

**OF BEASTS AND MEN:
ANIMAL BLOODSPORTS IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND**

A dissertation

submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Drama

TUFTS UNIVERSITY

May 2013

ADVISER:

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Abstract

Of all the sites of conflict that occupy theatre historians, early modern England is one of the most vexing on account of its Janus-faced popular culture: on the one hand, we have the “monumentals” of English drama, Shakespeare, Marlowe and Jonson; on the other, we have a seemingly unquenchable thirst for blood. Between the years of 1500 and 1700, a variety of combat-based sports involving animals made up a sizable portion of the entertainments on offer to English citizens. Bear-baiting, monkey-baiting, cock-fights, dog-fights, and bull-baiting are just a few examples of the many “barbaric” spectacles which English men and women from every class flocked to see, but they are among those most often glossed over in theatre histories of this period. Such bloodsports do not fit into our commonly accepted view of the English Renaissance as a time of humanistic triumph over the medieval, but like it or not, they were major sources of entertainment for people of all classes, and operated hand-in-hand with the famous theatres of Southwark, the Rose and the Globe.

Acknowledgements

My thanks go to Calista Lucy at the Dulwich College archives, Arnold Hunt of the British Library; and Cath Maloney, Steve Tucker, David Saxby, Julian Bowsher, Karen Thomas, and everyone at the Museum of London Archeological Archives and LAARC. I am grateful to my advisor Downing Cless for his seemingly inexhaustible patience and enthusiasm, and to Laurence Senelick for always steering me towards the better questions. Thanks also to my thoughtful committee members Kevin Dunn and Erika Rundle. My personal thanks to my college mentor Paul Nelsen, and to Rita Dioguardi, the heart and soul of Tufts Drama Department. This dissertation could not have been completed without the tireless support of my family, and my extended cheer-squad at Tufts, Grub Street, CCAE, and beyond.

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Introduction:

Unhouseled Bones

Handling animal-bones is an everyday occurrence for many people, myself included. After graduating from college, I spent a year working at the meat-counter in a grocery store, where the presence of bones, blood, and flesh was ubiquitous. Despite our best efforts, blood frequently stained our clothes and our shoes, and—worst of all—the smell of meat in various stages of decay lingered in our hair, and our nostrils. However, the experience by no means ruined my taste for meat. These days, I prefer to buy whole chickens and break them down into portions for freezing, and make a stock by roasting and then boiling the bones. The carcass is treated as just that—a carcass, which is used up and then discarded.

The bones of the baited bear which I was allowed to handle at the Museum of London Archives in September 2011 demanded a kind of reverence that most of us never think to pay the animals we consume. This was an animal consumed by humans in a very different way from the chickens, cattle, pigs and lambs I was used to handling. The bear died and was buried sometime in the late sixteenth-century, when it was still considered a juvenile, and perhaps “would have been too young to fight,” and “may have been in training but died before reaching its full

potential.”¹ The lower legbone that I held was chipped and scraped. The bear may have been butchered for dogmeat before the carcass was discarded. Although this particular bear may never have been subjected to the baiting-ring in its full horror, the evidence suggests that it died a violent death nonetheless, perhaps killed by a pack of dogs likewise in training to one day enter the arena, and possibly die there themselves. On the same visit, I was also permitted to handle two dog skulls excavated from the same area: in and around the grounds of the Rose and the Globe playhouses. These skulls showed clear marks of butchery. The dogs of the baiting-rings lived, in part, on the meat of their fallen comrades.

Although animal, these bones resound with suffering that is not at all inhuman but, to employ Elaine Scarry’s words, “anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned.”² In the same way that human bones, when the individuals died traumatically, emit a kind of silent shriek, the bones of the bears, dogs, and horses that have been unearthed from the refuse-heaps of the Bankside Bear Gardens seem to vibrate with “inexpressible” pain. These animals had a use-value not unlike that of cattle, pigs, and chickens in the modern world, but unlike the creatures that live and die on factory farms, the bear garden animals’ suffering was not a consequence of human carelessness, but the aim and purpose of their very existences. Bears, horses, bulls, and dogs had other uses, whether for meat or leather or other by-products. But they were not farm animals—they were “game” animals, and therefore a part of the leisure and pleasure industry that encompassed sport as well as popular entertainment. Perhaps this is why their bones have such an unusual effect on the imagination: because these

¹ Julian Bowsher and Pat Miller, *The Rose and the Globe Playhouses of Shakespeare’s Bankside, Southwark: Excavations 1988-90*, London: Lavenham Press, 2009; 79.

² Elaine Scarry, *The Body In Pain*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985; 4.

animals died in service to a human need that is often presumed to be “above” mere hunger, that being the appetite for ritual, spectacle, and story-telling—in other words, for theatre.

The living animals were incapable of telling their story except through “sounds and cries,” but their bones speak loud and clear. They died in an age when human eloquence, at least in terms of the English language, was achieving new heights. Just yards away from where they were buried, the plays of Shakespeare, Marlowe, Kyd, and Jonson debuted, in which, as James Allard and Matthew Martin discuss in *Staging Pain: Violence and Trauma in British Theatre*, representations of pain and suffering abound:

Required to fashion new ways of staging pain and defining its meaning, the theatre of the period did so in constant dialogue with (and often in direct competition with) the various public spectacles of pain that proliferated in the period, from martyrdom to flogging and hanging... [T]he drama of the period is very much engaged in exploiting, critiquing, and reworking the complex set of interrelations between pain and theatre that played itself out on stages other than the ones at the Globe or Drury Lane.³

Allard and Martin mention only forms of human suffering here, but animal suffering also took part in this exchange between stage-blood and real bloodshed. In *Stage, Stake, and Scaffold: Humans and Animals in Shakespeare's Theatre*, Andreas Höfele deals especially with the Bear

³ James Robert Allard and Matthew Martin, *Staging Pain, 1580-1800: Violence and Trauma in British Theatre*, Burlington, VT: Ashgate Press, 2009; 7-8.

Garden's apparent hold over the imagination of William Shakespeare, in whose plays images of bear-baiting appear with astonishing frequency. "Like Hamlet's 'old mole' stirring underfoot," says Höfele, "the animal bones buried in the foundations of the playhouse furnish the stage of human action with a ghostly double, a silent reminder of the non-verbal sound and fury that accompanied the Shakespearean stage."⁴

But what exactly was this accompaniment? Why were early modern theatre and bloodsports so intimately related? In 1923, E.K. Chambers termed bear-baiting a "rather troublesome question," one with which scholars continue to struggle nearly a century later.⁵ Early modern bear-baiting, and animal-bloodsports in general, present a terrible conundrum: the same age that produced our most celebrated literature, literature that has in fact been credited with "the making of" modern Western society, also indulged in practices that are deeply abhorrent to current ways of thinking. How is it possible for one time and place to foster Shakespeare on the one hand and support massive institutions of animal cruelty on the other? How can we begin to reconcile the idea of an "English Renaissance" with the overwhelming prevalence of this "barbarous sport?"

Höfele's answer is that we simply must, for the theatre of Shakespeare and the baiting-ring "bred an ever-ready potential for a transfer of powerfully affective images and meanings. The staging of one of these kinds of performance is always framed by, always grounded in, an awareness of the other [...] it always implies [the other's] absent-presence, a presence never quite

⁴ Andreas Höfele, *Stage, Stake, and Scaffold: Humans and Animals in Shakespeare's Theatre*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010; 2.

⁵ In Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, vol 2, Oxford, UK: The Clarendon Press, 1923; 449.

erased and sometimes, indeed, emphatically foregrounded.”⁶ If the playhouse and the baiting-ring essentially feed into the same meme, then there is no sense in “reconciling” the one with the other—obviously, they are already reconciled. As much as modern-day audiences are either alienated from or frustrated by the tropes of the early modern stage—the poetic language, the archaisms, the tortuously complicated plots—the most alienating aspect of all may reside in the plays’ embeddedness in a culture that strikes us as cruel, even psychopathic. Alternatively, the simulated cruelty of early modern theatre provides us with a vantage of the actual cruelties of early modern animal-baiting and public punishments that is recognizably modern. As Cynthia Marshall says in her book *The Shattering of the Self: Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts*, “[c]ontemporary terms such as *sadomasochism* and *jouissance* can be shown to coincide in reference with an earlier language of catharsis, heartbreak, and passion.”⁷ Far from the decorous lyrical pageants that the nineteenth century imagined, the plays of Shakespeare were every bit as violent and sensationalist as those of his earlier rival, Marlowe. As early modern bearwards often staged bouts between their animals so that the conflict—and by extension, the animals’ pain—would escalate towards points of climax, early modern playwrights also relied on the performance of suffering to arouse audiences’ passions. To use Marshall’s words, “theatrical pleasures may be distinctly paradoxical”: i.e., the act of bearing witness to another’s suffering, whether real or pretended, in a space where passive voyeurism is permissible causes the voyeur to experience emotions opposite to those he or she might feel upon seeing the same atrocities

⁶ Hofele, *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷ Cynthia Marshall, *The Shattering of the Self: Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002; 7-8.

enacted elsewhere.⁸ The result is pleasure, and the phenomenon, catharsis.

The problem of how to explain catharsis in the baiting-ring brings us back to the animals themselves. Another way of phrasing Höfele's transfer of meanings between the baiting-ring and the playhouse might be, as Erica Fudge states, "[r]eading about animals is always reading through humans, and [...] reading about humans is reading through animals."⁹ Early modern eye-witnesses to animal-baitings, whether they were delighted or horrified by what they reported, nearly always relied on anthropomorphic descriptions of the animal combatants. Bears and bulls could be adjudged "courageous" for steadfastly defending themselves, or dogs "noble," or apes "foolish." The brutality of human participants, such as those who perform the whipping of the blind bear, could indeed be conversely viewed as bestial.¹⁰

Although early modern philosophy draws very distinct lines between "brute creation" and man, the natural world's "sole and arbitrary king," this anthropocentric worldview resulted in bizarrely "humanlike" readings of animals and their behavior.¹¹ Such readings have antecedents in the populist theology espoused by religious authorities, lay-preachers, and philosophers alike, which claimed that "[e]very animal was... intended to serve some human purpose, if not practical, then moral or aesthetic...

Savage beasts were necessary instruments of God's wrath, left among us to 'be our schoolmasters,' thought James Pilkington, the Elizabethan bishop; they

⁸ Marshall, 19.

⁹ Erica Fudge, *Perceiving Animals*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000; 3.

¹⁰ In chapter one I will quote the playwright Thomas Dekker's remarkable account of a bear-baiting he attended, wherein humans and animals go through just such an ontological shift.

¹¹ From a 1735 poem by William Somerville, quoted in Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983; 22.

fostered human courage and provided useful training for war. Horse-flies, guessed the Virginian gentleman William Byrd in 1728, had been created ‘so that men should exercise their wits and industry to guard themselves against them.’ Apes and parrots had been ordained ‘for man’s mirth.’ Singing birds were devised ‘on purpose to entertain and delight mankind.’¹²

It follows that anthropocentrism is necessary in the “correct” interpretation of God’s purpose behind the creation of each and every beast, and especially necessary when such beasts are put on display. This is the reasoning behind Mrs. Peacham’s remark in John Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera* when she says, “You should go to Hockley in the Hole, and to Marybone [the sites of bear gardens], child, to learn valor.”¹³

Not surprisingly, early modern defenders of the stage often resorted to similar arguments: that playgoing edified the spectator with moral instruction, as Thomas Heywood proposes in his *Apology for Actors* (1612):

What profit many may attaine by playes,
To the most criticke eye this booke displaies,
Braue men, braue acts, being brauely acted too,
Makes, as men see things done, desire to do.¹⁴

¹² Thomas, 19.

¹³ John Gay, *The Beggar’s Opera*, London, 1728; 7.

¹⁴ Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors*, London: Nicholas Oakes, 1612; 6.

This suggests an interesting parallel between the animals of the baiting-ring and the actors of the playhouse, in which the performer of the spectacle becomes inextricably linked to the “purpose” of the spectacle, which in both cases is to provide examples for emulation. Just as the player vanishes into his part, the baited bear or bull’s suffering vanishes into the enactment of “valor.”

The links between theatre and bloodsports are not always so intangible. Until very recently, the study of bear-baiting was relegated to architectural comparisons between baiting-rings and playhouses, leading to a long, and still ongoing, chicken-and-egg debate.¹⁵ However, the connections between the two forms certainly run deeper than that. The question of whether baiting-rings copied playhouse architecture, or playhouses copied baiting-rings, may never be answered, and may even be the wrong question to ask. Rather, it is more productive to consider how these spectacles informed and borrowed from one another, and whether the outer appearance of the structures might not reflect similar, though less physical, processes of exchange. Certainly, the manner in which animal-baitings and plays were seen by their audiences may have been almost, if not in some cases truly, identical, as in the case of Philip Henslowe’s Hope Playhouse, designed for “Stage Playes on Mundayes, Wednesdayes, Fridayes and Saturdayes, And for the Baiting of Beares on Tuesdayes and Thursdayes.”¹⁶ Whether the shows themselves resembled each other visually, or even thematically, is a difficult question to answer, but at the very least we can be certain that theatre and animal-baiting stirred mutual sense-memories in their audiences, even in such cases where they were relegated to different structures. The relationship between spectator and action would have been much the same at the Bear Garden as in the playhouses. An

¹⁵ I will deal with this in more depth in chapter 1.

¹⁶ John Stow, quoted in Hofele, *Stake, Stage, and Scaffold*, 7.

individual could patronize the Bear Garden on Thursday—a traditional day for bear-baiting—and the playhouse on Friday, and stand at the same position in the galleries, viewing the action from nearly the same vantage. This superimposition of experiences would have been all the more vivid at venues like the Hope, or possibly even the Rose, where bears, dogs, and actors all shared the same building.¹⁷

With this in mind, we can return to “mysterious” moments of conflation—the most famous being Wenceslaus Hollar’s visual confusion of “the Beere bayting” for “the Globe,” and vice-versa, in his “Long View” of London—with fresh perspective. Imagine, for example, attending a production of *Julius Caesar* at a football stadium, and then the next night, returning to see a game played on the same turf. Now imagine doing so over and over again, year after year. Inevitably, the plays will harbor echoes of “sporting” energy, and quite possibly, the football matches will take on shades of the theatrical. Such transfers of meaning would occur through the visual recognition of features that the audience-member comes to associate with both football matches and plays, but even more so through other, more visceral senses. Football would smell, taste, and feel that same as theatre—the same hard plastic seats, the same tastes and smells of salty food and stale beer, the same acoustic qualities in the applause as in the cheers and chants. In the case of early modern baiting-rings and playhouses, it was not simply that the exterior

¹⁷ The question of whether or not the Rose had a removable stage as did the Hope remains quite contentious. Archeological excavations of the Rose have turned up some evidence to suggest that it had a “tacked on” stage. Of course, the stage at Hope has not been uncovered for comparison, and in the absence of remains that can be positively identified as those of a “removable” or “temporary” stage, it is difficult to say exactly what such a structure would have looked like or how it might have worked. Where was it stored when it was not in use? How was it built to expedite quick assembly and disassembly? How was it secured to the ground? Could it be repositioned around the space? These are all questions to which we are lacking in answers, and may go unanswered indefinitely if no further excavations are conducted on the site of the Hope. For an argument in favor of a removable stage at the Rose, see Andrew Gurr, “Bears and Players: Philip Henslowe’s Double Acts,” in *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 22 (2004), 31-41.

structures bore a striking resemblance to one another, but the *interior* aspects—interior to the patron’s body no less—that generated a profound sense of overlap.

Such was not always the case. What makes the period roughly between 1575 and 1658 so fascinating in terms of animal-baiting is that these several decades saw an exchange occur between bloodsports and theatre of a kind seen nowhere else in English culture. Although shows of violence have long been a part of popular entertainment, it was during the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I that real violence, real death, took place in exactly the same venues as comedies and tragedies—which were themselves often fraught with simulated violence and death. Prior to the mid-1570s, animal-baiting was an outdoor sport closely related to hunting, in particular, to the training of dogs.¹⁸ By the time of James I’s accession, animal-baiting had become a complex, episodic spectacle such as that described in a handwritten notice found amongst the Henslowe and Alleyn papers at Dulwich College:

Tomorrowe beinge Thursdaie shalbe seen at the Beargardin on the banckside a greate mach plaied by the gamstirs of Essex who hath challenged all comers what soeuer to plaie v dogges at the single beare for v pounds and also to wearie a bull dead at the stake and for your better content shall haue pleasant sport with the horse and ape and whiping of the blind beare. *Vivat Rex.*

By this time it had also taken on an entirely new significance under the “directorship” of James I, whose “inquisitive mind” transformed animal-baiting from a rustic sport to a theatre of

¹⁸ See chapter 2 for more on this.

experimental philosophy, attended notably by members of James's private circle—a self-fashioned intelligensia. Under Elizabeth, and even as early as the reign of Henry VIII, animal-baiting had been included in royal celebrations, usually as part of a grander spectacle. During James's rule, animal-baiting became ever more extreme and ever more contrived, pitting exotic animals, in particular lions and polar bears, against a variety of animals both adversarial and passively symbolic, such as lambs.¹⁹

As the era long referred to as the English Renaissance progressed, animal-baiting went through several stages, from sideshow to stadium extravaganza to something almost akin to a masque. It would seem an unlikely coincidence that theatre should have gone through an eerily similar and simultaneous transformation without there being some crucial point of intersection between the two forms. Changing attitudes about the nature of performance and the privilege of baiting animals, and regulations imposed on both, certainly had an enormous influence on the development of the Bear Garden. The several Acts against “Vacabondes” that were issued throughout the sixteenth century, most notably those in 1533 and 1572, restricted bear-baiting as well as the performances of plays and interludes, causing both forms of entertainment to seek similar solutions to the problem of centralized control: they settled into permanent structures, and found enthusiastic patronage amongst royalty and nobility. However, the essential link between the “stake and the stage,” and even to bear-baiting's earlier roots in hunting, may be credited to one man: Philip Henslowe, who, aside from building one of the two most important theatres ever

¹⁹ The use of these animals in baitings is well-documented, as I demonstrate in chapter 4, but it is interesting to note that lions and polar bears were in fact kept under the same roof. A warrant for payment to Philip Henslowe and Edward Alleyn from 1611, when they jointly held the position of Master of the Game, notes “for keeping two white bears and a young lion.” Quoted in Oscar Brownstein, “Stake and Stage: the Baiting Ring and the Public Playhouse in Elizabethan England,” [Doctoral Dissertation] University of Iowa, 1963; 342.

to stand on Bankside, was instrumental in changing bear-baiting from a brutal and often chaotic amusement to a highly stylized display of power, nature, and myth aimed at an intellectual elite.

In the following pages, I will center on four “moments” within the period of animal-baiting’s greatest popularity: the movement from outdoor rings to the earliest known structures for baiting; Henslowe’s struggle to obtain mastership over the game, which coincided with the rise of playhouse-like baiting amphitheaters; the fusion of plays and baitings that occurred in the construction of the Hope, and perhaps even earlier; and finally, the macabre “experimental” phase in animal-baiting authorized and overseen by James I. This is not a chronological history of animal-baiting. The reader will find that there are no distinct episodes in the story of this bloody and bizarre pastime. Rather, there are a few key locations and protagonists who are starkly illuminated against a murky background: one in which itinerant bearwards continued to roam from town to town as they had done for centuries, and every village had its own bull-ring near the meat-market, and the majority of aristocratic households maintained animals for baiting at special events. Although the practice of animal-baiting as it was known in London is the focus of this dissertation, one must keep in mind the ubiquity of animal bloodsports in the early modern era. The cruelty of the Bear Garden, especially in displays such as the whipping of the blind bear, or the tormenting of apes on horseback, was by no means unique to codified forms of sport and spectacle, but, as Keith Thomas reminds us in *Man and the Natural World*:

[early modern England] was a world in which much of what would later come to be regarded as ‘cruelty’ had yet to be defined as such. A good example of how people were inured to the taking of animal life is provided by the diary kept by

the schoolboy Thomas Isham, who grew up in Northamptonshire in the early 1670s. His little journal records much killing of cocks, slaughtering of oxen, drowning of puppies. It tells of coursing for hares, catching martens in traps, killing sparrows with stones and castrating bulls. None of these events evokes any special comment, and it is clear that the child was left emotionally unruffled.²⁰

Early modern men and women maintained a relationship with the natural world based chiefly on utility, which we can see in Thomas Isham's diary. Cocks and oxen are slaughtered for meat, hares are hunted for the same, and also for the training of dogs; martens are killed for their fur, and puppies are disposed of when they are unwanted. Sparrows, on the other hand, are killed for sport, which has its own use-value. In Joseph Strutt's *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England*, a section is devoted to the "slinging of stones" as a long-standing and popular sport for boys and young men "who followed the profession of a warrior."²¹ Such illustrates the blending together of sport-as-recreation and sport-as-instruction. For young Thomas Isham, shooting sparrows "on the wing" was a game, but not unlike animal-baiting, it was a game with deep roots in martial and hunting exercises that were once essential for young men to master. By the seventeenth century, hunting was so strictly regulated, and weaponry in war so advanced, that skill with a slingshot was neither necessary nor practical. It was simply entertaining. A similar trajectory can be followed in the history of animal-baiting, although in its earliest form it served a

²⁰ Thomas, 148.

²¹ Joseph Strutt, *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England*, London: Thomas Tegg, 1845; 74.

practical purpose in instructing not men, but other animals—namely, hunting dogs.²²

Even in such cases where it served a “practical” function, animal-baiting was ready-made for spectacle. Although humans might “set the stage” for the baiting of a bear, bull, or boar—usually by tethering it to a tree or stake—once the dogs were unleashed, the human participants were free to stand back and *watch*. From this we can extrapolate one possible explanation for baiting’s gradual rise as a public spectacle: it is, by nature, spectacular. But of course, the history of early modern bloodsports in form, cultural significance, and social function is much more complicated. Returning to the bones of the baited bear, the question I really want to ask is not so much “how did this animal die?” but “*why?*”

²² I will discuss bear-baiting’s roots in the hunt in chapter 2.

1: RITUAL/ PLAY

Inventing the (Bear) Garden:

Paradise and Bloodshed

Until very recently, scholars of early modern England, and of its theatre in particular, have sustained only passing interest in those bloody events which once took place inside the Bankside bear gardens: instead, the architecture of the bear gardens, and specifically, how that architecture may or may not relate to that of the playhouses, has been the driving force behind most investigations into animal-baiting in this period. The “Hope contract” found amongst Philip Henslowe’s papers and published by W.W. Greg in 1907 is certainly the most widely circulated and carefully studied document concerning bear-baiting, despite the fact that it has nothing to do with the “shows” that occurred within the arena walls. In 1963, Glynne Wickham read this contract as evidence of “architecturally backward-looking” playhouses that were based on

the far-from-novel, circular *pleg-hús* or game-house, adapted and sophisticated over centuries from the circular *pleg stów* or fortress-come-recreation ground, and stretched both in its meaning to include performances of stage-plays, and in its physical appearance to admit the addition of a raised stage and tiring-house: for however sketchy the middle portion of this genealogy still is, the Roman and

early Tudor extremities are firm enough.²³

In this reading the bear garden is reduced to a blip somewhere in the “sketchy middle portion” of a lineage which all too conveniently links Shakespeare’s Globe to the amphitheaters of classical Rome: a genealogy that may strike modern historians as being every bit as absurd as Elizabeth I’s claim to be a direct descendent of the Trojan Aeneas. Just two years later, Oscar Brockett took theatre historians to task for blindly accepting the view that bear gardens were merely primitive versions of their neighbors, the playhouses: “a statement which has been repeated so many times in this country [the United States] it has ceased to be challenged and has assumed the status of fact...

The evidence which has been used by scholars to support this idea comes primarily from two sources: (1) contemporary written statements about bear baiting, and (2) map views of London which show theatres and baiting rings.²⁴

This admonition came upon the heels of an illuminating and scrupulously thorough dissertation by one of Brockett’s own students, Oscar Brownstein. Completed in 1963—the same year that Wickham published his summary quoted above—“Stake and Stage: the Baiting-ring and the Public Playhouse in Elizabethan England” set out to thoroughly debunk the, in many cases, unsubstantiated claims of preceding scholars that a “continuity of thought and action within closely restricted architectural terms of reference” stretches from the “traditional game house” to

²³ Wickham, *Early English Stages 1300 to 1600*, part I, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963; 169.

²⁴ Oscar Brockett, “Some Reflections on Research in Theatre History,” in *ETJ*, 17: 2; 111-7.

the Fortune of 1621, encompassing the Shoreditch Theatre, the Curtain, the Rose, the Swan, and both incarnations of the Globe.²⁵ Brockett lamented how this “usually accepted view has blocked fruitful directions for inquiry into the early history of the Elizabethan theatre.”²⁶ It has also, by extension, effectively stymied investigations into the physical origins of the baiting-rings, not to mention having narrowed our understanding of this deeply troubling and brutal form of popular entertainment.

Although more recent studies of animal-baiting, such as those by Erica Fudge, are immensely insightful in terms of the wider social and cultural context of the sport, they often leave one with only searing, momentary impressions of the baiting-ring itself, the spectators in attendance, and the very real suffering of the animal combatants. As Elaine Scarry states in *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (1985), “[p]hysical pain has no voice”—which is especially true in the case of animals—and, when dealing with acts of violence perpetrated as long as 450 years ago, the materiality of bloodshed becomes all the more difficult, and therefore all the more important, to grasp.²⁷ What exactly occurred in the baiting-ring, how the audience responded, and what went on at the bear garden in between shows, all remain somewhat mysterious. At its worst extremes, the practice of animal-baiting evades apprehension simply because it is difficult to look at, and we are tempted to simply “use our imaginations” when it comes to the bloody business of the arena—but in fact we do not wish to actually imagine it, and prefer to think of baiting in very broad terms. An afternoon’s entertainment included the usual bouts between dogs and bears, or dogs and bulls, but also the “Jack-an-apes,”

²⁵ Alfred Harbage, *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions*, New York: MacMillan, 1952; 170.

²⁶ Brockett, “Some Reflections on Research,” 113.

