

*'True' Histories**Thomas Creede's Looking Glasses and the Print  
Identity of Queen Elizabeth's Men*

The first stationer to invest significantly in history plays from the commercial stages was printer-publisher Thomas Creede, whose strategies of selection and presentation for dramatic and non-dramatic texts reveal an interest in the past as a mirror or looking glass for the present. Prior to Creede, the only stationer to invest in more than one commercial history play was Richard Jones with Marlowe's 1 and 2 *Tamburlaine* (1590) and Wilson's *Three Lords and Three Ladies of London* (1590), the latter allegorizing the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. While Creede mostly worked as a trade printer for other stationers (printing Sidney's *Defence of Poesy* (1595) for William Ponsonby, for example), he also acted as a publisher, especially during the last decade of the sixteenth century. David Gants estimates that about two-thirds of Creede's output between 1593 and 1600 was self-published.<sup>1</sup> History plays were one of Creede's key investments during this period. In a short space of time between March and July 1594, Creede entered *A Looking Glass for London and England*, *The True Tragedy of Richard III*, *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, *Lochrine*, and *The Scottish History of James IV* in the Stationers' Register, establishing his rights to plays that dramatize biblical, English, Scottish, and legendary British history.<sup>2</sup> In 1594, he published *A Looking Glass*, *The True Tragedy*, and *Selimus* (a Turkish history, which has no Stationers' Register entry), followed by *Lochrine* in 1595, *The Famous Victories of Henry V* and *James IV* in 1598, and *Alphonsus, King of Aragon* (a pseudo-historical play) and *Clyomon and Clamydes* (an 'un-history', as Lisa Hopkins describes, that evokes a chivalric past) in 1599, both without entries in the Register.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> David L. Gants, 'Creede, Thomas (b. in or before 1554, d. 1616)', *ODNB*, online ed., September 2004, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/6666> (accessed 16 September 2019), para. 2.

<sup>2</sup> During this time, Creede also entered *The Pedlar's Prophecy* and William Warner's translation of *Menaechmi*.

<sup>3</sup> Lisa Hopkins, 'The Danish Romance Play: *Fair Em*, *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes*, and *Hoffman*', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, Special Issue 27 (2017), 1–17 (p. 2).

All of these playbooks have been connected at some point in their critical history to Queen Elizabeth's Men, which raises the possibility that Creede had a working relationship with the company and that he was interested in the kinds of histories that the Queen's Men had to offer. *The True Tragedy of Richard III*, *Selimus*, *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, and *Clyomon and Clamydes* are considered firmly a part of the company's repertory on the basis of external evidence, style, and Creede's title-page advertisements – all of these texts were 'playd by the Queenes Maiesties Players'.<sup>4</sup> *Locrine*, *James IV*, and *Alphonsus* have also been linked to the company, although the evidence is indeterminate. There are parallels in dramatic style and a link to Robert Greene (both *James IV* and *Alphonsus* carry attributions to Greene), but none of the playbooks contain company attributions and there is no conclusive evidence to support a connection.<sup>5</sup> Creede's investment in plays securely attached to the Queen's Men and his 1594 Stationers' Register entries have led some critics to propose that his other published playbooks must also have been part of the same repertory: G. M. Pinciss, for example, observes that 'no acted play entered or printed by Creede before 1600 is claimed on its title page for any company other than the Queen's', and, on the basis of Creede's involvement, he assigns many more plays to the company, including *A Looking Glass*, *James IV*, *Locrine*, *The Pedlar's Prophecy*, and *Alphonsus*.<sup>6</sup> While some of Pinciss's attributions may be correct, there are problems with this kind of reasoning: it does not necessarily follow that Creede's investment secures a company attribution, and the limitations of extant evidence make it unlikely that a firm conclusion will be reached. However, by looking at Creede as one of the first professional readers of history plays, this chapter offers an alternative perspective on the repertory of the Queen's Men. It uses the presentation of Creede's playbooks as evidence for how Creede read and marketed the plays, which establishes the coherence of his published output. One of the reasons why it is so tempting to attribute plays such as *Locrine* to the repertory of the Queen's Men is because of the consistency of Creede's wider investment patterns and paratextual practices.

<sup>4</sup> *The True Tragedie of Richard the third* (London, 1594; STC 21009), A2r. For evidence of the company's repertory, see Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and Their Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 84–96.

<sup>5</sup> *James IV* is attributed to 'Robert Greene, Maister of Arts', whereas *Alphonsus* claims the play was 'Made by R. G.'

<sup>6</sup> G. M. Pinciss, 'Thomas Creede and the Repertory of the Queen's Men, 1583–1592', *Modern Philology*, 67:4 (1970), 321–30 (p. 322).

For Creede, the purpose of 'history' (broadly conceived) was to provide exemplary and counter-exemplary models for readers which could be used to further England's and Elizabeth I's interests. His history plays tend to promote patriotic sympathies through their selection and presentation as playbooks. They enlist different histories – from medieval English monarchical history in *The True Tragedy of Richard III* to Turkish history in *Selimus* – which are then framed through their paratexts to reflect positively on England's political present and future, in terms of both domestic stability and foreign conquest. This chapter argues that Creede's practices have shaped our understanding of the Queen's Men as a company that specialized in history plays. It first considers the critical reputation of the company, and then examines Creede's involvement as the main publisher of their plays. As outlined in the Introduction, early playbooks from the commercial stages infrequently contain the discursive paratexts that feature in other books. By profiling Creede's wider published output, his interest in 'histories' that provide looking glasses for Elizabethan England is revealed. His non-dramatic publications also highlight a tension between royalist sympathies and the promotion of a chivalric aristocratic elite that qualifies the histories' use as propagandistic or promotional materials for Elizabeth I. These overlooked texts can be used to examine the 'position-takings' of Creede's title-page paratexts in playbooks from the Queen's Men, which on the one hand seem to announce their connection to Elizabeth, but, when considered alongside his other publications, redirect this emphasis towards an aristocratic coterie – potentially those who could offer a sophisticated readership for the playbooks.<sup>7</sup> Looking beyond Creede's output, this chapter proposes that the history play occupied a pivotal position in the development of a market for commercial playbooks during the early 1590s and shows how these publications experimented with some – but not all – of the presentation strategies seen in pre-playhouse and non-commercial playbooks.

### **The Royal Histories of the Queen's Men**

Recent studies of Queen Elizabeth's Men have tended to suggest that history plays – especially those that seem to promote a Protestant agenda and underline the authority of their patron Elizabeth I – were a prominent part of the company's repertory. In *The Queen's Men and Their Plays*, Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean claim that the 'most important kind of

<sup>7</sup> Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, p. 30.

play performed by the Queen's Men was the English history play', which the company established 'in the popular theatre before other companies took it up'.<sup>8</sup> This assessment concentrates on the company's extant repertory, which McMillin and MacLean limit to the nine plays that can be firmly linked to the company: *The Three Lords and Three Ladies of London* (which allegorizes English history), *The Troublesome Reign of King John* (English history), *Selimus* (Turkish history), *The True Tragedy of Richard III* (English history), *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (English history), *The Old Wives' Tale*, *The Famous Victories of Henry V* (English history), *King Leir* (early British history), and *Clyomon and Clamydes* (which stages a fictional Danish past, nominally set during the reign of Alexander the Great).<sup>9</sup> Basing their analysis on the plays' style and subject matter, McMillin and MacLean argue that a significant proportion of the company's repertory dramatized English history and that, through the plays' combination of 'anti-Catholicism with a specifically Protestant style, "truth" and "plainness" intertwined', the repertory broadly supports a Protestant and royalist ideology.<sup>10</sup> Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, and Sir Francis Walsingham were both involved in the formation of the company, and McMillin and MacLean adopt Conyers Read's description of them as key figures within 'an aggressively Protestant party' in the Privy Council.<sup>11</sup> In 1583, Walsingham instructed Edmund Tilney, Master of the Revels, to appoint the Queen's Men, an unusual development as the Revels office normally operated under the authority of the Lord Chamberlain.<sup>12</sup> The majority of the new 'all-star' troupe of actors was then provided by Leicester's Men. Because of these events, the company's court connections, and its touring networks, McMillin and MacLean propose that 'the Queen's Men were formed to spread Protestant and royalist propaganda through a divided realm and to close a breach within

<sup>8</sup> McMillin and MacLean, *Queen's Men*, pp. 33, 36.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 88–89. Andrew Gurr offers a similar list of plays that can be firmly linked to the repertory of the Queen's Men: see Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) pp. 210–11. As Martin Wiggins proposes, *Clyomon and Clamydes* may have been written during the 1570s, before the formation of the Queen's Men, but later inherited by the company; see Wiggins, II, p. 189 (No. 634).

<sup>10</sup> McMillin and MacLean, *Queen's Men*, p. 36.

<sup>11</sup> Conyers Read, 'Walsingham and Burghley in Queen Elizabeth's Privy Council', *English Historical Review*, 28:109 (1913), 34–58 (p. 41).

<sup>12</sup> Edmund Howes's additions to John Stow's *Annals* record that 'at the request of Sir Francis Walsingham, they [i.e. the company] were sworne the Queenes seruants, and were allowed wages, and liueries, as groomes of the chamber'. John Stow, *The Annales, or Generall Chronicle of England* (London, 1615; STC 23338), Mmm6r (p. 697).

radical Protestantism'.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, while Andrew Gurr's short account of the company tends to focus on the players and touring, he surmises from the extant repertory that 'moral and political conformism, even patriotism, shines out'.<sup>14</sup>

Other critics have questioned these assessments. Responding to McMillin and MacLean's study, Brian Walsh argues that 'the repertory of the Queen's Men can hardly be reduced to a coherent political or even theological agenda', and offers an important reminder that clear-cut ideological interpretations of the plays do not sufficiently attend to the performance context, which can encourage a range of perspectives.<sup>15</sup> Walsh suggests that political and religious complexities within the plays are activated by playing practices, such as doubling, and the performance settings, which limit the plays' ability to act as royalist propaganda. In her work on theatre companies and commerce, Roslyn Knutson challenges the assumption that companies, such as the Queen's Men, were pawns of their aristocratic or royal patrons and produced plays to support patrons' political and religious sympathies. Instead, Knutson demonstrates that playing companies operated as largely autonomous commercial ventures, staging plays on the basis of theatrical demand and audience taste, and argues that there is limited evidence to support the ongoing role of a meddling patron in the development of a company's repertory.<sup>16</sup> The assumption of a stable political identity for the Queen's Men is also suspect in the major edited collection on the company, *Locating the Queen's Men, 1583–1603* (2009), and most chapters prioritize a consideration of playing practices, performance conditions, and style over an assessment of the plays' ideology.<sup>17</sup> These have been profitable approaches; but studies thus far have not explored the possibility that the apparent unity of the company's extant texts, specifically their interest in history, could be a print phenomenon. Rather than assume that these patterns reflect performance repertories or are witness to the original political agenda of Leicester and Walsingham, this chapter draws attention to the interests of the plays'

<sup>13</sup> McMillin and MacLean, *Queen's Men*, p. 166.

<sup>14</sup> Gurr, *Shakespearean Playing Companies*, p. 211.

<sup>15</sup> Brian Walsh, *Shakespeare, the Queen's Men and the Elizabethan Performance of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 31.

<sup>16</sup> Roslyn L. Knutson, *Playing Companies and Commerce in Shakespeare's Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). See also Knutson, 'What's So Special about 1594?', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 61:4 (2010), 449–67 (p. 450).

<sup>17</sup> Helen Ostovich, Holger Schott Syme, and Andrew Griffin (eds.), *Locating the Queen's Men, 1583–1603: Material Practices and Conditions of Playing* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

publishers and the influence of the printing process on the identity of the Queen's Men.

The printing process, for example, fixes some of the fluid and detachable features of the performed plays, such as their closing addresses or prayers to Elizabeth I, which tend to promote royalist sympathies. In the early Tudor period, it was common, as critics including Michael Hattaway and Tiffany Stern have explored, for plays to end with an epilogue prayer for the queen or sometimes for the Privy Council.<sup>18</sup> This practice was later adopted, on occasion, by the commercial theatres, and the appearance of these prayers in printed playbooks has been taken to indicate a court performance. Stern, however, offers a reappraisal of this view. The context of a concluding prayer sometimes indicates that the play was performed at court and that the epilogue was only relevant for that occasion, such as when the monarch is required to receive a gift from the actors. But, in other cases, it is possible that the concluding prayer was a regular feature of the play in performance and did not require the monarch's presence. As Stern outlines, the epilogue prayer could advertise the company's patron, bolster the authority of the play and players, and promote their repertory.<sup>19</sup>

A significant proportion of the plays from the Queen's Men contain a concluding prayer for Elizabeth – and, interestingly, most of these are part of plays that dramatize some kind of historical past, which seems to connect the queen with the use and staging of history. *The Three Lords and Three Ladies of London*, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, and *The True Tragedy of Richard III* all contain an address to Elizabeth I, and the context of each suggests that they were a regular feature in performance and were not designed for a specific occasion. The presentation of these addresses in the printed playbooks is also distinctive. The 'reusable' prayers that Stern discusses in plays such as *2 Henry IV* or *The Disobedient Child* (c. 1570) are usually marked out as separate from the play by a heading or a stage direction that divides the play's action from the closing address. However, none of the plays from the Queen's Men contain a detachable epilogue. All of the prayers to Elizabeth are presented as part of the play itself.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Hattaway, 'Dating *As You Like It*, Epilogues and Prayers, and the Problems of "As the Dial Hand Tells O'er"', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 60:2 (2009), 154–67; Tiffany Stern, 'Epilogues, Prayers after Plays, and Shakespeare's *2 Henry IV*', *Theatre Notebook*, 64:3 (2010), 122–29.

