicholas Martyn and Richard Turvey both late of Southemyms,
> yeoman, were in the third instant between three and four p.m.
> playing with other persons at footeball in the field called
> Evanses Feld at Southemyms, when the said Roger Ludford and

> a certain Simon Maltus, of the said parish, yeoman, came to the ground, and that Roger Ludford cried out, cast him over the hedge, indicating that he meant Nicholas Martyn, who replied, "come thou and do yt." That thereupon Roger Ludford ran towards the ball with the intention to kick it, whereupon Nicholas Martyn with the forepart of his right arm and Richard Turvey with the forepart of his left arm struck Roger Ludford a blow on the fore-part of the body under the breast, giving him a mortal blow and concussion of which he died within a quarter of an hour (14).

The fact that scenarios like the one described above were more or less common during this period demonstrates how close football flirted on the edge between carnival and chaos. In fact, because it's potential for extreme excess, soccer games were very popular during the annual Shrove Tuesday celebration throughout England. However, although violence during these matches was more common than in other ball sports at the time, it is important to remember that the role of violence in society, with respect to controlled forms of carnival, like football, allows for a renewal of order and reaffirmation to the restoration of order. Indeed football during this period is one part of Elizabethan culture where "One [could] appreciate the cathartic effect of athletics in providing an outlet for hostility other than war and death" (Semenza, 67). So, although football might have had a greater propensity to foster a more violent sport culture, its ability to transform that violence into something functional and productive in society distinguishes it from other supposed threats to the state apparatus. In fact, Norbert Elias, argues that

> belligerence and aggression find socially permitted expression in sporting contests. And they are expressed especially in 'spectating' (eg., at boxing matches), in the imaginary identification with a small number of combatants to whom moderate and precisely regulated scope is granted for the release of such affects…[T] his…is a particularly characteristic feature of civilized society (Semenza, 67).

Elias emphasizes the benefits aggression and violence have upon the spectators of sports. Indeed, it has often been argued that sporting events that involve elements of aggression or violence serve as an outlet for the men and women frustrated with everyday tasks that society has imposed upon them. Again, sports in which belligerence offers alternatives to pandemonium serve to reintegrate people back into the stringent social fabric after the match is finished. What is most interesting is this appetite for hostility is most needed and in fact necessary in civilized societies like that of Elizabethan England. Indeed, this social phenomenon reminds us that every so often, even an English gentleman must succumb to his urge for unruliness. For the purposes of his argument Elias offers the example of boxing, however, the same principles can be applied to the sport of football as it was practiced during the Renaissance, and arguably even today.

Another aspect of sport culture observed from the above-cited passage has to do with class associations. Note that the coroner describes the men involved in the football match as 'yeoman.' This is significant because football during the Renaissance was most popular between the peasant and plebeian classes. It was discussed earlier that England was very much concerned about the nobility and their role in sports culture. As a result, football

became a sport listed as unlawful as it was seen to be less of a functional sport, too barbarous, and allowed for too much lower class fury. Indeed, in his work entitled *The Boke of The Governour*, Elyot claims that "sports like football, in which there is "nothing but beastly furie and exstreme violence." Just as the gentleman's skill in riding demonstrates his nobility, so a person's participation in a rural sport like football marks him as ignoble" (Semenza, 37-38). Certainly, the nobility were consciously concerned with maintaining their social rank within English society and thus rarely played football. Yet, Elyot's claims did not prevent English gentleman from observing football. William Fitz Stephen in, *A Description of London*, recalls a football game during the annual Shrove Tuesday celebration that brought all the classes together:

> After lunch all the youth of the city go out into the fields to take part in a ball game. The students of each school have their own ball; the workers from each city craft are also carrying their balls. Older citizens, fathers, and wealthy citizens come on horseback to watch their juniors competing, and to relive their own youth vicariously: you can see their inner passions aroused as they watch the action and get caught up in the fun being had by the carefree adolescents (Riley, 1).

Therefore, despite the governments' ability to prevent most members of the noble class from playing football, they could not stop the nobility from participating in unruly sport culture as spectators. Indeed football, like all activities in sport culture, has the ability to bring together all different types of classes, races, genders and ages to share in a momentary myth of blissful escape and magnanimous triumph over the stresses of the economic, social and political

structures that unapologetically inundate the people on a daily basis. Sports culture, especially the game of football, lawful or not, has the power to turn even the most civilized English gentleman into an unruly fan even if it is only fleeting.