²⁷ Scarry, 3.

or monkey-baiting, for comic relief; and offered audience members the opportunity to participate in “the whipping of the blind bear.” How exactly did these spectacles work? What was it that the audience came there to see? How did they “see” it?

We might think of animal-baiting as a chaotic affair, a frenzy of blood, slather, and fur. But much like any modern sport, animal-baiting operated in accord with certain conventions and expectations. Despite the flurry of violence at the center of each bout, the frame that contained said violence was necessarily ordered, enabling spectators to judge combatants’ “performance” in the ring: eyewitness accounts often affirm whether the bull behaved “valiantly,” or the dogs “courageously,” or the bear “cowardly.”²⁸ Victory was not determined by death alone, and in fact, death was not necessarily the desired outcome. Although dogs were frequently killed in fights, bearwards could be financially ruined by the loss of a bear.

“A bear is a luxury animal,” says Elizabeth Baldwin:

... In about 1564, Richard Wood bought a bear cub from John Seckerston of Nantwich, for the sum of £3 13s. 4d. The transaction was by no means a simple one; the money was actually paid by Wood’s kinsman, Thomas Bickerton, who received sureties from Richard Wood, William Wood, and unspecified others, that they would each pay a portion of the price. Fourteen years later, after the death of Bickerton, the question of whether William Wood had paid Bickerton was investigated, and witnesses testified that he paid his share four or five years before the death of Bickerton. He was evidently the first to pay his share, and

²⁸ Scarry, 4.

Bickerton anticipated having to go to law to get his money out of the others.²⁹

From this episode we can see how the sale of one bear cub could have repercussions even more than a decade later. Bought at a hefty price, the bear cub in question more than likely endured a long career in the ring, and—when not fighting, at least—was carefully tended to by owners who were quite literally invested in its longevity: and not just one, but *several* people put up the money for this investment. In this scenario the bear itself is akin to the very modern notion of a “start-up” business, a venture launched by a small group of moneyed individuals in hope of exponential returns, overseen by the real entrepreneur, the bearward.

However, this is not to say that bears were not directly mistreated by humans. In fact, bears suffered directly at the hands of humans as a means of prolonging their careers in the ring. Once a bear had lost its eyes (evidently a very common occurrence, owing to the dogs being trained to attack the bear’s face) it would be retired from fighting dogs, but suffer still more brutal treatment at the hands of its human captors. The “whipping of the blind bear,” according to contemporary accounts, often concluded a show of animal-baiting, and engaged willing audience members in a ritual of extraordinary cruelty:

[The whipping of the blind bear] is performed by five or six men, standing circularly with whips, which they exercise upon [the bear] without any mercy, as he cannot escape from them because of his chain: he defends himself with all his

²⁹ Elizabeth Baldwin, ““But where do they get the bears?”: Animal Entertainments in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Cheshire,” presented at *Société Internationale pour l’Étude du Théâtre Médiévale* (SITM) Colloquium, 2-7 July 2001; 8.

force and skill, throwing down all who come within his reach, and are not active enough to get out of it, tearing the whips out of their hands, and breaking them.³⁰

Bear- or bull-baiting permitted audience members to enter their dogs into the ring; the whipping of the blind bear gave them the opportunity to enter themselves. Certainly, each individual who elected to participate in what was, essentially, the staged torture of an animal, had his own reasons for doing so. Erica Fudge cites an early argument against vivisection in attempt to explain the psychological needs met by this ritual: “Rather than being seen as an aberration of human nature, the torture and killing of animals permitted those who had no rights, no possibility of ever imposing their will upon others, to demonstrate, often publicly, their strength and dominance.”³¹

Senselessly brutal as this practice may seem to us now, there was cold business-sense behind it: a blind bear could not be expected to fight dogs any longer, so instead of slaughtering the bear and selling the meat, it was kept in action for as long as possible, thereby ensuring that the bearward—and his investors—continue to reap returns. I doubt it is merely coincidental that prior to the construction of playhouse-like baiting rings in the 1570s, there is no mention of interludes such as the “Jack-an-apes” in accounts of bear-baiting. Bigger venues to fill meant more money to be made and more money up front from those interested in profiting from such spectacles. Necessarily, bear-baiting became more “spectacular” under these conditions.

As we can see, the shift in how animal-baiting was viewed by an audience, and in how

³⁰ Paul Hentzner quoted in Brownstein, “Stake and Stage,” 316-7.

³¹ Carol Lansbury quoted in Fudge, *Perceiving Animals*, 15.

both the audience and the action were contained, had a profound and lasting impact on the nature of the bloodsport itself. Following the establishment of baiting amphitheatres, a course of baiting took on markedly theatrical characteristics, becoming more akin to a variety entertainment than a victory/defeat-oriented sporting event. This is the paradox at the heart of early modern animal-baiting: despite the inherent *untheatricality* of bloodsports—in the sense that the violence put on show in the baiting-ring was never feigned—early modern witnesses more often than not responded to animal-baiting as if it were a theatrical performance, and the “staging” of baiting itself appears to have supported such responses.

Still, the question lingers of what came first: animal-baiting as a large-scale financial venture, or animal-baiting as a large-scale spectacle? This is extremely difficult to untangle, given the lack of information we have regarding animal-baiting prior to the construction of the first public baiting rings in London in the 1570s. The Wood/ Bickerton investment is an interesting example because it hails from a very murky period in the history of bear-baiting, and from Cheshire, far away from the Bankside plots where, not long after, the first Bear Garden would rise in London. The fact that Cheshire 1564 was the setting for Wood and Bickerton’s venture suggests that bear-baiting might have been viewed as a profitable business for much longer and much farther outside the walls of the bear garden than we tend to assume.

In fact, one incident reported in Beverly in 1520 suggests that even bear baiting structures may have originated far outside of the capitol. According to local legend, on April 29th 1520, “a bear baiting and a mass being both at one time in Beverly, there was near a thousand people at the bear baiting and only five-and-fifty at mass, who were all slain [when the church collapsed], and ever since they say there, *It is better to be at the baiting of a bear than at the singing of a*

mass.”³² This anecdote provides us with no details about the baiting ring that held these one-thousand spectators—and it must be kept in mind that such anecdotes are often prone to exaggeration—but the story opens up the possibility that some form of complex baiting structure existed in England decades before one appeared in London. If such is the case, then the idea of a baiting structure could have migrated into the capitol with the influx of people that occurred following Elizabeth I’s succession, indicating that bear-baiting was big show-business well before playhouse-like baiting rings came about on London’s Bankside, and moreover, that the architecture of these baiting rings was not inherently cosmopolitan. In light of this, mid-twentieth century scholars’ claims that baiting rings looked to Ancient Rome for architectural inspiration sound all the more ludicrous. Although bear baiting entertained monarchs and the working poor alike, the mass spectacle of baiting seems less influenced by the private delectations of the nobility and more so by the traditions of provincial, principally agrarian communities.

Since Oscar Brownstein’s 1963 dissertation, few comprehensive studies of animal baiting have delved into questions of architecture. Such may be due in part to the cautionary tale that is at the heart of Brownstein’s work, and suggests that all previous claims of a direct link between playhouse and baiting-ring architecture are misguided at best. It is now often assumed, as Brownstein asserts, that “there is no record of public baiting in London before the middle of the sixteenth century,” that “[i]t is clearly an error to conceive of baiting as significantly rivaling the drama,” and that “[t]here is nothing... in support of the conjecture that great amphitheaters for

³² W.H. Longstaffe quoted in E.G., “Additions to ‘Local Yorkshire Rhymes and Sayings,’” in *The Folk-lore Record*, 3:2 (1880), 174-7; 174.

baiting were erected twenty or even five years before those for plays.”³³ He cites misuse of evidence, especially pictorial evidence, as a major contributing factor in the circulation of uncontested myths about baiting amongst his predecessors. However, as Höfele points out, Brownstein’s “debunking” arose, at least in part, out of a desire to “disaffiliate the Elizabethan theatre from its disreputable cousin.”³⁴

Although many of Brownstein’s conclusions merit attention, recent books like Höfele’s *Stage, Stake and Scaffold*, Allard and Martin’s *Staging Pain, 1580-1800*, and Erica Fudge’s *Perceiving Animals* and *Brutal Reasoning* all reveal that early modern popular entertainment was every bit as saturated with real violence as modern films, television, and video-games are saturated with simulated violence. The site of convergence between the real and the simulated most certainly was the baiting-ring itself, the consummate example of which being Philip Henslowe’s dual-purpose baiting-ring and playhouse, the Hope. How was such a place even possible? What factors led up to its construction? How, exactly, did we get from a baiting in Beverly in 1520 to an amphitheatre that seats thousands right on the edge of the largest city in England?

In order to fully “tell the story” of early modern animal-baiting, it is necessary to reexamine Brownstein’s assertions in search of a more complete picture of the baiting rings’ physical reality. The fact that it is now possible to compare the conclusions of earlier scholars to the archaeological remains of baiting rings and playhouses fairly begs for reconsideration of the primary sources, even in such cases where the information they impart may be unreliable or

³³ Brownstein, “Stage and Stage,” 243-6.

³⁴ Höfele, *Stage, Stake and Scaffold*, 6.

easily misread. Pictorial evidence, although notoriously untrustworthy, deserves another look.

As said above, maps have largely come to be regarded as mere curiosities in the somewhat limited catalog of visual evidence from this period, having been misused in the past by theatre historians who take for granted the similarities between the bear gardens and the playhouses. Maps, for Brownstein, were to be regarded with an especially high degree of skepticism, or even deemed of “no usefulness whatsoever.”³⁵ In the case of early modern maps, visual accuracy was not a priority—however, in creating maps and drawings of the city as they experienced it, illustrators and artists made choices as to how best to represent certain features. Perhaps those choices were subjective, but even subjective choices are governed by the broader cultural context. Inaccurate though these images may be, they contain information of a different sort that illuminates a side of early modern London which an accurate map could not communicate: rather, they reveal something of how Londoners saw their city, and themselves in the context of that city. The visual information that can be gleaned from period maps and drawings has not necessarily been exhausted, provided that we turn to it with fresh appreciation for the aims and biases of the artists who created them.³⁶ The material aspects of attending the bear garden cannot be ignored, and that old bugbear of historiography, the visual conflation of the baiting-rings with the playhouses, ought to be reinvestigated.

³⁵ Brownstein, “Stake and Stage,” 245.

³⁶ I say “artists” because, as aforesaid, cartography was hardly an exact science at this time, and maps were not intended to serve as guides to a particular landscape or settlement—rather, maps created an “impression” of a place, its landmarks, and its culture.



Illustration 1: Detail of Wenceslaus Hollar's "Long View" of Southwark, 1647. The labels on the Globe and the "Beere bayting house" are inverted.

In 1647, the mapmaker Wenceslaus Hollar found it easy enough to visually confuse the Globe with the nearby Hope bear garden (Illustration 1). By this time, the architecture of the bear garden had “evolved” to appear very similar to the playhouse, and especially in the case of the Hope (which was based on the design of the Swan), the influence of playhouse architecture on its design and even its dimensions is clearly evident. However, the structures in which baiting took place comprised only a portion of what we may term the Bear Garden to its full extent, and in the peak of its popularity. Hollar’s rendering of the Hope as a place nearly interchangeable with the Globe represents only the final stages of the early modern bear garden, which in its heyday stood within a bustling entertainment district dedicated to leisure and pleasure: yes, an early modern “amusement park,” in terms of its diversity and expanse. Outside the polygonal walls of the playhouses and the baiting-rings lay public houses, bordellos, lawns, pools, and elegant gardens stretching along the Thames from Paris Garden Manor (approximately the site of the modern

Blackfriars Bridge) to London Bridge, nearly a kilometer in length.³⁷ Contemporary descriptions of the Southwark bear gardens likewise hint at the wealth of sensual delights awaiting visitors both in and outside of the arena:

I have been informed that you have recently been at the bear garden, and truly I was much rejoiced to hear it; for it is a pleasant and delightful place, and above all others, well calculated to give lessons in life and manners. Therefore, although it is commonly called the Garden of Paris, or Paris Garden, that is surely a corruption, or rather a contraction of the word... and the better sort call it the Garden of Paradise.³⁸

To equate Paris Garden, the center of animal-baiting, with the Garden of Eden seems insane to modern sensibilities, but visual records of the area, combined with archaeological findings, support this unlikely comparison. Maps of early modern London reveal that the bear gardens were indeed gardens: the “Agas” Map of c. 1561-70, for example, provides an excellent and detailed view of the extensive green-spaces surrounding each of the animal-baiting rings, which appear to contain ornamental hedges, pools, trees, walkways, and even possibly a tilting range

³⁷ Here I rely on reconstructed maps found in Bowsher and Miller (see especially page 18), period maps (in particular John Norden’s *Civitates Londonium* of 1593), and Google Earth.

³⁸ A letter dated 1639 from “Honest William” to Lord Francis Cottington, translated from Latin. Quoted in Brownstein, “Stage and Stage,” 356. As a side-note, the “digest” version of this letter recorded in the *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic* [1639; 420] interprets the original Latin very differently than the translation quoted in Brownstein, and in fact paints a very different image of the bear gardens and of the author of the letter. Because Brownstein quotes a complete translation of the letter, not merely a digest of its contents, I shall rely on his version.

(Illustration 2).³⁹ For that matter, as Keith Thomas points out in *Man and the Natural World*, “[i]t was common for a select part of a large garden to be known as ‘a paradise’... In the later Middle Ages ‘Paradise’ had been the term for the pleasure garden of a convent... In post-Reformation literature the enclosed garden was a symbol of repose and harmony. Its flowers and trees were emblems of spiritual truths, its walks and arbors a sort of outdoor cloister.”⁴⁰ It is interesting how in this case the “paradise” of Paris Garden is no place of “repose and harmony,” but strife and bloodshed. However, the spiritual and educational benefits of the “paradise” garden are an unlikely correlation to the “moral dramas” enacted by the animals in the baiting-ring. Although the experience of visiting this “paradise” was not meditative, its patrons could enter there under a pretense of witnessing “emblems of spiritual truths,” such as the struggles between good and evil, courage and cowardice, man and nature.

Paris Garden’s resemblance to a “paradise” may have also been superficial. Archeological digs in the area have been largely restricted to the eastern end of Bankside, but even this relatively limited sample has yielded findings of ornamental plant remains, such as box and holly.⁴¹ The site of Paris Garden Manor, at the far western end of Bankside, has not been excavated—and indeed would be difficult to excavate—so we may only guess at the variety of

³⁹ It should be noted that the “Agas” Map (a misnomer, for the surveyor Ralph Agas was clearly not responsible for it) is almost certainly based on a much earlier map of 1557, the “Copperplate” Map. No printed copies of the Copperplate Map are known to survive, and only three of its presumed 15 plates have been found, none of which show anything of Southwark. Just how closely the two maps are related is difficult to determine, but the Copperplate is generally considered to be the more accurate of the two. See John Fisher’s introduction to *The A to Z of Elizabethan London*, eds. Prockter and Taylor, London: The London Topographical Society, 1979; v-x. As for the tilting range, this is a matter of some debate, as the cruciform mark shown standing at a crossroads just outside Paris Garden Manor has been variously identified as a cross, a signpost, and as a quintain: a cross-shaped post for jousting. See Prockter and Taylor, 21, 59.

⁴⁰ Thomas, 236.

⁴¹ See Bowsher and Miller, 246 (Table 23).

flowers, fruit-trees, and ornamental shrubs that were once cultivated there.



Illustration 2: Detail from 'Agas' Map.

Comparing the letter above to the images we have of Bankside in the late sixteenth century shifts our perspective of the bear garden from the blood and sand of the arena to the arboreal greenery that surrounded it. Those who traveled to Bankside by boat to attend a bear-baiting would disembark at Paris Garden Stairs (upper left of illustration), and could then proceed through the orderly, manicured grounds of the ancient Paris Garden estate, with flowerbeds or hedges arranged into fussy geometric plots, trees, streams, and meadows; and pass the Royal Trout Ponds before at last coming into the shadow of the ring itself. There, they might stroll up and down a vast lawn surrounded by hedgerows where the dog kennels were open for inspection: in the illustration above, the dogs can just be made out in the lower right, straining at their chains.

Alternatively, visitors from the city of London could walk east down Bankside from the Paris Garden Stairs, a route that offered such delights as brothels, gambling houses, inns, and shops. Excavations carried out in the vicinity of the bear gardens reveal that the local diet

consisted of luxurious dishes, including many game animals and young domestic animals, such as roe deer, turtle, and suckling or even fetal lambs.⁴² In fact, nearby restaurants may have attracted customers by serving up the spoils of the baiting-rings, such as beef from baited bulls, and, on rare occasions, meat from the bears themselves, whose paws were considered a “delicate meat.”⁴³ This appears to be corroborated by the fact that the majority of bear bones excavated from the area come from the lower limbs and the feet.⁴⁴ Other signs of butchery on the animal bones may also indicate a macabre trade in souvenirs, such as bear and dog skulls or skins, the latter of which may have been sold to tanneries for use in leather goods. Dogs, at any rate, were frequently decapitated and skinned before burial.⁴⁵

Paris Garden itself, a small corner of which can be seen left-of-center in the section of the Agas map seen above, was officially a game park, and its stewards salaried as “keeper of the queenes beares,” and “keeper of the queenes mastiffs.”⁴⁶ As Oscar Brownstein reveals, such officers continued to be thought of as game-keepers rather than masters of an “entertainment” even during the height of animal-baiting’s popularity. Bears and dogs of the “game” of baiting were lumped together with “game” for hunting, such as deer, boars, and fowls. “Well after the Master of the Revels was an important office of the household,” Brownstein says, “the bears and

⁴² Reilly, Kevin, “The Animal bone” in Nicholas Elsdon, “20-22 New Globe Walk London SE1, London Borough of Southwark: Archaeological Post-Excavation Assessment,” Museum of London Archeology Service, April 2001; 44.

⁴³ See Elsdon, 13-4. Bear bones discovered near the remains of the baiting-rings show signs of butchery, and come from juvenile animals—both of which may indicate the use of bears as a food source. See also George Turberville, *Turberville’s booke of hunting* (orig. *The noble arte of venerie or hunting*, 1576), Oxford, 1908; 219.

⁴⁴ See Bowsher and Miller, 151.

⁴⁵ Mackinder, Tony, “Riverside House, Bear Gardens SE1, London Borough of Southwark: An Archaeological Post-Excavation Assessment,” Museum of London Archaeology Service, November 2001; 87. As evidenced by a fishing-weight made out of a dried, hollow dogskin seen on an episode of *Antiques Roadshow* (UK), dogskins served a number of surprising—and macabre—utilitarian purposes. *Antiques Roadshow*, Season 30 Ep. 18, “The Castle of Mey,” 2009.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Brownstein, “Stage and Stage,” 43.

dogs for baiting continued to be kept under a land stewardship[.]”⁴⁷ The practice of animal-baiting—again, with an irony that is shudder-inducing to modern sensibilities—emerges as being deeply connected to the land, both as an entertainment closely associated with the large “green space” of Paris Garden and a sport bearing striking similarities to early modern hunting practices.⁴⁸

Of course, bear-baiting did not originate as an amphitheater entertainment, but rather as an outdoor sport with its own set of standards and expectations. Early images of bears being baited such as those seen in the fourteenth-century Luttrell Psalter and even in the Bayeux Tapestry always depict bouts as taking place out in the open, with the bear chained to a tree or a stake, or simply restrained by its keepers.⁴⁹



Illustration 3: Marginalia from The Luttrell Psalter, British Library Add. 42130 f. 161. The bear is shown muzzled, and possibly wearing some sort of costume around its hindquarters.

⁴⁷ Brownstein, “Stage and Stage,” 243.

⁴⁸ In the next chapter I will elaborate on said similarities.

⁴⁹ See below for the Luttrell image; also see Shirley Ann Brown, “Cognate Imagery: the Bear, Harold and the Bayeux Tapestry,” in *King Harold and the Bayeux Tapestry*, ed. Gale R. Owen-Crocker, Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2005; 149-60.



Illustration 4: Woodcut illustration from William Lily's Antibossicon (1521) showing a bear-baiting. As in the Luttrell image above, the stake to which the bear is restrained is very low to the ground, with a pin through the top for extra security.

Prior to the construction of fenced-in baiting-rings (probably sometime in the 1540s), bears may have been baited somewhere on the grounds of Paris Garden, using whatever naturally occurring or landscaped features there were available to designate “arena” vs. “audience.” Most likely, baitings were staged within a deep pit with the audience looking down on the action from a safe height, making very large gatherings of spectators impossible.⁵⁰ Modern bear-baiting, much of which occurs in Pakistan, may also resemble the kind of baiting that occurred in England before the mid-1500s: taking place on open fields with spectators simply forming a circle around the action, having minimal to no physical barriers. Henry Machyn’s 1554 account of a bear baiting gone horribly wrong certainly seems to suggest a lack of any enclosure between

⁵⁰ Such “bear-pits” still exist, if only folklorically, in areas outside of London. One blogger from the Winwick area reports that as a child he was taken to see a “bear-baiting pit” in a local farmer’s field, which was “15 feet x 12 feet, around 7 to 8 feet deep, cut down into the floor with a stone overhung capping around the top, and with a stone column to one end, with hole in the top, which he [the farmer] told us was where they tethered the bears, while they threw dogs in to fight it.” This describes a later, and perhaps far more elaborate structure than the Paris Garden bear-pits of the early 1540s and before, but the relationship of audience-to-action is essentially the same. See <http://www.n-le-w.co.uk/history/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=940> [accessed 12/9/10].

the audience and the action, for on said occasion a blind bear was able to escape his bonds and mangled a bystander so badly “that within iij days after he [the bystander] ded.”⁵¹

As the c. 1561-70 “Agas” Map image reveals, structures for animal-baiting were in use before 1575: Brownstein deduces that at least six stood on Bankside “between 1546 and 1576,” which is a very different figure from that estimated by W.W. Braines, writing in 1923, who only found evidence for *five* in the whole of the 16th and 17th centuries.⁵² Although early modern mapmakers often used generalized images of structures in drafting their “bird’s-eye” views of cities, both the “Agas” and Braun-Hogenberg maps show a surprising amount of detail in the bear- and bull-baiting rings. Additionally, their outsized scale in comparison to the incidental buildings that surround them is comparable to that of important buildings such as St. Paul’s Cathedral and Lambeth Palace: in fact, on the Braun-Hogenberg Map, the baiting-rings are scaled much larger than St. Paul’s.⁵³ This degree of magnification suggests that the structures, though far humbler in appearance than the many church and secular buildings that are also depicted, were afforded a certain privilege by the mapmakers. In the “Agas” Map in particular, and in the Copperplate Map on which it was based, numerous scenes of “local color” including men practicing archery, women washing clothes, and people rowing boats are also outlandishly enlarged, which suggests that the mapmakers saw animal-baiting as an established part of

⁵¹ Quoted in Brownstein, “Stake and Stage,” 264.

⁵² Brownstein, “Why Didn’t Burbage Lease the Beargardens?” in *The First Public Playhouse* ed. Herbert Berry, Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1979, 83; and Braines, *The Site of the Globe Playhouse, Southwark*, London, 1924. Braines labeled the purported structures, including the Hope and the later Davies Bear Garden, as Bear Gardens 1-5, and this system is still used by the Museum of London Archaeology Service in differentiating the various “generations” of baiting-rings from c. 1540-c. 1680.

⁵³ St. Paul’s, then with its spire (destroyed in 1561) stood at 150m; the remains of baiting-rings discovered in this area average at around 18m in diameter. In the map St. Paul’s is scaled 150m to 2.4 cm, and the bull-baiting is scaled 54m to 2.4cm. If the scale of St. Paul’s is applied to the bull-baiting ring, it would have to be 37.5m in diameter—more than twice its actual size. See Bowsher and Miller, 17.

everyday London culture.

But how established was it? Is there, as Brownstein claims, “no evidence that either [bull or bear baiting] was popular in the sense usually meant until the latter part of the sixteenth century?”⁵⁴ Undeniably, animal-baiting’s popularity rose exponentially at around the same time that playhouse-like baiting-rings began to loom up above the tree-line along Bankside, but it may be more accurate to say that at this time baiting’s popularity *changed dramatically* (pun fully intended). Animal-baiting pre-1575 may not have drawn audiences of thousands—at least not in London—but it did exist as a deeply ingrained part of English culture, rooted in ancient beliefs. As another paradox in the custom of animal-baiting, these beliefs were themselves rooted in nature, or more specifically, in ritualistic attempts to “read” natural phenomena, such as the weather.

Seeing its shadow.

Although it is impossible to know when the first bear-baiting occurred on English soil, clues that provide a rough idea of how long animal-baiting has been a part of English culture do exist. Recent archeological finds in York reveal that gladiatorial combat involving animals (lions, specifically) did occur in Roman Britain, and according to Seneca, bears were used in bloodsports elsewhere in the Roman empire.⁵⁵ However, there does not appear to be any clear, contiguous link between Roman bloodsports and those of early modern England. This is not to

⁵⁴ Brownstein, “Stake and Stage,” 244.

⁵⁵ “In the morning men are thrown to the lions and bears, at noon to the spectators[.]” Seneca, *Epistles*, quoted in Paul Plass, *The Game of Death in Ancient Rome*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995; 68. Martin Wainwright, “Scars from lion bite suggest headless Romans found in York were gladiators,” *The Guardian* 7 June 2010. Accessed at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2010/jun/07/york-gladiator-graveyard>, 16 December 2010.

say that we cannot learn a great deal about English bloodsports from looking to Rome—the Elizabethan period, in particular, saw a flourishing of interest in all things Roman—but, as discussed above, to place Roman amphitheater sports and games in the roots of bear-baiting’s “family tree” is highly problematic. Ultimately, the trajectory of bear-baiting does not appear to follow any clear pattern of “evolution” until the middle of the sixteenth century, when the sport, much like the theatre, made its move into round structures.