<sup>19</sup> Stern, 'Epilogues', p. 124. For patterns of prologue and epilogue inclusion in playbooks, see Sonia Massai and Heidi Craig, 'Rethinking Prologues and Epilogues on Page and Stage', in *Rethinking Theatrical Documents in Shakespeare's England*, ed. Tiffany Stern (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2020), pp. 91–110.

In the final scene of the anonymous *True Tragedy of Richard III*, for example, 'Eliza' (Elizabeth of York, consort of Henry VII), the 'Queene' (Elizabeth Woodville, consort of Edward IV), and a messenger address the audience directly and celebrate the 'ioyning of these Houses both in one' (11v). They praise the Tudor line, giving laudatory accounts of Henry VII, Henry VIII, and Edward VI, who 'did restore the Gospell to his light', while rather tersely acknowledging the Catholic reign of 'a Mary' (meaning Mary I) and her marriage to 'Philip King of Spaine', who sent the Armada against England in 1588 (11v–12r). The play closes with the Queene offering a lengthy verse prayer for Elizabeth I, who is described as the 'lampe that keeps faire Englands light'. The prayer focuses on Elizabeth's position as a Protestant leader: it is through her faith that 'her country liues in peace', has 'put proud Antichrist to flight, | And bene the meanes that ciuill wars did cease' (12r). The closing address extols the political stability brought by Elizabeth, even claiming that the Turk – the early modern period's religio-political scapegoat – 'admires to heare her gouernment . . . and hath sworne neuer to lift his hand, | To wrong the Princesse of this blessed land' (12r). The fact that the play's address to the audience and prayer for Elizabeth are not separated – by heading or layout – from the rest of the text establishes their fixed position as the play's conclusion, while also reinforcing a teleological historical narrative that views the inauguration of the Tudor line as part of a divinely sanctioned process.

Similarly, the conclusion of Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* offers a prognostication of Elizabeth's reign from the repentant Friar Bacon, who links Elizabeth with a legendary Trojan lineage:

That here where Brute did build his Troynouant,  
From forth the royall garden of a King,  
Shall flowrish out, so rich and faire a bud,  
Whose brightnesse shall deface proude Phoebus flowre  
And ouer-shadow Albion with her leaues.  
Till then, Mars shall be maister of the field,  
But then the stormie threats of wars shall cease.<sup>20</sup>

For a comic play that is less reliant on chronicle sources than *The True Tragedy of Richard III* or *King Leir*, this allusion to legendary British history as a way of prefiguring the reign of Elizabeth is particularly striking and encourages a providential reading of history similar to *The True Tragedy's*. In *Friar Bacon*, this sudden foreshadowing of Elizabeth's reign is

<sup>20</sup> Robert Greene, *The Honorable Historie of frier Bacon, and frier Bongay* (London, 1594; STC 12267), 11v–12r.

assimilated within the main text and is followed by a concluding address from Henry III, which returns the audience to the events of the play. Walsh has described the play's praise of Elizabeth as a pessimistic elegy for the Tudor line (which was clearly drawing to a close), but its ebullient account of Elizabeth is fixed as a permanent part of the printed history.<sup>21</sup> As a material text, the playbook participates in the writing and circulation of history and offers an explicit reference – a printed monument – to a glorified role taken on by Elizabeth.

The inclusion of these concluding addresses or prayers to Elizabeth as a semi-regular feature of plays from the Queen's Men in performance – contained within the plot of the play, rather than as potentially detachable epilogues – emphasizes the company's connection to the queen and, implicitly, to her policies. The presentation of the playbooks, where the concluding addresses are not marked off as separate from the main play, adds to their propagandistic potential for readers by making these sections clear points of conclusion, rather than suggesting they could be detached, omitted, or replaced. As Kastan points out, 'our sense of the shape of a play . . . in large part emerges from our understanding of the way in which the drama begins and ends'.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, the fact that history plays from the Queen's Men often concluded in similar ways suggests an interpretative link between the different histories they dramatize: medieval English monarchical history (in *The True Tragedy*), loosely historical, citizen-based English history (in *Friar Bacon*), and Middle Eastern history (in *Selimus*) could be enlisted to serve Elizabeth and England and foster a patriotic collective identity for audiences and readers.

Ultimately, any understanding of the company's repertory depends on an analysis of printed playbooks and rests significantly on decisions stationers have made in the selection and presentation of plays. As with other theatre companies, the majority of plays performed by the Queen's Men were not printed and have not survived, disappearing without even leaving a record of their titles.<sup>23</sup> This paucity of evidence does not lead to an

<sup>21</sup> Brian Walsh, "'Deep Prescience': Succession and the Politics of Prophecy in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*", *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*, 23 (2010), 63–85 (p. 71). Cf. David M. Bergeron, "'Bogus History'" and Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, *Early Theatre*, 17:1 (2014), 93–112 (pp. 108–09).

<sup>22</sup> Kastan, *Shapes of Time*, p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> Lost plays associated with the company include 'Felix and Philomena', 'Five Plays in One', 'Phyllida and Corin', and 'Three Plays in One'; Gurr, *Shakespearean Playing Companies*, p. 211. See also the lists provided under 'Auspices' in the *Lost Plays Database*, ed. Roslyn L. Knutson, David McInnis, Matthew Steggle, and Misha Teramura (Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Library, 2018), [www.lostplays.folger.edu](http://www.lostplays.folger.edu).



interpretative impasse, but it necessitates some caution in terms of what can be claimed about the company. It may be problematic to assert confidently that the full performance repertory of the Queen's Men was composed mainly of history plays with a specific political design. It is possible, however, to discuss the unity of their printed representatives: the history play is the main genre of the Queen's Men *in print*. Of the nine plays that have secure attributions to the company, Creede invested in four of them (*True Tragedy*, *Selimus*, *Famous Victories*, and *Clyomon*); the other plays were published by Richard Jones (*Three Lords*, 1590), Sampson Clarke (*Troublesome Reign*, 1591), Edward White (*Friar Bacon*, 1594), Ralph Hancock and John Hardy (*The Old Wives' Tale*, 1595), and John Wright (*King Leir*, 1605). Creede was, therefore, the most significantly invested, and one of the main arguments of this chapter is that his practices helped to create a print identity for the Queen's Men that is too often conflated with their performance identity. A contrastive analysis of Creede's wider output suggests that the selection and presentation of his playbooks indicates his own publishing interests and reading of 'history', rather than providing a clear window onto the company's repertory and political sympathies.

### Creede's Looking Glasses

Thomas Creede was made free of the Stationers' Company on 7 October 1578 and seems to have been a journeyman printer until 1593, when he opened his own printing house at the Sign of the Catherine Wheel near the Old Swan in Thames Street and entered his first titles in the Stationers' Register. From 1593 until the end of the sixteenth century, he made a consistent effort to publish texts independently, as well as acting as a trade printer for other stationers. Creede's early publications are dominated by playbooks and 1594 is a significant year for his acquisition of titles. With the exception of *Selimus* (1594), *Alphonsus, King of Aragon* (1599), and *Clyomon and Clamydes* (1599), which were published without entry in the Stationers' Register, Creede entered, in that year, all of the plays that he would eventually publish: *A Looking Glass for London and England* (entered 5 March 1594; published 1594); *The True Tragedy of Richard III* (entered 19 June 1594; published 1594); *The Pedlar's Prophecy* (entered 13 May 1594; published 1595); *Menaechmi* (entered 10 June 1594; published 1595); *Locrine* (entered 20 July 1594; published 1595); *The Famous Victories of Henry V* (entered 14 May 1594; published 1598); and *James IV* (entered 14 May 1594; published 1598). Creede therefore played an important role in the early publication of commercial plays. As Holger

Syme points out, only Edward White entered as many texts as Creede (seven altogether), only Cuthbert Burby published more playbooks (thirteen, compared to Creede's ten), and no stationer printed more plays between 1590 and 1604 (Creede printed twenty-six, compared to Edward Allde's twenty-two).<sup>24</sup>

A profile of Creede's non-dramatic publications from the 1590s suggests how he may have read these playbooks, which, with the exception of *Menaechmi* (a closet translation of Plautus), do not contain any discursive paratexts. Much of Creede's output during this time reveals an interest in 'histories' that offer looking glasses for readers and provide either a warning to avoid the misfortunes of those relayed in the texts or a spur for noble emulation. This use of history has parallels in a range of texts from the period, including *The Mirror for Magistrates*, which provides warnings to readers through its *de casibus* structure that outlines the fall of monarchs, aristocrats, and pretenders to power, and the exemplary 'politic' histories that became an important part of humanist historiography and were especially influential in England during the 1590s through Henry Savile's translations of Tacitus.<sup>25</sup> Creede's publications display an interest in fictional histories that can similarly be used as mirrors and applied to the present. The semantic flexibility of 'history' and the exemplary and counter-exemplary potential of both real and invented histories is reflected in the titles and discursive paratexts of his publications. Sometimes 'history' applies to an invented story and has much in common with Sidney's 'poetry'; other times 'history' is used specifically to mean an account of the past. For example, an English translation of Francisco López de Gómara's *Pleasant History of the Conquest of the West India, Now Called New Spain*, published by Creede in 1596, applies the term to an account of Spain's conquest of Mexico in 1521 led by Captain Hernán (or Hernando) Cortés. In other publications, such as Anthony Munday's translations of the *Palmerin* romances, 'history' applies to a story of chivalric deeds that do not advertise a clear connection to a documented past.<sup>26</sup> These histories

<sup>24</sup> Holger Schott Syme, 'Thomas Creede, William Barley, and the Venture of Printing Plays', in *Shakespeare's Stationers*, ed. Straznicky, pp. 28–46 (p. 28).

<sup>25</sup> See Jessica Winston, 'National History to Foreign Calamity: *A Mirror for Magistrates* and Early English Tragedy', in *Shakespeare's Histories and Counter-Histories*, ed. Dermot Cavanagh, Stuart Hampton-Reeves, and Stephen Longstaffe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 152–65; Paulina Kewes, 'Henry Savile's Tacitus and the Politics of Roman History in Late Elizabethan England', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 74:4 (2011), 515–51.

<sup>26</sup> See also *The Honour of Chivalry*, an English translation of 'the most Famous Historie of the Magnanimous and Heroike Prince' Don Belianis of Greece. In this case, 'Historie' applies to a chivalric romance novel, originally written in Spanish by Jerónimo Fernández and translated into

are models to imitate, irrespective of whether the subject matter is invented or tied 'to the particular truth of things' (*Defence*, DIV).

A patriotic repurposing of a wide range of histories – often ones that were first printed in European languages and translated into English – takes place in Creede's paratexts. One address written by Creede and Valentine Simmes in their joint publication of *The Ancient History of the Destruction of Troy* (1597) sums up this overarching interest in profitable histories, which is witnessed throughout Creede's other publications, including his playbooks. This classic text was originally written in French by Raoul Lefèvre, translated into English and printed by William Caxton (as *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, 1473–74), and then updated by William Phiston for publication by Creede and Simmes. In this latest edition, the history's three books have separate title pages (although the pagination and register are continuous): Creede's name appears on the title-page imprints to Book 1 and Book 2, while Simmes's name appears in Book 3. The opening paratext – from 'The Printers to the curteous Reader, health and happinesse' – potentially indicates that both Creede and Simmes were involved in its composition.<sup>27</sup> The address's detailed account of the uses and definition of history succinctly sums up one of Creede's dominant publishing specialisms:

[T]he reading of Annales, and Histories, most delighteth men of all ages, but especially yoong men, whose affections are quickly incensed, and their hearts set on fire with an emulation of whatsoever notable and valorous enterprises they shall heare or reade of: but most principally yoong Gentlemen and Noblemen, are by the viewing of memorable deeds and martiall prowesse so inflamed with an approbation of good and famous exploitys ((x)iiir).<sup>28</sup>

Here, 'history' applies directly to accounts of the past, and its main purpose is to encourage 'Gentlemen and Noblemen' to emulate the deeds and conquests of the figures contained in the text – in this case, the

Italian by Oratio Rinaldi, but which could be used in the same way as 'true' histories. Jerónimo Fernández, *The Honour of Chivalrie*, trans. Oratio Rinaldi and 'L.A.' (London, 1598; STC 1804), A2r.

<sup>27</sup> Raoul Lefèvre, *The Auncient Historie of the destruction of Troy*, trans. William Caxton and William Phiston (London, 1597; STC 15379), (x)ivr. The agency of the stationers in the translation seems to be underscored through their claim to have 'caused' the 'sundry sentences so improperly Englished' in Caxton's earlier translation to 'bee made plainer English'.

<sup>28</sup> Syme also offers a profile of Creede's investments (in 'Thomas Creede', pp. 40–44), but concentrates on his business connection to Barley (which I discuss later) and an interest in 'big' books, like Munday's *Palmerin* romances. My discussion takes account of some of these texts, but I identify a core specialism in 'histories' that brings together pamphlet and large-scale formats.

