

John Nichols's The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth I: A New Edition of the Early Modern Sources. Elizabeth Goldring, Faith Eales, Elizabeth Clarke, and Jayne Elisabeth Archer, eds.
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In a dimly lit room, a young graduate student, several decades ago, bent forward, squinting into a microfilm reader. He was reading and taking notes from the three volumes of John Nichols's *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth* (1823). He resorted to this now-antiquated technology because the university's library did not own a copy of Nichols. Hundreds of pages of primary material, otherwise unavailable to this student in the days before EEBO, had to be read from Nichols. The student spent days and probably weeks in this arduous task, recognizing that such circumstances could scare one away from research and possibly scar one forever. I know all of this because I was that student. These early days of research on English civic pageantry, despite the pain, endeared me to the remarkable work done by John Nichols (1745–1826) in his two editions of the *Progresses* and the four volumes of the *Progresses of King James*. Despite a lot of wacky scholarship in the nineteenth century, some people, like Nichols, made profound contributions for which we remain indebted. And now we have a newly edited version of Nichols's work on Elizabeth.

Since my earliest days of research and thinking about progresses, I have been haunted by an image in the July 1602 Harefield Entertainment, Elizabeth's last estate entertainment. A dialogue occurs between Place and Time — Place dressed in a "*partie-colored roabe, lyke the bricke of the howse,*" and Time with yellow hair and a green robe, "*and an houre glasse not runninge, and his winges clipte*" (4:182). This unwittingly prescient image of Time with a nonfunctioning hourglass says more than anyone could have known about the imminent fate of the aged queen. How did the

general editors of this new edition — Elizabeth Goldring, Faith Eales, Elizabeth Clarke, and Jayne Elisabeth Archer — get to this poignant moment?

It took fifteen years and the outstanding work of fifty scholars to arrive at this point. (Nichols himself spent some fifty years leading to the completion of the second edition of *Elizabeth*, and he also had help.) One might first notice that all the general editors are female, underscoring how far the scholarly world has come since the nineteenth century of Nichols (might I also say, since most of the twentieth century?). This editorial undertaking grew out of the John Nichols Research Project, housed at the University of Warwick. The introduction spells out the history of this project, its editorial principles, the procedures followed by Nichols, and his cultural context. The editors describe their work: “The present edition is a new, old-spelling edition of the early modern texts and documents printed by John Nichols in the two editions [1788–1821; 1823]” (1:7). This means that the editors chose not merely to edit Nichols’s work, but the more challenging task of returning to the early texts that underlie his edition. Thus they have scoured the countryside for original texts, some to which Nichols did not have access. Of course, Nichols occasionally did not indicate where he might have gotten the text that he reproduced. The editorial team has reedited the texts, using well-established principles of textual editing, including, on occasion, collating multiple copies of early texts. This careful process results in Nichols revisited, plus reliable scholarly editing, copious commentary notes and glosses, and new material about which Nichols did not know. While we may want to hang on to the nineteenth-century Nichols volumes for many good reasons, this new edition clearly transcends what he was able to do.

The section in the introduction about John Nichols the man, his predilections, prejudices, and methods, I found most illuminating, filling in large gaps in my understanding of him and how he operated. Nichols admits, for example, that the idea for such a project did not originate with him but came from suggestions made by the Rev. Michael Tyson, Rev. Dr. Thomas Percy, and Rev. Samuel Henley. These men and others were active in the antiquarian movement — Henley, for example, being a member of the Society of Antiquaries. Also, Nichols “was a staunch Protestant and a royalist, who believed that he lived ‘in an age when religion and morality [were] . . . neglected’” (3). The editors thus try to re-create Nichols’s cultural context and how his world views affected his efforts. They might have added another insight, such as this comment in his preface: “A superstitious awe of Majesty produced unmanly adulation and servile attentions. The ill effects of such principles were displayed in a succeeding Reign, when the whole Kingdom was thrown into confusion. . . . Miserable was the state of those days” (1823, 1:vi). I am still trying to figure out exactly what “unmanly adulation” might be. But *unmanly* seems to be a recurring word in nineteenth-century scholarship, usually aimed at some opponent. Given Nichols’s view, one wonders why he invested so much time and effort in producing the volumes on King James.