The bear has been an important symbol in Britain since at least the end of the Roman occupation (450 CE) as evidenced by its frequent depictions in Anglo Saxon jewelery, armor, and carvings. Cremated bear bones dating from the period of “pagan Britain” have also been found buried with human remains.⁵⁶ The full significance of the bear as a symbol in non-Christian Anglo Saxon culture may never be fully understood, and for that matter the existence of any form of ritualized animal-baiting in the British Isles cannot be proven until around the middle of the twelfth century.⁵⁷ Despite this, ritualistic elements of later British culture may represent echoes of one or more atavistic religions that existed in pre-Christian Britain, which, like their continental counterparts, possibly involved some form of bear-worship. Although Neolithic culture in Britain did not leave behind quite so rich an archeological record as it did in France or Spain, it is likely, given the migration of peoples from France to Britain, that these early cultures practiced a religion similar to that represented in sites such as the Chauvet Caves in southern France, where bear skulls collected at least 32,000 years ago appear to have served a

⁵⁶ See Bond, “Burnt Offerings: Animal Bone in Anglo-Saxon Cremations,” *World Archeology* 28:1 (Jun. 1996); 76-88.

⁵⁷ The earliest reference to a bear-baiting that I have found comes from the c. 1130 *Chanson de Roland*: “... il ert en France, ad Ais, a un perrun./ En dous chaeines s’i teneit un brohun./ Devers Ardene veeit venir .XXX. urs,/ Cascun parolet altresi cume hum./ Diseient li: ‘Sire, rendez le nus!/ Il nen est dreiz que il seit mais od vos,/ Nostre parent devum estre a succurs.’” Quoted in Brown, 156.

ceremonial function.⁵⁸ At Chauvet in particular, bear skulls were not only hoarded, but one specimen was discovered installed on a natural altar, and it may be that these animals were sacrificed.

Francois Laroque, in *Shakespeare's Festive World*, posits that “[a]nimal sacrifice survived in the Elizabethan period in the indirect and sporting forms of... bull-baiting, bear-baiting and cock-fights.”⁵⁹ He also describes a by then obsolete English tradition which has its unlikely antecedent in the minor American holiday, “Groundhog Day”:

There was a direct link, in popular belief, between the beginning of carnival and the end of the bear’s hibernation which was liable to take place on Candlemas Day (February 2). As the beast emerged from its lair, it was thought to look around to see what the weather was like. If it was fine, it went back in, which was a sign that winter would continue for another forty days, that is to say until about 10 March; if, on the other hand, the weather was overcast, the bear emerged for good, thereby marking an early end to winter.⁶⁰

Because the basic scenario of this folk-belief requires a hibernating, and therefore wild bear, it is possible that the tradition predates the extinction of wild bears in England, which may have

⁵⁸ For a stunning look at these caves, see the Werner Herzog documentary *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, USA 2010, 89 mins.

⁵⁹ Francois Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive World: Elizabethan Seasonal Entertainment and the Professional Stage*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991; 48.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.

occurred prior to the withdrawal of Roman troops in the fifth century.⁶¹ The scenario also resembles a number of other “weather-forecasting” traditions associated with the end of winter throughout mainland Europe and Asia and even amongst certain Native American tribes, nearly all of which involve a (often sacrificial) animal emerging from hibernation, usually a bear.⁶²

One way in which this tradition could have survived in England would have been through performances such as those seen in rural France on Candlemas Day as recently as the 1930s, in which actors costumed as bears are “killed” by a huntsman and then “resurrected” by a doctor, much like the knight in English mummer’s plays or Plough Plays (performed on Plough Monday, in mid-January).⁶³ Indeed, the similarities between these French performances and the English Plough Plays are so striking that they could play out in much the same way if the bear and the huntsman were simply exchanged for the knight and his opponent.

This suggests a fascinating conclusion: that the tradition of the Plough Play originated outside of the British Isles, perhaps brought to England via France. If so, then it may be that the bear and huntsman were later replaced by a knight and challenger in effort to distance the tradition from its pagan roots, possibly a necessary adaptation at the time when Britain was still in the process of becoming an independent “Christian kingdom.”

⁶¹ Exactly when the brown bear became extinct in Britain is a matter of ongoing debate, but as Roger Lovegrove states in *Silent Fields: The Long Decline of a Nation’s Wildlife*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) they were very likely hunted to extinction before the end of the fifth century. During the Roman occupation of Britain, Scottish bears were frequently imported to Rome for use in arena bloodsports, but by the 16th century, bears had to be imported to England from as far away as Russia.

⁶² See A. Irving Hallowell, “Bear Ceremonialism in the Northern Hemisphere,” a dissertation published in *American Anthropologist* 28: 1 (1926) 1-175 for an early but thorough study of bears associated with the end of winter and the coming of the Vernal Equinox. Bears of all kinds appear in hauntingly similar ceremonies and traditions everywhere from France to Serbia, from Siberia to North America, where they either perform a weather-predicting function or are sacrificed in order to hasten the coming of spring.

⁶³ See Violet Alford, “The Springtime Bear in the Pyrenees,” *Folklore* 41:3 (1930); 266-79.

Although the bear has disappeared from the English version of this ritualistic performance, the Plough Play's relationship to the widespread and evidently ancient Candlemas Day bear ceremonies can also be traced through the time of year with which it is associated: winter. Interestingly, one of the earliest written references to bear-baiting, from William Fitzsteven's late twelfth-century *Life of Thomas á Beckett*, describes it as predominantly a winter pastime:

In winter on almost every feast day before dinner either foaming boars, armed with lightning tusks, fight for their lives 'to save their bacon,' or stout bulls with butting horns, or huge bears do battle with the hounds let loose upon them.⁶⁴

This suggests that early forms of bear baiting, and animal baiting in general, had seasonal significance for medieval English people. Although it remains unclear how the bear-baitings that occurred on Candlemas Day may have been different from those staged on other winter feast days, Fitzsteven's account indicates a certain regularity—a ritualistic regularity—with which such spectacles were performed. Indeed, if a live bear took part in the Candlemas Day celebrations in a way analogous to the American groundhog, then this animal would have been imported to England along with bears intended solely for baiting, and was very likely baited itself after it had performed its weather-predicting function.

In this, the Candlemas Day bear resembles the so-called “year-spirit” identified in numerous cultures by J.G. Frazer, the knight of the English Plough Plays being another often

⁶⁴ A translation quoted in Brownstein, “Stake and Stage,” 253.

cited example. Whether as in the very earliest ceremonies an actual bear was sacrificed as it left its den, or as in the French tradition both the death and resurrection of the bear were staged by human performers, the death of the bear appears to have been a symbolic “death” of the winter season, and even more significantly, the start of “a period of carnivalesque excess which would continue until the beginning of Lent.”⁶⁵ Not surprisingly, the atmosphere on Bankside in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries strove to create the sense of a never-ending carnival, in which bear baiting played a large part.

Candlemas Day bear-rituals, whether they are “ancestors” of bear-baiting or not, share an important attribute with early-modern animal bloodsports which Erica Fudge describes as an impulse towards anthropocentrism. The impression of humanlike perception upon the weather-predicting bear—not to mention the human endeavor to “read” whether the animal has or has not seen its own shadow—correlate to early modern impressions of baited animals as behaving “valiantly” or “cowardly” in the ring. In Fudge’s words, “[t]o watch a cruel entertainment such as baiting is to reveal the truth about humans. They sink below the level of the beasts.... To watch a baiting, to enact anthropocentrism, is to reveal, not the stability of species status, but the animal that lurks beneath the surface.”⁶⁶ For a great many early modern spectators, however, human cruelty did not enter into the experience of watching a baiting except abstractly, as interpreted through the behavior of the animals on display. Although it was certainly cruel to force animals

⁶⁵ Juliet Wrightman, “All the world is but a bear-baiting: Violence and Popular Culture in the Renaissance,” in *Sites of Discourse, Public and Private Spheres, Legal Culture: Papers from a Conference held at the Technical University of Dresden, December 2001*, 67-77; 71. On another note, some evidence of bear-baiting’s seasonal popularity may be found in a curious entry in Henslowe’s Diary: “just after Christmas” in 1608, Henslowe recorded profits as great as £6 at the bear garden, while his takings at the Fortune Theatre for the same dates did not exceed 45s. See Dulwich MS 7, 126v-7.

⁶⁶ Fudge, *Perceiving Animals*, 15.

to fight with one another, and often for their very lives, only a select few eye-witnesses from the period take this into consideration. Under most circumstances, human cruelty was not seen as something acted upon the animals, but *enacted by* them.

“Reading” the baited animals anthropomorphically allowed the audience to embody the “courage” of the bear or the “determination” of the dogs; or alternatively, to view the “savage” bear or the “bloodthirsty” dogs as reflections of personal or public enemies. Because the “performers” at the heart of these brutal dramas lacked stable identities of their own, audience members were free to imprint them with whatever qualities they liked, which also remained unstable and “free-flowing” as the conditions of the individual bouts changed from moment-to-moment. Such instability allowed Thomas Dekker, in his eye-witness account of a bear-baiting, to interpret animal combatants in the ring in more than one way on the same occasion:

No sooner I entred [the bear garden] but the very noyse of the place put me in mind of *Hel*: the beare (dragd to the stake) shewed like a black rugged soule, that was Damned and newly committed to the infernall *Charle*, the *Dogges* like so many *Diuels*, inflicting torments vpon it. But when I called to mind, that al their tugging together was but to make sport to the beholders, I held a better and not so damnable an opinion of their beastly doings: for the *Beares*, or the *Buls* fighting with the dogs, was a liuely represe[n]tation (me thought) of poore men going to lawe with the rich and mightie.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Dekker quoted in *Perceiving Animals*, 18.

Notably, it is his awareness of the spectacle as an entertainment for a human audience that causes him to rethink his reading of the animals' combat, and to shift the scene from a highly symbolic setting (Hell) to one of familiar social struggles, the Law Courts. At least for Dekker (who for a man of his time is unusually empathetic in his views on the bear garden), the presence of a human audience is all that grounds the colossal battles in the material, secular world. Moreover, this same awareness of the baiting as "sport to the beholders" is what allows him to identify with the animals by placing them in an anthropocentric context—by anthropomorphizing them.

Dekker is not alone in his penchant for "casting" the animals in human roles such as "torturer/ prisoner" or "judge/ defendant." As Andreas Höfele's *Stage, Stake and Scaffold* reveals, William Shakespeare's plays abound with references to animal-baiting wherein bears, bulls or dogs are made to reflect human-beings and vice-versa, and in many cases the distinction between anthropomorphization and bestialization is blurred.⁶⁸ When Macbeth says "They have tied me to a stake. I cannot fly,/ But bear-like I must fight the course," he embodies the baited bear as both a figure of universal struggle and as the victim in a vicious dog-fight, one in which the bestial Macbeth is further dehumanized. Macduff, after all, entices him to fight by calling him a "cur" just minutes later, effectively stripping him of his pretensions to "bear-like" stamina and courage.⁶⁹ For Shakespeare as for Dekker, the bear seems to more easily take on "human-like" qualities than any other animal in the baiting-ring, and often emerges as the protagonist of the bloody drama. "In truly Aristotelian fashion, the performance [of a bear-baiting] arouses

⁶⁸ Also see Alexander Leggatt, "Shakespeare and Bearbaiting" in *Shakespeare and Cultural Traditions*, ed. Tetsuo Kishi, Newark: University of Delaware Press, 43-53; and Nick de Somogyi, "Shakespeare and the Three Bears," in *New Theatre Quarterly*, 27, 2 (2011), 99-114

⁶⁹ William Shakespeare, *Complete Works*, 2nd edition, eds. Taylor and Wells, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005; *Macbeth* 5.7 1-2.

terror and pity,” asserts Höfele in his article “Sackerson the Bear,” reminding us that Macbeth’s words quoted above are echoed later in Shakespeare’s career by Gloucester in *King Lear* just before he is blinded: a mutilation for which he is certainly to be pitied as much as a tyrant like Macbeth is to be feared.⁷⁰ Evidently, the bear can come to represent a variety of characters, and characters of great depth at that.

In the baiting-ring, such anthropomorphic readings of the key players may also be seen as a negative-image, of sorts, of a common occurrence in nature-based religious rituals: the enactment or embodiment of animals by human beings. Baited animals, albeit unwillingly, are perceived by the human onlookers as avatars of social tensions, conflicts, and even specific individuals, and because the audience identifies with these figures and principles through free-association, the outcome of the bout will nearly always be a satisfactory one: one in which the “judge/ dogs” will punish the “bear/ criminal” or the “poor man/ bear” will overcome his “oppressors/ dogs.” In this sense, “play” is every bit as profoundly rooted in bloodsports as it is in theatre: “Theatre and baiting face each other like two mirrors,” says Höfele: “just as the bear becomes Gloucester, Gloucester in Shakespeare’s play becomes the baited bear.”⁷¹

Anthropomorphism is the transformative means by which such roles are assigned.

The case for bear-baiting as a “descendant” of some form of animal sacrifice related to the end of winter depends on a clearly defined, ritualistic or performative quality to the way in which bears were baited. As a winter activity, its association with a particular season and possibly with a much older ceremony also linked to that season provides enticing evidence in

⁷⁰ Höfele, “Sackerson the Bear,” *The Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature*, 17, 161-77; 167.

⁷¹ Höfele, *Ibid.*.

support of this. Of course, the next step—from animal-baiting as public ritual to animal-baiting as public entertainment—is by no means a simple progression. At what point does the bear cease to be a symbolic creature, one that is slaughtered for sacrificial purposes, and become a brute combatant, at best a gladiator? This shift of perspective is so difficult to unravel that it resembles a parallel series of “mutations” in the nature of theatre, which, interestingly enough, seem to have occurred at about the same rate and during the same period of time. Such changes go well beyond the movement of playing-spaces from outdoors-in, or from nonsecular to secular environments. Rather, the development of both theatre and bloodsports in the medieval and early modern eras reflects a profound shift in the way that people perceived “performance” as a whole. Once again, in spite of Brownstein and Brockett’s cautions, plays and baiting appear to intersect.

“Playing” dead.

Theories of “play” have established the connections between ritual, sport, and performance, identifying “the play-instinct” as a common ancestor to all three activities.⁷²

According to Johan Huizinga,

[r]itual is thus in the main a matter of shows, representations, dramatic performances, imaginative actualizations of a vicarious nature. At the great seasonal festivals the community celebrates the grand happenings in the life of nature by staging sacred performances, which represent the change of seasons,

⁷² Leo Frobenius, quoted in Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1955; 16.

the rising and setting of the constellations, the growth and ripening of crops, birth, life and death in man and beast.⁷³

Animal-sacrifices were certainly a part of many seasonal festivals, but in Huizinga's description the actuality of death is not underscored—animal death is but an aspect of “shows, representations, dramatic performances,” etc., as indeed animal sacrifices often took place in the midst of a much larger and more elaborate ritual. The reality of the moment when blood is actually spilled is here glossed-over, although one must not assume that the physical bloodshed in such rituals is seen by participants as being in any way separate or “bracketed” from the whole spectacle of the rite. For Huizinga, the difference between ritual and bloodsport is in the audience's experience of the play-instinct: for example, “[t]he great and bloody Roman games were a survival of the archaic play-factor in depotentialized form. Few of the brutalized mob of spectators felt anything of the religious quality inherent in these performances.”⁷⁴ Ultimately, he takes the Augustinian view that the heyday of *pane et circensis* was symptomatic of a culture in decline, the last fitful gasp of Roman decadence.

English animal baiting does not fit into this pattern. If anything, its most bizarre and gruesome extremes arose at the beginning of modern English culture's florescence, and the end of the “medieval period.” Although Huizinga bewails the loss of a “religious quality” in spectacles of sacrifice, the fact that sacrifices grow in scale as they wane in sacredness points to not a decline in culture, but a change in the cultural function of sacrifice, and just as profoundly,

⁷³ Huizinga, 15.

⁷⁴ Huizinga, 177.

to a change in that culture's relationship with the natural world from which its sacrificial animals are collected. Early modern English bloodsports are not "depotentialized" rituals, for they resound with a fiercely ritualistic potency all their own.

What distinguishes bloodsports from ritual sacrifice in the sense Huizinga intends is the highly individual way in which spectators of bloodsports interpret the action they are witnessing: rather than share a collective understanding of the bear as a representation of, for example, a god, or a time of year, the bear and other animals shift in symbolic meaning, as demonstrated in Thomas Dekker's account of a baiting quoted above. The ritual potency of these shifts in meaning lies in their very slipperiness, which is in accord with the sea-change in English culture at the time: namely, from a province of the Roman Catholic Church to a nation defined by its own unique politico-religious ideology. Each man or woman in the audience of a baiting had the freedom to "cast" bears, dogs, bulls, et cetera in roles that they wished to see violently matched. In other words, animal-baiting "performed" the aspirations and struggles of the individual.

Just as animal-baiting was going through its transformation from an outdoor activity to an amphitheater spectacle, another transformation was taking place across the whole spectrum of English popular culture: due in large part to the battles of religion that raged on throughout the sixteenth century, drama, games, and festivals that had once been associated with Catholic holidays were rapidly becoming secularized. This process was far from a simple "evolutionary" dying out of old forms and breeding in of new ones, and as Lawrence Clopper describes in *Drama, Play, and Games*, the distinction between mimetic "play" (on the stage) and ludic "play" (in the streets, the public houses, green-spaces, etc.) in this particular era has been frequently misinterpreted. In fact, the English language made no such distinctions until the middle of the

sixteenth century, when terms such as “tragedy” and “comedy” came into use, when “playhouses” were built specifically for staging theatrical performances, and laws were imposed in attempt to curtail unauthorized performances of any kind. E.K. Chamber’s “secularization” of English performance traditions went hand-in-hand with the centralization of government control over plays, festivals, games, sports, and spectacles; it also, according to Clopper, went hand-in-hand with an important change in the semantics of “play”:

As John Coldewey has shown, the “word ‘play’ is historically and conceptually a philological subset of the word ‘game,’ not the other way around.” Both *ludus* and “play” include all kinds of games and sports; in addition, a “player” may not be a participant in any of these activities but a musician or even a player at dice and cards.⁷⁵

He goes on to illustrate this point with receipts from a staging of the Dunmow Corpus Christi play in which the event included a “playe” of St. Andrew made up of “shoyting,” “runnyng,” and “leapyng”: “not an enactment of [St. Andrew’s] vita but a parish Olympics.”⁷⁶

Unlike stage-plays, bear baiting had fallen under the jurisdiction of a government official, the Master of the Royal Game, since at least 1484, when a John Brown held the position.⁷⁷

However, itinerant bearwards were also a common feature of life in and outside of London,

⁷⁵ Lawrence Clopper, *Drama, Play, and Game: English Festive Culture in the Medieval and Early Modern Period*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001;12.

⁷⁶ Clopper, 13.

⁷⁷ Christoph Daigl, *All the world is but a bear-baiting: Das Englische Hertztheater im 16 und 17 Jarhundert*, Berlin: Friedrich-Alexander-Universitat, 1997: see table on 132 for a complete list of Masters, Yeomen, and Sergeants of the Game from 1484 to 1680.

many of them “kept” by a noble household, although there were certainly those among them who only made pretensions to such patronage. These *ursinariii* earned their living by traveling from village to village to participate in festivals and holidays, their receipts appearing in the account-books of abbeys and priories all over England.⁷⁸ In such provincial forms of animal baiting the transgressive aspect of “play” often becomes alarmingly evident: for instance, in 1449 the sixth station in the Beverly Corpus Christi Play was located adjacent to the market’s bull-ring.⁷⁹

With the outlawing and gradual decline of religious plays, certain festivals, and folk traditions, bearwards felt the change in the air as surely as did the “players of interludes” who regularly moved in and out of villages alongside them, timing their journeys in accordance with opportunity. It was during this time that we find places like Nantwich in Cheshire becoming centers of bear breeding and bear baiting, when entrepreneurs like Wood and Bickerton of the previous chapter began to see animal baiting as a for-profit venture, thoroughly secularized and increasingly regulated. The landless bearwards of previous centuries could not easily subsist under these new conditions, and gradually moneyed investors took firm control over the sport.

Although Henry VIII had issued his act against “Rogues, Vagabonds and Sturdy Beggars” in 1533, it was not until the reign of Elizabeth that serious, calculated efforts were made in the policing of entertainers and “players” of all kinds from jugglers and minstrels to bearwards and “players of interludes.” These efforts culminated in the creation of the Office of the Revels, and

⁷⁸ See Brownstein, “Stake and Stage” 254-60 to see examples of bearward receipts from 1399 to the 1540s.

⁷⁹ Brownstein, “Stake and Stage,” 255. In fact, bull-rings—not, in fact, a standing structure, but merely the iron ring to which the bull’s nose was tied—were a common feature of English market towns everywhere, as beef was thought to be unpalatable unless the animal was baited before slaughter. Birmingham’s Bull Ring, a major shopping center, stands near the site of the city’s early modern meat-market and the “green” where bulls were baited. See John Morris Jones, “The Centre of Birmingham”. *Birmingham Grid For Learning*. http://www.bgfl.org/bgfl/custom/resources_fnp/client_fnp/teacher/history/jm_jones/jmj_maps_2/page3.htm.

in the issuing of a second “Acte for the punishment of Vacabondes,” both in 1572.⁸⁰ Only three years after this proclamation was authored, the first “Bear Garden” went up on Bankside. A year after that, construction began on James Burbage’s Theatre in Shoreditch. However distinctly differentiated these two forms of entertainment are from one another, the ludic play of baiting and the mimetic play of acting became embroiled in the same political struggles to control a religiously divided, unprecedentedly diverse, and spiritually traumatized populace, and the result in both cases was that they sought shelter within the confines of enclosed structures.

It can hardly be accidental that the years 1575-6 saw enormous changes in two pastimes whose association with “folk” and sacred festivals had bound them together over perhaps hundreds of years. Nor is it strange that they should change in very similar ways. Theatre and bloodsports differ from most festive forms of “play” in that they are both spectacle entertainments, meant to be witnessed by an assembly of onlookers rather than active participants. The innovations in architecture that led to the construction of playhouses and eventually bear gardens arose out of practical needs, especially in the case of the latter: the round shape of the baiting-ring allowed for a large number of people to enjoy maximum visibility of the event. The progression from an open green space to a round pit or enclosure, to round standings, to a round, playhouse-like amphitheatre, makes for a passable summary of the baiting ring’s “development.” And yet, we are still left grappling with questions. How did bear gardens and playhouses come to be so similar, almost interchangeable, in appearance? Why did theatre impresarios like Philip Henslowe and actors like Edward Alleyn seek to become Masters of the

⁸⁰ “... all Fencers Bearewardes Comon Players in Enterludes & Minstrels, not belonging to any Baron of this Realme... shalbee taken adjudged and deemed Roges Vacaboundes and Sturdy Beggars.” In Brownstein, “Stake and Stage,” 271.

Queen's Bears, Bulls, and Mastiff Dogs? How did Bankside become the epicenter of both animal baiting and the greatest achievements of English drama? Although the connections between bear gardens and playhouses were indeed misinterpreted in the past, it cannot be denied that they had a great deal more in common with one another than meets the eye. Perhaps the most crucial point of overlap was not their common ancestry in folk plays and religious rites, and not even the similar social functions that they served, but rather the extraordinary career of one man with whom early modernists are already well-acquainted: Philip Henslowe.

“Better to be a bearherd”:

Philip Henslowe, Hunting, and the First Bankside Bear Gardens

However unclear are the connections between theatre and animal-baiting for the first forty years of Elizabeth’s reign, after Philip Henslowe and Edward Alleyn began to invest in the sport in c. 1594 the two forms became incontrovertibly linked. We may prudently resist concluding that playhouses and baiting-rings belong in the same continuum of architectural innovation, but there is no denying that early modern theatre’s holiest texts, the Henslowe and Alleyn Papers at Dulwich College, are equally vital to the study of early modern animal baiting. Without them we would know very little about the Rose and almost nothing about how it was managed; and without them, our view of the Bear Garden and its successor, the Hope, would be dim at best. In order to fully understand the intimate relationship between the stage and the baiting arena, a long hard look at Henslowe, “the old pawn-broking, stage-managing, bear-baiting usurer,” is essential.⁸¹

Despite their indebtedness to Henslowe, historians have been unkind to him up until very recently, when scholars such as S.P. Cerasano and Roslyn Knutson decided to take a more holistic view of Henslowe’s nontheatrical exploits, and his assumed “obsession” with making money. In Cerasano’s case, the view is in fact achieved through a process of “reversal”: “[t]hat is, Henslowe’s book offers as much a picture of Henslowe and his activities as it does of the Rose playhouse.”⁸² Prior to her work in the 1990s, interest in the biography of Henslowe and what it

⁸¹ As described by F.G Fleay, in *A Chronicle History of the London Stage, 1559-1642*, London, 1890, 94.

⁸² S.P. Cerasano, “The Geography of Henslowe’s Diary,” in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 56:3 (2005), 328-53.

may reveal about his miscellany has been egregiously slight, as evidenced by F.G. Fleay's dismissive, nineteenth-century take on the man quoted above. From Fleay's comment, it is immediately apparent that bear baiting has a great deal to do with Henslowe's controversial place in theatrical history, along with his other very un-Victorian occupation as a pawnbroker. Scholars' disdain for Henslowe certainly did not end with the nineteenth century: for example, Norman Nathan's 1948 article, "Is Shylock Philip Henslowe?" postulates a contentious relationship between Shakespeare and Henslowe based on the latter's "miserly" qualities:

Shakespeare and Henslowe represented rival theatrical interests. Moreover, Henslowe's tightfistedness, especially in respect to playwrights, would be likely to antagonize Shakespeare who, on several known occasions, lent money gratis. What would be more likely than that he would strike at the guiding and vulnerable spirit of the rival organization if Shakespeare did not take part in the war of the theatres?⁸³

Aside from those fallacies which are most readily apparent in this statement (the "war of the theatres," the casual certainty about Shakespeare's money-lending habits), Nathan's article demonstrates a widespread and almost pathological presumption of Henslowe as a talentless Elizabethan venture capitalist, reaping as much profit from keeping his players in debt as he did from the box-office.⁸⁴ This rendering of Henslowe did not go entirely unchallenged, but even

⁸³ Norman Nathan, "Is Shylock Philip Henslowe?" in *Notes and Queries* 1948, 163-5; 163.