'martiall prowess' on display at Troy. Histories, the address explains, are 'committed to writing, and left to posteritie, in all ciuil Countries, to be as whetstones' ((x)iiiiv). The other dominant sense of history is also introduced in the paratext: Creede and Simmes claim that 'to this purpose [i.e. noble emulation], not only true Histories haue always beene published, but many fictions of admirable and most straunge, yea of incredible things atchieued by industrious valour, and constancy in Louers' ((x)iiiiv). Although the stationers rate more highly the 'true' accounts of the historical past (containing 'some poetically paintings'; (x)iiiiv), the purpose and subject matter of histories both true and feigned are strikingly similar and are connected to chivalric ideals of honour, conquest, and constancy. This edition of the Troy story, as A. E. B. Coldiron points out, reinforces 'a nostalgic, chivalric reading of empire(s)'.<sup>29</sup> The new address does not consider the catastrophic destruction of Troy, but concentrates on 'an approbation of good and famous exploits' ((x)iiiir) contained in the history. It also testifies to a late Elizabethan resurgence of interest in chivalric literature that was widespread and represented by works such as Spenser's *Faerie Queen* (1590; 1596), an interest that, as Melnikoff discusses in relation to Richard Jones, was not only martial in its emphasis, but was also 'inflected by humanist and pastoral models of courtesy'.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the language of chivalry, as Helgerson outlines, also became 'the primary language of Elizabethan public display', making the appeal in Creede and Simmes's paratext a means of connecting the history with Elizabeth and a celebration of her court.<sup>31</sup>

The importance of history as a looking glass for the present is emphasized in an unsigned paratext 'To the Reader', which is part of *The Mutable and Wavering Estate of France, from the Year of our Lord 1460, Until the Year 1595* (1597; see Figure 1.1). This address was potentially written by Creede; it ends with the same salutation, 'Fare ye well', as the address in the Trojan history and makes similar points.<sup>32</sup> As described on its title page (and also repeated in the address), this anonymous history recounts the 'great Battailes of the French Nation, as well abroad with their

<sup>29</sup> A. E. B. Coldiron, *Printers without Borders: Translation and Textuality in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 60 (see also pp. 40–64).

<sup>30</sup> Melnikoff, 'Jones's Pen', p. 205. See also Arthur B. Ferguson, *The Chivalric Tradition in Renaissance England* (Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1986), pp. 66–107.

<sup>31</sup> Richard Helgerson, 'Tasso on Spenser: The Politics of Chivalric Romance', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 21 (1991), 153–67 (p. 160).

<sup>32</sup> Anon., *The Mutable and wavering estate of France, from the yeare of our Lord 1460, untill the yeare 1595* (London, 1597; STC 11279), n.s.

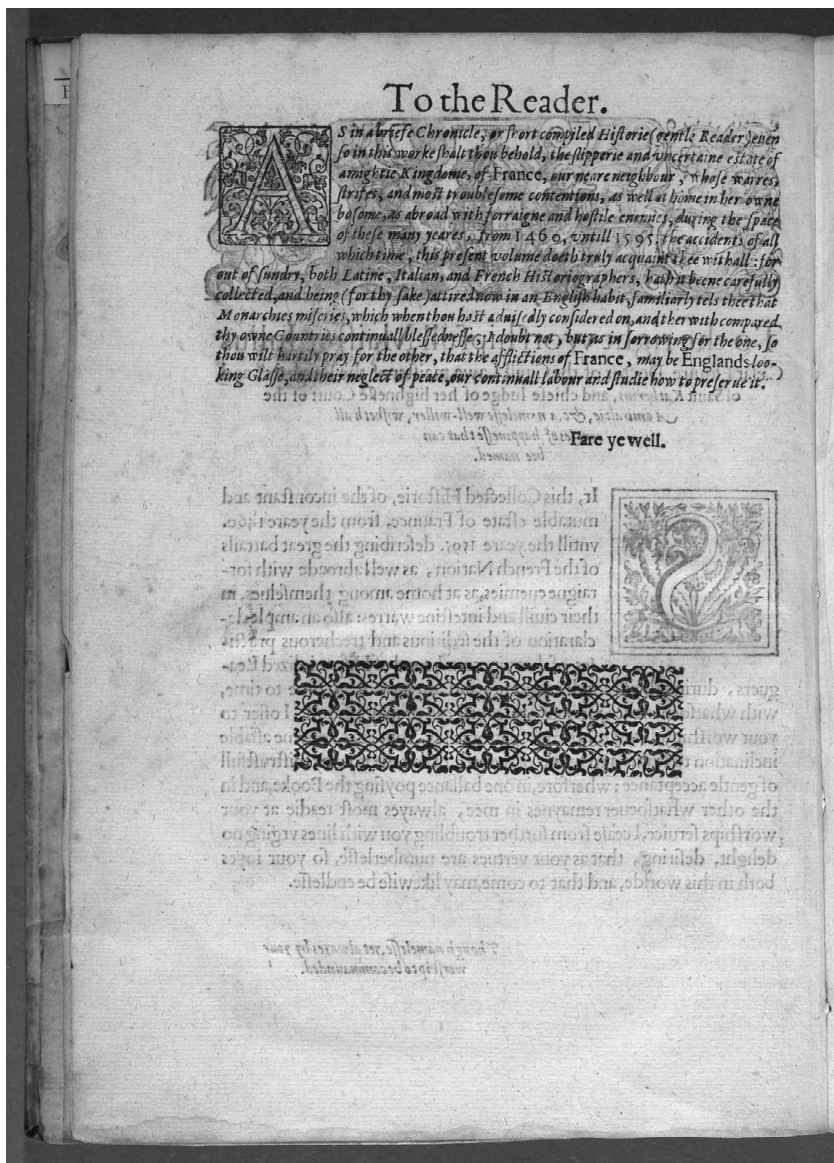


Figure 1.1 Address to readers in *The Mutable and Wavering Estate of France* (1597; STC 11279).

forraigne enemies, as at home among themselues, in their ciuill and intestine warres', which have been 'Collected out of sundry, both Latine, Italian, and French Historiographers' (t.p.). In this publication, 'history' applies specifically to events that have taken place and have a significant impact on a state's political stability. The address assumes an intimacy with English readers, encouraging them to apply the French 'Chronicle, or short compiled Historie' of 'our neare neighbour' to England, by comparing the state of France to 'thy own Countries continuall blessednesse'. It also, however, cautions readers to remember that 'the afflictions of France, may be Englands looking Glass, and their neglect of peace, our continuall labour and studie how to preserue it' (n.s.).<sup>33</sup> Histories, according to the claims in this paratext and Creede's wider output, should be mined for topical applications and used as models or warnings. The misfortunes of other countries are not just materials to aggrandize Elizabethan England, but also to make readers consider the speed with which political stability can be lost, particularly when individuals labour for themselves and not for their country's benefit, a point that is regularly emphasized in Creede's paratexts.<sup>34</sup>

This history reserves criticism for Spanish-Catholic influences, a reproval that is underscored through the title-page reference to the 'seditious and trecherous practises of that viperous brood of Hispaniolized Leaguers'; but Creede's other publications sometimes promote an international elite community that looks favourably on the conquests of European powers because of their potential as a spur for English readers. This way of reading has a direct parallel with humanist models of historiography and promotes, in Brian Lockey's phrase, 'trans-territorial values'.<sup>35</sup> For example, Creede's edition of *The Pleasant History of the Conquest of the West India, Now Called New Spain*, which was translated out of Spanish by Thomas Nicholas, contains a dedication to Walsingham (from the translator) that praises the actions of Captain Hernán Cortés who led the Spanish conquest: 'this delectable and worthie Historie' is 'a Mirroure and an excellent president, for all such as shall

<sup>33</sup> A similar emphasis on history as a looking glass for the present is witnessed in Creede's English translation of Jean de Serres's *Historical Collection of the Most Memorable Accidents and Tragicall Massacres of France, vnder the Raignes of Henry 2, Francis 2, Charles 9, Henry 3, Henry 4 now liuing* (London, 1598; STC 11275).

<sup>34</sup> See also Francisco López de Gómara, *The Pleasant Historie of the Conquest of the West India, now called new Spaine*, trans. Thomas Nicholas (London, 1596; STC 16808), 23v: 'euery true Cristian is born, not for his owne priuate wealth and pleasure' but for 'God' and 'prince'. For French history as a mirror for England, see Andrew M. Kirk, *The Mirror of Confusion: The Representation of French History in English Renaissance Drama*, new ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 1–14.

<sup>35</sup> Brian C. Lockey, *Law and Empire in English Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 95.

take in hand to gouverne new Discouerie; for here they shall behold, how Glory, Renowne, and perfit Felicitie, is not gotten but with great paines, trauaile, peril and daunger of life' (a2r-v). Although the Spanish conquest marked the beginning of that nation's colonization of the Americas, which might be seen to challenge England's power, the paratext, written especially for the English translation, presents Cortés as part of a chivalric elite that crosses state boundaries and traditional lines of division. The values of this international community of leaders are nevertheless redirected towards English projects in the dedication's final lines: it is to be hoped that 'within this happie Realme is nowe liuing a Gentleman, whose zeale of trauell and valiant beginning doth prognosticate great, maruellous, and happie successe' (a4r).

Creede's interest in the application of foreign and domestic histories for England's future benefit is underlined through his regular investment in works by Henry Roberts (fl. 1585–1617), a patriot propagandist. Roberts pursued a naval career, although he may, as Helen Moore points out, have been a member of the Stationers' Company, and his works tend to commemorate English expeditions and conquests.<sup>36</sup> For example, *The Trumpet of Fame* (published by Creede in 1595) mourns the deaths of Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Hawkins, while also praising their colonial enterprises and 'what they have done against our foes'.<sup>37</sup> The poem offers a celebration of England and Elizabeth, predicts the nation's lasting fame, and ends with an acquisitive prayer that 'Phillips [i.e. Philip of Spain's] Regions may not be more stor[e]d, | with Pearle, Jewels, and the purest gold' than England's (B3r). Its potential for application is advertised on the title page and head title: the historical poem is offered as 'an encouragement to all Sailers and Souldiers that are minded to go in this worthe enterprise' (A2r, A3r). Similarly, Roberts's prose history, *Honour's Conquest* (1598), also celebrates adventures and victories over foreign forces, as described in its detailed title-page summary:

the famous hystorie of Edward of Lancaster recounting his honourable trauailes to Ierusalem, his heroic adventures and honours, in sundrie countries gained: his resolutions, and attempts in armes. With the famous victories performed b[y] the knight, of the vnconquered castel, a gallant English knight, his admirable forces, and sundrie conquests obtained, with his passions and successe in loue: full of pleasant discourses and much varietie.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Helen Moore, 'Roberts [Robarts], Henry (fl. 1585–1617), author', *ODNB*, online ed., September 2004, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/23753> (accessed 14 May 2020), para. 1.

<sup>37</sup> H[enry] R[oberts], *The Trumpet of Fame* (London, 1595; STC 21088), A2r.

<sup>38</sup> H[enry] R[oberts], *Honours Conquest* (London, 1598; STC 21082), t.p.

This prose narrative recounts the earlier English history of Edmund of Lancaster, which is cast as a chivalric adventure, featuring foreign travels, successes in love, and martial victories that can help 'Gentlemen' readers to 'attaine true vertue' and 'an eternall reward of glorie'.<sup>39</sup> Creede published this history in the same year as his first edition of *The Famous Victories of Henry V* (discussed in the next section), a play that seems, at first glance, to share key parallels in subject, treatment, and presentation. Indeed, the plot summary in Roberts's text recalls the play's title through its description of a 'famous hystorie' and 'famous victories'. It is possible that Creede compiled the title-page blurb for *Honour's Conquest*, especially as the summary draws attention to the features that typically characterize his publications: an interest in battles, conquests, heroic and honourable adventures, and chivalric achievements.

In summary, a profile of Creede's non-dramatic publications, ranging from short pamphlets to longer prose accounts, reveals an interest in 'histories' that can be used by readers and applied to England's present and future.<sup>40</sup> Many of these texts were first written by European authors, before being translated (sometimes several times) into other languages and finally into English. Their histories are often of European states and figures; and they draw attention to an international chivalric elite that is invested in conquest. Their paratexts (sometimes contributed by Creede himself) position these histories as looking glasses for England and anticipate a future of military victories and political supremacy, which reflect the chivalric language and literature of the late Elizabethan period. These features introduce, however, two tensions. First, the forms and figures of chivalry could be, as Helgerson, Moore, and others have discussed, controversial; despite their importance for the Elizabethan court, they valorize

<sup>39</sup> See Roberts's address 'To the Courteous Reader'. A similar argument is also offered in Roberts's *Pheander: The Mayden Knight* (London, 1595; STC 21086), a chivalric romance dedicated to Captain Thomas Lee ('true professor, follower of Armes, and marshall discipline'; A3r). See also Lockey, *Law and Empire*, pp. 92–98.

<sup>40</sup> Creede also printed some texts on behalf of Elizabethan authorities. He published several editions of works by Ludwig Lavater, the Swiss Reformed theologian, including *Of Ghosts and Spirits* (London, 1596; STC 15321) and *Three Christian Sermons* (London, 1596; STC 15322). The latter was translated by William Barlow under the instruction of John Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury, and reflects on a period of prolonged famine and dearth in Switzerland, which, Creede's title page announces, is 'verie fit for this time of our Dearth' during the mid-1590s (A1r). In the book, Barlow's dedication to Whitgift explains that it was the Archbishop's idea 'that these Sermons of Lauatere shuld be vulgarly translated to the end that all sorts among vs, might in this time of Dearth, be directed to know both the proper cause and the right vse of this Iudgement' (A2r). Whitgift seems to have arranged the translation and its publication, and its paratextual materials recall Creede's own interest in providing instructive looking glasses for English readers.



and autonomize the chivalric knight as a militant aristocrat in a way that was politically charged and had the potential to disrupt the state.<sup>41</sup> As Moore describes, 'the identification of military leaders with chivalric heroes had reached its apotheosis in the person of Robert Devereux, the second Earl of Essex', whose challenges to monarchical authority ended in his execution in 1601.<sup>42</sup> Second, the promotion of chivalric ideals in Creede's publications emerges firmly through the paratextual materials, which offer explicit direction for how to read the histories. Some of the main texts are less optimistic or clear-cut than the paratexts. *The Ancient History of the Destruction of Troy* recounts the heroic deeds of its warriors, but the fall of Troy was also a threatening emblem of civic catastrophe – a reading that, while clearly implied through its main text, is not part of the history's paratexts. A hallmark of Creede's publications seems to be a clear paratextual framework that emphasizes the utility of the history and downplays its troublesome complexities, which is also a defining feature of his playbooks from the Queen's Men.