Policy and enforcement of laws regarding lawful and unlawful sports were at a disconnect during the reign of Elizabeth and throughout much of the Renaissance period. In fact, Semenza explains that part of the problem surrounding sports and politics was that "Elizabethan laws regarding sports and pastimes were extremely ambiguous. Despite the queen's official denunciation of the Marian revival of the old pastimes, the reality is that 'the early and mid-1560s were a notable time for old-fashioned merry-making" (55). The carnival atmosphere loomed large despite the laws implemented against such behavior, and it is this kind of ambiguity from the state that led to the ultimate weakening of social and class distinctions that were so rigorously upheld between the noble and plebeian classes.

Indeed economic, social, and political traditions begin to be challenged as Elizabethan England moves toward a more pre-capitalist market system. This move toward capitalism results in a new and influential middle class, consisting of merchants, professionals and the gentry. The new emerging social dynamic affects the sports culture as well: Semenza points out that while English society at this time is undergoing some major changes the role of sport culture inevitably must change as well.

> As we have seen, traditional defenses of sport sought deliberately to maintain social distinctions, but they were seriously challenged in the later sixteenth century. Part of the problem was that social hierarchies were themselves undergoing major changes. The constantly increasing size of the gentry, merchant, and

> professional classes testified to a greater social mobility than England had seen in the past. General differences between the lifestyles of aristocrats and nonlanded elites could no longer be clearly determined. As a result, nobles were increasingly warned to stay away from activities that might threaten their social status and reputation (43).

Now more than ever as class hierarchies begin to converge the government seeks to preserve the English state by way of isolating the English nobility from the rest of society. Yet, as the lives of the two worlds become similar, this strategy does not last long. Consequently, football, a game rooted in the lives of the plebeian and middle class people, has the capacity to influence the English gentleman in so far as to captivate and satisfy his desire for the unruliness of carnival.

It was mentioned earlier that sport, such as blood sports and other unlawful games, began to appear in the writings of Shakespeare, especially within the plots of his history plays. It is important to note that Shakespeare derives the term sport to mean "everything from diversion (Venus's 'A summer day will seem an hour but short, / Being wasted in such time-beguiling sport' [24]) to amorous dalliance…to outdoor games like the hawking episode in Henry VI" (Semenza, 74). Indeed, his definition reflects the cultural climate of English society at the time as the majority of Englishmen tended to reference sport in much the same way. Yet, Shakespeare's concern with sport dealt more with a new emerging politic that had sport and war becoming interchangeable: realpolitik.

The Renaissance sees the emergence of a school of thought that perceives sport as the new "war or battle" between countries, classes, and even individuals. Realpolitik becomes

the dominant political practice and is what catapults and separates theater from football with respect to political influence. There is a shift from a collective concern for the state to a more individually focused competition for power. As a result, "Personal ambition replaces such principles and becomes the chief signifier of the historical shift from an idealistic political system based on the chivalric code to a more cynical one governed by the demands of realpolitik" (Semenza, 63). Sports, like football, become the vehicle through which to promote this new world order.

Realpolitik essentially stifles the societal function of carnival and its inherent connection to Renaissance sports culture. Yet, there is one character that Shakespeare creates that seems to understand the importance of carnival and its relation to sports culture of the past, present, and future: Prince Hal in *Henry IV Part I.* The following is an analysis of how Hal is presented as a liminal hero and an example of a potential modern leader with his ability to use sport to unify the masses while still honoring the will of the state.

Prince Hal: A Modern Day Politician

Shakespeare manages to suspend the world of theater and the world of the state in *Henry IV Part I*. In fact, Shakespeare's separation of the two conflicting realms of being, the state and the stage of sports culture, are what cause his main hero, Prince Hal, to undergo a crisis of identity and acceptance. It is important to recall that theater is defined as a space in which carnival-like behavior is condoned and celebrated as it serves as an outlet for social release. Thus, although there are days of carnival and parading within Elizabethan England, these days are fewer and farther between one another; whereas sport, such as theater, allows

for the carnivalesque-taking place regularly without disrupting all the outside operations of the state.