⁸⁴ A confederacy of Fleay and E.K. Chambers can be partially credited for this view. See Fleay, *A Biographical*

W.W. Greg, the “Diary’s” first editor, changed his mind about Henslowe more than once, and according to R.A. Foakes, often maintained the opinion that “Henslowe was illiterate, mercenary, and operated by a ‘selfish hand-to-mouth policy.’”⁸⁵

As much as it has served to immortalize Henslowe, the “Diary” itself has a great deal to do with modern scholarship’s unflattering portrayal of him. In Cerasano’s words:

some imagine that Henslowe’s book actually resided within the Rose playhouse, with Henslowe sitting nearby and becoming something of an inert fixture, a bit like his diary. Given this image, it is perhaps understandable that much writing in the early twentieth century drew on his *Diary* to create a biographical narrative in which Philip Henslowe is depicted as a one-dimensional person who spent all of his time in the playhouse watching every penny cross his desk.⁸⁶

Emphasis on the “Diary” as primary amongst Henslowe’s writings has likewise done him a disservice, for it represents a similarly static impression of his activities in the Elizabethan entertainment industry in which he played a significant and dynamic part. As the investigations of Cerasano, Knutson, Ann Rosalind Jones, and Peter Sallibrass reveal, earlier scholars’ scope of interest in his writings has been governed by a narrow focus on the theatre, especially the Rose, which represents only a fraction of his entrepreneurial activities. In fact, a closer look at Henslowe’s long and frequently harrowing history with animal baiting suggests that the Rose

Chronicle of the English Drama, vol. 1 (London, 1891), p. 117.

⁸⁵ R.A. Foakes, “Preface” to *Henslowe’s Diary*, 2nd edition (Cambridge, 2002), viii.

⁸⁶ Cerasano, “Geography,” 330.

may have played a much smaller role in his life than previously assumed. After all, it was his career as a “bearherd” that brought him great wealth and status at Court—not the theatre—and judging from what we know of his life beyond Bankside, status at Court was of considerable importance to him.

It is only within the past thirty years that this side of Henslowe has been widely recognized. Murray Bromberg, writing in 1950, may have been one of the first scholars to bring serious attention to Philip Henslowe the courtier: “Philip Henslowe was an honored member of the community, a churchwarden, Groom of the Chamber to Queen Elizabeth, Gentleman Sewer of the Chamber to James I, Master of the Royal Game, theatre-builder, landlord, merchant, manufacturer of starch, and banker for the Admiral’s Men and other acting companies of the time.”⁸⁷ One may add Master of the Royal Barge to this list, a post he held from circa 1590 and possibly the first of several to take advantage of his theatrical connections, for the painters he employed in the theatre could certainly have embellished the barge for river pageants and progresses.⁸⁸ Due to more recent investigations, we now know Henslowe to have established a strong network of allies in the Court, not least among them being Sir Julius Caesar (“Doctor Seasser,” Henslowe called him), the Master of Requests under both Elizabeth and James, who in 1606-7 procured Henslowe a lifelong annuity from Crown.⁸⁹ This savvy, well-connected, socially fluent Philip Henslowe is certainly a far cry from the traditional image of him as a man rooted to his counting-office.

⁸⁷ Murray Bromberg, “The Reputation of Philip Henslowe,” in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 1: 3, (1950), 135-9; 135.

⁸⁸ In fact, Edward Alleyn purchased two panels from the old barge when it was dismantled in 1618, which can now be seen in a chimney-piece at Dulwich College. See Cerasano, “Geography,” 340.

⁸⁹ See Cerasano, “Geography,” 338. As described by Cerasano, Henslowe’s name appears very high on Caesar’s list of persons receiving such perpetuities, written with great emphasis.

Although a large number of the “Diary’s” entries have to do with the takings for various performances at the Rose, one must not be too quick to assume that the quantity of entries represents the greatest amount of personal investment on Henslowe’s part. Daily receipts at the Rose varied widely, and a shrewd account-manager would have to keep extensive records just to stay abreast of the ebb and flow of money.⁹⁰ Moreover, as Cerasano cautions us, those who would study the “Diary” must keep in mind that Henslowe’s reasons for keeping it are often at cross-purposes with our reasons for using it. To him, the “Diary” may have been at best a convenient place to jot notes, containing many hands and preserving all manner of information, from business transactions to quack remedies to Henslowe’s own tortuous attempts at poetry.⁹¹ “The book’s owner,” says Cerasano, “was the single unifying principle behind the information collected.”⁹²

For this reason, despite the fact that references to animal-baiting are among the rarer entries in the “Diary,” it would be imprudent to discount the importance of his post as Master of the Game simply based on that infrequency. Indeed, Henslowe spent decades trying to acquire the mastership, and his various maneuvers in its pursuit represent some of the most dramatic episodes in his biography. Although it is very clear from a study of his full miscellany—especially his letters and patents—that Henslowe sought the Mastership of the Game with a

⁹⁰ See Foakes, ed., *Henslowe’s Diary*, 16-17 for an early example of performance receipts, which could vary anywhere from a few pence to several pounds: for example, “Rd at senobia [*Zenobia*, a lost play] the 9 of marche 1591” just 22s 6d, and on the following day for “the Jewe of malta” 56s.

⁹¹ One of the most fascinating images of the book is in fact, its vellum wrapper, where both John and Philip Henslowe scribbled and doodled quite habitually. Both brothers wrote their names numerous times; Philip seems to have practiced writing his signature there. In addition, he left an interesting little gem of amateurish but eerily prophetic verse, given his reputation amongst modern theatre historians: “when I lent I wasse A/ frend & when I asked I wasse vnkind.” See Foakes, ed., 3.

⁹² Cerasano, “Geography,” 333.

determination that verges on obsession, his reasons for doing so have never been deciphered. Money is hardly an adequate answer to the problem, for when he did finally acquire the post in November of 1604, he did so by purchasing it from its current owner for the then astronomical sum of 450 pounds. In c.1606 he had to petition the king for aid, for even two years after the purchase, he claimed to have still not recovered from it: “which is your pore servantes undoinge, unles your M^{tie} of your gracious clemensey have consideration of us.”⁹³

Again, this does not sound like Henslowe the “Shylock,” but rather, a man driven by his own will (and perhaps even passion) to risk everything on a dangerously steep investment. It sounds, in fact, more like a man of the theatre, or the Philip Henslowe created by Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard for the film *Shakespeare In Love*, who when pressed as to how the show will go on, can only respond with denuded hope: “I don’t know—it’s a mystery!” However, the venture on which the historical Henslowe did hazard his hopes, and his purse, was not the theatre but the baiting ring.

Why he did this would seem to be itself an unanswerable mystery, but in fact the seeds of Henslowe’s quest for the Mastership can be found in his largely overlooked origins in the Sussex Weald, in particular Ashdown Forest (which was known as Lancaster Great Park until 1672).⁹⁴ As rediscovered by the antiquarian Edward Turner in the 1860s, Philip Henslowe’s father Edmond served as Master of the Royal Game in the park beginning in 1539, during the reign of Henry VIII.⁹⁵ The interconnectedness of hunted “game” and the “game” of baiting have already

⁹³ Henslowe to James I, c. 1606, quoted in John Payne Collier, *Memoirs of Edward Alleyn*, (London, 1841), 75-6.

⁹⁴ Incidentally, Ashdown Forest is also the site of A.A. Milne’s “Hundred Acre Wood.” That Philip Henslowe, consummate bear-baiter, and Winnie the Pooh should have the same origins is almost too ironic to be believed.

⁹⁵ Rev. Edward Turner, “Ashdown Forest,” *Sussex Archeological Society*, 1862, 35-64; 45.

been outlined; moreover, Henry VIII's hunting methods, which a modern-day hunter might not even accept as "hunting," bore uncanny resemblances to animal baiting: rather than give chase after wild prey, often he would have "two or three hundred deer rounded up and then [loose] his greyhounds upon them."⁹⁶ In Lancaster Great Park, both deer and the far more aggressive "wild" boar (not wild at all by the mid-sixteenth century) were hunted this way. As Master of the Game, Edmond Henslowe (or Hensley, as his name is spelled in the records of the Duchy of Lancaster) would have been responsible for not only the management of those animals fated for hunting but also the King's dogs, which were kenneled onsite. When deer or boars were rounded up for the hounds, it was Edmond Henslowe and his deputies who had to herd the animals into "the royal hunting-box... in Vachery Wood."⁹⁷

Perhaps because the relationship between hunting and baiting is not widely understood, the Henslowe family's legacy in bloodsports has received little to no attention from historians. However, the fact that in hunting "the methods of pursuit, capture and kill were highly stylized"—often even "staged"—in early modern England indicates that the connection between the two forms of bloodsport is especially profound.⁹⁸ The young Philip Henslowe would have grown up in a household whose fortunes rested upon the spilling of often copious amounts of animal-blood, and may have even had occasion to observe royal hunts wherein deer or boars

⁹⁶ Thomas, 145.

⁹⁷ Ernest Straker, "Ashdown Forest and Its Inclosures," *Sussex Archeological Society*, 1940, 121-135; 122. According to Turner, the Vachery, or "Vechery," dates from the reign of Edward II when it was first established as a principal hunting-ground. See Turner, 45.

⁹⁸ Thomas cites a number of early modern examples of hunting wherein the quantity of animals killed appears to have been of greater importance than the skill needed to track them. Indeed, he makes a very good case that "tracking" or "chasing" as a modern hunter would understand it was seldom a part of royal hunts in this period; rather, partially domesticated or even tamed animals would be led into enclosed areas and then either shot at leisure or set upon by dogs. See Thomas, 143-50.

were essentially baited to death by packs of dogs. He would have either absorbed or been instructed in the care of large numbers of dogs bred for violence, and perhaps, through frequent exposure to such royal “chases,” developed a taste for the spectacle of death.

Of course one can only speculate as to Henslowe’s personal feelings about the sport, but the fact remains that he invested an enormous amount of time, effort, and money into becoming the country’s premier “bearherd.” Between c. 1594 and 1604, when he finally acquired joint mastership with Edward Alleyn, Henslowe tried and failed over a course of at least seven different maneuvers to obtain the control over the game that he desired. During these ten years, his motives for seeking the mastership either changed depending on his financial standing, or in fact he simply changed his story depending on to whom he was speaking. Officially, Henslowe stated his reason for wanting the mastership to be based almost entirely upon economic gain, for in his petitions to the Crown and to the Privy Council, he often claimed that penury and debt motivated him: “It is better to be a bearherd than to be baited daily with great exclamations for small debts,” he lamented in a letter to Secretary Cecil in 1598.⁹⁹ However, Henslowe used similar tactics in his suits for other posts: for example, in c.1603 he petitioned the newly crowned James I for the lucrative post of Inspector of Woolen Goods for the counties of Essex and Kent, claiming that his stipend as a Groom of the Chamber was simply not enough to live on:

And for so muche as throughe the smalnes of the stipend for performance of my
said service beinge only [blank] and the charges of y^r Ma^{tes}/ often remoues I am no
[ways] able to performe my dutye and service to y^r Ma^{tie} in suche measure as in all

⁹⁹ *Calendar of State Papers 1598-1601*, p. 60. The spelling has been modernized in the transcription.

deutye I desire.¹⁰⁰

Even after he had achieved his goal of the mastership in 1604, he continued to plead financial hardship in his petitions, and to seek ever more widespread control of the sport in order to protect his own interests. Although it is doubtful that in every case he was simply lying, it is certainly possible that Henslowe exaggerated the extremity of his circumstances in order to demonstrate that his need was greater than that of his competitors for the mastership.

While Henslowe certainly spent large sums of money as a theatre impresario and the manager of the Bear Garden, he also made money, if not on those exploits than through his court-stipends, rents, interests, and eventually, through annuities. His son-in-law and business partner Alleyn, for that matter, gained considerable wealth through landholdings on Henslowe's home-turf in Brill, within the pale of Ashdown Forest. In July 1598, one month after Henslowe sent Alleyn an especially morose letter bewailing their loss of the mastership to Ralph Bowes, Alleyn leased a parsonage in Brill to one Arthur Langworth for 3,000 pounds, or 150 pounds per year.¹⁰¹ Neither he nor Henslowe appears to have sought the mastership in a desperate effort to pay off debts.

Given his background, Henslowe was in an advantageous position to put his own stamp on animal baiting, and perhaps he knew this when he first embarked on the quest for mastership

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Cerasano, "Geography," 337. In this case, his petition was unsuccessful, but indeed, his petitions rarely achieved their intended result, as evidenced by the numerous times he applied for mastership of the game. If he was in fact bluffing, then perhaps someone out there knew of it. Most curious in this letter is the fact that Henslowe himself does not seem to know what his own stipend is, perhaps because he expected it to change for better or for worse in the near future, and his request here was drafted prematurely.

¹⁰¹ See Foakes, ed., *Henslowe's Diary*, 52.

of the game in 1595, after leasing the Bear Garden from its current owner for just six pounds.¹⁰² Having experienced the pomp, splendor, and bloodshed of royal hunts in his youth, Henslowe would have been able to approach the “staging” of bloodsports with both a showman’s and a huntsman’s perspectives. It is important to note here that of all the Masters of the Game who served during his lifetime, Henslowe was the only one who also had confirmed interests in the theatre, and who can be proven to have constructed his baiting-ring, the Hope, in the shape of a theatre. It was during his career as a bearwarden that animal-baiting saw its greatest spike in popularity, and that the game itself went through its most significant changes and experiments in form, many of which could be described as leaning towards the theatrical. I have already demonstrated that a powerful connection existed between animal-baiting and the theatre, and Philip Henslowe was a vital part of that connection: I do not think it is an overstatement to say that from 1595 onwards, he *was* that connection.

“A sport for gentle bloods”: hunting as performance.

In order to understand Henslowe’s contribution to animal-baiting, the other “game” in which he was experienced ought to be examined. As stated above, hunting in early modern England did not strictly mean giving chase to a wild animal across open countryside; in fact it frequently did not. Beginning in the 1540s, royal hunts were most often conducted using “toils”—nets supported on poles used to trap large numbers of game animals—and sometimes were even staged in “hunting-boxes,” or large corrals.¹⁰³ Henry VIII, Mary, and Elizabeth I were

¹⁰² Ibid., 74.

¹⁰³ See Peter Edwards, *Horse and Man in Early Modern England*, (London, 2007); 132-3.

all known to hunt this way, and their spoils often mounted in jaw-dropping numbers, such as a staged hunt led by Henry VIII in 1541 in which were killed “two hundred stags and does with bow and arrow and scarcely any fewer the following day.”¹⁰⁴ James I, an almost fanatical devotee of both hunting and baiting, disparaged the commingling of the two, remarking that “grey hound hunting is not so martial a game”—but coursing, the practice of setting dogs upon a quarry within an enclosure, remained popular well into the eighteenth century.¹⁰⁵ Even in such cases when hunters did give chase, usually on horseback, dogs performed most of the tracking and sometimes the actual killing, and the pursued animal was nearly always part of a privately owned herd, warren or kennel. Thus the “sport” of hunting can easily be confused or conflated with the “game” of baiting, and vice-versa, as the descriptors were essentially interchangeable for both. As Elspeth Graham notes in her article on horses in early modern literature:

[a] transformation in the symbolic content of the hunt thus occurs. Both hunted animals and those used in the hunt, whether horses or dogs, have staged parts. The hunt no longer constitutes an exercise in developing physical prowess, in engaging human participants directly in a confrontation with (semi) wild animals. Rather, it becomes a theatrical event in which specially bred animals (sometimes imported from distant breeding parks) are ritually supplied to be killed in an attenuated contest.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 133.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 128.

¹⁰⁶ Elspeth Graham, “Reading, Writing, and Riding Horses in Early Modern England: James Shirley’s *Hyde Park* (1632) and Gervase Markham’s *Cavelarice* (1607),” in *Renaissance Beasts*, ed. Erica Fudge, (Chicago, 2004),

As Master of the Game under Henry VIII, Edmond Henslowe would have helped to stage some of these “theatrical events,” which became more and more common as the king deteriorated in health—though not in girth—and found himself unable to participate in “chases.” But the true theatricality of such devastating and decidedly unsportsman-like hunts extended far beyond aspects of what might be called “self-performance”—audience also mattered, and in the case of royal hunts “audience” was not limited to those who attended the spectacles, it included anyone in the land who might happen to hear about it. For this reason as much as the simple joy of collecting trophies, staged hunts grew increasingly outlandish in proportion towards the ends of both Henry VIII and Elizabeth I’s reigns: no doubt the sheer number of animals killed by the monarch’s own bow on these occasions would not fail to impress his or her subjects.

It must also be borne in mind that those very subjects were themselves largely prohibited from hunting, and those who did engage in it were disparaged as mere poachers by the elite, for whom “the pleasures of the chase” were reserved. Nowhere is this distinction made clearer than in George Gascoigne’s verse preface to his *The Noble Arte of Venerie or Hunting* (1575):

*A sport for Noble peeres, a sport for gentle bloods,
The paine I leaue for seruants such as beate the bushie woods,
To make their masters sport. Then let the Lords reioyce,
Let gentlemen beholde the glee and take thereof the choyce.*

For my part (being one) I must needes say my minde:

That Hunting was ordeyned first, for Men of Noble kinde

And vnto them therefore, I recommend the same,

As exercise that best becomes their worthy noble name.¹⁰⁷

This elitism certainly supports hunting as a kind of performance, as does the emphasis on hunting as having the singular purpose of pleasing the hunter. By emphasizing the pleasurable aspects of hunting—and Montaigne once quipped that “to hunt without killing was like having sexual intercourse without orgasm”—the hunt loses all identification with necessity and sustenance, despite the fact that hunting’s original purpose was simply to feed the hunter.¹⁰⁸ No longer a requirement of survival, here hunting’s main function is as one of many “actions” in the grand performance of aristocratic power. “In its highest form,” says Daniel Beaver in *Hunting and the Politics of Violence Before the English Civil War*,

the royal hunt elevated this ritualized killing to a form of sacrifice, the blood and flesh of the slain deer offering a fertile medium for symbols of honor, nobility, and authority. The forests furnished a landscape for this theatre of honor, a political ecology created by the crown through a Chancery writ, thus conjuring the administrative order of a forest from a tangle of mere woodland.¹⁰⁹

Thus, Edmond Henslowe’s role as Master of the Game served an essential political, and even

¹⁰⁷ George Gascoigne, *The Noble Arte of Venereie or Hunting [...]*, (London, 1575), x.

¹⁰⁸ Montaigne paraphrased by Thomas, 146.

¹⁰⁹ Daniel Beaver, *Hunting and the Politics of Violence Before the English Civil War*, (Cambridge, 2008), 11.

psychological function. By controlling hunting-grounds and hunting animals, the elder Henslowe protected royal dominion over Nature itself, little of which, if any, remained free to common use. Moreover, by reserving the use of the forests for members of the aristocracy, the Master of the Game prevented “lowly” members of society from experiencing the ennobling and elevating ritual of hunting.

Several factors present in sixteenth-century England, and immediately looming in the life of the Henslowes, contributed to the transformation of hunting from common need to noble pastime: deforestation, species decline, and increases in human population. Ashdown Forest, or Great Lancaster Park, suffered near-catastrophic losses of woodland and wildlife to the iron industry in which Philip Henslowe’s elder brother John eventually became involved. John Henslowe’s accounts (which he recorded in the same book that his brother Philip would one day use as his “Diary,”) depict a landscape in decline, for in them we find Ashdown Forest teeming with miners, colliers, log-cutters, and foundry workers: not least among them being Ralph Hogg, John and Philip Henslowe’s brother-in-law and the maker of England’s earliest cast-iron cannons.¹¹⁰ As early as 1540, local officials and servants of the Crown raised serious concerns about the decline of the forest, and sent inspectors to “enquire into, and report upon, the waste and destruction of the King’s woods and game of deer.”¹¹¹ By the end of the seventeenth century it seems that nothing had improved, for the Master of the Game under William and Mary, also named Edmund Henslowe and very likely a direct descendant, brought suit against several local

¹¹⁰ In the deed for the sale of Hogg House in Buxted in 1588, a note reads, “In this house lived ralp Hog who at the then furnace at Buxted cast the first iron cannon that was cast in England.” See K.H. Macdermott, *Buxted the Beautiful*, (Brighton, UK: 1929), 44.

¹¹¹ Turner, 50-1.

farmers whom he accused of stealing timber, poaching deer, and grazing their cattle on royal land.¹¹² With England's woodlands in constant threat of disappearing altogether, the sport of hunting could not simply prefer, but required the use of specially bred, semi-domesticated game as opposed to wild animals—few traces of “wildness” remained in existence.

Along with the scarcity of wild game, anxieties about social mobility influenced the passing of laws and sanctions which denied common citizens the right to take part in hunting, especially through “property qualifications,” which demanded that individuals desiring to hunt prove themselves to be of significant financial worth.¹¹³ In fact, tensions over the right to hunt had mounted so high by the start of the Civil War that a rash of deer massacres occurred in several royal forests during the summer of 1642—by no means a simple act of poaching, but a bloody and systematic form of social protest. In an era when class distinctions appeared fuzzier than ever to its contemporaries, hunting proved to be a bastion of the hierarchical system on which the English nobility was sustained: “honest recreations and fit disports for some great men, but not for every base inferior person.”¹¹⁴ Even Edmond Henslowe, as Master of the Royal game, would have been counted as among the servants “who beat the bushie woods/ To make their masters sport.”

Enter Philip Henslowe, a prime example of Elizabethan social mobility, and, far from Fleay's “illiterate moneyed man,” something closer to our modern concept of a “Renaissance Man”: courtier, sportsman, patron of the arts. He is not merely situated at a junction-point

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ See Edwards, 128-9. James passed an act in 1605 requiring would-be hunters to qualify for 40*l* yearly income or to hold no less than 200*l* in property. Another act in 1671 raised this by more than double.

¹¹⁴ Robert Burton, quoted in Edwards, 125.

between the theatre and the Bear Garden, but also between the exclusively aristocratic sport of hunting and the increasingly demotic sport of animal-baiting. Because Paris Garden was designated as a royal hunting ground long before a Bear Garden ever stood there, it would seem that significant overlap between the two forms existed far into the past, and may indeed be every bit as distant as the overlap between ancient weather-predicting rituals and bear-baiting as discussed in the previous chapter. If so, then the social function of animal-baiting throughout the reigns of Henry VIII, his children, the Stuarts, and possibly even beyond, would appear to be a kind of hunting ritual in which commoners were free to take part, either through submitting their dogs for a bout, helping to restrain bears and bulls, whipping the blind bear, or simply by placing bets on the outcome of each fight. It may be of no coincidence that—even after decades of protest from supporters of animal-rights—baiting only became illegal in 1835, just four years after the “property qualification” for hunting was finally revoked. Perhaps in the absence of elitist exclusivity in hunting, baiting no longer served any particular function, and therefore was left undefended.

Henslowe’s predecessors:

the Bowes Brothers and the spectacle of the burning rose.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the similar trajectories of theatre and bear-baiting during the sixteenth century, not least of all in the architecture associated with them, may be in part due to government sanctions which forced bearwards and players to physically establish themselves within a centralized location. When Philip Henslowe arrived in Southwark,

presumably sometime in the 1580s, the “Acte for the punishment of Vacabondes”—which may have had a profound influence on the construction of both playhouses and baiting-rings—had been in effect for more than a decade, and the first Bear Garden had been standing for nearly as long. The contract for the building of the first Rose theatre in 1586/7 is the earliest extant document to place Philip Henslowe in London, which could easily indicate that he had arrived soon before, perhaps intent on establishing his cloth-dyeing business in the capital. At the very least, we can be certain that by the time Henslowe had settled in Southwark, Ralph Bowes held the office of Master of the Queen’s Game.¹¹⁵

Very little is known about Ralph Bowes, who seems to have been the leader of a triumvirate in the mastership of the game that also included a Thomas Bowes and an Edward Bowes, all three of whom are referred to interchangeably as Master of the Game in warrants and correspondences.¹¹⁶ Unlike the letters patent for Henslowe and Alleyn, which clearly states that theirs will be a jointly held mastership, the other two Bowes Brothers are not mentioned in Ralph’s appointment, only that he has sole authority over “all and singular our game pastymes and sportes, that is to saie of all and everie our beares bulles and mastyve dogges, meet for the

¹¹⁵ His letters patent are dated 2 June 1573. However, there is a good deal of confusion surrounding this particular succession, as Ralph Bowes was not the only man licensed to bait bears during this time. Morgan Pope, John Napton, and a “Wistow” or “Winston” also held this privilege, leading E.K. Chambers to assume that it was one of these three men who built the 1583 Bear Garden (see Chambers, vol 2, 451). Owing to the fact that the Bowes Brothers’ names appear in far more documents concerning baiting during the period between 1574 and c.1589—particularly in Court entertainments—I feel it is much more likely that the Bowes oversaw construction of the arena. To add to the confusion, in Collier’s transcription of the 1573 patent, he changes Bowes’ name for John Dorington, who would eventually snatch-up the post while Henslowe was mired in petitioning the Privy Council for it, in 1598. See Brownstein, “Stake and Stage,” 273.

¹¹⁶ Thomas Bowes first appears in the records in 1576, and Edward Bowes in 1581. See *ibid.*, 277 and 284, respectively. For the sake of brevity, I refer to all three as the “Bowes Brothers,” although to be clear their actual familial relationship to one another is unknown.

purpose.”¹¹⁷ Despite the fact that the Bowes Brothers have never been the objects of a serious study and therefore remain something of a mystery, their career as Masters and Deputies of the Game spanned three critical decades in the development of baiting prior to Henslowe’s influence upon it. During their mastership the first Bear Garden—a round and enclosed structure with galleries—was constructed and subsequently collapsed in 1583, the latter event made infamous through the breathless reportage written up by a number of puritanical pamphleteers.¹¹⁸ One of these is worth quoting at length, simply for the wealth of detail it provides:

You shal vnderstand therefore (beloued Christians) that vpon the last Lords day being the thirteenth day of the first month, that cruell and lothsome exercise of bayting Beares being kept at *Parrisgarden*, in the afternoone, in the time of common praiers, and when many other exercises of Religion, both of preaching and Catechizing were had in sundry places of the city, diuers preachers also hauing not long before cryed out against such profanations: yet (the more pittie) there resorted thither a great company of people of al sorts and conditions, that the like nomber, in every respect (as they say) had not beene scene there a long time before. Being thus vngodly assembled, to so vnholly a spectacle and specially considering the time; the yeard, standings, and Galleries being full fraught, being now amidst their iolity, when the dogs and Bear were in the chiefest Battel, Lo the mighty hand of God vpon them. This gallery that was

¹¹⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, 273.