### Creede's Print Brand for the Queen's Men

Creede's non-dramatic publications can be used to understand his investment in four playbooks from the Queen's Men that contain company attributions: *The True Tragedy of Richard III* (1594), *Selimus* (1594), *The Famous Victories of Henry V* (1598), and *Clyomon and Clamydes* (1599). As printed playbooks, they seem to announce Creede's agency in their selection and presentation – especially as he is the main publication agent involved, acting as both printer and publisher. Creede's acquisition of playscripts will be considered in more detail in the next section, but it does not appear that the plays' dramatists directly took part in the process. All of the plays were issued anonymously, which was common practice, but by advertising only the stationer and company, the playbooks seem to minimize the dramatist or at least imply that publication has been entrusted to these other agents. More tellingly, Creede published a number of plays that were, or have subsequently been, connected to Robert Greene, including *Selimus* (published anonymously, but attributed to the Queen's Men), *A Looking Glass* (advertised as by Greene and Lodge and performed by Lord Strange's Men), *James IV* (from an unspecified

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Helgerson, 'Tasso', p. 159.

<sup>42</sup> Helen Moore, 'Jonson, Dekker, and the Discourse of Chivalry', *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* 12 (1999), 121–65 (p. 136).

company, but advertised as by Greene), and *Alphonsus, King of Aragon* (also from an unspecified company, but attributed to 'R.G.'). All of these were published after Greene's death in 1592, which clearly removes the dramatist's agency and prioritizes the stationer's.<sup>43</sup> Creede's playbooks tend to suggest either his sole agency in their publication or his role in a stationer–company network of exchange.

Holger Syme proposes, however, that Creede may have collaborated quite extensively during the 1590s with William Barley, who is listed as bookseller on the title-page imprints of several Creede publications, including *The True Tragedy of Richard III*, *Menaechmi*, *The Pedlar's Prophecy*, and *The Trumpet of Fame*.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, both Barley and Creede needed to collaborate with other stationers. Creede's printing house at the Sign of the Catherine Wheel was not a bookshop, meaning that he had to work with others in order to maximize profits; Barley's main shop on Gracechurch Street seems to have been a wholesale and retail location for a number of them. Barley was officially a member of the Drapers' Company, which prevented him from holding publication rights and entering texts in the Register (until he finally joined the Stationers' Company in 1606). He also had to collaborate, and Syme proposes a publishing syndicate with Barley providing financial backing to three printers: Creede, Abel Jeffes, and John Danter.<sup>45</sup> While it is possible that an exchange like this took place, the evidence of Creede's published output and paratexts suggests that, whatever arrangement may have existed with Barley, he retained control over text selection and presentation. The wider range of books on which Barley's name appears does not reveal a clear interest in history, nor does Creede become regularly involved in, for example, coney-catching pamphlets or music publications, the latter emerging as Barley's dominant specialism in the late 1590s.

Creede's playbooks from the Queen's Men share parallels in their title-page design and content, which help to construct a print identity for the

<sup>43</sup> Greene's authorship or co-authorship of *Selimus* has been proposed on the basis of stylistic analysis, the dramatist's connection to the Queen's Men, and the inclusion of six extracts from the play in *England's Parnassus* (1600), with an attribution to Greene. Many of the passages in *England's Parnassus* are misattributed, so the association with Greene cannot be taken as conclusive. See Donna N. Murphy, 'Lochrine, *Selimus*, Robert Greene, and Thomas Lodge', *Notes and Queries*, 56:4 (2009) 559–63; Darren Freebury-Jones, 'Determining Robert Greene's Dramatic Canon', *Style*, 54:4 (2020), 377–98.

<sup>44</sup> Syme, 'Thomas Creede', p. 30.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 29–31. Syme calculates that, for the seven plays Creede entered in 1594, he 'must have spent over twenty pounds on authors' fees, licenses, and registration alone – and he maintained a similar rate of entrance for over five years' (p. 40). Syme suggests that it is unlikely – although not impossible – that Creede possessed these funds himself.

company and encourage a reading of their plays as profitable histories that promote England's and Elizabeth I's interests. One prominent title-page feature is Creede's signature woodcut ornament (McKerrow #299, see Figure 1.2), which appears on most of his published texts, as well as on many of the texts he printed for other stationers, such as the second edition of *Richard III* (1598, see Figure 2.3) for Andrew Wise and Sidney's *Defence* (1595). Because the design is so distinctive, it has the effect of creating a recognizable Creede brand. The woodcut features the personification of Truth as a naked woman being scourged by a hand descending from the clouds, with the initials 'TC' (Thomas Creede) and the inscription '*Viressit [sic] vulnere veritas*' ('Truth flourishes though wounded'). Yamada and McKerrow identify one other printer who used a similar design.<sup>46</sup> In 1589, Thomas Orwin printed Anne Dowriche's *The French History* (STC 7159) for Thomas Man, which shows the figure of Truth on both the title page and final page, alongside a verse interpretation. Orwin died in 1593 and, from that point, Creede seems to be the only London printer using this emblem on title pages. It is an apt woodcut for a stationer interested in histories that advertise their utility as 'true' models or warnings for readers, and appears in, for example *The Pleasant History of the Conquest of the West India*, *The Honour of Chivalry*, and *The Trumpet of Fame*. The woodcut carries added interpretative significance for plays that also contain an attribution to the Queen's Men. It implies that the plays from Elizabeth's company – and, by extension, Elizabeth herself – are invested in the discovery and promotion of truth.

Although these playbooks do not contain discursive paratexts, their title-page plot summaries put forward readings of the histories they contain and – similar to Creede's non-dramatic publications such as *The Ancient History of the Destruction of Troy* – they tend to downplay the complexities of their plots in favour of a patriotic reflection on Elizabethan England and an emphasis on using history to understand the present. For example, the anonymous *True Tragedy of Richard III*, which was one of Shakespeare's sources for the later *Richard III*, dramatizes the title character's usurpation of the English throne and his downfall. Tudor chroniclers and writers, including Vergil, More, Grafton, Hall, and Holinshed, frequently vilified Richard III, a practice that was at least partly in the service of the new royal dynasty established after his death at the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485. Through its paratexts, this anonymous playbook encourages a reading in line with Tudor apologia. The title page

<sup>46</sup> Yamada, *Thomas Creede*, pp. 250–51. See also McKerrow, *Devices*, p. 117.

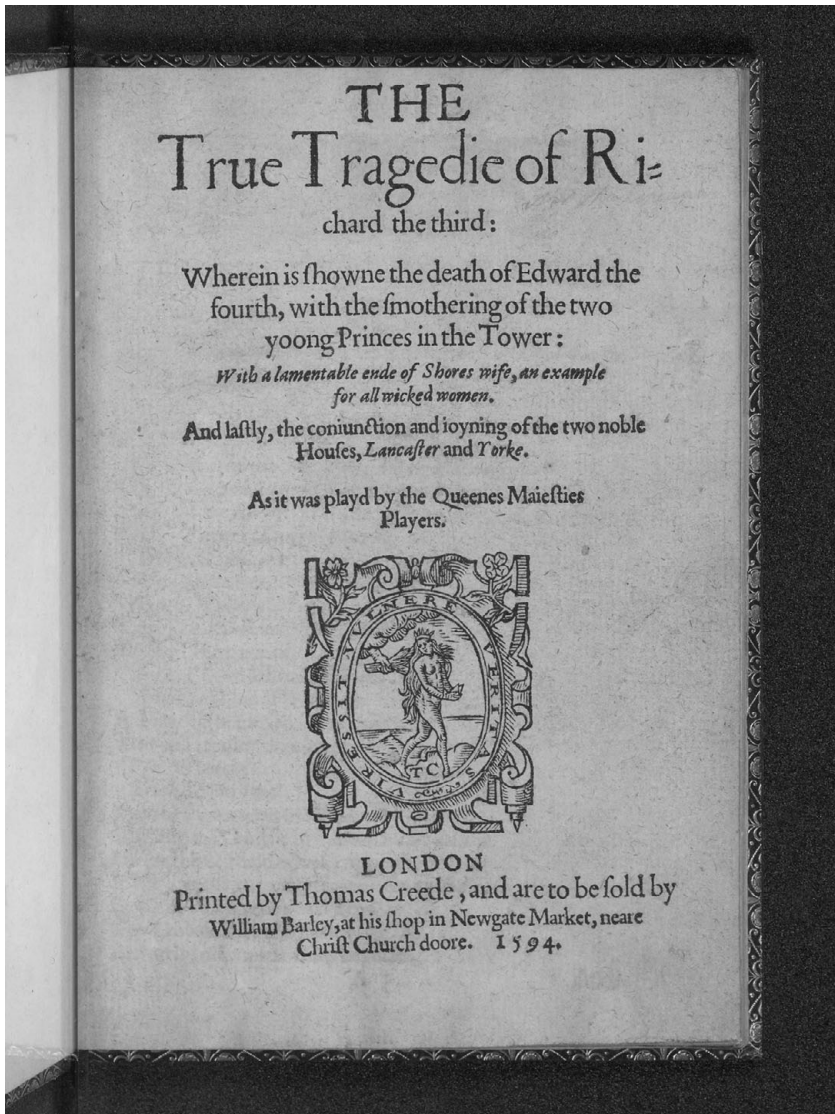


Figure 1.2 Title page from *The True Tragedy of Richard III* (1594; STC 21009).

(see Figure 1.2) draws attention to key narrative developments that promote a providential reading of history: the plot description appeals to a sense of injustice at the 'smothering of the two young Princes in the Tower' and anticipates the 'coniunction and ioyning of the two noble

Houses, Lancaster and Yorke' (A2r) with the marriage of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York. This phrasing echoes the title of Hall's chronicle, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York* (1548), a text that – at least on the surface – appears to engage in a project of Tudor mythologizing, although recent critics including Peter Herman have argued that Hall expresses an underlying scepticism about the Henrician court for which he was writing.<sup>47</sup> Similar to the laudatory title-page summary in Hall's Chronicle, which presents Henry VIII as the 'vndubitate flower and very heire of both the sayd Images', the play's paratexts position the text as a celebratory account of the inauguration and legitimation of the Tudor line.<sup>48</sup> The title page advertises the veracity of the play's treatment of history by drawing attention to the word 'True', which is presented in large type at the top of the page (A2r) and contained as part of the running title throughout the text. This epithet was not, however, featured in the Stationers' Register, which records the play as 'an enterlude intituled | The Tragedie of Richard the Third'.<sup>49</sup> Creede may have added this adjective to the printed playbook to complement his own ornament featuring 'Truth' and to further the reading of history suggested by the title-page description. McMillin and MacLean propose that plays from the Queen's Men frequently insist upon the truthfulness of their dramatizations and advocate a Protestant plainness in speech, but it is important to consider that this reading could, to a degree, be a product of the printed playbook and a publisher's marketing strategies.<sup>50</sup>

The seemingly straightforward interpretation implied by the paratextual materials is, however, complicated by a closer examination of the play. Walsh draws attention to the play's demystification of 'its own history-making by showing it to be the work of the players on stage'.<sup>51</sup> The induction involving the characters Truth and Poetry appears to suggest a Protestant desire 'for substantial truth and plain speech', but the role of Truth in the representation of history that follows is ambiguous.<sup>52</sup> Poetry asks 'will Truth be a Player' (A3r), and indeed, in light of theatrical doubling practices, both Truth and Poetry would have become players

<sup>47</sup> See Peter C. Herman, 'Henrician Historiography and the Voice of the People: The Cases of More and Hall', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 39 (1997), 261–83; and 'Hall, Edward (1497–1547)', *ODNB*, online ed., November 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/11954> (accessed 16 September 2019).

<sup>48</sup> Edward Hall, *The Union of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancastre and Yorke* (London, 1548; STC 12721), 60r.

<sup>49</sup> SRO3636; Arber, II, p. 654.

<sup>50</sup> McMillin and MacLean, *Queen's Men*, p. 36.

<sup>51</sup> Walsh, *Shakespeare*, p. 101.