The twenty-first-century editors had, in other words, to clear out a lot of underbrush, including what they rightly characterize as Nichols’s “haphazard” methodology. They comment: “one of the first tasks confronting those responsible for a new edition . . . is to

reexamine those motives and preconceptions, for, unless we do so, we will also continue to see the Elizabethan *Progresses* — and, perhaps, the Elizabethan progresses, also — through antiquarian eyes” (3). Thus the editors have supplemented the early modern texts “with editorial, contextual, and bibliographic notes and commentary” (8). At the same time, they have largely preserved Nichols’s chronological presentation, often including his “bridge narratives.”

Two vexing problems confront the editors: first, “Nichols does not always identify his sources . . . but when he does so, he is usually reliable”; second, “Nichols was not personally responsible for many — perhaps most — of the transcriptions printed in his Elizabethan *Progresses*” (21). Many difficulties arise therefore. And yet, “Given the very different routes through which Nichols acquired his transcriptions of early modern texts, it is remarkable that the second edition is as coherent and reader-friendly as its continuing use suggests” (21). This recognition means that the editors did not have to abandon Nichols or start from scratch, but rather repair, refurbish, and augment. The editors acknowledge that this astounding new edition will not be the last word on Elizabethan progresses or on court culture. Instead, they write, “our objective has been to produce an authoritative collection of source materials for early modernists to be used as a gateway and tool for further research” (25). This they have achieved with room to spare, banishing antiquarianism and embracing rigorous standards.

I choose examples from among scores that illustrate the accomplishment of this new Nichols. The royal entry pageant of Elizabeth through London on the day before her coronation, 14 January 1559, stands out as one of the major achievements of such public entertainment during her reign. Nichols gave it much attention in his edition, but he offered no commentary notes or translations of Latin verses; he also did not make clear what original text he followed. The 2014 edition confronts all of these issues, beginning with an introduction (1:112–14) by William Leahy, who edited this text. He clarifies the relationship between the two editions of the pageant that appeared in 1559, and he lays out an argument for *The Queenes Maiesties Passage* as being the earlier version; it therefore serves as the copy text. Although the *Queenes* text includes English translations of most of the Latin pageant verses and speeches, Leahy supplies translations where none exists; and he corrects the mistranslations in the text. Through skillful detective work, Leahy determines that Nichols followed the second edition of 1559, and he deduces that Nichols used the copy that now resides in the Huntington Library (1:113). Using archival records in the Corporation of London Library, Leahy sorts out the contributions of Richard Mulcaster, Richard Grafton, and others in the preparation of the pageant and the text. Leahy has scrupulously edited this pageant text and accompanied it with copious and helpful notes, supplanting Nichols’s edition. As we follow the queen along in her procession, we have the good company of a reliable text.

Gabriel Heaton, the editor of the progress into Essex, Suffolk, and Hertfordshire, July–September 1561, claims that this progress “was easily the most ambitious of the reign so far” (1:185). What we know of the extensive journey we learn from archival records; no text exists of dramatic performance. Therefore, Heaton bases his

reconstruction of the journey wholly from a set of accounts of daily expenses of the Royal household, found in a British Library manuscript. Nichols had offered extensive comments about this progress, but he provided no explanation of sources. The accounts are in Latin, which Heaton translates in footnotes. A wonderful map appears that immediately conveys a visual image of the extent of this progress (185). Indeed, all the progresses in this multivolume edition include maps — another achievement.

Heaton also fills in considerable gaps in Nichols's account of Elizabeth's visit to Coventry and Kenilworth, 17–22 August 1566 (1:450). In fact, Nichols does not include this Kenilworth visit at all. Heaton takes his information for Coventry from a manuscript belonging to the Viscount De L'Isle, first made known in 1985. This manuscript provides, according to Heaton, the most reliable contemporary account of the long opening speech by Coventry's recorder John Throckmorton, offered in Coventry's streets where large crowds of citizens and city officials had gathered to welcome the queen. Throckmorton waxes expansively, saying, for example: "O Happie quene therfore sent vs from god as an excellent and Devine Jewell, O fortunate people allowed by god to receaue so rare a benefite" (457). The city provided several pageant devices scattered in its streets. Small wonder that Elizabeth enjoyed herself.