¹¹⁸ See Brownstein, “Stake and Stage,” 285-97, for a collection of documents relating to the catastrophe.

double, and compassed the yeard round about, was so shaken at the foundation that it fell (as it were in a moment) flat to the ground, without post or peere, that was left standing, so high as the stake wherevnto the Beare was tied. Although some wil say (and it may be truly) that it was very old and rotten and therefore a great waight of people, being planted vpon it then was wont, that it was no marvaile that it fayled: and would make it but a light matter. Yet surely if this be considered, that no peece of post, board, or stake was left standing: though we vrge it not as a miracle, yet it must needes be considered as an extraordinary judgement of God, both for the punishment of those present profaners of the Lordes day that were then, & also informe and warne vs that were abroad. In the fal of it, there were slaine fiue men and two women, that are come to knowledge, who they were and where they dwelled, to whit, *Adam Spencer* a *Felmonger*, in *Southwarke*, *William Cockram* a Baker, dwelling *Shoredich*, *Iohn Burton* Cleark, of *St. Mary Wolmers* in *Lombard street*, *Mathew Mason* servant with Master *Garland*, dwelling in *Southwarke*, *Thomas Peace*, servant with *Robert Tasker*, dwelling in *Clerken well*. The maydens names, *Alice White*, servant to a Pursemaker without *Cripplegate*, and *Marie Harrison*, daughter to *Iohn Harrison*, being a waterbearer, dwelling in *Lombard street*.¹¹⁹

Here we are given not only a cross-section of the Bear Garden's patrons, both male and female,

¹¹⁹ From a pamphlet circulated soon after the event entitled, *A Godly exhortaion, by occasion of the late judgment of God, shewed at Parris Garden, the thirteenth day of Ianuarie[...]* which partially transcribed in Brownstein, "Stake and Stage," 287-9.

hailing from near and far, but also a (literal) dissection of the Bear Garden itself, with its “yeard, standings, and Galleries.” The picture that emerges out of the rubble is of a distinctly playhouse-like structure, one having a “gallery that was double, and compassed the yeard round about.” This strongly suggests that the Bowes Brothers, not Philip Henslowe, were the builders of the first playhouse-like baiting-ring in London. Indeed, as Andreas Höfele reasonably surmises, “[t]he collapse of the old Bear Garden in 1583 [...] could hardly have had such a disastrous effect if it had not been of a similar—though obviously far more rickety—structure as the solidly built Theatre or Curtain.”¹²⁰

The author of the pamphlet quoted above was by no means alone in his presumption that “the hand of God” had been behind the disaster. In the year 1583, the infamous Puritan pamphleteer Philip Stubbes published his own account of the collapse in his antitheatrical *Anatomie of Abuses*, and the Lord Mayor and Privy Council jointly enacted a prohibition on “playes enterludes tumblingS beare or bulbaytinges or any vnlawfull games plaies pastimes or exercises vpon the saboth daies.”¹²¹ Given the zealous atmosphere of 1583, it is unsurprising that the Bowes Brothers more or less ceased all baiting activities on Bankside until they had finished rebuilding the Bear Garden that August.¹²²

When at last the Bear Garden did reopen, the Bowes put on a show like no other that can

¹²⁰ Höfele, *Stage, Stake, and Scaffold*, 6.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 288.

¹²² The old Bear Garden collapsed in January 1583 and the spectacle of the rose was performed on 23rd August 1583, which would have given the Bowes Brothers about eight months to build a new structure, just a little over the average construction-time for playhouse-like structures in this period. (See Bowsher and Miller, 109, for more on this.) Because of dating discrepancies, it can be difficult to ascertain just how long the old Bear Garden lay in ruins; whatever the case, there is no record of a baiting being conducted in Paris Garden proper until this time. See Brownstein, “Stake and Stage,” 285-99, for records of the Bowes Brothers’ activities between the collapse and the burning rose spectacle, most of which took place at Court.

be found on record:

On the 23rd [of August 1583] we went across the bridge to the above mentioned town [Southwark]. There is a round building three stories high, in which are kept about a hundred large English dogs, with separate wooden kennels for each of them. These dogs were made to fight singly with three bears, the second bear being larger than the first, and the third larger than the second. After this a horse was brought in and chased by the dogs, and at last a bull, who defended himself bravely. The next was, that a number of men and women came forward from a separate compartment, dancing, conversing and fighting with each other: also a man who threw some white bread among the crowd, who scrambled for it. Right over the middle of the place a rose was fixed, this rose being set on fire by a rocket: suddenly lots of apples and pears fell out of it down upon the people standing below. Whilst the people were scrambling for the apples, some rockets were made to fall down upon them out of the rose, which caused a great fright but amused the spectators. After this, rockets and other fireworks came flying out of all corners, and that was the end of the play.¹²³

I have not been able to find another account of a bear-baiting which includes so many extraordinary details: the shape of the building (“three stories high,” therefore playhouse-like and one gallery higher than its predecessor), the climatic progression of bears from smallest to

¹²³ From an account originally written in German by Lupold von Wedel, translated in Daigl, 41.

largest, a full-length play or playlet (the length cannot be determined here, but the description suggests a comedy), the possible appearance of a clown (the bread-throwing figure), and finally, the bizarre and certainly dangerous use of rockets and fireworks. As the centerpiece in the pyrotechnic display, the rose predates Henslowe's Rose by two years, and therefore its significance is uncertain. Most likely it was meant to represent a Tudor rose, in which case the dropping of apples and pears may symbolize the munificence of the Queen. The Bowes Brothers had every reason to be grateful to the Crown following the disaster in January, not to mention the widespread superstitions about any sort of popular entertainment that had ensued. In fact, the year 1583 would be crucial in garnering royal support for popular entertainment as a whole—and the spectacle of the burning rose, for all its apparent strangeness, is a prime example of how that support extended across the spectrum of performance.

The play, although its subject is a mystery, may reveal a great deal more about the relationship between animal baiting and the professional theatre than has been previously noted: for the account very clearly states that men *and* women featured in it. There can be little doubt that these women were not women at all, but rather boy actors, and therefore, members or apprentices of a professional company—and in 1583, that company was almost certainly the Queen's Men, whose license had only just been granted earlier that summer.¹²⁴ According to Mary Blackstone, the formation of the Queen's Men in 1583 was deeply entwined with the collapse of the Bear Garden in January:

¹²⁴See Joy Leslie Gibson, *Squeaking Cleopatras: The Elizabethan Boy Player*, (Gloucestershire, UK 2000) for a thorough examination of women's roles in professional acting companies. For the Queen's Men and the granting of their royal license, see Mary Blackstone, "Patrons and Elizabethan Dramatic Companies," in *The Elizabethan Theatre* 10 (1988), 112-32; and Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and Their Plays*, (Cambridge: 1999).

Early in 1583 the Londoners' [antitheatrical] zeal raged hotly after scaffolding at Paris Gardens [sic] collapsed and killed eight spectators. Petitions went to the Privy Council, private letters were sent to lobby for the assistance of two of the Queen's chief officials and Philip Stubbes published his *Anatomie of Abuses* publicly attacking players and those who allowed them to perform. Within this context, then, the Queen's decision to form the Queen's Men later in 1583 was an attempt to cool, if not end, this controversy.¹²⁵

As they did for the majority of their career, the Queen's Men spent their first summer touring far and wide, and according to E.K. Chambers, did not perform in London at all until that winter. However, Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, the authors of a comprehensive study on the Queen's Men and their repertoire, have since discovered that "the company was readily dividable into smaller groups to enable simultaneous performances in different locations[.]"¹²⁶ Although provincial records place them in Leicester in August of 1583, it is possible that a smaller group of the Queen's players sufficient for performing a comedy did in fact appear onstage for the spectacle of the burning rose. By extension, this information offers not only proof that (at least on this occasion) a play shared space with animal baiting, but that professional actors—in fact, *royally-commissioned* professional actors who, like Philip Henslowe, were also Grooms of the Chamber—did share space with baited animals well before the completion of the

¹²⁵ Blackstone, 113-4.

¹²⁶ Michael G. Brennan provides this helpful digest of McMillin and MacLean's findings in his review [untitled] of *The Queen's Men and Their Plays* for *The Review of English Studies* 50: 200 (Nov. 1999), 519-20.

Hope in 1613.¹²⁷ Exactly how they shared that space is yet another matter in need of examining.

One key element of the description quoted above that has never been adequately explored is the mention of a “separate compartment” from which the actors emerged. What exactly was meant by this is certainly debatable, but the fact that the acting space was somehow separate and distinct from the baiting ring suggests a possibility that what is being described here is a stage—of sorts. Because archeological investigations on the site of the rebuilt Bear Garden (or “Bear Garden 3,” cataloged as BAN95 in the London Archaeological Archive) have as of yet turned up little more than “fragmentary walls tentatively identified as the inner walls,” there is unfortunately no solid evidence that a stage, or any form of “acting area” was used there.¹²⁸ This does not rule out the possibility that, at least on this particular occasion, some sort of defining structure was erected in order to distinguish “actors’ space” from audience, and of course, “actors’ space” from baiting ring.

Not even after Henslowe constructed the Hope do we have clear evidence of actors and baited animals sharing the same performance space, despite the fact that Henslowe specified in the building contract for the Hope that it would be adaptable to both plays and animal baitings: Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair* (to which I will return in the next chapter) is the only notable Hope play on record, which suggests that the Hope was not long in use as a playhouse, at least not one of great significance.¹²⁹ Until now, scholars have consistently characterized the Hope as an

¹²⁷ Stow quoted in Chambers, 104: “... at the request of Sir Francis Walsingham, they [the players] were sworn the queens servants and were allowed wages and liveries as grooms of the chamber[.]”

¹²⁸ Bowsher and Miller, 20.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

architectural “oddity.”¹³⁰ However, it must be borne in mind that unlike the case of previous baiting rings, the building contract for the Hope has survived, and its remains, although they were buried under a car-park soon after their discovery, have been positively identified.¹³¹

What little we know of the Bear Garden of 1583 comes from descriptions of the collapse of its predecessor and of the spectacle of the burning rose, both of which strongly suggest that the building was playhouse-like: not only in its inclusion of tiered galleries, but also, perhaps, in its use of a “separate compartment” from which actors entered and exited the arena. Unfortunately, because the foundations of the 1583 Bear Garden are also buried beneath modern development, the use of a stage, tiring-house or any other structural element associated with theatre within the baiting ring itself must remain conjectural.¹³² If future excavations do reveal the presence of a stage in use at any time during the 1583 Bear Garden’s existence, however, it will mean that we will have to redefine the Hope’s place in the history of baiting-ring and playhouse architecture: not an “oddity” after all, but rather a more fully realized and more elegant version of an older model, which had engendered its own peculiar forms of spectatorship.

Within the seemingly chaotic spectacle of the burning rose, in which people “scrambled” for apples while rockets rained down upon them, there is some uncertainty regarding for whom the spectacle itself was intended: was it the groundlings scrambling for generous offerings of luxurious food, such as white bread? Or was it in fact for the “spectators” who were so “amused” by the groundlings’ fright at the falling rockets? The description of the spectacle suggests that

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ See Catherine Milner, “Elizabethan theatre found under car park concrete,” in *The Sunday Telegraph* (22 April 2001) for the full, heartbreaking story.

¹³² Simon Blatherwick’s “Archeology Update: four playhouses and the Bear Garden,” in *Shakespeare Studies* 30 (2002) offers a brief overview of findings on the site of “Bear Garden 3”/BAN95.

those who were assembled directly underneath the burning rose—that is, within throwing distance of the bread—were physically *inside* the baiting area, and therefore included in the galleries’ view of the carnage. The behavior of the groundlings as they fought for morsels of food and dove to escape falling rockets seems to have provided just as much entertainment for the more privileged spectators as did the sight of the bull who “defended himself bravely.” Moreover, it is interesting that the author of this account did not consider the “play” to have ended until well after the rose had dropped its bounty, which in turn incited what seems to have resembled a contained riot.

In contrast to the galleries’ lofty perspective, the groundlings were hardly passive spectators, but were acted *upon* as a part of the entertainment. Although the account does not specifically address their experience of the spectacle (for it can be assumed that its author, a German diplomat, was seated in the galleries), it would have been vastly different from that of the seated spectators. What the description does make very clear is that although several violent bear, bull, and horse baitings occurred in the ring, the groundlings were free to move about in it, and thus there may have been very little in the way of physical boundaries between them and the animals, if any. As soon as the bull-baiting had ended (most certainly in the bull’s death), the groundlings, who may have been standing in a circle or semi-circle around the periphery of the action, were able to reconfigure themselves to play a part in the next round of entertainment, which, not to be anticlimactic, included a good deal of mayhem as well.

The practice of animal baiting is unsettling enough, but to add to this a kind of baiting of Bankside’s *hoi polloi*—provoking hungry people to fight over food—has a ring of Roman decadence about it. We cannot know for certain what those who planned the spectacle of the

burning rose (presumably the Bowes Brothers in conjunction with members of the Queen’s Men, or Edmund Tilney, Master of the Revels) intended to accomplish, but each distinct episode in the event, from the animal baiting to the playlet to the bread-throwing to the fireworks, featured violent encounters between animals or humans. As can be seen in the bread-thrower, the actors may have also served two overlapping functions: firstly, to entertain the entire crowd with their “dancing, conversing, and fighting”; and secondly, to provoke excited and potentially violent responses from the groundlings, which in turn provided entertainment for the galleries. All in all, the spectacle of the burning rose represents a form of popular entertainment that is both hybridized and multiplied: hybridized in the blending of several different forms, and multiplied in the way it was meant to be viewed and/or experienced by its highly stratified audience, many of whom were themselves included in the performance—perhaps unwittingly. For Philip Henslowe, this and possibly other performances by the Bowes Brothers would have presented him with an innovative proposition: that theatre and animal-baiting could go hand-in-hand.

In 1586, the Bowes leased the Bear Garden to Morgan Pope, who, according to John Stow, had “exemplification of the grant of Mastership of the Game of Bears”—likely meaning that he stood in hope of obtaining it.¹³³ Certainly, securing a lease over the Bear Garden would have made the leaseholder a more likely candidate for Mastership. Henslowe either owned or leased property on the Bear Garden’s doorstep throughout the 1590s, including public houses such as the Bell & Cock, tenements standing on Bear Garden property, and the Royal Barge

¹³³ Stow, *Survey of London*, 68. It does not appear that Pope ever actually ascended to Master of the Game—by 1590 a Thomas Burnaby had taken over his lease.

House.¹³⁴

When Ralph Bowes fell gravely ill in June 1598, Henslowe was already well prepared to take over the Mastership, and had even gone so far as to procure a lease on the Bear Garden three years earlier. Evidently, Ralph Bowes' failing health brought a premature end to his family's active involvement in animal baiting, having leased the Bear Garden yet again in 1590, this time to Thomas Burnaby, who in turn sold his lease to Henslowe and Alleyn.¹³⁵ Although the Bowes Brothers remained officially Masters over the Bear Garden and the animals held therein, Henslowe's lease would have enabled him to physically manage the building, reap a portion of its profits, and take responsibility for the staging of baiting events. As in the case of Morgan Pope, the lease exponentially improved his candidacy for Mastership of the Game—but, also like Morgan Pope, it did not guarantee him the position.

By 1597, Henslowe had gained three years' worth of experience as the manager of a baiting ring, and seemed a likely choice to succeed the Bowes Brothers in the Mastership. In preparation for this, Henslowe had a receipt for his lease of properties connected to the Bear Garden, dated 1595, copied into his "Diary," just above several entries recording his frantic movements between Southwark and the Court of Requests, and the money he "Layd owt at Sundrey tymes... a bowt the changinge of ower comysion."¹³⁶ Henslowe's hopes may have been high, and a petition for his succession as Master of the Game was drafted, but to no avail. On

¹³⁴ See Prockter and Taylor, 20, loc. 7G.

¹³⁵ See Foakes, ed., 74. The agreement can be found in the "Diary," and most likely concerned tenements and public houses adjacent to the Bear Garden rather than the baiting-ring itself. Nevertheless, Henslowe endorsed the agreement as "consaring a bargin of the beargarden," perhaps in hope that it might further strengthen his claim. See also Anthony Mackinder and Simon Blatherwick, *Bankside: Excavations at Benbow House Southwark, London, SE1* (London: 2000); 22.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

June 4th, he wrote to Alleyn:

Mr. Bowes liesse very sycke, and every bodey thinckes he will not escape; in so muche that I feare I shall losse all, for doctor seassar hath done nothinge for me & as for ower other matter betwext vs I haue bene wth my lord admeralle a bowt yt & he promysed me that he wold move the quene a bowt yt & the next daye he Rides from the corte to winser so that ther is nothing ther to be hade but good wordes wh^{ch} trvbelles my mind very mvche for my losse you knowe is very mvche to me I did move my laday Edmondes in yt & she very onerably vsed me, for she weant presentley & moved the quene for me & Mr darsey of the previ chamber crossed hir & made yt knowne to her that the quene had geven yt all Readey in Reversyon to one Mr dorington a pensenor & I haue talked wth hime & he confeseth yt to be trew but as yet Mr bowes lyveth & what paynes & travell I haue tacken in yt Mr langworth shall mack yt knowne vnto you for I haue had his heallpe in yt for so mvche as In hime leysse for we haue moved other great parsonages for yt but as yeat I knowe not howe yt shall please god we shall spead for I ame sure my lord admerall will do nothinge & this I comitte you bothe to god leavinge the wholle descord to be vnfolded to you by Mr langworth from london this 4 of June 1598

Your to my power

Phillippe Henslow¹³⁷

¹³⁷ Quoted in John Payne Collier, *Memoirs of Edward Alleyn* (London: 1841); 49.

As mentioned above, “Doctor Seassar” (or “Seasser” depending on the transcription) was Sir Julius Caesar, Master of Requests, whom Henslowe appears to have visited at least nine times in the weeks or even days leading up to Ralph Bowes’ death, according to the entries in the “Diary.” The Lord Admiral Charles Howard was, of course, the patron of the company of players for whom Henslowe’s Rose was home. Aside from offering a colorful glimpse into Henslowe’s network at court, the letter depicts the tense competition for the post in which Henslowe was embroiled. The fact that Dorington was a “pensenor” (“pensioner”) and perhaps already in poor health—as he was to be for the duration of his tenure—must have made the loss especially infuriating for Henslowe.

When he wrote Alleyn again in September, less than a month after Dorington officially received the patent for the Mastership, Henslowe’s tone was almost manic-depressive:

... I understand yow have considered of the wordes which yow and I had betweene us consernynge the beargarden, and accordinge to your wordes yow and I and all other frendes shall have as much as wee can do to bring yt unto a good eand: therefore I wold willingly that yow weare at the bancate [banquet], for then with our losse I shold be the meryer. Therefore, yf yow thincke as I thincke, yt weare fytte that we weare both here to do what we mowght, and not as two frends, but as two joyned in one.¹³⁸

This may be the closest thing we have to a written contract of partnership between Henslowe and

¹³⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, 50-1.

Alleyn. It also hints at what might have transpired soon after Alleyn did indeed return to London, at the “bancate” or “banquet” of which Henslowe speaks, which very probably refers to a function in honor of John Dorington’s succession as Master of the Game. Here, Henslowe alludes to his plan to “do what we mowght” at this event, possibly referring to the first of many instances wherein he offered his invaluable services to Dorington—as a supplier of bears.¹³⁹ Even in losing the battle for the Mastership, Henslowe maintained a powerful hold over the Bear Garden.

Although much of Henslowe’s relationship with his landlords, the Bowes Brothers, is every bit as mysterious as the Bowes’ personal histories, we can reasonably infer from the fact that the Bowes granted Henslowe his lease, and that Henslowe continued to supply bears to the new Master of the Game after Ralph’s death, that they were at the very least an essential connection for him. Indeed, Henslowe seems to have learned a great deal from the Bowes Brothers, for, as the spectacle of the burning rose reveals, they could be innovative in their integrating of bloodsports with professional theatre, and may have even modified their arena, either permanently or temporarily, to accommodate plays and animal baiting in the same day, as part of the same event. Whether Henslowe was in the audience at the spectacle of the burning rose or not, the idea of merging these two very different forms of entertainment took hold of him at some point—although it would be more than two decades before his plans for a hybridized space would come to fruition, in the building of that befuddling architectural “oddity,” the Hope.

Because so little is known about the Bowes Brothers, John Dorington, or Henslowe’s other rivals for the mastership, we can only guess at what drove them into such a vocation. In

¹³⁹ See Brownstein, “Stake and Stage,” 319-20. How often Dorington took Henslowe up on this offer between 1598 and 1600 is not clear, but we know from letters from Dorington and another bear supplier, Wigall, to Henslowe, that Henslowe could be relied upon to send bears, dogs, and even bulls if required by Dorington.

Henslowe's case, at least, the story is deeply rooted in the forests and chases where Henslowe—seemingly the ultimate urbanite—spent his boyhood. Through Henslowe, we find a clear and indisputable link between bear baiting and theatre, but also through him, we find a powerful connection to bear baiting's origins in open land, and in hunting. Although it appears that theatrical performance and animal baiting could share the same venue and even the same billing well before the Hope existed, Henslowe's background in staged royal hunts afforded him a flair for the theatrical, and a rare perspective on the privilege to take an animal's life. It may be that the transgressive aspects of animal baiting discussed in chapter one were unintentional on the part of bearwards, spectators, and—in the case of the “whipping of the blind bear” at least—participants. But certainly, Henslowe was all too familiar with the social tensions fulminating behind hunting and land-use restrictions, and could well have exploited them through the licensed animal-bloodletting that went on within the walls of the Bear Garden: a place where, to continue the account by Thomas Dekker quoted earlier, anyone wanting to prove his courage and strength could bring a bear to its knees:

At length a blinde *Beare* was tyed to the stake, and in stead of baiting him with dogges, a company of creatures that had the shapen of men, & faces of christians (being either Colliers, Carters, or watermen) tooke the office of Beadles vpon them, and whipt monsieur *Hunkes*, till the blood ran downe his old shoulders[.]¹⁴⁰

As mentioned earlier, it was not until after Henslowe began his career as a bearward that the

¹⁴⁰ Dekker, quoted in Fudge, *Perceiving Animals*, 18.

“whipping of the blind bear” became the solidly established finale of an afternoon’s bear-baiting.¹⁴¹ Why this especially gruesome ritual rose in prominence under Henslowe’s directorship could, perhaps, be related to his keen understanding of the violent fantasies harbored by members of society deemed not worthy enough to participate in other forms of ritual bloodletting—perhaps because Henslowe harbored them too. A cunning and cosmopolitan social-climber with origins in the “wild” theatre of aristocratic might, the royal forests, Henslowe’s own desire to participate in the privilege of bloodshed may have, at least in part, fueled his quest to control the most spectacular and transgressive “game” in the land. Such is mere speculation. What we do know is that the battle for Mastership of the Game consumed a significant part of Henslowe’s time and energy for over a decade of his life, and that no sooner did he finally obtain it in 1604, but he closed the doors forever on the building for which he is renowned today, the Rose playhouse. We can clearly glean from this sequence of events just where his priorities lay.

¹⁴¹ The earliest mention of a blind bear that I can find is from the Henry Machyn account of 1554 quoted in chapter one. The first description of a ritualized “whipping” spectacle is Paul Hetzner’s 1598 account, also quoted in chapter one. Prior to c.1598 mention of blind bears, or hints of a whipping, are extremely scarce. At any rate, it may be that Henslowe decided to emphasize a preexisting custom of the baiting-ring, resulting in the whipping of the blind bear’s becoming a highly anticipated climax, rather than simply another episode.

3: THEATRE

“An educated Ape”:

The Hope’s Carnival of Blood and Laughter

Tomorrowe beinge Thursdaie shalbe seen at the Beargardin on the banckside a greate mach plaid by the gamestirs of Essex who hath challenged all comers what soeuer to plaie v dogges at the single beare for v pounds and also to wearie a bull dead at the stake and for your better content shall haue pleasant sport with the horse and ape and whiping of the blind beare. Viuat Rex.¹⁴²

Whole books have been dedicated to the Rose and the Globe, but the Hope occupies a somewhat shadowy place in theatre history—which is ironic, considering we have more contemporary descriptions of and references to the Hope than for either of its more famous cousins. When the foundations of the Hope were uncovered and identified by archaeologists in 2000, the Evaluation Report submitted by the Museum of London Archaeology Service promised that such a find would be of national, if not international importance. A year later, when a second report was issued by the same author, the Hope had been demoted to being of only “local significance.”¹⁴³

I once asked Julian Bowsher, one of the archaeologists currently investigating the playhouses and bear gardens of Bankside, about this discrepancy, at which he could only shrug

¹⁴² From an undated bill amongst the Henslowe papers advertizing a baiting at the Hope. Quoted in Jason Scott-Warren, “When Theatres were Bear Gardens, or What’s At Stake in the Comedy of Humors,” in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 54:1 (2003), 63-82; 73.

¹⁴³ See Nicholas Elsdon, “New Globe Walk London SE1, NGW00; London Borough of Southwark: An Archeological Impact Assessment and Evaluation Report,” MoL Archaeology Service, July 2000 and “20-22 New Globe Walk London SE1, London Borough of Southwark: Archaeological Post-excavation Assessment,” April 2001.

and sigh, “Politics!” It seems that the land on which the Hope had once stood belonged to a developer who wanted to turn it into a car-park. When the foundations of the Rose were threatened with a similar fate in 1989, the furor that erupted over the potential loss of such a national treasure raised enough money to have the Rose foundations put on permanent display, the project being funded by theatre aficionados and even celebrated actors such as Sir Laurence Olivier.¹⁴⁴ The Hope, however, did not drum up nearly as much interest—nor money—as the Rose, certainly not enough to rescue it from the proverbial wrecking-ball. While the Rose is now once again host to a small theatre company, who perform on a platform overlooking the unburied foundations (which are helpfully illuminated in red tube-lighting), the Hope lies forgotten under several feet of concrete.