<sup>52</sup> McMillin and MacLean *Queen's Men*, p. 33.

in the main dramatization. The actors performing these roles would have reappeared in other parts, thus visually complicating the plainness and transparency of Truth and the play's depiction of a single and unchallenged history. It raises the possibility of multiple, endlessly qualified readings.<sup>53</sup>

When *The True Tragedy* is considered as a whole, it points to, as Walsh describes, the fallibility and 'belatedness of historical narratives', and it complicates the Tudor apologia that other parts of the play seem to establish.<sup>54</sup> It recalls contemporary historiographical concerns about the inaccessibility of the past, such as those expressed by Abraham Fleming in his address 'To the Readers studious in histories', prefacing the second volume of Holinshed's *Chronicles* (second edition, 1587): 'it is a toile without head or taile euen for extraordinarie wits, to correct the accounts of former ages so many hundred years receiued, out of vncerteinties to raise certeinties, and to reconcile writers dissenting in opinion and report.'<sup>55</sup> Diverging, unreconcilable reports – and the character, Report – are a recurrent feature of the play. While also evoking the idea of a false account (later personified as Rumour in Shakespeare's *2 Henry IV*), Report allegorizes the historian through the character's search for the 'certain true report' (H3r) of the Battle of Bosworth; however, Report arrives after the battle, which suggests the writing of history is belated, flawed, and partial. In his account to Report, the Page frames Richard's death as a classical paradigm: 'Richard came to felde mounted on horsback, with as high resolute as fierce Achillis mongst the sturdie Greekes . . . to encounter worthie Richmond, [and he] would not yeeld, but with his losse of life he lost the field' (H3v). The Page – who, throughout the play, reflects on the inaccessibility of truth and often addresses the audience as a choric figure – rejuvenates Richard's reputation; and rather than offering a rigid moral judgement on the battle's outcome, provides a report that privileges neither Richard nor Richmond. While the play ostensibly remains a Protestant campaign for Tudor legitimacy, most notably through its overt political statements in the concluding prayer for Elizabeth and its explicit condemnation of Richard as 'a man ill shaped, crooked backed, lame armed' and 'tyrannous in authoritie' (A3v), the play also considers the

<sup>53</sup> See also Brian Walsh, 'Truth, Poetry, and Report in *The True Tragedy of Richard III*', in *Locating the Queen's Men*, ed. Ostovich et al., pp. 123–33.

<sup>54</sup> Walsh, *Shakespeare*, p. 88.

<sup>55</sup> Raphael Holinshed, *The First and second volumes of Chronicles . . .* (London, 1587; STC 13569), II, title-page verso.

partiality of historical writing and, by implication, questions the truthfulness of its own representations.<sup>56</sup>

Of course, it is inevitable that the ways in which a play is marketed and makes a book of itself through its paratexts cannot capture the complexity of the full text. Title-page advertisements are, by necessity, selective: they sometimes feature just the title and at other times are supplemented with a few details from the plot. As Janette Dillon succinctly puts it, '[t]itle pages are devised in order to sell books, not to make precise scholarly statements about the texts they preface'.<sup>57</sup> We should not expect Creede's title pages to offer nuanced critical evaluations, but one of the reasons why his playbooks are particularly useful as a case study is owing to their consistent paratextual design. The playbooks' framing of history to appeal to the reigning monarch and England's political present can also be seen throughout many of Creede's non-dramatic publications that relay histories of battles, victories, and heroic exploits as models or warnings for their readers, an application that is often discussed explicitly in paratexts that tend to eschew the complexities of the main text.

The same pattern can be seen in *Selimus*, but in this case the subject matter of the play is drawn from Turkish history, which is used to reflect flatteringly on England. It is based on Selim I, who reigned from 1512 to 1520, and concentrates on events that took place between 1511 and 1513. The play's main sources are Thomas Newton's 1575 translation of Augustino Curione's *Sarracenicæ Historiæ libri III* (Basel, 1567) and Peter Ashton's 1546 translation of Paolo Giovio's *Comentarii della cose de Turchi* (Florence, 1531).<sup>58</sup> As a playbook, the new print paratexts of the 'most tyrannicall Tragedie and raigne of Selimus' (A3r) present the title character as the single source of unrest and corruption in the play, fashioning him as their religio-political target. The title-page plot summary describes in detail the immorality of this emperor of the Turks, including how he 'most vnnaturally raised warres against his owne father', 'caused him to be poysoned', and murdered 'his two brethren' (see Figure 1.3).<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> For a discussion of how the play in performance could have promoted affective, rather than reflective, responses in its audience, therefore encouraging an experience of 'royalist nationality', see Jennifer Roberts-Smith, "'What makes thou upon a stage?': Child Actors, Royalist Publicity, and the Space of the Nation in the Queen's Men's *True Tragedy of Richard the Third*", *Early Theatre*, 15:2 (2012), 192–205.

<sup>57</sup> Janette Dillon, 'Is There a Performance in This Text?', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 45:1 (1994), 74–86 (p. 79).

<sup>58</sup> Daniel J. Vitkus, *Three Turk Plays from Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 18.

<sup>59</sup> [Robert Greene]/Anon., *The First part of the Tragicall raigne of Selimus* (London, 1594; STC 12310a), A2r.

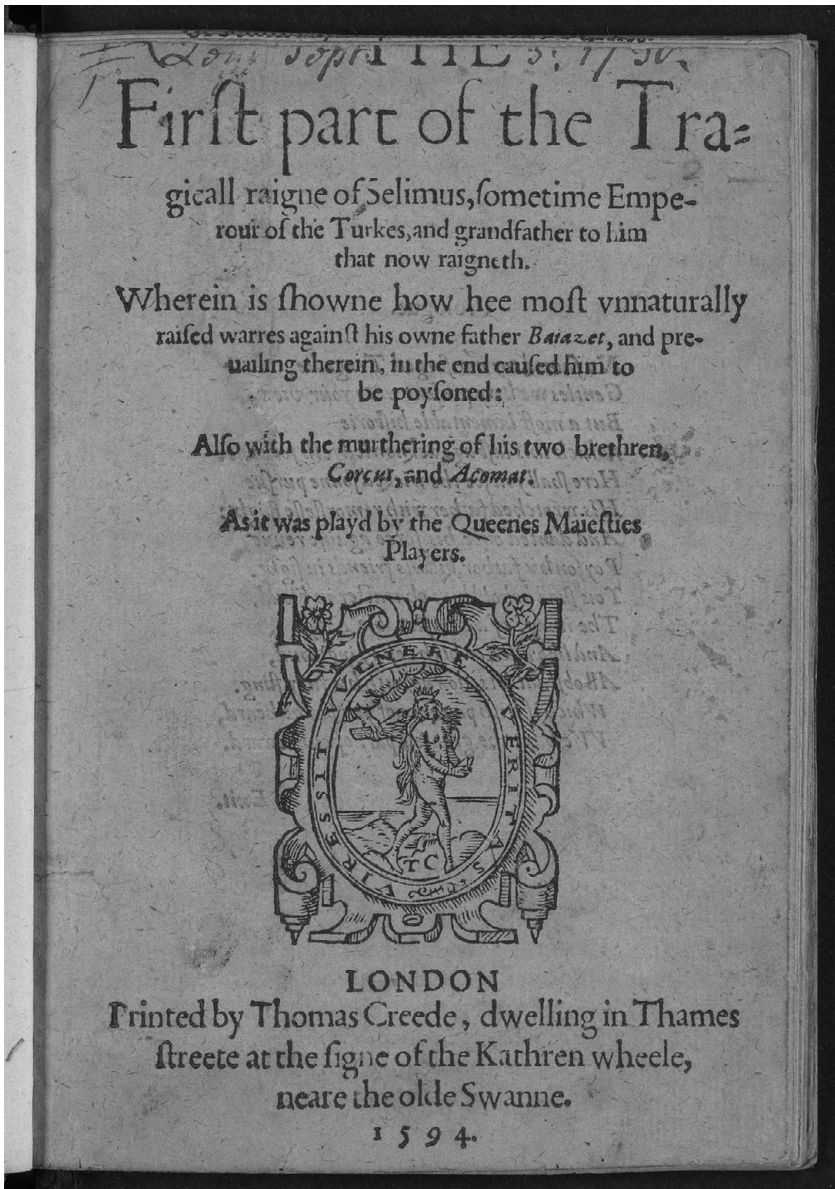


Figure 1.3 Title page from *Selimus* (1594; STC 12310a).



This emphasis on a single, overreaching conqueror recalls Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* – a connection that is made even more explicit by its full title: 'The First part of the Tragicall raigne of Selimus'. No second part is extant or known to have been written, although the epilogue refers to the potential for a continuation, indicating the company's desire to capitalize on the successful Tamburlainean model from the Admiral's Men. However, *Selimus* rejects *Tamburlaine's* amoral model: the play as a whole is aware, as Peter Berek observes, that 'the Tamburlainean conqueror posed ethical and dramaturgical problems' and its printed presentation strategies serve to condemn Selimus's actions.<sup>60</sup> The classification of this Turkish history as a 'tragedie' (in its head title) and 'tragicall' (in its main and running title) furthers this judgement of the protagonist, as these genre labels were sometimes used, as Berek proposes, to indicate the 'death of one who behaves badly'.<sup>61</sup> Both *Selimus* and *The True Tragedy of Richard III* were published as 'tragedies' and feature villainous protagonists whose tyrannical actions are singled out in their paratexts. Significantly, *Selimus* does not actually dramatize the death of its central character, which adds to the sense that 'tragicall' refers to a reading of his actions as immoral.

*Selimus* also contains a print prologue and epilogue that display the same evaluation: they denounce Selimus as 'a wicked soone' who pursues his 'wretched father with remorselesse spight' and 'kill[s] his friends in fight' (A2v). These materials likely have theatrical origins, but through their inclusion in the playbook the prologue and epilogue acquire a new interpretative fixity, which differs from their detachable and temporary status as performance parts. Indeed, they seem particularly suited to act as paratextual addresses in the printed book. The prologue describes how 'You shall behold him character in bloud, | The image of an vnplacable King' (A2v). The use of 'character' in this context implies that Selimus is characterized by his bloody conquests and betrayals and that he is symbolized by an image of blood; but it also connects him to a written history that both records and creates, 'character' and 'charactery' being terms for writing symbols and systems. As a fixed part of the playbook, the prologue characterizes Selimus as the 'vnplacable King' of this printed history. The fact that the epilogue is actually titled the 'Conclusion' (K3r) in the playbook furthers this idea that theatrical documents are being re-presented as printed documents that provide (textually) closed views on the play.

<sup>60</sup> Berek, 'Tamburlaine's Weak Sons: Imitation As Interpretation before 1593', *Renaissance Drama*, 13 (1982), 55–82 (p. 72).

<sup>61</sup> Berek, 'Genres', p. 171.

Together with Creede's signature woodcut on the title page, they also advertise the truthfulness of the play's account, describing it as 'a most lamentable historie | Which this last age acknowledgeth for true' (A2v). In the playbook, the conjunction of the terms 'history' and 'tragedy' (and their variants) offers a critical judgement on the play's dramatization of the past.

A closer look at *Selimus* reveals that the main play adopts a critical stance towards all of the Turkish leaders, while the playbook's paratexts concentrate on Selimus as the central villain and compress the play's sources of instability and corruption into a single figure. The paratexts gloss over the other power struggles, betrayals, and usurpations that take place, notably those involving Selimus's brother, Acomat, who is arguably even more tyrannical and extreme than Selimus, but who is represented on the title page with pathos as an unnaturally murdered brother. In fact, Selimus's dominance over the play, suggested by the title page and prologue, is belied by his absence from the drama between sigs. C4v and F4v (spanning about ten scenes and over 800 lines of dialogue). During this time, Acomat assumes the central dramatic position and enacts various atrocities that, as Berek observes, surpass Selimus's later brutality.<sup>62</sup> In a scene that possibly influenced Shakespeare's depiction of the blinding of Gloucester in *King Lear*, Acomat, with the assistance of Regan, blinds the loyal advisor Aga and cuts off both his hands, before sending him back to Bajazet.<sup>63</sup> The stage directions in the quarto edition specify that these actions be shown on stage and indicate the moments when Acomat 'Puls out [Aga's] eyes' and 'They [i.e. Acomat and Regan] cut off[f] his hands' (F2v–F3r). It is the most significant and sustained example of tyrannical action in the play and creates a striking disjunction with the title page's sympathy towards Acomat and his later fate.

Selimus's more moderate tactics to gain power are, in fact, derided by Acomat, whose sudden and insatiable desire for 'the crowne' (F2r) leads to civil destruction, including the murder of his nephews and the massacre of his subjects as part of an attempt to suppress all opposition:

He [Selimus] should haue done as I meane to do,  
Fill all the confines, with fire, sword and blood.  
Burne vp the fields, and ouerthrow whole townes,  
And when he had endammaged that way,

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., pp. 73–74.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Shakespeare, *True Chronicle Historie of the life and death of King Lear* (London, 1608; STC 22292), H1r–H2r. Berek, 'Weak Sons', p. 74.

Then teare the old man peecemeale with my teeth,  
 And colour my strong hands with his gore-blood

...

It is the greatest glorie of a king  
 When, though his subjects hate his wicked deeds  
 Yet are they forst to bear them all with praise.

(F2r–v)

Acomat's switching of pronouns in this exclamation – from 'And when *he* had endammaged that way, | Then teare the old man peecemeale with *my* teeth' – marks the moment when Acomat's reflection on what Selimus should have enacted becomes an envenomed declaration of his own intended actions. Although Acomat claims that '[h]ate is peculiar to a princes state' (F2v), Selimus has the support of the people, as well as many of the main advisors, and he is recognized as a strong military leader. While he does eventually eliminate all opposition through orchestrating the deaths of his father and brothers, Selimus's actions are not presented in ways that surpass the visual impact and extremity of Acomat's, and what emerges is a state plagued by repeated power struggles between different factions. There is no overriding villain (as the paratextual materials seem to suggest) to contrast with a benign and effective alternative; instead, there are variations on a political model of domination and usurpation that arise from a state governed by the ineffective leader, Bajazet.