That pleasure certainly carries over into the entertainments that occupy volume 2. Indeed, if I could possess only one volume of this new edition, it might be this one. Primarily because of chronology and the arrangements of texts, volume 2 contains Kenilworth (1575), Woodstock (1575), Wanstead (1578), and Suffolk and Norfolk (1578). One could not find a more concentrated time period with such rich entertainments in the Elizabethan era. Kenilworth, location of the castle belonging to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, emerges in all discussions of such pageantry. As Elizabeth Goldring, the editor of this text, writes: the festivities "were of a size, scale, and splendour never before — and never again — attempted in the course of Elizabethan progresses" (2:231). Who could not be struck by the events upon the queen's arrival on Saturday, 9 July, when the Lady of the Lake came floating upon a movable island, "bright blazing with torches" (245), and spoke to Elizabeth; or the gifts from seven gods left for her on the bridge that led into the castle grounds; or the appearance of Arion on Tuesday on the back of a dolphin, which contained within it a consort of musicians? These moments account for but a fraction of the entertainments that lasted from 9 to 27 July.

Goldring carefully lays out the textual problems of the two sources for this pageant: Robert Langham's *Letter* and *The Princely Pleasures*. The editor makes a strong case for Langham's authorship, persuasively setting aside other claimants; and she argues that his text "is perhaps the single most important text for the study of Elizabethan court culture" (236). More copies survive of this text than for any other progress pageant. George Gascoigne's name did not get associated with *Princely Pleasures* until 1587, "when it appeared in Abel Jeffes's posthumous edition of the poet's *Whole workes*" (287), having been earlier printed by Richard Jones in an anonymous copy in 1576.

Volume 3 contains the investiture of King Frederick II of Denmark into the Order of the Garter (1582), not in Nichols, and the pageant text of George Peele's Lord Mayor's

show (1585). The editors also include all thirty engravings of the funeral procession of Sir Philip Sidney (1586), not reproduced in Nichols, and the baptism of Prince Henry in Stirling, Scotland, in 1594, at which Queen Elizabeth served (in absentia) as a godparent. The pageant at Elvetham (20–23 September 1591) stands as the most elaborate and most important entertainment of the late Elizabethan period. The editor, H. Neville Davies, provides an intricate discussion of the two quarto editions of this pageant, offered on the estate of the Earl of Hertford (3:563–69). The existence of quarto 2 of *The Honorable Entertainment* became known only in 2008; it resides in the Royal Collection and serves as the copy text. The authorship remains a vexed and unresolved issue. Not so the exquisite delight produced by the battle between the wood gods and sea gods, watched by Elizabeth, seated under a green satin canopy on the edge of the specially created pond. The queen voiced her approval and appreciation for all the activities that filled these summer days in Hampshire.

The Essex rebellion of 1601 receives attention in volume 4, but the editor does not comment on the performance of a *Richard II* play before the event. Nor do the editors include any mention of the visit of Ludovic Stuart, Duke of Lennox, James's kinsman and confidant, in November 1601. Lennox stayed for three weeks and had several visits with Elizabeth, who wrote a glowing letter to James about him. The duke also met with Robert Cecil, which surely served as part of the preparation for the eventual succession of James. I point out this matter only because so many letters and other documents do appear in the new Nichols, documenting numerous political events. The editors have curiously omitted the account that occurs in Nichols (3:526–28) of the baptism of Prince Charles, 2 December 1600. These relatively minor issues pale by comparison to the nearly 600 pages in this volume given to an account of the sickness, death, funeral, and reactions to Queen Elizabeth's death.

Just when we think that we might not be capable of absorbing any more information, along comes volume 5, which has twenty-six appendixes, including a catalogue of the Nichols family's annotated copy of *The Progresses*. Add to this a most useful biographical dictionary and a "List of Principal Office Holders and Prelates." The bibliography runs 126 pages, sixty-two of which list primary pre-1700 materials — a scholar's dream. A general index (121 pages) closes this volume, which alone might be worth the price of admission to this astounding scholarly accomplishment. No cultural, historical, social, or economic investigator of Elizabeth's reign can proceed without the new Nichols. We owe an incalculable debt to the many scholars involved in this project and to the beneficence of Oxford University Press.

As we gratefully close these volumes, we might recall the farewell words of Place (Harefield, 1602). Place, now dressed in a "mourning habitt," says: "I am this *Place*, that at your comeinge was soe full of ioye, and nowe at your departure am as full of sorrowe. . . . O that I coulde remooue with you as other circumstances can" (4:193). The new Nichols enables us to travel with Elizabeth, and it mitigates any sorrow.

DAVID M. BERGERON, *University of Kansas*