Although Hal can comfortably exist within the carnival world of theater and his beloved chum, Falstaff, he does not fully adhere to the constraints of that world. At the same time, the audience witnesses Hal's triumph over Hotspur in the world of the state, but still he remains unwilling to conform entirely to the principles which govern the stately world as well. As a result, Prince Hal is left suspended between two principles of existence. It could be that Shakespeare is suggesting that Prince Hal be looked at as an alternative ruler for the present state of England. Hal belongs to nothing at the end of *Henry IV Part I.* Instead he is able to move freely from one realm of existence to another. Thus, Shakespeare could be suggesting that the best way for the state to control her people is by becoming her people. In a sense, Shakespeare uses Hal to show a pre-democratic vision of the world.

In *Henry IV Part I*, Shakespeare presents his character Hal as a liminal hero, and thus, the best alternative ruler for the future of England due to his ability to move freely across the boundaries of the state and the theater. In his discussion about the social function of festivity Bristol defines a liminal existence as:

> the experience of liminality, [as] the transitional state 'betwixt and between' the roles, functions and predetermined identities provided for in the social structure . . .The experience of liminality is a resource that facilitates alteration in one's social situation. The liminary participant leaves the social structure and at the same time enters…a state that enhances sociability and provides support for 'becoming different' (37, Bristol).

The following discussion will apply Bristol's definition of liminality to the character of Hal, and, through analysis, will show Hal as a suspended servant to both the theater world (a world of controlled carnival) and the world of the state.

Hal is one of the only heirs in Shakespeare's history plays that show knowledge of how to approach these dueling realms of existence so that they may coexist to form a symbiotic relationship. As a result of his association with Falstaff and his symbolic world of carnival, in *The First Part of Henry the Fourth,* Hal is shaped by the "every-man" (Bristol) into a versatile ruler able to bridge social divides. Yet, at the same time, Hal is not an "every-man," for he is subject to the demands of his father's crown as well. Therefore Hal exists in a liminal world, in the in between; Hal is the boy king who does not have a permanent role within the symbolic world of carnival, nor does his character fit nicely into the world of the state. As a result, he is able to become a self-generating "class chameleon." For he is able to move from one realm to another, and use his knowledge of both the world of the stage and the world of the state to cross classes and cultures within his kingdom.

In the beginning of *Henry IV Part I* Hal exists in Falstaff's world. His world is the world of the "every man." It is a world of tavern dwellers, equivalent to the modern-day truck stop populous. In this world, as Prince Hal observes, "there's no room for faith, truth, nor honesty in this bosom of thine…thou whoreson, impudent, embossed rascal, if there were anything in thy pocket but tavern reckonings, memorandums of bawdy houses, and one poor pennyworth of sugar candy to make thee long-winded, if thy pocket were enriched with any other injuries but these, I am a villain. And yet you will stand to it, you will not pocket up wrong! Art thou not ashamed?" (lines 123-129; Act III Scene III).

In this passage one can acknowledge the pride Falstaff takes in being, in a sense, the "king of carnival and misrule." Indeed, Falstaff is not ashamed of his role in society as being a glutton, a sloth and, as he will admit later, a counterfeit. In fact, he wholeheartedly defends the nature of carnival by proclaiming: "If sack and sugar be a fault, God help the wicked! If to be old and merry be a sin, then many an old host that I know is damned. If to be fat be to be hated, then Pharaoh's lean kine are to be loved. No, my Falstaff, kind Jack Falstaff, true Jack Falstaff, valiant Jack Falstaff, and therefore more valiant being as he is old Jack Falstaff, banish not him thy Jack, and banish all the world" (lines 375-382; Act II, Scene IV). Although, such defiance to the state of order is what Hal inevitably loves about Falstaff, there is no doubt that overall Hal does not feel he has a secure identity within the carnival culture. Evidence of his doubt can be drawn from his questions to Falstaff regarding the shame he must feel for behaving so badly. Thus, one can see that although Hal can, and successfully does, live within the plebeian culture, there remains something very regal about his character. Indeed, his moral questioning of Falstaff suggests that he possesses stateliness about him.