In common with many of Creede's non-dramatic publications, *Selimus's* text and paratexts highlight the ways in which 'foreign' histories had wide application and could be used to reflect on contemporary political events at home. As Kewes discusses, the play evokes a familiar English landscape in the midst of the unfamiliar foreign setting and it is infused with English idioms, social descriptions, and place names (such as 'Holburne vp Tiburne', H4r), which recall late sixteenth-century London.<sup>64</sup> The scenes involving the play's clown, Bullithrubble, particularly encourage a connection (or conflation) with an English setting. Elizabethan clowns tended to be topical, and they frequently use contemporary colloquialisms and allude to current events.<sup>65</sup> Through its incorporation of anglicized characters and references, *Selimus*, as a history play, partly erases the distinction between past and present events and between native and foreign histories. The title page further announces the 'presentness' of the past by pointing out that Selimus is 'the grandfather to him that now raigneth', which encourages readers in England to look for the relevance of the events

<sup>64</sup> Kewes, 'Elizabethan', pp. 175–76.

<sup>65</sup> See also Rackin, *Stages of History*, pp. 222–47.

presented in the play. Interest in Turkish history had been fuelled by the establishment of the 'Turkey Company' in 1581 (reorganized as the Levant Company in 1592), which regulated trade between England and the Levant and Ottoman Empire. Foreign trade was becoming more and more important, and as Daniel Vitkus describes, readers and theatregoers in England would have been 'increasingly aware of the power of the "Grand Seigneur" in Turkey'.<sup>66</sup> Accounts of Ottoman government, succession, and religion were not simply distant, detached histories (like the Troy stories) but pressingly current ones that could have a direct bearing on power dynamics in central Europe. Representations of these histories reflect an Anglocentric fascination with and desire to control the Ottoman past and present.<sup>67</sup>

Another way in which *Selimus* draws attention to its contemporaneity is through the scenes involving the poisoning of Bajazet, which are advertised on the title page. While the play was probably written and first performed by 1592 (especially if it is by Greene, who died that year), the fact that *Selimus* enlists the services of 'Abraham the Iew' (G3r-v) to murder his father would have prompted a topical reading in 1594. It would recall the accusations levelled against Elizabeth's physician, Roderigo Lopez, who was of Jewish heritage and had been executed in June 1594 for allegedly attempting to poison the queen.<sup>68</sup> Lopez's involvement and the details of the plot are uncertain, but the outcome of the trial was sealed once Robert Devereux, second earl of Essex, staked his reputation on the prosecution – partly because of a personal enmity against Lopez, his former physician, for revealing details of the earl's medical conditions, which 'did disparage his honour'.<sup>69</sup> The plot aroused extraordinary public interest in England, and spurred a series of pamphlets, including an official government account by William Cecil, who castigated Lopez as a treasonous rebel threatening the stability of the state.<sup>70</sup> As a book, therefore, *Selimus* acquired a new application – and one that is alert to the use of history for political

<sup>66</sup> Vitkus, *Three Turk Plays*, p. 43.

<sup>67</sup> For the use of the Ottoman Empire in the construction of European and English identities, see Ambereen Dadabhoy, 'Two Faced: The Problem of Othello's Visage', in *Othello: The State of Play*, ed. Lena Cowen Orlin (London: Arden Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 121–47.

<sup>68</sup> Lopez's father had been baptized by force and, while outwardly conforming to the Anglican church, Lopez may have adhered to Judaism at home. Sir Edward Coke used Lopez's secret Judaism as a point of attack during his trial. See Kewes, 'Elizabethan', p. 176, and Edgar Samuel, 'Lopez [Lopes], Roderigo [Ruy, Roger] (c.1517–1594)', *ODNB*, online ed., January 2008, <https://doi.org/10.1093/refodnb/17011> (accessed 16 September 2019), para. 1, 7.

<sup>69</sup> Samuel, 'Lopez', para. 6.

<sup>70</sup> William Cecil, *A True Report of Sundry Horrible Conspiracies* (London, 1594; STC 7603).

exempla. The overarching reading suggested by its paratexts demonstrates the appeal of simple, stereotyped historical verdicts and narratives. The paratexts compress the threat of corruption into the single figure of Selimus – who is both a hyperbolic Turkish antagonist and also a symbol of papal corruption, established through the allusion to Lopez, whose plot was supposedly at the behest of his Spanish contacts. Vitkus points out that some Protestant writers in England ‘expressed a hope that the rival powers of pope and sultan would annihilate each other’, and this kind of dual condemnation is witnessed in *Selimus*'s title page, alongside an anti-Semitic allusion.<sup>71</sup> The paratexts serve to reassure readers who are desirous of Anglocentric legitimacy, expansion, and control, while the play itself packages its concern about these foreign ‘others’ in a different way. Selimus ends the play in triumph, and the comeuppance suggested by the paratexts does not take place, at least in this part of the play, which marks a disjunction between the formal shape of its history and the clear didactic applications implied by the title page. The play is not as confident as its paratexts and displays a sweeping anxiety over Ottoman history and current events, including their ramifications for England's political and economic prosperity.

As a final example of a history playbook firmly connected to the repertory of the Queen's Men, *The Famous Victories of Henry V* creates a similar tension between text and paratext. It was performed by the company at some point between 1583 and 1587, making it one of their earliest extant plays.<sup>72</sup> Although it was entered in the Register on 14 May 1594, it was not published until 1598 and was therefore a relatively old play by the time it appeared in print. Indeed, *The Famous Victories* is sometimes described as the first English history play, and one that is representative of the company's repertory owing to its subject matter and the prominence of its clowning parts.<sup>73</sup> It features a monarch who was regularly invoked during the sixteenth century as an exemplum of military prowess in the service of national glory, in contrast to the villainous protagonists, Richard

<sup>71</sup> Vitkus, *Three Turk Plays*, p. 8.

<sup>72</sup> The dating of the play's early performances depends on an anecdote concerning Tarlton doubling the parts of Derick and the Lord Chief Justice, with William Knell as Henry V. As Knell was killed in a duel in June 1587 and Tarlton died in 1588, the play must have been performed at some point between the company's formation in 1583 and mid-1587. See *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*, prep. Chiaki Hanabusa, Malone Society Publications, vol. 171 (Manchester: Manchester University Press for the Malone Society, 2007), pp. xx–xxii.

<sup>73</sup> Larry S. Champion, “‘What Prerogatives Meanes’”: Perspective and Political Ideology in *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, *South Atlantic Review*, 53:4 (1988), 1–19 (p. 1).

III and Selimus, from Creede's other playbooks.<sup>74</sup> The title page of *The Famous Victories* underscores this reading. After the main title, it singles out the depiction of the 'Honourable Battell of Agin-court' as the play's main feature – a wise marketing decision as the legacy of Henry V was so closely tied to this famous battle.<sup>75</sup> In the years following the defeat of the Spanish Armada, when hostilities with Spain continued and the threat of future armadas remained high, the playbook offers a reminder of one of England's most celebrated victories. Creede's regular ornament effectively labels the play a 'true' history and, together with the plot summary, encourages an optimistic reflection on England's political stability and ascendancy. As mentioned previously, it was published in the same year as Roberts's enthusiastic prose history, *Honour's Conquest*, that similarly praises England's 'famous victories'.

The play itself complicates this view, and instead of focusing on, as the paratexts suggest, 'Honourable' military exploits, it foregrounds Henry's transition from prince to monarch in social and political spheres that draw attention to his unflattering qualities, such as his ruthlessness. Indeed, the 'Battell of Agin-court', advertised so prominently on the title page, makes up a relatively small section of the play, the preparation, battle, and aftermath consisting of around 300 lines out of a total of approximately 1,720. Most of the play concentrates on colourful events from Henry's life, including his riotous youth and eventual succession to the English throne. Critics have described the play as a glorification of monarchy, suggesting that Henry emerges as an ideal prince at the point of his sudden repentance on his father's deathbed; but this reading has been partly influenced by a tendency to diminish the complexities of plays that are associated with Shakespearean equivalents (in this case, 1 and 2 *Henry IV*, and *Henry V*).<sup>76</sup> Rather, the play's expansive scope, fast-paced action, and manipulation of its chronicle sources reveal a troubling representation of its central character. For example, unlike Shakespeare's 1 *Henry IV*, *The Famous Victories* shows Henry as the instigator and ringleader of the robbery of his father's Receivers, an action that displays a disregard for public welfare and

<sup>74</sup> See Amy Lidster, 'Challenging Monarchical Legacies in *Edward III* and *Henry V*', *English: Journal of the English Association*, 68:261 (2019), 126–42.

<sup>75</sup> *The Famous Victories of Henry the fifth* (London, 1598; STC 13072), A1r.

<sup>76</sup> Tillyard (in *Shakespeare's History Plays*), Ribner (in *The English History Play*), and Madeleine Doran (in *Endeavours of Art: A Study of Form in Elizabethan Drama*) have stressed the play's patriotism and upholding of Henry V as a national hero.

which would have been especially apparent to the socially mixed early modern audiences.<sup>77</sup>

This disruptive presentation is highlighted in Henry's 'reformation' on his father's deathbed, which may be, as Larry Champion suggests, 'more politically expedient than genuine'.<sup>78</sup> In this scene, Henry enters wearing a 'cloake so full of needles', which he describes as 'a signe that I stand vpon thorns, til the Crowne be on my head' (C1v). He also carries a 'dagger in his hand' (C2v) in order to murder the king, a plan that is thwarted by his father's sudden awakening. While Henry's cloak recalls the morality play tradition and the symbolic robe that Mankind would wear and remove to signal his repentance, it does not indicate that Henry undergoes a genuine transformation.<sup>79</sup> Henry's repentance ensures his dying father's approval and is essentially motivated by personal gain. The representation of the heir apparent readying a dagger to murder the king constitutes a dangerous act of political subversion. Although the play is influenced by morality-play techniques, it reminds readers that Henry is not an everyman.

The events in France similarly challenge a clear-cut patriotic interpretation, showing that, as Karen Oberer describes, 'some of Henry's victories are not entirely worthy of being remembered in the chronicles'.<sup>80</sup> The play's subplot involving Derick and John Cobbler undermines the 'Honourable' claims of the title page. During the battle scenes, these characters – played by the company's clowns – exploit the casualties of war and scavenge the battlefield, removing shoes and valuables from both French and English soldiers (F4v–G1v). In contrast, the title-page paratexts recall the popular legacy of Henry V as it was invoked in Elizabethan military manuals, including Robert Barret's *Theory and Practice of Modern Wars*, published in the same year, which praises 'our noble Henry the fift at Agincourt' for showing 'constancy and true fortitude of mind in all perillous and daungerous successes' in the 'actions of warre'.<sup>81</sup> Creede's edition capitalizes on this reputation of Henry and encourages a reading of *The Famous Victories* as a jingoistic history that extols England's foreign conquests and military strength, despite the somewhat dishonourable actions that take place in the play and contrast with the paratextual values of his other publications, including *Honour's Conquest* and *The Ancient*

<sup>77</sup> Champion, "What Prerogatiues Meanes", pp. 2–4.      <sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8.

<sup>79</sup> See Karen Oberer, 'Appropriations of the Popular Tradition in *The Famous Victories of Henry V* and *The Troublesome Raigne of King John*', in *Locating the Queen's Men*, ed. Ostovich et al., pp. 171–82 (p. 173).

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>81</sup> Robert Barret, *The Theorike and Practike of Moderne Warres* (London, 1598; STC 1500), Q1r.

*History of the Destruction of Troy*. Indeed, a contrastive analysis of the ideas typically explored in Creede's dramatic and non-dramatic paratexts seems to support a view of Henry as a kind of chivalric knight who takes part in 'Honourable' exploits – a reading that is qualified by the rather unchivalrous events featured in the main play.

As suggested by this brief survey, Creede's paratexts – sometimes written by him, sometimes contributed by others, but always overseen by him – tend to diminish the complexities of the main text in favour of advancing a simple, often didactic, reading that promotes the use of history for patriotic ends. In his playbooks, the authorizing figure of Elizabeth I, introduced through title-page attributions to the Queen's Men, enhances their potential as royalist histories that applaud the queen and the Tudor line. A play like *The Famous Victories* also draws attention to a chivalric culture that was widespread in Elizabethan literature and at court. On the one hand, this parallel secures an interpretative connection between Creede's published output and Elizabeth I; but, on the other hand, it also suggests an interest in aristocratic military exploits that could be controversial and challenge the authority of the monarch (which Henry's actions, as prince, initially do). Indeed, Creede's final playbook with a title-page attribution to the Queen's Men – *Clyomon and Clamydes* – clearly reflects the publisher's interest in the chivalric tradition and sheds light on the other playbooks' understanding of history. The title page describes the play as 'The Historie of the two valiant Knights, Syr Clyomon Knight of the Golden Sheeld, sonne to the King of Denmarke; And Clamydes the white Knight, sonne to the King of Suauia'.<sup>82</sup> Here, 'history' applies to a fictional story that is not otherwise connected to a written or oral historical narrative: as Lisa Hopkins discusses, there was no Danish king called Clyomon and, although the play features Alexander the Great as a character and is nominally set during his reign, it collapses distinctions between time and space by bringing this classical figure into a mythical setting.<sup>83</sup> *Clyomon* offers a tale of heroic adventures, a 'Glasse of glory shining bright', according to its prologue (A2v); but this is a publishing specialism that, across Creede's output, tends to unite real and fictional histories. In my working definition of the 'history play' outlined in the Introduction, I privilege plays that have a connection to an identifiable historical

<sup>82</sup> Anon./[George Peele?], *The Historie of the two valiant Knights, Syr Clyomon Knight of the Golden Sheeld, sonne to the King of Denmarke; And Clamydes the white Knight* (London, 1599; STC 5450a), A2r.