This may strike a handful of people as a terrible outrage, but no surprise whatsoever. Who has ever heard of the Hope? The Rose garners its value as a *physical artifact* because of its association with famous Elizabethan playwrights, namely the two “biggies,” Marlowe and Shakespeare—an association that made its way into public awareness through a film I have already mentioned, *Shakespeare In Love*, in which the Rose serves as a centerpiece. When archaeologists and researchers are asked to evaluate the significance of their discoveries, they may approach the question from one of two perspectives: either from the finding’s significance in its own time, or how we might perceive its significance now, based on its association with important people or events. More often than not, archaeological findings are evaluated through the latter perspective, and such is certainly true in the case of the Rose and Hope. Both structures were built by the same man as part of the same enterprise, both were witness to enormously

¹⁴⁴ See <http://www.rosetheatre.org.uk/discover/the-trust/> for more information on the “Save the Rose” campaign.

significant moments in theatre history, both are immensely important to the study of theatre architecture, and one—the Rose—was possibly a mere prelude to the other.

This is to say that I doubt Philip Henslowe would have agreed with our modern demotion of the Hope in favor of the Rose, and it may be true that early modern Londoners familiar with the Bankside theatres might have felt the same way. Although in its heyday the Rose saw the debuts of several of Christopher Marlowe's plays, and possibly some of Shakespeare's, by the time it was demolished in 1606 it had languished for many years in a state of "dangerous decay," abandoned by Henslowe and essentially left to ruin.¹⁴⁵ Excavations on the Rose site indicate that it may have been little more than a mouldering eyesore on Bankside from 1603—just one year before Henslowe finally gained the title he had sought for nearly as long as the Rose had been standing, the *Mastership of the Game*.

This serves as a fascinating reminder of one aspect of the past that we all too frequently overlook: that it was once *present*. The significance of the Hope may not be something of which we are aware, and may indeed strike us as irrelevant given the way that history has been written since its time. However, the Hope's importance in its own time is by no means irrelevant to our perception of early modern popular entertainment as a whole, for nowhere is the entanglement of theatre and animal baiting better illustrated than in the Hope itself. Perhaps twentieth century scholars' habit of searching for refractions of one form in the other has its roots in those very foundations that now lie under a borough car-park.

For Henslowe, the Hope may have been the culmination of a long and passionate struggle,

¹⁴⁵ See Bowsher and Miller, 64-5, for a recapitulation of the Rose's final, undignified years, for most of which it was known chiefly as a source of periodic flooding due to its blocked drains and collapsing foundations.

opening exactly ten years after he and Edward Alleyn obtained the Mastership of the Game. It was one of three entertainment-based enterprises in which Henslowe invested after the Rose had lived out its function: the first was called the Fortune (1600), a playhouse at which animal-baiting is not known to have taken place; and the second, often overlooked, is the New Bear Garden of 1606, constructed on the foundation of the Bowes Brothers' Bear Garden of 1583 and built by Peter Streete, architect of the Globe. Together, the Fortune, the New Bear Garden, and the Hope represent a part of Philip Henslowe's legacy that today is often overlooked, although for Henslowe it appears to have been the height of his career—full of hope, and yielding good fortune. It began at what was certainly a new beginning for the English nation as a whole, the Accession of James I, and carried on long after Henslowe's death—until the Hope was finally shut down by Oliver Cromwell's troops in 1656, and all its bears shot.

The New Bear Garden.

However thorough Henslowe was in his quest to win the Mastership, his ultimate succession went anything but smoothly. For the last three years of his tenure, John Dorington “was ill of an ague,” and finally expired in 1603.¹⁴⁶ During the period of Dorington's lingering illness, Henslowe and Alleyn served functionally as Masters of the Game and were even occasionally referred to as such, notably by Stow.¹⁴⁷ As will be discussed in the next chapter, they even assumed responsibility for the newly ascended James I's private animal baiting exercises and experiments carried out at the Tower of London's menagerie, exercises which required no

¹⁴⁶ Collier, *Memoirs of Edward Alleyn*, 70.

¹⁴⁷ John Stow and Edmund Howes, *Annales, Or a General Chronicle of England* (London: 1631); 864.

small amount of skill and flexibility from Henslowe and Alleyn. Correspondence between Dorington and Henslowe also reveals that the latter was often indispensable to the former. In 1600, an already sickly Dorington wrote to Henslowe in full humility:

To my very good frend Mr henslow geve thes
Mr henslow I have Receivd a letter to haue hir M^{aty} games to be at the court of
mvnday next so short a warning as I never knew the lycke and my self not well
having had a fytt of agew on frydaye at night but yf ther be no Remydye then
good mr henslow pull vp yowr sperytts and Jackobe [a bear] to furnyshe yt as
well as yow canne and I have wrytten my syster hide to lett hir M^{aty} vnder stand
of the losse we haue had this winter of our best bears and to sygnyfy so mvch to
them that executes my lord chamberlins place and so I will leve you for this time
hoping you will dow all yowr best Indevers to satisfy hir M^{aty} in this servisse
from wigell this [...] of maye 1600.

Your very frend

John dorington¹⁴⁸

Whether Dorington and Henslowe were indeed “good friends” or simply dependent upon one another at various times is not known. There is little evidence to suggest that Henslowe afforded Dorington the same professional, and perhaps personal respect that he did Ralph Bowes, on the eve of whose death Henslowe wrote, “if it please god to take away Mr Bowes I cannot helpe it

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in Daigl, 174-5.

but be sorry.”¹⁴⁹ Nor does it appear that Henslowe’s mental state in the wake of Dorington’s death was anywhere near as frantic as it had been after Ralph Bowes’ passing. If he made the same efforts to obtain the Mastership after Dorington as he did after Bowes, then a record of such has not survived. To all appearances, one William Stuart—“an invading Scot,” Chambers derided, and possibly a relative of the new king—snatched up the position not long after Dorington drew his last breath.¹⁵⁰

To add insult to injury, Stuart—whose personal interest in the appointment seems to have been strictly financial—revoked Henslowe and Alleyn’s license, saddling them with a venture that they were forbidden to operate. Although Henslowe and Alleyn maintained their lease on the Bear Garden, and owned the bears, dogs, bulls, horses, and possibly even apes contained therein, the loss of their license to bait could have easily ruined them. Still worse, when a desperate Henslowe and Alleyn tried to sell their now worthless property to Stuart, he refused. Instead, Stuart offered to sell them his Mastership of the Game, at the cutthroat rate of 450 pounds. Perhaps having no other choice, they paid up.

One can well imagine just how bittersweet a victory this must have been for Henslowe, after a decade of maneuvering for the position. Remarkably, the vicious battle with Stuart seems to have culminated in no more than four days: on the 28th of November, 1604, Stuart drafted the contract for the sale of the Mastership, and by December 1st, Henslowe and Alleyn were officially declared Masters of the King’s Game.¹⁵¹

True to form, Henslowe’s first act as Master of the Game was to negotiate his rate.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 173.

¹⁵⁰ Chambers, vol 2, 452.

¹⁵¹ See Collier 70-6 for full transcripts of Stuart’s contract and Henslowe and Alleyn’s (partially extant) letters patent.

Perhaps suffering from his losses under Stuart, not to mention the 450-pound fee, Henslowe soon after petitioned the king for a pay raise of 2 s. 4 d. per day, to lift the prohibition against holding bear baitings on Sundays, and to enforce stricter punishment on “divers vagrantes, and persones of losse and idell liffe, that usalley wandreth through the contreyes with beares and bulles with owt any lycence.”¹⁵² Had Henslowe succeeded in enforcing such punishments—the degree to which he did so is difficult to assess—the result would have been a sea-change in animal-baiting as a whole. No longer a loosely-regulated, provincial, market-day event staged in ad hoc settings, Henslowe’s game of bears envisioned an entertainment equally as centralized, circumscribed, and spectacular as an afternoon at the playhouse.

Perhaps in connection to this grand vision, Henslowe’s next order of business was to remodel the Bowes Brothers’ Bear Garden of 1583, which after more than two decades of use may have been in disrepair, or may simply have not been up to Henslowe’s standards as a place of “show.” Fascinatingly, his choice of builder was none-other-than Peter Streete, architect of the 1597 Globe. By the time Henslowe, Alleyn, and Streete made up their contract for the New Bear Garden in 1606, the Globe had stood on Bankside for going on ten years. Henslowe and Alleyn would have both been very familiar with Streete’s handiwork.

Peter Streete’s reputation has suffered under the folkloric misassumption that his work on the Globe was only a reassembly job. Owing to legal documents concerning the demolition of the Theatre in Shoreditch prior to the Globe’s construction, the notion that Peter Streete and his craftsmen simply dismantled the Theatre, transported “from thence all the wood and timber ther of unto the Banckeside... and there erected a new play howse wth the said Timber and wood” has

¹⁵² Henslowe quoted in *ibid.*, 76.

long been perpetuated.¹⁵³ However, the same document also clearly states that the materials pulled from the Theatre were not in fact used to build the Globe: rather, they were “sett... upp upon the premiss in an other forme.”¹⁵⁴ In an age when building materials were scarce and often reused this was not at all uncommon. More likely, the once proud Theatre spent its afterlife as a lowly taphouse adjacent to the Globe, the early modern equivalent to our concession stand.

Although no building contract for the Globe survives, Henslowe’s contract with Streete for the building of the Fortune (1600) stipulates a desire for the Fortune “to be made doen to be in all other contrivitions, conveyances, fashions, thinge and thinges effected, finished and doen accordinge to the manner and fashion of the saide howse called the Globe.”¹⁵⁵ The only difference—which surely had a profound effect on the staging of plays at the Fortune—was that Henslowe’s new playhouse “shalbe sett square.” Henslowe seems to have had a habit of copying designs from other playhouses, as he would again with the building of the Hope in 1613, in that case stipulating that it be based on the appearance and proportions of the Swan. His interest in the Globe may have been merely convenient, and his references to it only shorthand for the dimensions his ideal audience capacity would require. Because excavations of the Globe’s remains are only fragmentary, and represent very little of Peter Streete’s original design, Henslowe’s Fortune contract has provided scholars with invaluable insights into the Globe. Once again, early modernists are in Henslowe’s debt.

Peter Streete’s highly specialized skill in the building of playhouses seems to have easily

¹⁵³ From a PRO document quoted in Bowsher & Miller, 90. The most recent repetition of the “reassembly” story occurred on the television documentary series “Shakespeare Uncovered: *Henry IV & V* with Jeremy Irons,” PBS, airdate 1/25/2013—a week prior to my writing this. Clearly the tale is standing firm.

¹⁵⁴ Bowsher & Miller, 90.

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in Bowsher & Miller, 169.

translated to the design of the New Bear Garden. Though smaller than the Globe by about thirty feet in diameter (the Globe's diameter was approximately 82 ft, and the New Bear Garden's only 52), the New Bear Garden featured at least two galleries, the third level being more likely used for attic space; bay windows, an inner staircase off the public entrance, and an unusually lavish portico topped with "twoe carved Satyres," "piramides," and "gables."¹⁵⁶ Nowhere in the contract of the Hope do we find such detailed descriptions of the building's decorative elements, but such is no reason to assume that it was plainer than its predecessor. Far from a walled-up ring surrounded by rudimentary scaffolding, the New Bear Garden sets a precedent for baiting arenas that were pleasing to the eye, and fit with contemporary notions that equated Paris Garden with the Garden of Paradise.¹⁵⁷

The description of the New Bear Garden's splendid portico is also in keeping with the fashion of the times. Grotesques, particularly those derived from classical or "antick" imagery, became highly popular under Elizabeth's reign.¹⁵⁸ Owing to the Elizabethans' fascination with ancient Rome, decorative elements such as carved satyrs and pyramids would have set the New Bear Garden apart from its predecessors. It was certainly a far cry from the bear-pits of previous decades. Once again we see the grandeur of Henslowe's vision reflected in the architecture: an afternoon at the bear garden was now a form of "total" entertainment, much like the twentieth century experience of attending a "movie palace": the surroundings are every bit as pleasing as the show itself. In *Theatre, Court, and City*, Janette Dillon points out that decorative elements of

¹⁵⁶ See Bowsher & Miller, 112, and Mackinder & Batherwick, 26.

¹⁵⁷ See chapter 1.

¹⁵⁸ See Michael Snodin and John Styles, *Design and the Decorative Arts: Tudor and Stuart Britain 1500-1714*, (London: 2004); 44.

theatrical architecture “seemed to contemporaries to speak from within an elite and classicist architectural vocabulary.”¹⁵⁹ The same was certainly true of Henslowe’s lavish bear garden.

Such may have contributed to Henslowe’s unprecedented success as a “bearward” in ways not previously understood. As Paul Yachnin argues in his article “The Populuxe Theater,” one way to interpret early modern audiences’ pleasure at the beholding of a theatrical event is as a virtual participation in the world of their social betters:

Commercialized forms of entertainment such as playing and prostitution inserted themselves into the early modern system of rank and capitalized on the desirability of the language, conduct, and dress of the gentry and the court. The players and prostitutes were among the first traders in what I am calling ‘the populuxe market,’ an area of trade that centered on the selling of popular, relatively inexpensive versions of deluxe goods.¹⁶⁰

As discussed in chapter one, Erica Fudge has applied a similar theory to the experience of animal baiting. Henslowe, being familiar with the goings on at Court—and more importantly, the animal baitings that were carried out at Court—may have been farsighted enough to see a need for “the populuxe” in his New Bear Garden. Not only did the witnessing of baiting feed into a psychological need to experience “mastery” over “lesser beings,” as posited by Fudge, but the simple act of entering the Bear Garden’s splendid doors would have invited patrons to participate

¹⁵⁹ Janette Dillon, *Theatre, Court, and City*, (Cambridge: 2000); 40.

¹⁶⁰ Paul Yachnin, “Populuxe,” in *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare’s England*, Yachnin and Dawson, eds. (Cambridge: 2001); 40.

in a grand and decadent fantasy, one that cast them as courtiers attending a bear-baiting at Whitehall or Nonesuch Palaces.

Although the New Bear Garden remained open for only ten years, Henslowe seems to have carried its fantastical and fashionable appearance over into his next venture, the Hope—although in the case of the Hope, the theatricality was quite literal. The New Bear Garden represents an important move towards the fabrication of a space that takes “total” entertainment to a whole new level. If nothing else, it is the first provable example of a Bankside baiting ring to strive for the same luxury evoked by its neighboring playhouses. From a bear garden that resembles a theatre—in form, aim, and function—to a space that is both a theatre and a baiting ring is only a small step.

The Hope.

Despite having been business partners for nearly a quarter of a century, in 1611 Edward Alleyn and Henslowe parted ways. Alleyn’s new ambition was to build a boy’s school, the College of God’s Gift. The separation was amicable, as Alleyn maintained his share in the animal-baiting activities at the Hope—though not, it seems, in theatrical performances.¹⁶¹ In his absence Henslowe took on a new business partner, Jacob Meade, who Sidney Lee claims to have resided at one of Henslowe’s inns on Bankside, the appropriately named Dancing Bears.¹⁶² After Henslowe’s death in 1616, the Meades continued to manage the Hope for years afterwards,

¹⁶¹ How he came to this dramatic change of career seems to have been a mysterious matter in his own lifetime. Rumors sprang up alleging that Alleyn had seen an apparition of the Devil during a performance of one of Shakespeare’s plays—unlikely in several ways, since Alleyn was never a part of the King’s Men and probably retired from playing some time before 1604. Whatever the case, we have no reason to rule out spiritual rebirth as having something to do with the founding of the College. See Collier, *Memoirs*, 111-2.

¹⁶² From Henslowe’s entry in *The Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 26, 137.

eventually succeeded by the Godfreys, who managed the Hope until its climactic—and bloody—closure in 1658. Perhaps this is why Lee also asserts that Meade assumed responsibility for all operations at the Hope while Henslowe was still alive. Collier, following a remark in a deposition describing Henslowe as “sick with the palsy” in his final moments, suggests that Henslowe, “old and infirm... took Meade into partnership to assist him.”¹⁶³ However they arrived at their partnership, it was Henslowe and Meade, not Henslowe and Alleyn, whose names appeared on the building contract for the Hope, drafted on 20 August 1613. Judging from the date of its first recorded performance, 31 October 1614, the Hope may have taken well over a year to build, possibly owing to the fact that the second Globe was also in construction at this time, and the two massive projects may have periodically siphoned off labor from one another.

The wealth of visual evidence of the Hope that survives is unprecedented. Unlike its neighbors, of which only vague descriptions are available to the modern scholar, the Hope rises solidly out of the long-vanished London skyline. We know from Wenceslaus Hollar that it had a distinctive pitched roofline, quite plain compared to the gables and onion-dome of the rebuilt Globe to its south; and that it had an external staircase much like the one pictured on the Globe in the same image. From Hollar, we might also glean the presence of an awning over the stage (to which the flagpole appears to be affixed)—a detail corroborated by the Johannes DeWitt drawing of the interior of the Swan playhouse, on which the Hope was based (see Fig. 6), as well as the highly detailed contract for the Hope’s construction (quoted in full below), which specify “the Heavens all over the saide stage to be borne or carried without any postes or supporters to

¹⁶³ Collier, *Memoirs*, 125 and 110, respectively.

be fixed or sett vppon the saide stage.”¹⁶⁴

Owing to directions within the Hope’s building contract which request that the new structure “be made in althinges and in suche forme and fashion, as the saide plaie house called the swan,” its builder Gilbert Katherens—not to mention its mastermind Henslowe—could be mistaken for little more than a copycat. A closer look at the contract reveals such to have not been the case. Although the contract does specify that the Hope should be of “the same of suche large compasse, fforme, widenes, and height as the Plaie house Called the Swan,” and that it should be “of such largnes and height as the stearecasses of the saide playehouse called the Swan,” at no time is Katherens, Henslowe’s carpenter, asked to replicate anything other than the building’s dimensions and some basic structural components, specifically its “tymbers, tyles, and [brick] foundation.” In this case, the Swan may have been merely a convenient shorthand for the size of building Henslowe desired. Otherwise, the contract’s main focus is the creation of a “flex-space”: “fitt & convenient in all thinges, bothe for players to playe Jn, And for the game of Beares and Bulls to be bayted in the same.” Exactly how this space functioned practically is debatable. The contract describes the stage elements to be capable of being “carryed or taken away,” but where they were stored when not in use, how they fit together, in how many parts, how easily they were disassembled and reassembled, and how long such transitions took may never be known.

¹⁶⁴ I have followed W.W. Greg’s more or less faithful transcription as near as possible, with a few modernizations of spelling and punctuation for clarity’s sake. From Greg, ed., *The Henslowe Papers*, vol. 1, (London: 1904); Mun. 49, 19-22.

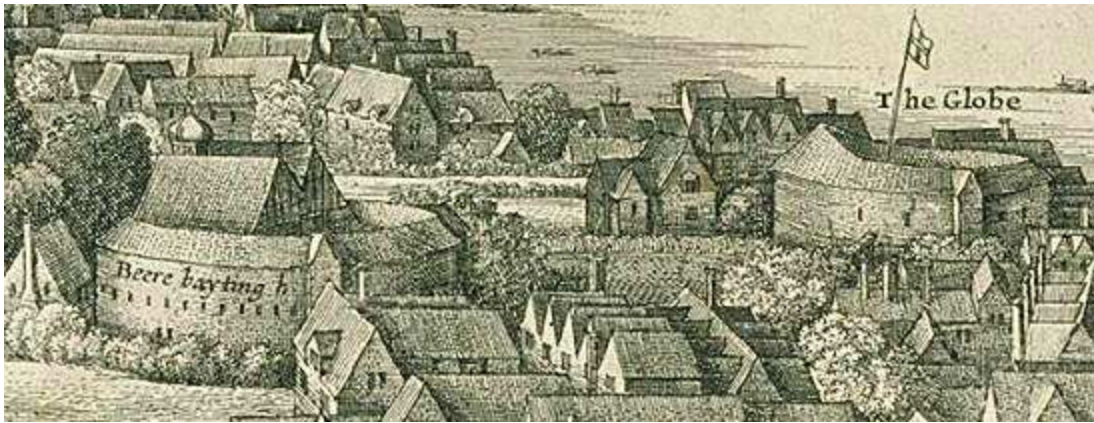


Illustration 5 [Illus. 1]: The “Long View” by Wenceslaus Hollar, with the Hope incorrectly identified as the Globe.



Illustration 6: The “DeWitt” sketch of the Swan Playhouse (1596), which appears to depict a partially covered stage. The image that survives is a copy of DeWitt’s original sketch.
<http://www.theatre.ubc.ca/fedoruk/TheatreArchitecture/swan-theatre.jpg> [accessed 2/11/13].

Scant evidence of theatrical activity at the Hope survives past 1614, but it is assumed that the Hope was used “for Stage Playes on Mundayes, Wednesdayes, Fridayes, and Saturdayes, and for the baiting of the bears on Tuesdayes and Thursdayes.”¹⁶⁵ In 1613-4, Henslowe and Meade contracted Nathan Field, formerly of the Children of the Queen’s Revels, to establish an in-house company of players at the Hope.¹⁶⁶ Field’s contract was for three years, the end of which ultimately coincided with Henslowe’s death. It may be that Meade did not share Henslowe’s interest in the theater, or that the conversion of the space from baiting-ring to theater was deemed too costly or time-consuming, or even that Field’s actors had no desire to renew their contract—whatever the case, theatrical activity ceased at the Hope soon after Henslowe expired.¹⁶⁷ In fact, the only significant theatrical performance that ever occurred at the Hope, at least on record, was the debut of Ben Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair*, possibly the Hope’s maiden production.

Field had experience with performing Jonson, having begun his career as a child-actor in Jonson’s masque *Cynthia’s Revels* (1600). However, the conditions of the theater at Whitefriars’, Field’s previous engagement, and those of the Hope could not have been more dissimilar. For that matter, in writing *Bartholomew Fair* Jonson reverted to comedy for the first time in four years and the last time in his life, innovating a kind of theater that could be described through the modern term of “site-specific performance”—and perhaps “time-specific” may also be appropriate. The date of the performance is stated in the prologue as is the location, and the text makes few allowances for adaptation, despite the fact that the night after its debut it was

¹⁶⁵ Stow, *Annales*, 375.

¹⁶⁶ See Collier, *Memoirs*, 118-9, for a transcription of Field’s contract.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

performed at Whitehall. Indeed, much of the comedy in the play's lengthy induction refers to the setting of the Hope, as in Jonson's mock contract with the audience:

Scrivener: Articles of Agreement, indented, between the Spectators or Hearers, at the Hope on the Bankside, in the County of Surry on the one party; And the Author of Bartholmew Fair in the said place and County, on the other party: the one and thirtieth day of Octob. 1614. and in the twelfth year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord, James, by the Grace of God, King of England, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith: And of Scotland the Seven and fortieth.

Here, Jonson pokes fun at the very sort of Elizabethan legalese that we find in documents such as the contract for the building of the Hope. So closely does this fake contract resemble the real contract for the Hope, in fact, that one could argue for the presence of an inside joke. Given the scale of the project in the Hope's construction, it is possible that a number of the audience present for the first performance of *Bartholomew Fair* had helped to erect it. As master carpenter Gilbert Katherens would have been most familiar with the contract, but during the process of construction it is possible that parts of the document may have circulated verbally amongst subcontractors, unskilled laborers, and other workmen. As mentioned above, Bankside in 1613 saw the simultaneous building of both the Hope and the second incarnation of the Globe, and it may be that these circumstances fostered a community, or at the very least a camaraderie, based

in the local labor force. The fact that much is made of the Hope as a setting in the opening scene of Jonson's play suggests that the audience may have already been familiar with the space, right down to its particular odor:

...And though the *Fair* be not kept in the same Region, that some here, perhaps, would have it; yet think, that therein the *Author* hath observ'd a special *Decorum*, the place being as dirty as *Smithfield*, and as stinking every whit.

The reference to "decorum" relates to Jonson's translation of Horace's *Ars Poetica*, begun at least as early as 1604 and perhaps never finished.¹⁶⁸ Jonson owned at least two editions of Horace's work, (one of which is housed at the Cambridge University Library, and is heavily lined and annotated in Jonson's hand) and cultivated his own often strict definition of "decorum" over the course of his career, criticizing poets such as Sidney, Guarini, and Lucan for, as he saw it "forgetting decorum" in that they "make every man [character] speak as well as themselves."¹⁶⁹ "Decorum's" usage in *Bartholomew Fair* may be Jonson poking fun at himself as well as his surroundings—however, it also indicates an awareness on Jonson's part that *Bartholomew Fair's* eponymous setting is especially well served by the Hope, a space in which one may find actors on the stage, and bears and bulls—and perhaps even lions—just outside the frame.

¹⁶⁸ See Victoria Moul, "Translation as Commentary? The Case of Ben Jonson's *Ars Poetica*," in *Palimpsestes: revue de traduction*, 20 (2007), 59-77.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 60. And "Conversations with William Drummond," in *The Works of Ben Jonson*, vol. 11, ed. William Gifford (1875), 411.

In the induction scene, the Bookholder angrily puts the overly critical Stage-keeper in his place by reminding him that one of his menial jobs is to “gather... up broken Apples for the Bears within”—“within” meaning, in this context, offstage. Later in the play, Leatherhead the Hobby-horse seller draws attention back to the animals that would have been housed in the stables close by:

Leatherhead: What do you lack, Gentlemen, what is't you lack? a fine Horse? a Lyon? a Bull? a Bear? a Dog, or a Cat? an excellent fine *Bartholmew*-bird? or an Instrument? what is't you lack?

At the Hope, such lines would have acquired a special significance, and could not have achieved the same effect in *Bartholomew Fair's* subsequent performance at Whitehall. The Hope's building contract includes instructions “to new builde, erect, and sett vpp the saide Bull house and stable wth good and sufficient scantlinge tymber planks and bordes and [partitions] of that largnes and fittnes as shalbe sufficient to kepe and holde six bulls and Three horssees or geldinges, wth Rackes and mangers to the same.” We also know from letters between Henslowe and his preceding Masters of the Game that Henslowe also kept bears and lions, presumably not in the same stable as the horses and bulls, but close at hand.¹⁷⁰

Bruce Boehrer states in his book *Shakespeare Among the Animals* that “the induction to Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*... expresses a pointed aversion to bear-baiting as a consequence of the circumstances in which the play itself was originally introduced. The architectural

¹⁷⁰ See previous chapter, letter from John Dorrington to Henslowe.

peculiarity of the Hope seems to have stung Jonson.”¹⁷¹ I am not certain that it did sting Jonson. Judging from the play’s fluidity between social spaces, its frequent references to the newly built venue, and its carnivalesque pageant of comic scenes, I believe that the play is suited specifically for the Hope’s unique atmosphere, and that it is reasonable to assume that Jonson took full advantage of said atmosphere in constructing his play. Jonson had written about bearwards before, in *Epicoene, or The Silent Woman*, but *Bartholomew Fair* takes a far less literal approach to the coalescence of theatre and bloodsport. Here it is not the animals that are baited, but society as a whole.