Indeed, as the heir to the throne, Prince Hal has no choice but to inhabit the world of the state. However, he acknowledges that his only connection, initially, to the state is his physical presence when he declares of himself, "I am not yet of Percy's mind" (line 85; Act II Scene IV). He is distinctly proclaiming that he is not part of the state mentally. Thus, suggesting that his inability to think like other members of the state sets him apart, leaving him in an isolated state of affairs. Again, Hal is unable to feel secure in a world defined by order and obedience. Yet, Hal's state of liminality is what makes him a prime candidate to keep England alive in the future. Hal possesses the ability to relate and sympathize with the plebeian popular culture, while still maintaining a sense of state authority. In a sense, he is

the most brilliant politician to date due to his ability to comprehend and appreciate the necessity of the plebeian carnival culture. Yet, he is still capable of enforcing civil obedience and state authority throughout the land.

In fact, Hal acknowledges the importance of his alliance with the inhabitants of Carnival and wins their support when he declares: "Sirrah, I am sworn brother to a leash of drawers, and can call them all by their Christian names, as Tom, Dick, and Francis. They take it already upon their salvation that, though I be but Prince of Wales, yet I am the king of courtesy, and tell me flatly I am no proud Jack like Falstaff, but a Corinthian, a lad of mettle, a good boy---by the Lord, so they call me!---and when I am King of England I shall command all the good lads in Eastcheap" (lines 5-12; Act II Scene IV). Thus, through the language of Prince Hal, Shakespeare manages to create an identity for Hal outside the constraints of societal norms by aligning himself in both the plebeian world and the world of the state without committing to one realm of existence.

There are immense advantages to being in a liminal position within society. The most important has to do with the fact that the people, or the characters of the opposing realms, manage to survive when principles do not collide but remain suspended. Indeed, Shapiro confirms this assertion stating "two worlds must be kept apart in order to avoid a 'combustible mixture' (165, Shapiro). Certainly, Prince Hal is the only Shakespearean character that comprehends the necessity of keeping the theater and the state from destructively colliding into one another. In fact, his knowledge of the importance of the liminal ground is evident in his most famous and only soliloquy through *Henry IV Part I*:

> Yet herein will I imitate the sun --

Who doth permit the base contagious clouds --

To smother up his beauty from the world --

That when he please again to be himself --

Being wanted he may be more wondered at --

By breaking through the foul and ugly mists --

Of vapors that did seem to strangle him --

If all the year were playing holidays --

To sport would be as tedious as to work --

But when they seldom come, they wished-for come --

And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents --

So when this loose behavior I throw of --

And pay the debt I never promised…My reformation, glittering

o'er my fault --

Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes --

Than that which hath no foil to set it off. --

I'll so offend to make offense a skill, --

Redeeming time when men think least I will --

(lines 150-170; Act I, Scene III).

In his soliloquy, Hal is preparing to take on the responsibilities of the state as he assumes the role of heir to the English throne. Yet, what is most interesting about his rhetoric

is its sneaky dualism. When he begins by saying "herein I will imitate the sun" not only is he exclaiming to his father that he is ready to be the son of the state that his father has always wanted, but at the same time he is admitting that he has another side to him that delights in the devious and shifty world of Falstaff. Indeed, he explains that, like the sun, he shall use the clouds "to smother up his beauty from the world" and thus cover up the part of him that delights in the misdeeds of misrule. However, when he feels it is necessary for his needs or the needs of others he does acknowledge that he shall "please again to be himself…by breaking through the foul and ugly mists of vapors that did seem to strangle him." Indeed, we see the sun associated with the youthful Hal that seeks pleasure and entertainment from carnival and sport, and the clouds are the standards imposed upon him by the state, which he nobly agrees to accept and wear.

Thus, midway through his soliloquy we witness a shift from the world of carnival and sport to the world of the state as Hal begins to justify the rules of the state with respect to sport. He says "If all the year were playing holidays/ To sport would be as tedious as to work," and thus asserts that there is a time and a place for holiday atmosphere and merry-making and it shall be limited in its occurrence. Indeed as he takes on the role of the state his rhetoric rejects the good-natured world of sport, although half-heartedly, but nonetheless Hal proclaims that his "reformation [glitters] o'er [his] fault," and so he is now ready to be the leader of the state. What is most intriguing about this statement is that he readily proclaims his youthful participation in sport as a fault, yet ends his speech with the promise or hope of this spirited side of him returning again when he states "I'll so offend to make offense a skill/Redeeming time when men think least I will." Thus, Hal leaves his audience unsure which Hal is the real Hal.