<sup>83</sup> Hopkins, 'Danish', pp. 2, 9.



tradition. Creede's practices, those of a real early modern reader, indicate how this boundary often breaks down. His understanding of 'history', true and feigned, centres on its ability to provide models or warnings for English readers, an application that sometimes introduces a slight tension between the autonomy of the monarch and the competing exploits of a noble elite.

Creede's investment in history and commercial drama has led critics, such as Pinciss, to attribute plays that have uncertain theatrical origins to the Queen's Men.<sup>84</sup> It is not my aim to evaluate the origins of Creede's other playbooks, most of which will remain a matter of speculation. What is interesting for my purposes is the fact that these playbooks draw attention to the consistency of Creede's publishing strategies. They all feature Creede's principal ornament showing 'Truth' and they dramatize a range of different histories that can be used for instruction and delight. *A Looking Glass for London and England*, which was in the repertory of Strange's Men by March 1592, presents its biblical history of Jonah and the sins of Nineveh in the eighth century BCE as a warning for Elizabethan London and England.<sup>85</sup> This admonitory potential is the exclusive emphasis of the playbook's title-page paratexts. Readers have to turn the page to discover the play's actual subject matter. *James IV* is labelled as a 'Scottish Historie', and the title page announces the playbook's interest in the past by advertising historical events that do not actually take place in the play (that is, that James IV was 'slaine at Flodden').<sup>86</sup> *Alphonsus* offers a pseudo-historical play set in Italy, Turkey, and the near East that personifies history through the inclusion of Clío as one of the characters. Similar to *Clyomon*, it seems to invest its fictional account with the signs and symbols of history through its emphasis on the utility of the past and its nominal setting at the time of the conquest of Naples in 1442.<sup>87</sup> Finally, *Lochrine* features early British history that, according to the title page, is 'No lesse pleasant then profitable'.<sup>88</sup> It

<sup>84</sup> Pinciss, 'Repertory', pp. 321–30.

<sup>85</sup> Pinciss ('Repertory', p. 322) assigns *A Looking Glass* to the Queen's Men on the basis of Creede's involvement. Henslowe's *Diary* shows that the play was in the repertory of Strange's Men in March 1592, and Lawrence Manley and Sally-Beth MacLean argue convincingly that there is no clear reason to suppose it originated first with another company. See Manley and MacLean, *Lord Strange's Men and Their Plays* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), pp. 101–03; R. A. Foakes (ed.), *Henslowe's Diary*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 16–17, 19.

<sup>86</sup> Robert Greene, *The Scottish Historie of James the fourth* (London, 1598; STC 12308), A2r.

<sup>87</sup> Robert Greene ('R.G.'), *The Comicall Historie of Alphonsus, King of Aragon* (London, 1599, STC 12233), A3v–A4v. Wiggins, II, pp. 381–85 (No. 788).

<sup>88</sup> Anon./'W.S.', *The Lamentable Tragedie of Lochrine* (London, 1595, STC 21528), A2r.

suggests that the play's account of the 'warres of the Brittaines, and Hunnes' (A2r) will be profitable for readers, and it echoes the paratextual agenda of Creede's other publications, such as *The True Tragedy's* celebration of the Tudor line, *The Famous Victories'* commemoration of an 'Honourable' battle, and *The Trumpet of Fame's* promotion of foreign exploration and acquisition. *Lochrine's* tumultuous events and civil wars – which are not advertised on the title page – introduce a disjunction with this triumphant paratextual reading.

While Creede had an interest in the Queen's Men, it was not an exclusive one. Other stationers (including Edward White) published plays from the company and Creede invested in plays from different playing troupes. Uncertain theatrical origins mean it is possible that half of Creede's playbooks were first performed by companies other than the Queen's Men.<sup>89</sup> Walsh suggests that the initial interest of the Queen's Men in history plays may have been 'driven by Ciceronian principles about the didactic powers of history', but 'the company's actual plays work to complicate the use of history to promote stable political messages'.<sup>90</sup> Creede's playbooks support a similar reading: their paratextual materials fashion a print brand for the Queen's Men as a company invested in the patriotic use of history, but the main plays are less clearly and consistently works of political propaganda. The fact that Creede's unattributed playbooks and non-dramatic texts also display the same interest in the application of 'histories' as contemporary exempla underpinned by an optimistic reflection on England's present and future securely establishes the Queen's Men playbooks as representative of *his* output, rather than the company's complete repertory.

For a few years during the 1590s, Creede emerges as an important printer-publisher in search of, as aptly suggested by his first play title in the Register, looking glasses for London and England. Although the paratexts in his dramatic and non-dramatic publications tend to overlook the complexities of the main texts, it does not follow that Creede was an unintelligent reader or that he was deliberately misrepresenting texts. Publishers needed to choose a way to market their texts, and all reading – including, as this study argues, genre discussions – is motivated by an agenda. Indeed, holding a mirror up to nature is an act that suggests

<sup>89</sup> Of the roughly nine commercial plays that Creede published, the theatrical origins of *A Looking Glass*, *The Pedlar's Prophecy*, *Lochrine*, *James IV*, and *Alphonsus* are uncertain or connected to other companies.

<sup>90</sup> Walsh, *Shakespeare*, p. 31.

partiality: to use history to reflect and instruct the present necessarily involves highlighting certain aspects and excluding others. It offers only a semblance of historical reality, and in Creede's case, his paratexts make a claim for the benefits of reading patriotically, of searching for models and warnings to assist late Elizabethan England.

### Creede and the Emerging Market for Commercial Playbooks

All of Creede's Register entries for commercial plays took place in 1594 – and within a period of only a few months from March to July. He was not alone. In May 1594, Edward White also registered plays from the Queen's Men, and other stationers entered and published plays from different theatre companies at an unprecedented rate during the same year. In total, nineteen commercial plays were printed in 1594 – all of which were first editions with the exception of *The Spanish Tragedy* – and twenty-one were entered in the Register.<sup>91</sup> Although critics have debated the reasons for this 'bumper year', the prominence of history plays within the first major publication boom in commercial drama has not been recognized, which perhaps owes something to the enduring emphasis, in accounts of the genre, on Shakespeare's Folio histories, represented by just one of the 1594 plays – *The First Part of the Contention of the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster* (2 *Henry VI* in the Folio).<sup>92</sup> Moreover, only three of these plays are described as 'histories' on their title pages, a usage that, in the case

<sup>91</sup> The nineteen plays (with their Register dates, if entered) are: *The Spanish Tragedy* (6 October 1592 to Jeffes); *Edward II* (6 July 1593 to William Jones (2)); *Jack Straw* (23 October 1593 to Danter); *Orlando Furioso* (7 December 1593 to Danter); *A Knack to Know a Knave* (7 January 1594 to Richard Jones); *Titus Andronicus* (6 February 1594 to Danter); *A Looking Glass for London and England* (5 March 1594 to Creede); *The First Part of the Contention* (12 March 1594 to Millington); *The Taming of a Shrew* (2 May 1594 to Short); *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (14 May 1594 to White); *The Wounds of Civil War* (24 May 1594 to Danter); *The Cobbler's Prophecy* (8 June 1594 to Burby); *Mother Bombie* (18 June 1594 to Burby); *The True Tragedy of Richard III* (19 June 1594 to Creede); *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (9 February 1596, transfer to Linley); *The Battle of Alcazar* (no entry); *Selimus* (no entry); *The Wars of Cyrus* (no entry); and *The Massacre at Paris* (no entry). The other plays entered in 1594 but not published that year are: *The Pedlar's Prophecy* (13 May to Creede, published 1595); *Lochrine* (20 July to Creede, published 1595); *The Famous Victories of Henry V* (14 May to Creede, published 1598); *James IV* (14 May to Creede, published 1598); *David and Fair Bathsheba* (14 May to White, published 1599); *King Leir* (14 May to White, published 1605); *The Four Prentices of London* (19 June to Danter, published 1615); *The Jew of Malta* (14 May to Ling and Millington, published 1633); 'John of Gaunt' (14 May to White, lost); 'Robin Hood and Little John' (14 May to White, lost); and 'Heliogabalus' (19 June to Danter, lost).

<sup>92</sup> See Knutson, 'What's So Special about 1594?', pp. 449–67; and Holger Schott Syme, 'The Meaning of Success: Stories of 1594 and Its Aftermath', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 61:4 (2010), 490–525.

of *Orlando Furioso* ('Historie') and *The Taming of a Shrew* ('Pleasant Conceited Historie'), mostly carries the meaning of a fictional story. Only *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* ('Honorable Historie') could convincingly be described as dramatizing the past through the connection of its title characters to the historical figures Roger Bacon and Thomas Bungay and the play's plot involving the future Edward I.<sup>93</sup> The limited and/or indeterminate use of 'history' as a label for plays that dramatize the past is in keeping with patterns on Creede's playbook title pages and for the period as a whole.<sup>94</sup> Creede specialized in accounts of the past that took dramatic and non-dramatic forms, but he favours the classically derived terms 'tragedy' and 'comedy' as genre labels for plays. Similarly, most of the other 1594 playbooks that feature an identifiable historical past are described as tragedies, or their broad thematic concerns about leadership, military conflict, and civil uprising are highlighted through terms such as 'battle', 'contention', 'massacre', 'reign', 'wars', and 'wounds'. In this section, I consider briefly the nature of this wider publication boom in history plays, arguing that it reveals an overlooked diversity in plays about the past, that it clarifies the emerging market for commercial playbooks, and that it was potentially a means of advertising the newly reopened theatres and developing a new platform for their plays as printed books.

The 1594 playbooks dramatize a wide range of histories, which qualifies one of the most quoted accounts of the period's theatrical offerings. In Thomas Nashe's *Pierce Penniless* (1592), the title character claims that the subject of plays 'for the most part' is 'borrowed out of our English Chronicles, wherein our forefathers valiant actes (that haue lyne long buried in rustie brasse and worme-eaten bookes) are reuiued'.<sup>95</sup> Nashe's text should not be taken too literally as an indicator of repertory patterns. His account of plays staged in London is part of the fictional narrator's supplication to the Devil and is contained within a section about the prevalence of sloth (one of the seven deadly sins) in sixteenth-century society. Plays are presented as an antidote to sloth, and Pierce's description is informed by his agenda to defend the theatres as a place of recreation and profitable instruction. Like Sidney's *Defence*, Nashe's prose narrative seems

<sup>93</sup> David Bergeron ("Bogus", pp. 93–112) also classifies the play as a 'history', carrying the meaning of an account of the past, and disagrees strongly with David Bevington's description of the play as 'bogus' history in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology* (New York: Norton, 2002), p. 129.

<sup>94</sup> See Introduction, pp. 15, 25–31.

<sup>95</sup> Thomas Nashe, *Pierce Penniless his Supplication to the Diuell* (London, 1592; STC 18371), H2r.

to make a clear statement about theatrical patterns and kinds, but it is shaped by impulses other than a considered assessment of company repertoires and is offered by a narrator who is far from reliable. Nashe may have underlined the significance of English history for other reasons too: Pierce goes on to recall the personation of 'braue Talbot' (H2r), which probably alludes to a production of *1 Henry VI* (as named in the Folio). Nashe likely contributed to this play, so the defence serves a promotional function as well.

The group of playbooks published in 1594 offers a better view of the historical pasts that appeared on stages in London and across the country than Nashe's account.<sup>96</sup> They feature classical history in *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and *The Wounds of Civil War* (which dramatizes the conflict between Marius and Sulla between c.88 and 87 BCE); biblical history in *A Looking Glass for London and England*; and relatively recent history in *The Battle of Alcazar* (dramatizing the historical battle from 1578) and *The Massacre at Paris* (dramatizing the St Bartholomew's Day massacre of 1572). Evidence from Henslowe's *Diary* indicates high performance takings and frequencies for some of these plays. Strange's Men performed *The Battle of Alcazar* (as 'mvlomvrco' and variants) fourteen times at the Rose theatre between February 1592 and January 1593, making it their third most frequently staged play, while *The Massacre at Paris* recorded the highest average receipts for the company.<sup>97</sup> Of course, the 1594 playbooks were written and first performed at different times and should not be seen to reflect, comprehensively and statically, repertory patterns from the early 1590s; but that does not alter the fact that they testify to the prominence of other histories in the public playhouses. Alongside Creede's biblical, English, and Turkish histories, they draw attention to the diversity of early modern historical culture on stage and in print. What remains particularly relevant about Nashe's discussion is its promotion of historical drama for the purposes of emulation – a factor that also informs Creede's investment and which ultimately serves to connect different histories rather than divide them.

By investing in these histories, publishers speculated that they would be of interest to readers, and the fact that some, like Creede, specialized in non-dramatic histories and topical news pamphlets implies an overlap – in

<sup>96</sup> See also Manley and MacLean, *Lord Strange's Men*, chs. 3 and 4, appendix B.