Scholars such as Peggy Knapp and Jonathan Haynes have described *Bartholomew Fair* as exposing and critiquing the “inversion” of social order that was then prevalent in English society.¹⁷² “Ben Jonson saw his world quite clearly, but he liked almost nothing in what he saw,” says Knapp. “...Nearly everything in society needed reformation; to Jonson’s eyes the commonwealth had denigrated into the ‘publicke riot.’”¹⁷³ Bear-gardens were long established as sites of controlled chaos, and indeed had been the scenes of riots in years’ past, usually owing to mishaps in the ring, such as when a blind bear broke loose in 1554.¹⁷⁴ They were also potentially places of social inversion, such as that described in Thomas Dekker’s account of the “whipping of the blind bear” discussed in chapter one, and in baiting’s relation to the socially exclusive activity of hunting examined in chapter two. By staging *Bartholomew Fair* at the Hope, Jonson

¹⁷¹ Bruce Boehrer, *Shakespeare Among the Animals: Nature and Society in the Drama of Early Modern England*, (New York: 2002), 139.

¹⁷² Peggy Knapp, “Ben Jonson and the Publicke Riot,” *ELH* 46: 4 (1979); 577-94. And Jonathon Haynes, “Festivity and the Dramatic Economy of Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair*,” in *ELH* 51: 4 (1984), 645-68.

¹⁷³ Knapp, 577.

¹⁷⁴ An account of the incident can be found in Henry Machyn’s Diary. See Brownstein, “Stake and Stage,” 263.

did far more than take the “publicke riot” to task from on-high—he was addressing the “publicke riot” directly, and on their own turf.

Transgressive laughter: Jonson and the Jack-an-apes.

Bartholomew Fair is often described within the context of Bakhtin’s concept of the “carnavalesque”:

...the pageants and costumes, parodies, and abusive language listed by Bakhtin as significant elements of folk culture fill the arena of the Fair. The puppet show of the fifth act offers traditional carnivalesque entertainment; Justice Overdo roams in the costume of a madman; authority figures are satirized and parodied. The characteristic abusive language flows between many of Jonson’s characters.

Despite economic changes, the core elements of carnival remain.¹⁷⁵

Bakhtin lists animal shows among those activities and pastimes associated with the carnivalesque, as a part of “parish feasts, usually marked by open-air amusements, with the participation of giants, dwarves, monsters, and trained animals.”¹⁷⁶ Animal baiting certainly falls within the traditions of folk ritual (see chapter one), but was, within the walls of the Hope, elevated to a grander spectacle, and one that not only transgressed social distinctions, but also

¹⁷⁵ Martha Zumack, “The Threat of Social Inversion from Economic Changes,” <http://www.jbu.edu/assets/academics/journal/resource/file/2009/marthazumack.pdf>; 5 [accessed 2/12/13].

¹⁷⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky, (Bloomington: 1984); 5.

elicited what Bakhtin calls “carnival laughter... the laughter of the people.”¹⁷⁷

As has already been discussed, the bear garden functioned as a many-sided subversion of English society, in which the weak triumphed over the strong. But it also embodied the strong in reenactments of oppression and the exemplification of weakness: specifically in the disturbing shows of the “Jack-an-apes,” often viewed as comic interludes within a day of baiting. With laughter as the central element in Bakhtin’s paradigm, and laughter as the goal in a ribald comedy such as *Bartholomew Fair*, we must question exactly how laughter—unthinkable laughter at that—featured in animal-baiting. Up until now, I have focused on the combat-based spectacles of bears, bulls, or boars versus dogs, or (blinded) bears versus humans. But there was another side to animal-baiting too, perhaps even more unsettling to modern sensibilities than those that involved “gladiatorial” contests. In the case of the Jack-an-apes, contest was not the point—rather, to cause fear, pain, or even death in order to elicit laughter from the crowd.

Contemporary accounts establish the Jack-an-Apes as comic relief. The impressions made by Alessandro Magno, an Italian merchant who visited London in 1562, are especially vivid:

They take into the ring—which is fenced around, so that one cannot get out unless the gate is opened—a cheap horse with all his harness and trappings, and a monkey in the saddle. Then they attack the horse with five or six of the youngest dogs. Then they change the dogs for more experienced ones. In this sport it is wonderful to see the horse galloping along, kicking up the ground and champing at the bit, with the monkey holding very tightly to the saddle, and crying out

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 11.

frequently when he is bitten by the dogs. After they have entertained the audience for a while with this sport, which often results in the death of the horse, they lead him out and bring in bears—sometimes one at a time and sometimes altogether. But this sport is not very pleasant to watch.¹⁷⁸

Another witness from abroad, Don Manriquez de Lara, remarked in 1543-4 that “to see the [horse] kicking amongst the dogs, with the screams of the ape, beholding the curs hanging from the ears and neck of the pony, is very laughable.”¹⁷⁹ Examining contemporary perceptions of the ape gives us further insight into its function as comic relief within the context of the bear and bull baitings, comic because the ape being baited is a) seen as weak and unable to defend itself, b) unnaturally assuming human behavior and dress, and c) a creature perceived negatively due to its “indecent likeness and imitation of man,” and therefore often associated with human beings perceived to be of a “lesser race.”¹⁸⁰

The anthropoid appearance of the ape brings its torments in the baiting-ring into dialogue with another form of decorum: that is, “gallows decorum.” The shrieks and screams the ape emitted as its “ridiculous” body was attacked exemplified the spiritual cowardice of humans who resisted death, particularly in public executions and in war. Furthermore, the ape’s lack of humanity underscores the perceived lack of humanity that the English frequently ascribed to those who suffered the worst on the scaffold: Catholics, those accused of treason, and “atheists.”

¹⁷⁸ Quoted in Scott-Warren, 70.

¹⁷⁹ W.B. Rye, ed. *England as Seen By Foreigners in the Days of Elizabeth and James I*, (London, 1865); xlvi.

¹⁸⁰ Topsell, quoted in Susan Wiseman, “Monstrous Perfectibility: Ape-Human Transformations in Hobbes, Bulwer, Tyson,” in *At The Borders of the Human: Beasts, Bodies, and Natural Philosophy in the Early Modern Period*, Erica Fudge, ed. (New York: 1999), 215-38; 216.

In a sense, the Jack-an-apes serves as a form of ritual torture: the ape's unwilling and therefore ludicrous assumption of human behavior and human garments dramatizes a public fear of traitors and religious dissenters, those who may have been human in appearance but were indeed "more beast than man." The ape's screams become surrogate for the screams of the condemned, its torment an allowable and gratifying spectacle of cruelty.

According to Aristotle, whose views on the natural world had an enormous influence over early modern concepts of nature, animals occupied a place between mankind and plants, possessing "vegetative" and "emotional" qualities, and incapable of distinguishing right from wrong. This lack of either "rationality" or "volition"—the two attributes applied exclusively to humans—led early modern philosophers, naturalists and theologians to see animals as symbolic of vice and criminal behavior, driven especially by the pleasures of lust, gluttony, wrath and sloth.¹⁸¹ In addition, early modern popular belief held that a major mark of distinction between human beings and animals was humans' ability to contemplate mortality, and better prepare themselves for their own ends: an act of contemplation that's benefits only the Protestant religion could validate.¹⁸² Apes, in particular, were distinguished from men because "above all... they have no religion."¹⁸³

It is difficult to determine exactly how long the Jack-an-Apes existed as an

¹⁸¹ Nathaniel Wolloch, *Subjugated Animals: Animals and Anthropocentrism in Early Modern Culture*, (Amherst, NY: 2006); 26.

¹⁸² See Wunderli and Broce, "The Final Moment Before Death in Early Modern England," *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 20: 2 (1989), 259-75; 268-9, for a compelling example of how deeply this distinction was imprinted in the minds of early modern people. The need to die "like a Christian," and not "like a hellhound and a beast/ not remembering your maker," was the single most important goal in life according to social doctrine.

¹⁸³ Topsell, quoted in James Knowles, "'Can ye not tell a man from a marmoset?': Apes and Others on the Early Modern Stage," in *Renaissance Beasts: of Animals, Humans, and Other Wonderful Creatures*, ed. Erica Fudge, (Chicago: 2004), 138-63; 141.

entertainment—Alessandro Magno’s account from 1562 is the oldest reference to it as a bear garden interlude—but it shared space in England’s theatrical culture with numerous forms of “ape” divertissement. There was the actor Thomas Greene, who specialized in ape-mimicry and invoked the holy wrath of anti-theatricalists for “barbarously diverting Nature, and defacing Gods owne image, by metamorphosing humane shape into bestiall forme.”¹⁸⁴ Entertainments that featured bona fide apes, both in and outside of the bear-baiting pit, flourished well into the nineteenth century, although they decreased in diversity over time. Apes juggled, danced on ropes, and famously, as Jonson describes in the prologue to *Bartholomew Fair*, could be trained to “come over the Chain for the King of *England*, and back again for the *Prince*, and sit still on his Arse for the *Pope*, and the King of *Spain*!”¹⁸⁵ Nungezer’s *Dictionary of Actors and Other Persons Associated with the Public Representation of Plays in England Before 1642* includes amongst its otherwise exclusively human inventory a performing ape called “Gew,” or “blind Gew.”¹⁸⁶ Ape-leaders roamed the streets of London and moved itinerantly from town to town as did bearwards, putting their charges through their paces with the aid of a whip.

As Erica Fudge (and Thomas Dekker before her) has described the pleasure derived from the whipping of the blind bear as a demonstration of “strength and dominance,” an element of this vicarious social inversion was present in the Jack-an-apes as well.¹⁸⁷ The identification of corrupt authority-figures with apes was not altogether uncommon in early modern discourse, the most fruitful example of which being John Marston’s *Scourge of Villainie*, Satire IX, which

¹⁸⁴ I. H., “The World’s Folly,” (1615) quoted in Knowles, 144.

¹⁸⁵ Jonson 1:1, see also Strunk, 219.

¹⁸⁶ Knowles, 138.

¹⁸⁷ Coral Lansbury quoted in Fudge, *Perceiving Animals*, 15.

“presents the world as a monarchy of monkeys who write, judge, copy foreign fashions and debase culture, even smearing their excrement across the landscape.”¹⁸⁸

Down, Jackanapes, from thy feigned royalty!
What! furr’d with a beard—cast in a satin suit,
Judicial Jack? How hast thou got repute
Of a sound censure? O idiot times,
When gaudy monkeys mow o’er sprightly rhymes!
O world of fools, when all mens judgment’s set
And rests upon some mumping Marmoset.¹⁸⁹

Likewise, a poem dedicated to Thomas Godfrey, who eventually took over management of the Hope after Jacob Meade, mockingly commends the “courage” of the horse-riding ape and bids the audience learn by his example:

Where *Jack-an-Apes* his horse doth swiftly run
His circuit, like the horses of the sun,
And quicke as lightning, hee will trace and track,
Making that endlesse round his Zodiake,
Which *Jacke* (his Rider) bravely rides a straddle,

¹⁸⁸ Knowles, 142.

¹⁸⁹ *The Works of John Marston*, ed. A.H. Bullen, (London: 1886): “The Scourge of Villainy,” Satire IX, “Here’s a toy to Mock an Ape indeed”; 363.

And in his hot Careere perfumes the saddle.¹⁹⁰

Clearly, the anthropomorphized ape represented a particularly degraded vision of humanity on which the audience was wont to cast a baleful eye: those who wore rich, “gaudy” cloth and “feigned royalty,” yet were ultimately bestial, cowardly, secretly “perfuming” their gleaming saddles with excrement. Through such a bias the screams of terror and pain emitted by the restrained monkey could indeed be relished, and perhaps far more openly than the screams of actual “villains” who perished in agony at public executions. In a society as rife with paranoia and ideological suppression as early modern England, the suggestion that the majority of the public found satisfaction in the state’s wielding of conventional justice is to be doubted. Perhaps the Jack-an-Apes, as in Marston’s satire, offered a symbolic alternative in which the unsatisfied mob could turn the tables on the ultimate executioner: the apish heads of state in their “satin suits.”

To return to Jonson, Bakhtin, and of course the other side of the Hope as an entertainment venue, echoes of the “comic” Jack-an-apes reverberate throughout *Bartholomew Fair*’s carnival atmosphere: “during carnival there is a temporary suspension of all hierarchic distinctions and barriers among men and of certain norms and prohibitions of usual life... an ideal and at the same time real type of communication, impossible in ordinary life, is established.”¹⁹¹ If we view the ape through the eyes of Marston—or indeed through any number of his contemporaries—the Jack-an-apes spectacle is every bit as concerned with facilitating this atmosphere of suspended

¹⁹⁰ John Taylor “the Water Poet,” *Bull, Beare and Horse*, quoted in Fudge, *Perceiving Animals*, 13.

¹⁹¹ Bakhtin, 15-6.

deference, albeit far less elegantly, as is Jonson's play. Moreover, both spectacles share a similar aim, which is the exposure of implicitly *human* frailty for open derision. In Jonson's case, the desire for social reform may have been a motivator; in the case of the Jack-an-apes, social reform is vicariously play-acted through a sacrificial animal, one who stands in the place of corruption and debauchery.

The fact that the Hope was capable of addressing such matters from both the stage and the baiting ring attests to Henslowe's vision as a consummate showman, and to Jonson's flexibility as a poet. By moving fluidly from the feigned blood-and-thunder of the theatre to the very real blood of the baiting ring, the Hope provided audiences not only with dynamic entertainment, but also dynamic perception of oppression, mastery, suffering, courage, cowardice, and death.

However misguided was the early modern mindset in its cruelty, not to mention its anthropomorphic presumptions regarding animal behavior, the Hope's exchange between the theatre and the perceived theatricality of animal baiting can be viewed as a culmination of both forms: after all, the Hope was a style of playhouse already on its way to obsolescence in 1613. Although it was not the last bear garden to be built in the form of a round, open-air, galleried structure, it was in fact the last playhouse to take that shape.

4: MASQUE

A Trial of Two Kings:

James I and the Lions of the Tower Menagerie

Throughout known human history, animals have been, and remain, good to think with. This fact, more than any other, influences the way we conceptualize the animal but also produces a form of discourse that distorts the way we relate to the animal. When we are thinking through animals, the animal is a medium of thought, a tool, a vehicle, and is neither an autonomous being nor an end in itself. It sometimes serves as a standard against which to measure ourselves; it is often a metaphor. As standard, its own intrinsic characteristics are far less important than the symbol it can be made to represent. As metaphor or simile, the concern is to depict the character of that which is likened to the animal, not the animal itself. In such instances, the language uses the animal, it is not about the animal.¹⁹²

The year prior to Henslowe and Alleyn's appointment as Masters of the Game saw the death of Elizabeth I and the accession of James I, significant not only for the end of the era now referred to as "Elizabethan," but also for its unprecedented uniting of the kingdoms of England and Scotland. Under Elizabeth, the sigil of the realm had been a lion and a unicorn, rampant; under James this changed to a pair of lions, beasts which symbolized both parts of his newly united kingdom, and embodied the kind of monarch that James himself aspired to be.

James's preoccupation—one might even say obsession—with lions went much further than mere symbolism. No sooner had James I taken office in 1603 than he staged the first of several lion-baitings at the Tower of London. Throughout his reign, James maintained a

¹⁹² Rod Preece, *Animals and Nature: Cultural Myths, Cultural Realities* (Vancouver: 1999), 31.

mysterious fascination with lions, as both metaphor and living entity. Influenced by a complex mixture of Baconian science and the medieval bestiary, James utilized the Tower as a space that was part theatre, part laboratory, part baiting-ring. Described as “trials” by James’s contemporary Edmund Howes, these bloody spectacles were attempts at manipulating the events of the arena into a perceivable narrative—one that employed fable, symbol, and myth—making the animals performers as well as gladiators, with the king himself acting as director.

For James, these trials represented a very personal struggle with questions of kingship and the “natural order.” James’s trials of the lions illustrate a violent collision of two distinct forms of power: that which has been constructed by human beings, and that which is of the nonhuman world. As “the king of beasts,” the lion straddled the exclusively human world of politically and divinely granted dominion, and the “wild kingdom,” in which life is sustained on predation and adaptation. The “kingly” side of the lion, or that which is formed purely out of metaphor and myth, was paradoxically and unavoidably intertwined with the bestial: a paradox that was of profound significance to James, whose understanding of the natural world spanned across the sharp divide between medieval symbolism and the vanguard of experimental philosophy.

That James saw his baitings at the Tower as more than mere sport is indicated by the language used to describe them: “trial” is a word deeply rooted in Baconian science, and implies a more investigative thrust to the event than the common “game” or “bout.” In fact, it does not appear that this word was ever used to describe animal-baiting until after the death of Elizabeth, at which point Edmund Howes seems to have coined the term for the specific purpose of

describing King James's lion-baitings at the Tower.¹⁹³ The word itself was relatively new in the seventeenth century, and had its most common application in matters of law (a familiar context for the lawyer Bacon), but could also be used to describe an ordeal or test.¹⁹⁴ The trials of the lions can therefore be seen as an entirely new breed of animal bloodsport, in both name and process, which is deeply rooted in the simultaneous groundswell of interest in natural science.

James's trials of the lions have baffled historians for at least a century, described variously as "barbarous sport," "a good bit of lively entertainment," "a psychological anatomy theater," and even as "investigations."¹⁹⁵ Ultimately, their full purpose remains unclear. Erica Fudge's three-page assessment of one trial that took place in 1605 (to which I will return later), describes these events as operating on a wide range of meanings generated from a more or less narrow range of expectations: they are "not so much... nature in as action as myth [in action]."¹⁹⁶ Myth-in-action implies that "natural" behavior was precisely what James wanted to avoid; however, what is mere myth to us today represented another form of reality in the early seventeenth century.

With the natural sciences still in their nascence, the lion as living entity continued to be seen as a deeply encoded system of divine missives for human instruction, a way of thinking that Francis Bacon challenged in his treatise *Of the Proficiency and Advancement of Learning Divine and Human* (published 1605). In it, he compares the "errors" and "superstitions" of that

¹⁹³ Here, I rely on Brownstein's extensive catalog of references to animal bloodsports in "Stake and Stage," 318-413.

¹⁹⁴ See OED, def. "trial"ⁿ. John Briggs reveals that Bacon was exceedingly cautious about the words he used to describe his experimental method, and many are synonyms for "trial": "essay," "waigh and consider," and "judgment." Briggs sums up Bacon's argument in the essay "Of Studies" as "[t]here are really two kinds of studies: conventional ones instruct; wise ones *test*." (My italics.) See Briggs, *Francis Bacon and the Rhetoric of Nature*, (Cambridge, MA: 1989); 216.

¹⁹⁵ In order: Britton and Bayley, *Memoirs of the Tower*, (London: 1830); 357; Daniel Hahn, *The Tower Menagerie*, (New York: 2003), 92; Scott-Warren, 74; Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning*, 113.

¹⁹⁶ *Brutal Reasoning*, 113.

Elizabethan bugbear, Catholicism, to those errors and superstitions of medieval bestiaries that had invaded the natural sciences:

This facility of credit and accepting or admitting things weakly authorized or warranted, is of two kinds, according to the subject: for it is either a belief of history... or else of matter of art and opinion.... So in natural history, we see there has not been that choice and judgment used as ought to have been... being fraught with much fabulous matter, a great part not only tried but notoriously untrue, to the great derogation of the credit of natural philosophy with the grave and sober kind of wits.¹⁹⁷

Bacon hoped that *On the Advancement of Learning* would convince James, its dedicatee, to affect real reforms across the spectrum of knowledge, and in particular to champion the experimental method. As Peter Pesic describes, “Bacon wanted a new kind of natural philosopher who would not merely gaze respectfully at nature, but would engage with her in an intense mutual *trial*.”¹⁹⁸ His dedications to James reveal his hopes that the king will become an earnest proponent, and even practitioner, of the experimental scientific methods that he puts forward. However, the eagerness to learn, or “light of nature” that Bacon observed in James was refracted through a series of distorting mirrors, and James’s “careful and severe examination[s]” of the Tower lions

¹⁹⁷ Francis Bacon, “Book One of The Advancement of Learning” in *Selected Philosophical Works*, ed. Rose-Mary Sargent, (Indianapolis: 1999), 24-5.

¹⁹⁸ Peter Pesic, *Labyrinth: A Search for the Hidden Meaning of Science* (Cambridge, MA: 2000), 21. My italics.

were all too frequently conducted in service of fables, and certainly, “vanity.”¹⁹⁹

At the time of James’s trials of the lions, the most widely-read work of “natural history” currently in print was not by Francis Bacon: it was Edward Topsell’s *An History of Foure-Footed Beasts* (1607). This very popular book, which went through several reprintings, remained entrenched in the paper menageries, or “bestiaries,” of the medieval period and earlier, in which the “nature” of animals went hand-in-hand with their use-value as mythic figures. As Peter Harrison states in his essay on “Animals and the Experimental Philosophy,” bestiaries of this kind saw animals as being “useful in a variety of ways—useful as moral exemplars, useful as symbols of theological truths, even useful for sermon illustrations.”²⁰⁰ Erica Fudge describes this need for a metaphorical utility in the animal as a linchpin to our anthropocentric worldview, especially as it manifests in bestiaries: “animals are studied because they allow us to say things about humans and human lives.”²⁰¹ Una Chaudhuri coined the term *zooësis* to describe this process of metaphorization from both humans to animals and humans to other humans:

From its shifting locations on the margins of human life, the non-human animal participates in the construction of such human categories as the body, race, gender, sexuality, morality, and ethics. It also intervenes decisively in the social construction and cultural meaning of space. Animal practices shape not only the specific and actual spaces in which they occur, but parallel and opposite spaces as

¹⁹⁹ See “To the King” from *Of the Proficiency and Advancement of Learning*, Bacon, *ibid.*

²⁰⁰ Peter Harrison, “Reading Vital Signs: Animals and the Experimental Philosophy,” in Erica Fudge, ed. *Renaissance Beasts: Of Animals, Humans, and Other Wonderful Creatures*, Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2004; 190.

²⁰¹ *Perceiving Animals*, 93.

well, spaces to which they are related through the logic of the nature-culture divide that enables so much cultural meaning. Thus zooësis pertains not only to, for instance, the zoo, the dog run, the slaughterhouse, but also the nursery, the playground, the dining room.²⁰²

Such applies to the medieval bestiary as well, being essentially a zoo on paper, with educative aims that are not unlike those of the modern zoo, although they are predicated on myth and symbol more often than on actual observation. Topsell's late bestiary (which James undoubtedly read), unabashedly mixes fables, biblical stories, and ancient anecdotes with empirical observations of living animals, thoroughly blurring the boundary between science and myth.

Often, James's trials of the lions closely align with the pseudoscience of *An History of Foure-Footed Beasts*, viewing the animal as first and foremost a "moral exemplar" to the human, and secondarily as a living thing "not made in God's image."²⁰³ Bestiaries share an intimate history with the natural sciences: indeed, the first major work of this kind, the *Physiologus* (approx. 9th century CE), literally translates to "natural historian."²⁰⁴ According to Joyce Salisbury, bestiaries reached a peak in popularity during the twelfth century, but the late-sixteenth century saw a resurgence of interest in these paper menageries, which continued to rely on scripture and fables for their descriptions of both familiar and unfamiliar beasts. *An History of Foure-Footed Beasts* was no exception, and remained chiefly concerned with the animal as

²⁰² Una Chaudhuri, "Animal Geographies: Zooësis and the Space of Modern Drama," in *Modern Drama* 46: 4 (2003), 646-662; 104.

²⁰³ Thomas Aquinas, quoted in Joyce Salisbury, *The Beast Within: Animals and Humans in the Middle Ages*, (New York: 1994); 5.

²⁰⁴ Salisbury, 109.

metaphor. Even the extended title of the book touts it as *Necessary for all diuines and students, because the story of euery beast is amplified with narrations out of Scriptures, fathers, phylosophers, physitians, and poets*, drawing attention to the humanist, biblical, and classical traditions on which its observations are founded. Indeed, the majority of Topsell's observations are merely anecdotal, often bordering on the fantastic: for example, he reports that there is a variety of Arabian sheep with a tail measuring three cubits (approximately 60 inches) in length, so long that the shepherds of the region have had to invent wooden contraptions for supporting them.²⁰⁵

The "scientific" nature of Topsell's work is certainly questionable by today's standards, but, as Salisbury reminds us, the science of bestiaries lay in their examinations of human nature, using animals as "moral exemplars" to the human. Topsell, who was a preacher at Hatfield, Sussex for most of his life, relied on prior work by Conrad Gesner as well as an education steeped in Aristotle and Aesop to formulate an ecology of utility, or in Fudge's words: "[a]nimals need to be understood so that we can consume them with more ease."²⁰⁶ Within this paradigm, animals were firstly created by God in order to serve and provide for Man, and then "recreated" by Man, through myth and fable, for the purpose of better understanding God's intentions. The act of "recreation" is seen as in no way inferior to the initial act of creation: rather, the latter is illuminated by the former. Processes of "reinvention," as Carolyn Merchant phrases it, shaped the early modern conquest of nature, in terms of both resources and knowledge. By participating in these processes, Topsell endowed his readers with "divine" knowledge of creation. As he says in

²⁰⁵ Edward Topsell *History of Foure-Footed Beasts...* (London: 1607); 600. The accompanying illustration of the animal in question affords Topsell's description nothing in credibility.