The dualism within his soliloquy is an absolutely brilliant political move. Hal manages to speak to two different audiences without either constituency realizing. Therefore, the peasantry understands his rhetoric and message to mean that he must hide his true self, the "every man" of the fun-loving and common plebeian class from the rulers of the state since they are handing him the power of the throne. On the other hand, Hal is delivering to the ruling class and his father, the King, words that they desperately want to hear: that he is done with sport and "loose behavior." In reality what Hal has done is spun two separate messages to satisfy both worlds so that he may utilize sports culture and the state as he wishes, when he wishes, while still keeping the two worlds suspended from each other without risk of the two colliding.

His suspended state allows for the two worlds to exist in a successful relationship that leads to a thriving and functionally efficient society. Indeed, Hal is the liminal hero, and thus the only leader who understands "what it means to live in the bewildering space between familiar past and murky future" (279, Shapiro). This is a state of ambiguity that Elizabethan London will suffer through, for years to come, due to Elizabeth and her Privy Council's unwillingness to experience the evolving culture located on the "wrong side of the Thames."

The political tensions that would ensue between the state and sports like football and the theater for the rest of Elizabeth's reign would serve to foreshadow the direction that London was headed towards as she embarked on a future in the market economy. Ultimately, the ambiguous past of inconsistent hierarchal enforcement would give way to the cyclical nature of a market system of government. One of Elizabethan government's largest flaws was in its belief that football and theater, as controlled forms of carnival, could cause serious threats to its regime. Indeed, it is widely held that "The participants in a festival are, in fact,

often unreflective and unanalytical about what they are doing, and much festive usage does retain an apparently archaic character" (27, Bristol).

Therefore, Elizabethan London's rigid adherence to the social hierarchy of her time, rather than the radical nature of football and the theaters, is what ultimately weakens her. The government's inability to understand the necessary symbiotic relationship between the state, football and the stage leaves the individual stranded and isolated from the collectively held societal beliefs, traditions, customs and moral standards. Consequently, Elizabethan London risks its livelihood on the principle that "society might be inherently divided, not in the sense that there are contending social classes, in the more confusing sense that it might consist of conflicting and even incommensurable experiences for the same group of individuals" (35, Bristol). Thus, one can conclude, using Hal as an example, that even a divided class system must maintain some remnant of unity or equality in order to maintain its supreme power and dominance over its people.

Perhaps what is most important about Hal's liminal role is his unique capability to understand the importance of sport culture to the structure and function of the state from both sides. For as Semenza points out,

> In sport, as in game, victory and victors are never predetermined. Each participant or group of participants is always capable of victory or defeat. At the same time, contestatory dynamics should not be articulated in terms of randomness. In the mind of the observer, at least, there is always certain predictability about sport, based on the size, speed and skill of the participants. The lack of insurance, however the possibility that the unpredictable might

> manifest itself at any time is a constant reminder that seemingly ordered structures are always unstable at best. In other words, the contestatory dynamic of sport serves as a microcosmic affirmation of the possibility for greater subversion on the sociopolitical level (Semenza, 44).

Shakespeare constructs a young Prince Hal to be unknowingly wise beyond his years. Some argue that it is just inexperience and naivety that allow his character to be presented as a symbol of hope for the future. However, Shakespeare adds depth and insight to his character that separates him from his foils in the play like Hotspur and his brother, John of Lancaster. Hal's ability to inhabit both the stately world and the carnival world of colorful sports culture allows him to understand that nothing is permanent. Power changes hands constantly; no team or play is on stage forever. It is his comprehension of the transient nature of power politics, and sports that allow him to lead England in a time of unpredictability into the unknown realms of possibility. These are the qualities that make Hal a modern leader who not only has the capacity to transcend boundaries during his own time, but also is also able to transcend the ultimate test of time and become an enduring figurehead of sports, politics and literature. He is a character every politician could learn from. Arguably some even have.

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