<sup>97</sup> It is uncertain if 'mvlomvrco' (meaning Muly Molocco) indicates Peele's *Battle of Alcazar*. Manley and MacLean argue that it does (*ibid.*, pp. 75–78, 339); see also Wiggins, III, pp. 160–61 (No. 918).

theme and readership – between these materials. Thomas Millington, for example, published *The First Part of the Contention*, as well as short, politically invested texts such as *News from Brest* (1594) and *The Copy of a Letter Sent by the French King to the People of Artois and Hainault* (1595). The former is a pamphlet about Sir John Norris's successful attack, in 1594, on Fort Crozon outside Brest in Brittany, which was in aid of the Protestant Henri IV of France's efforts against the Catholic League and Spanish troops.<sup>98</sup> The latter is also concerned with the French Wars of Religion and features Henri IV's declaration of 'open warre against the king of Spaine and his adherents, and the causes him mouing therto'.<sup>99</sup> The staging of political debate, uprisings, and a French connection (through Margaret of Anjou) in *The First Part of the Contention* would therefore provide a fitting accompaniment to Millington's topical pamphlets. During the 1590s, playhouse plays 'began to establish a stable market' in print, as Andy Kesson and Emma Smith suggest, by ensuring they could be 'read well beyond the theatre by a wide readership as a means to connect with contemporary political and social debate'.<sup>100</sup> The first readers to make these connections were publishers, and the first site of exchange between non-dramatic texts and history playbooks was the bookstall.

Interestingly, Creede worked directly with Millington on *The First Part of the Contention*: he was hired as trade printer for the edition. The presentation of this playbook recalls the recognizable Creede brand discussed earlier.<sup>101</sup> The title page contains his signature woodcut of 'Truth', and its *mise en page* resembles those from his own publications, which offers a useful reminder of the influence that trade printers could have over the final design of playbooks. Millington entered the play in the Register on 12 March 1594 at a similar time to Creede's own entry, on 5 March, for *A Looking Glass for London and England*. These two playbooks link Creede to neighbouring booksellers who had premises close to theatrical venues. Barley's bookshop in Gracechurch Street, given in the title-page imprint of *A Looking Glass*, was in the immediate vicinity of Millington's shop under St Peter's Church, as well as two playing venues – the Cross

<sup>98</sup> Anon., *Newes from Brest* (London, 1594; STC 18654).

<sup>99</sup> Anon./Henri IV of France, *The Copie of a Letter sent by the French king* (London, 1595; STC 13119), A1r.

<sup>100</sup> Andy Kesson and Emma Smith, 'Introduction: Towards a Definition of Print Popularity', in *Elizabethan Top Ten*, ed. Kesson and Smith, pp. 1–15 (p. 6).

<sup>101</sup> See also Helen Smith, who writes of the 'Creede effect', because of his distinctive house style and its use within texts he published and those he printed for others. Smith, 'Mapping', p. 83.

Keys and Bell Inn, which were associated with the Queen's Men.<sup>102</sup> The geographical proximity of bookshops, theatrical venues, and Creede's dealings with both Barley and Millington could have shaped the stationers' investment and presentation strategies, contributed to the acquisition of playscripts, and encouraged trade from passing playgoers.

Because of their potential for contemporary application, history plays may have presented themselves as the most relevant thematic grouping for publishers, which offers a tentative explanation – dependent on playscript availability – for the dominance of historical subject matter in printed plays from this period. The acquisition of manuscripts must, however, be briefly addressed. As most of the 1594 plays (including Creede's) were entered in the Register between March and July, it appears as if a large number of plays from the commercial stages suddenly became available to stationers. For example, at almost the same time as Creede's entries, White received the rights on 14 May 1594 to *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (published 1594) and *King Leir* (published 1605), both from the Queen's Men.<sup>103</sup> The fact that two London stationers, working independently, acquired a number of plays from the company suggests that members may have been actively offering their playscripts to stationers. One still-prevalent theory is that, because of prolonged theatre closures due to the plague, theatre companies released their playscripts to stationers as part of an effort to raise much-needed financial revenue. Recent scholars, including Erne, Knutson, and Syme, have substantially discredited this theory.<sup>104</sup> Playscripts (which were of considerably lower value than a company's other assets, such as costumes) would not have raised significant funds for the Queen's Men or for any theatre company.<sup>105</sup> The accompanying assumption that the sale of playscripts was a last resort for companies as their publication could limit performance takings is also untenable: the theatre and the book trade were two different environments and there is

<sup>102</sup> See, for example, the licence (28 November 1583) given to the Queen's Men to play at the Bull and Bell inns, in E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), IV, p. 296; David Kathman, 'London Inns As Playing Venues for the Queen's Men', in *Locating the Queen's Men*, ed. Ostovich et al., pp. 65–76.

<sup>103</sup> In the same Register entry, dated 14 May 1594, White also entered Peele's *Love of David and Fair Bathsheba* (from an unknown company; published 1599) and the now-lost texts 'John of Gaunt' and 'Robin Hood and Little John', both of unknown origins and authorship. This batched entry shows White's name replacing Adam Islip for all five titles. See Arber, II, p. 649.

<sup>104</sup> Erne, *Literary Dramatist*, ch. 5; Knutson, 'The Repertory', in *New History of Early English Drama*, ed. Cox and Kastan, pp. 461–80; Knutson, 'What's So Special about 1594?', pp. 449–67; and Syme, 'Meaning', pp. 490–525.

<sup>105</sup> Blayney, 'Publication', pp. 394–96.

no clear evidence to indicate that the publication of plays curtailed their performance success.<sup>106</sup>

A narrative of company decline has also distorted the reasons for the release of playscripts from the Queen's Men, which has not only been seen as a consequence of theatre closures in London, but also of growing competition from other companies, specifically the Admiral's Men and the newly formed Chamberlain's Men.<sup>107</sup> There is not, however, any firm evidence that the Queen's Men were in decline in May 1594, when the majority of playscripts were entered in the Register.<sup>108</sup> During the 1593–94 Christmas court season, the Queen's Men provided (on 6 January) the only theatrical entertainment noted in the records.<sup>109</sup> In April, they performed at the Rose theatre with Sussex's Men, recording greater average takings per performance than the Admiral's Men would upon their establishment at the Rose later in the year.<sup>110</sup> When the Queen's Men started touring again in July 1594, the payments recorded in provincial accounts are consistent with earlier amounts and do not suggest a company struggling with financial difficulties.<sup>111</sup>

One useful and adaptable theory is that the publication of playbooks was intended as an advertisement for theatre companies and to anticipate the return of stable playing conditions.<sup>112</sup> In May 1594, playing resumed on a regular basis at the London theatres after periods of prolonged closure from mid-1592, owing to Privy Council orders and the plague.<sup>113</sup> Plays from the Admiral's Men and Pembroke's Men appeared on the bookstalls alongside those from the Queen's Men, possibly with an aim to generate interest in London's theatrical offerings. As it was common practice for the title pages of books to be pasted around London (on stalls, posts, and walls), the appearance of these playbooks – most of which contained attributions to their companies – could have worked alongside playbills

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 386; Erne, *Literary Dramatist*, ch. 5.

<sup>107</sup> Gurr, for example, proposes that this 'duopoly' had severe repercussions for other companies, in *Shakespearean Playing Companies* (pp. 206–11).

<sup>108</sup> Knutson ('What's So Special about 1594?', pp. 449–67) and Syme ('Meaning', pp. 490–525) have challenged the view that other playing companies were floundering in the wake of the so-called duopoly, claiming it may well have been 'business as usual' (Knutson, p. 467). Syme offers a clear account of the development of Gurr's narrative and its problems – most notably, in the way in which it is increasingly stated as fact (see pp. 491–92).

<sup>109</sup> Chambers, *Elizabethan Stage*, IV, p. 108. <sup>110</sup> See Syme, 'Meaning', p. 496.

<sup>111</sup> See McMillin and MacLean, *Queen's Men*, pp. 170–88.

<sup>112</sup> Blayney, 'Publication', pp. 386–87.

<sup>113</sup> Court documents and records in Henslowe's *Diary* suggest the London theatres were closed from 23 June to 28 December 1592, from 2 February to 26 December 1593, and from 7 February to 31 March 1594. Most (but not all) of these closures can be attributed to outbreaks of the plague. Foakes (ed.), *Henslowe's Diary*, pp. 19–21; Chambers, *Elizabethan Stage*, IV, pp. 313–14, 345–51.



to advertise the resumption of playing and add to the visual presence of theatre in the city. However, the fact that the plague often worsened in the summer months (as it did in 1593, one of the most devastating years) suggests that companies could not count on the long-term lifting of playing restrictions nor use the sale of playbooks to announce, with certainty, their return to venues in London.

The publication boom also reflects an emerging interest in a new medium for theatre – the play as a book. Jones's 1590 edition of *Tamburlaine* from the Admiral's Men may have been a turning point for the publication of playbooks. As discussed in the Introduction, Jones's unprecedented paratextual address announces the importance of commercial playbooks for 'Gentlemen Readers' (A2r) and he claims to have improved Marlowe's plays with the interests of his sophisticated readers in mind.<sup>114</sup> This repackaging of *Tamburlaine* was successful and Jones published another edition in 1593, just before the influx of Register entries in 1594. Although playscripts needed to be available in the first place, stationers carried the financial risk of the venture and had to choose to invest. The success of *Tamburlaine*, including its recent reprinted edition, could have prompted other stationers to publish plays from the commercial stages and experiment with this relatively new textual commodity.

Stationers adopted different marketing strategies, but one prominent approach for the 1594 playbooks – the inclusion of title-page attributions to gentlemanly writers and aristocratic patrons – potentially reveals the influence of non-commercial playbook practices and the ways in which they had already shaped drama as a textual category in print. As Atkin demonstrates, pre-playhouse plays with connections to the Inns of Court, the universities, or classical drama often announced their academic credentials through a range of title-page attributions and discursive paratexts.<sup>115</sup> While none of the 1594 playbooks contain paratextual addresses, a significant proportion name their dramatist(s) and give an indication of gentlemanly status or university education on the title page: *A Looking Glass for London and England* ('Made by Thomas Lodge Gentleman, and Robert Greene'), *The Wounds of Civil War* ('Written by Thomas Lodge Gent'), *The Massacre at Paris* ('Written by Christopher Marlow'), *Edward II* ('Written by Chri. Marlow Gent'), *Dido, Queen of Carthage* ('Written by Christopher Marlowe, and Thomas Nash. Gent'), *The Cobbler's Prophecy* ('Written by Robert Wilson. Gent'), and *Friar*

<sup>114</sup> For the significance of Jones's editions, see Melnikoff, 'Jones's Pen', pp. 184–209.

<sup>115</sup> Atkin, *Reading Drama*, pp. 120–33.

*Bacon and Friar Bungay* ('Made by Robert Greene, Maister of Arts').<sup>116</sup> Many of these playbooks also specify the company that performed the play, which, by extension, links aristocratic patrons with the text and serves an additional authorizing function. These attributional innovations do not represent a consistent design on the part of one publisher, as the playbooks were issued by a number of different stationers, including Creede, Danter, White, William Jones, Thomas Woodcock, and Cuthbert Burby. But they do reveal that these stationers, none of whom invested significantly in non-commercial drama, were adopting similar tactics to legitimize the status of commercial plays as texts to be read.<sup>117</sup> These strategies did not, however, establish a norm for playbook presentation, and detailed attributions like these tend to disappear from commercial playbooks after 1594. It is not until later in the period that playhouse plays start to resemble non-commercial drama in their selection and presentation of paratexts.

This chapter has shown that a contrastive analysis of performance contexts and print patterns for history plays challenges two prevailing assumptions about the Queen's Men: that they were in decline by 1594 and that their repertory was dominated by English history. First, there is little evidence to prove that the Queen's Men were in financial difficulty in May 1594, and Creede's entry of five play titles in the Register between May and July (only two of which are securely attributed to the company) does not support this assumption. The evidence of other stationers' investments in this year also suggests a widespread interest in (history) plays that is not dependent upon falling company fortunes. Second, print and stage patterns should not be conflated. The reputation of the Queen's Men as dramatizers of English history may be more accurately a print identity. The example of Creede shows how his investment in history plays was likely contingent upon strategies of selection and presentation for dramatic *and* non-dramatic texts. His playbooks enable understanding, because they are one of our main points of access to the repertory of the Queen's Men, but they also limit understanding, because his choices are selective and speculative. One of the dominant critical views of the Queen's Men – as a company designed to promote Protestant and

<sup>116</sup> Prior to these editions, no playbook from the commercial stages had contained unambiguous title-page attributions to dramatists: previously, only *Three Ladies of London* (attributed to 'R.W.' on its title page) in 1584 and *Edward I* (attributed to 'George Peele Maister of Artes in Oxenforde' on its final page; L3v) in 1593 had referred to authorship.

<sup>117</sup> Of these stationers, only Creede (in *Menaechmi*, 1595) and Woodcock (in *Andria*, 1588) invested in non-commercial drama.

royalist sympathies – owes much to the agendas and wider investments of the stationers who turned these plays into books.

### Conclusions

As one of the first stationers to specialize in commercial plays that dramatize the past, Creede and his practices are key for understanding how history plays fit into the historical culture of the period and the book trade. Print paratexts tend to position his playbooks as profitable and truthful histories that could be used as looking glasses for the present. They sometimes advertise a link with important historiographical works (such as Hall's *Union* in *Richard III*) or contemporary events (such as the poisoning plot associated with Roderigo Lopez). They tend to offer readings that temper some of the histories' broader complexities and promote a patriotic ideological packaging that can be linked to the authorizing figure of Elizabeth I, especially when title pages contain attributions to the Queen's Men. Crucially for my purposes, Creede's playbooks, when considered alongside his wider output, draw attention to competing notions of 'history'. Although his texts tend to advertise their 'pastness' and seem to connote historicity, they variously draw on 'true' and fictional materials that are nevertheless united through a similar purpose: the provision of exemplary and counter-exemplary models for readers in England. Through Creede's investments, we can see how one early modern reader negotiated the unruly parameters and purposes of history.