²⁰⁶ *Perceiving Animals*, 95.

his opening “Epistle”:

no man ought rather to publish this [book] unto the world, then a Diuine or Preacher. For the first, the the knowledge of Beasts, like as the knowledge of the other creatures and workes of God, is Deuine, I see no cause why any man shoulde doubt thereof, seeing that at the first they were created and brought to man as we may read Gen. 1 24, 25, and allby the Lord himselfe, so that their life and creation is Deuine in respect of their maker.²⁰⁷

Topsell devotes a great deal of time to his discussion of the lion, which he unsurprisingly begins by affirming that the animal is “iustly [sic] stiled by all writers [as] the King of beasts.”²⁰⁸ Although Topsell promises to “not be afraid, to handle this Lyon, and looke into him both dead and aliue,” much of the proceeding pages are concerned with enumerating the lion’s various roles in biblical and classical literature, and what little anatomical information he does give owes nothing to scientific dissection. Rather, he relies on myths to illustrate the physical reality of the animal. For example, he reports that lions have bones so strong that they can spark flint, that they sleep with their eyes open, and, like bears, they lick their newborn cubs into shape.²⁰⁹

Such was the very sort of pseudoscience against which Bacon vehemently argued until the end of his life; but its appeal to King James is more than evident in the particulars of his lion trials. On the other hand, James’s careful planning, execution, and assessment of the trials color

²⁰⁷ Topsell, ii-iii.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 465.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 461.

them as striving for a mutuality of struggle, testing both the director and the unlucky performers.

Peter Pesic identifies this mutuality as an essential component of Baconian scientific method:

Although many writers state that Francis Bacon advocated the torture of nature in order to force her to reveal her secrets, a close study of his works contradicts this claim. His treatment of the myth of Proteus depicts a heroic mutual struggle, not the torture of a slavish victim. By the “vexation” of nature Bacon meant an encounter between the scientist and nature in which both are tested and purified.²¹⁰

As a king, James was himself situated somewhere between myth and materiality, not unlike the subjects of his inquiry, the lions. Through a reading of these spectacles of “myth in action” as a mutual trial of two kings—one human and a true monarch, the other animal and fabled as “king”—it is possible to interpret the motives behind such a theatre of bloodshed.

From the Nursery to the Ring.

Lions had been kept at the Tower since the thirteenth century, but James appears to have been the first to regularly “amuse himself” with baiting them against dogs and other animals.²¹¹

The very first fight he staged at the Tower, which presumably took place inside the Lion Tower

²¹⁰ Peter Pesic, “Wrestling with Proteus: Francis Bacon and the ‘Torture’ of Nature,” in *Isis* 90, 1 (1999); 81.

²¹¹ Bayley, *Memoirs of the Tower*, 357. And yet, he was not *the* first: according to John Kay’s 1576 treatise *Of English Dogges*, Henry VII became so incensed at the baiting of a lion by mastiffs that he ordered all the mastiffs in the city to be hanged, “conceaung great disdaine that an yll-faured rascall curre should with such violent villany assault the valiaunt Lyon king of all beastes.” Kay, 26.

itself (and therefore raises the question of exactly how this spectacle was safely observed), took place just two days before James's triumphal progress through London, upon his first royal visit to the menagerie. The so-called "secret" baiting was precipitated by James's perhaps overly earnest inquiries into the history of the lions, and "how they came thither, for in England there are bred no such fierce beasts."²¹² It may be that the keepers took offense, or else found James's enthusiasm to be misplaced, for they refused to answer his questions, retorting that "the mastiff dog is of as great courage as the lion."

According to John Kay, who published his treatise *On English Dogges* in 1576, the bandog or English mastiff was traditionally believed to have originated from the crossing of a dog with a Lion.²¹³ Therefore, the keepers' reply is somewhat ironic, if not slyly admonitory of the Scotsman, who is more dazzled with the alien lion than with the native "Arcadian curre." Incredulous of the keepers' claims, James ordered Edward Alleyn to "fetch secretly three of the fellest dogs in the Garden," after which they were brought to the Tower, where James was in attendance, accompanied by his family and "foure or five Lords."²¹⁴ What followed was clumsy and exceptionally brutal. Yet James's active direction of the baiting foresees his later, more intricately engineered spectacles: he "caused" the dogs to be introduced one by one into the fight, choosing each according to the animal's perceived "fierceness," so that the bout progressed towards a climax in which the increasingly exhausted lion took on a dog "more fierce and fell than eyther of the former."²¹⁵ Eventually, the baiting seems to have descended into near chaos:

²¹² Stow, 823.

²¹³ Kay, 26.

²¹⁴ Stow, 824.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

... [N]ow whilst the last dog was thus hand to hand with the Lyon in the upper roome, the other two Dogs were fighting together in the lower roome, whereupon the king caused the Lyon to be driven downe, thinking the Lyon would have parted them, but when hee saw he needs must come by them he leapt cleane over them both, and contrary to the Kings expectation, the Lyon fled into an inward den[.]²¹⁶

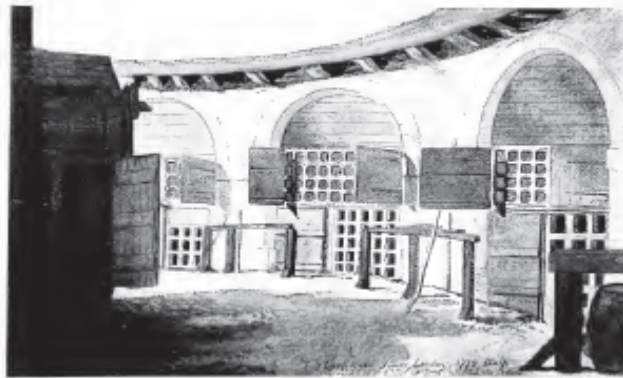
The fact that James had certain expectations of the lions, and moreover, stated them clearly enough that knowledge of them found its way to the chronicler, is significant not only to his interest in baiting, but to his personal identification with the lion. Moreover, his expectation as stated was for the lion to take a nonviolent action: to “part” the fighting dogs, or in other words, to separate them. The chronicler also notes that a second lion who witnessed the fight from its cage “rampt and roared as if hee would have made rescue,” which in fact, looks forward to a much later baiting in which a lion was expected to make a valiant rescue of one of its brethren in distress. Notably, in neither instance did the lion behave as anticipated, disappointing James, who, or so the chronicler implies, concluded that “[t]he Lyon hath not any peculiar or proper kind of fight, as hath the Dog, Beare, or Bull, but only a ravenous kind of surprising for prey.”

What exactly was meant by this conclusion is unclear, but the fact that James did not abandon the idea of staging a lion-bait implies that the problem may not have been seen as

²¹⁶ Ibid.

inherent to the lion. In fact, the subsequent construction of a “lion-walk” at the Tower, and the relentlessness with which James attacked the problem of baiting lions, indicate that the animals were expected to *learn* how to fight:

[T]he king builded a wall, and filled up with earth, all that part of the mote or ditch, round about the West side of the Lyons den, and appointed a drawing partition to be made towards the South part thereof to serve for the breeding Lionesse: when she shall have whelps, and the other part thereof for a walke for other Lions. The king called also those trap doores to bee made in the wall of the Lyons den, for the Lyons to goe into their walke, at the pleasure of their keeper, which walke, shall be maintayned, and kept for especiall place, to baight the Lyons, with Dogges, Beares, Bulles, Bores, &c.



*Illustration 7: The lion-walk built by James I in 1603, as it appeared in 1779, with the barred trap-doors and semicircular baiting area visible (Benham, *The Tower of London*, 8).*

As can be gleaned from the description, the lion-walk was designed to James's specifications, and built in order to perform double-duty as a baiting-ring and a nursery: two purposes that, to James, may not have been at all exclusive of one another. As it happened, lions that were born into the nursery were often, upon reaching maturity, baited in the ring next-door.²¹⁷ Constant exposure to violence was certainly a part of training mastiffs in animal-baiting, and James may have hoped to instill a similar fierceness in his "hand"-raised lions as could be found in dogs that had been reared by "a Pikestaffe, a clubbe, or a sworde."²¹⁸ The deliberate placement of the nursery within sight, smell, and hearing of the baiting-ring suggests a lifespan of bloodshed, beginning at birth and continuing relentlessly until death. Indeed, it is very likely that James hoped to breed a generation of lions that had been raised to do one thing and one thing only: fight.

This reflects contemporary attitudes towards animal-baiting as a sport first and foremost, in the sense that the animal combatants were often viewed as gladiators—as athletes. The performance of the gladiators could be judged, as in fencing, through a system of "strokes" and "hits." In 1618, one English aficionado of the sport described its criterion to a visiting Italian diplomat: "The most spirited stroke is considered to be that of the dog who seizes the bull's lip... The second best hit is to seize the eyebrows; the third but far inferior, consists in seizing the bull's ear."²¹⁹ Dogs and bears had been trained to execute such "hits" in the ring for centuries; however, no previous attempt at training the lions of the Tower to do so has been recorded.²²⁰

²¹⁷I will discuss one such baiting, albeit an unsuccessful one, at the end of this chapter.

²¹⁸ Kay, 25.

²¹⁹ Quoted in Oscar Brownstein, "Stake and Stage," 346.

²²⁰ At least, I have not yet found any such record. Exotic animals in the Tower menagerie were often given as gifts

Although James does not appear to have entered the lions into a rigorous regimen such as that proscribed to dogs, his efforts connote an even more devious method of molding “mere beasts” into gladiators. In short, by raising lions under the provided conditions, the impulse, or better yet, thirst to fight, could be naturalized to them, hopefully curtailing the possibility that such unpredictable actors would fail to perform when called upon.

Joyce Salisbury’s book on medieval perceptions of animals stresses that the wildness ascribed to creatures outside of the domestic sphere is specifically linked to violence, and thus, “people who act that way fall under the category of bestial.”²²¹ The lions of the Tower, however, are especially problematic because of their having been (presumably) bred in captivity: they were “wild beasts” because they were not domesticated, yet they were not “savage” because they had never experienced wilderness. This situates them somewhere between the two extremes of “civilization” and “wilderness” that Carolyn Merchant describes in *Reinventing Eden*. In her words, “[w]ilde’ and ‘wylde’ pertained to untamed animals living in a state of nature”; however, though the Tower lions were not tame, neither did they live in even a passable imitation of their natural state.²²² As a further complication, the Tower lions were also named after monarchs and endowed with certain “magical” properties by popular belief, such as the ability to live to be over a hundred years old and to sense when their namesake was at his or her life’s end.²²³ This placed the lions within a gray area that other animals of the time rarely, if ever occupied, making it

by foreign monarchs, and frequently, were short-lived due to the stresses of the journey from their native lands. See Bayley, 353-5, for information on the menagerie from its establishment in the time of Henry III (1235). Its earliest occupants were, in fact, leopards, not lions.

²²¹ Salisbury, 5.

²²² Carolyn Merchant, *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture*, (New York: 2003), 68.

²²³ In 1599, Thomas Platter visited the Tower menagerie, where he claimed to have seen two centenarian lions. See Daniel Hahn, *The Tower Menagerie*, 110.

possible for James to view them as *Edenic* creatures, being merely captive rather than tamed, and yet wholly subject to the dominion of Man.

Merchant sees the recreation, reinvention, and recovery of the Garden of Eden as the driving force behind much of western, Christian culture, and cites the ever-rising importance of agriculture and horticulture in the early modern period as exemplary of this tendency. However, menageries also began to rise in prominence during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, chiefly as showcases of wealth and power. Although the modern zoo with its quasi-theatrical reconstructions of habitats was yet to come, the constructions of barriers such as cages, fences, walls, and pits that separated human viewers from animals served a similar function as did gardens in early modern society. What better way for an English monarch to display his or her mastery over the natural world than to have the “king of beasts” safely and securely contained? Divorced from those “savage” behaviors such as hunting and killing that were a part of daily life in the wilderness, the captive lions of the Tower depended entirely on the hand of Man for sustenance, and therefore were subdued (if not actually recovered) to the Edenic state: “harmony” between Man and beast. If it was possible for James to view the lions of the Tower as Edenic, then it was by extension possible for him to see himself as directly engaged in the process of recovery.

For Francis Bacon, the recovery of Eden meant the recovery of knowledge—knowledge of the natural world, to be exact. As Merchant states, “it was through a new knowledge to be gained from science and technology that the lost dominion [over nature] could be reclaimed. ‘Let the human race *recover* that right over nature which belongs to it by divine bequest,’ [Bacon]

asserted.”²²⁴ This is no great leap from the aims of his predecessors like Edward Topsell, and Bacon frequently struggled with the fact that “superstition” and “experimentation” shared a common purpose in the recovery of Eden. As he says in the *Novum Organum*, “To speak the whole truth, the very beholding of the light is itself a more excellent and fairer thing than all the uses of it;—so assuredly the very contemplation of things, as they are, without superstition or imposture, error or confusion, is in itself more worthy than all the fruit of inventions.”²²⁵

Although Bacon advocated an active, interrogative approach to knowledge, in this statement he admits the necessity of mere contemplation to the search for truth, albeit somewhat reluctantly. Passivity implies a certain reverence for the thing beheld, which in turn implies that a harmonious stasis in nature—the remnants of that lost Eden—remains detectable. By removing the veil of superstition from nature, Bacon’s new science could “recover” Eden, but it could also simply reveal it.

In many ways, James’s role as a director of animal-baitings places him at a junction between two views of Eden: the medieval, Aquinian Eden of “peaceful coexistence” between Man and animals, and the Baconian, hidden Eden revealed through the relentless pursuit of “truth” in “disorderly” nature.²²⁶ The enactment of these trials allowed James to participate in these processes of recovery from a position of absolute authority over nature, “following and as it were... hounding Nature in her wanderings,” and even more importantly for his task as director,

²²⁴ Carolyn Merchant, “Secrets of Nature: the Bacon Debates Revisited,” in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, (January 2008), 149-50.

²²⁵ Quoted in Briggs, 4-5.

²²⁶ Salisbury’s phrase, from *The Beast Within*, 177.

“be able to lead her afterwards to the same place again.”²²⁷

Even prior to his assumption of the English throne, James’s experience of the natural world seems torn between these two opposing conceptions. One sonnet in particular, written by James as early as 1591, eloquently illustrates this point of juncture at which he was situated:

The azur’d vaulte, the crystall circles bright,
The gleaming fyrie torches powdred there,
The changing round, the shynie beamie light,
The sad and bearded fyres, the monsters faire;
The prodiges appearing in the aire,
The rearding thunders, and the blustering windes,
The fowles in hew, in shape, in nature raire,
The prettie notes that wing’d musiciens finds;
In earth the sau’rie flowres, the mettal’d minds,
The wholesome hearbes, the hautie pleasant trees,
The syluer streames, the beasts of sundrie kinds;
The bounded waves, and fishes of the seas:

All these for teaching man the Lord did frame,

To do his will whose glorie shines in thame.²²⁸

²²⁷ Bacon, quoted in Merchant, “Secrets,” 150.

²²⁸ <http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/james/poetical.htm> [accessed 05/07/2010].

The concluding couplet's assertion that nature's true purpose is in the "teaching" of humanity is consonant with the pre-Baconian focus on nature's metaphorical use-value; however, although the language James uses to describe nature is lyrical, it is also concerned with variety and typology. Moreover, it describes the natural world as a whole, from the top down: from the distant stars to the fish of the sea, constructing a model of the natural world that is physically descending but holistically, and equally, valued under heaven.

Despite this, James is hardly advocating a view of nature that includes human beings. In this paradigm, Man remains separate from nature, which exists for his instruction as decided by God, and functions as both a laboratory and as an intricate tapestry of divine missives to be interpreted. The concluding couplet asserts that the purpose of the preceding layer-cake of ecology is to teach Man "to do his [God's] will," equating knowledge of the natural world with divine knowledge in a way that is consonant with both Topsell ("the knowledge of the... creatures and workes of God, is Deuine") and Bacon, who states in the late essay "Of Truth": "Certainly it is Heauen vpon Earth, to haue a Mans Minde... Turne vpon the Poles of *Truth*."²²⁹ In this sense, the moral truths that one may find embedded in nature are also scientific truths: a concept that is consonant with James's trials of the lions, in which the enactment of myth provides the framework for what amounts to a behavioral experiment.

The Lion and the Lamb.

The lions' dual-purpose nursery and baiting ring was no sooner built than the king staged a bizarre spectacle there which Edmund Howes described as "A tryall of the Lyonesse['s]

²²⁹ Bacon, "Of Truth" in *A Harmony of the Essays of Francis Bacon*, 501.

quality.”²³⁰ What, exactly, was meant to be qualified by the spectacle that followed is not immediately apparent: indeed, it was among the most perplexing of any baiting event that can be found on record. Because it was the first to be “staged”—I use the word deliberately—within the newly completed lion-walk, it is of special significance in terms of James’s side-career as a director of animal-baitings: it represents his first fully-realized effort, unfolding in a space that was entirely conceived and controlled by him. Thus, its unique characteristics may be owed to the fact that it was an inaugural performance, intended to honor the lion-walk’s designer and to astonish the many nobles who also attended.

The event began with the opening of the trap-doors leading to the open-air walk. Contrary to expectations, the Tower lions refused to use them, and had to be chased out into the sunlight with “burning Links.” Once they emerged onto the walk, the lions “were both amazed, and stood looking about them, and gazing up into the ayre”: perhaps an indication that the lions had never experienced anything other than a cramped cage before.²³¹ At this point, the king ordered the lions to be thrown two racks of mutton, which they duly devoured, then two cocks, both of which they killed. The third and final offering, like the third and final dog of the first lion-baiting, imparted a sense of climax to the event, although of a very different nature: for, after the lions had presented ample evidence of their ability to kill and eat live animals, James ordered a live lamb to be “easily let downe unto them, by a rope.” The lamb did not fail to perform spectacularly, for upon the reaching the ground, it promptly went down on its knees before the lions, who “only beheld the Lamb... and... very gently looked upon him.” As if by a miracle, the

²³⁰ Stow, *Annales*, 865.

²³¹ Stow, *ibid.*

lions spared the lamb their wrath, and it was eventually hoisted out of the baiting-ring unscathed.

Howes makes no attempt to interpret the king's reaction to this trial, but the events he describes indicate that James approached this spectacle with a particular plan in mind, perhaps even a particular set of expectations: a hypothesis, based in part on assumptions that he absorbed from popular myths. For example, Erica Fudge points out in her analysis of this spectacle that lions were rumored to have a legendary antipathy, or even fear of cocks, who were thought to have a special power over the lion:

... in the morning when the Cocke croweth the Lions betake themselues to flight, because there are certaine seedes in the body of Cockes, which when they are sent and appeare to the eyes of Lions, they vexe their pupils and apples, and make them against nature become gentle and quiet[.]²³²

The lamb, of course, has a special significance in tandem with the lion; and certainly, the choice of mutton for the lions' first offering—the meat of an adult sheep—does not appear to have been arbitrary, when taken in conjunction with the entrance of the lamb. This trial has all the makings of a theatrical event: a beginning, middle, and end, clearly defined characters, and an unexpected, dramatic conclusion. As an animal display, it shares more in common with modern “feeding” demonstrations at zoos and parks than with early modern bloodsports. So what is it?

Firstly, there is the problem of the cocks: oddly, Fudge mentions only the second of the two cocks that were thrown to the lions on this occasion. Howes records that after the two racks

²³² Topsell, 465.

of mutton were devoured, “then was there a lusty liue Cocke, cast unto them, which they presently killed, and sucked his bloud, then there was another liue Cocke cast unto them, which they likewise killed, but sucked not his blood.”²³³ Her conclusion is that the lions’ apparent lack of interest in drinking the blood of the cock would have “counted as evidence to support” the myth regarding lions and cocks.²³⁴ However, if both cocks are accounted for, the spectacle comes closer to debunking that myth than supporting it. Clearly, if James and his audience had come there expecting to see the myth of the lion’s fear of cocks in action, they would have been disappointed—or pleasantly surprised. As described by Topsell above, the fact that cocks were thought to contain “seedes” in their bodies that have the power to turn lions “gentle and quiet” suggests that James may have had another purpose in mind for them. Whatever the outcome of their encounter with the lions, exposure to these pacifying “seedes” certainly would have ensured the lions’ subsequent gentle treatment of the lamb, thereby insuring against the possibility that they would fail to demonstrate benevolence.

Perhaps James wanted to test the assumption behind the myth, rather than simply prove it: after all, Bacon’s *On the Advancement Of Learning* had only just been published, and it is likely that James had chosen a particular set of myths associated with lions that he wished to use as the bases of experiments. The lions’ legendary appetite, fear of cocks, and special relationship with lambs were variously played out by the trial, making it possible for James and his retinue to observe the myths-in-action “scientifically,” as natural behaviors. On the other hand, it is just as likely that this trial was meant to demonstrate rather than to probe: a show-trial, rather than a

²³³ Stow, *Annales*, 865.

²³⁴ Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning*, 113.

Baconian induction. The size and quality of the audience that James gathered together for this event, which included no less than eight lords plus “many Knights and Gentlemen of name,” certainly suggests that James had no intention of wasting anyone’s time. Rather, the presence of such a retinue further colors the incident as a carefully planned, and if not rehearsed at least researched, performance.

According to Fudge, this spectacle is firmly rooted in “the bestiary tradition, the Bible, and the belief in the monarch’s divine power.”²³⁵ However, this assumes that the audience to this event saw exactly what they had expected to see and nothing else: anything unexpected places it in the realm of behavioral experimentation, and on a very grand scale at that. The mystery and fascination surrounding this event does not lie in it being one thing or the other, but overlapping both. Like its creator/director, it hovers between the arcane world of “superstition,” and the vanguard of science: a macabre hybrid of natural history that blends the bestiary with Bacon, and bloodsport with theatre. In fact, it would appear that the theatrical exercise is, itself, a mode of scientific experimentation in this context, and acts as the vehicle by which the distinct schools of old and new sciences are brought together.

In *Perceiving Animals*, Fudge finds a link between the bestiary and experimental philosophy in the sense of sight: “[e]ven in the Middle Ages a sense of real observation, as opposed to the mere repetition of myths, was emerging which offers a link to the scientific ideas of the early modern period.”²³⁶ Topsell, for all the strangeness of a number of those myths that he does merely repeat, asserts in his Epistle that “[w]hen I affirm that the knowledg of Beasts is

²³⁵ Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning*, 114.

²³⁶ Fudge, *Perceiving Animals*, 94.

Deuine, I do meane no other thing then *the right and perfect description* of their names, figures, and natures.”²³⁷ This scientific “emphasis on seeing” relates literally to both “spectacle” (*specere*) and “theatre” (*theatron*), but more importantly in James’s case, the need to produce observable behaviors for his distinguished audience places him in a double-role, as both instigator and investigator. Although the circumstances into which he directed the lions were contrived, the real drama of the event lay not in the given circumstances but in the action that followed—true to theatrical form.

The allegorical and dramatic aspects of the event are self-evident, its various incidents arranged into a discernible narrative arc that forces the viewer into a certain set of assumptions and associations: the two lions, a male and a female, emerge unwillingly into the open air for the first time in their lives, and are made to demonstrate certain inherent behaviors such as eating meat (mutton, for that matter) and attacking and killing weaker prey. The lamb, undoubtedly chosen for its polysemous symbolism, is offered to them as a sacrifice, and they, in defiance of the behaviors they previously demonstrated, spare its life. The climax is made all the more startling because of the lions’ having entered into the trial from out of a void, with no natural reason to spare the lamb other than out of an anthropomorphic reverence for its “innocence”—or, more likely, because they had already eaten two legs of mutton and one out of two cocks before the lamb arrived. As Topsell describes:

A Lyon while hee eateth is most fierce and also when he is hungry, but when hee is satisfied and filled, he layeth aside that sauage quality, and sheweth himselfe of

²³⁷ Topsell, iii. My italics.

a most meeke and gentle nature, so that it is lesse danger to meet with him filled then hungry, for he neuer deuoueth any till famine constraineth him.²³⁸

The question then becomes, did James already know and count on the lions being full after such a meal so that his staged parable would go as planned; or, was this final test a Baconian “Instance of the Fingerpost,” in which the outcome of the experiment is ambiguous? Perhaps that very ambiguity heightened the sense of drama, at least for the audience of noblemen if not for James; but unlike the vast majority of spectacles staged in baiting-rings, the trial achieves its startling, and satisfying, conclusion not through bloodshed, but mercy.

However, the trial of the lions did not end bloodlessly: after the lamb had ascended to safety, the first two lions were also taken out of the ring, and a third, male lion brought out. Two mastiffs were immediately set upon this third lion, and “perceiving the Lyons necke to bee defended with haire... [the dogs] sought only to bite him by the face.”²³⁹ Once again, the “fiercest” dog was the last to be released into the ring, and although this third dog managed to turn the lion onto his back, the lion “spoyled”—mortally wounded—all three dogs.

If myth-in-action was all that James intended his audience to see, then what is the purpose of this violent epilogue? Indeed, the baiting that followed the spectacle of the lions sparing the lamb seems almost arbitrary, even anticlimactic. However, it also, whether consciously or not, provided a stark contrast to the Edenic enactment of behaviors that had been demonstrated previously, as a show of “wild” behavior. After all, the decision to bait a third lion rather than the

²³⁸ Topsell, 462.

²³⁹ Stow, *Annales*, 865.

two from the first part of the trial does not appear to be at all arbitrary: he is a different lion and a different kind of lion, performing in a different kind of drama. This juxtaposition demonstrates an inherent dualism in the lion, as both a merciful monarch and the “king of beasts”—a warrior-king, to be exact—two roles with which James himself identified. It is telling that in Henry Peacham’s *Minerva Britannica* of 1612, a book of heraldic emblems based on James’s *Basilikon Doron* and dedicated to Prince Henry, the lion is almost invariably used as a stand-in for the monarch, with lions depicted crowned, seated on thrones, and wielding the orb and scepter.²⁴⁰

James’s personal and political writings are often exercises in dual-consciousness. As Jane Rickard asserts in *Authorship and Authority: the Writings of James VI and I*, James struggled with questions of identity throughout his life, and frequently became “both subject and object in his own writing.”²⁴¹ His search for balance between private and public selves, to be the king who lives as a God but dies like a man, reverberates throughout the *Basilikon Doron* (1599), a treatise intended to prepare Prince Henry for his future role as King.²⁴² In the second book, “Of a King’s Dvctie in His Office,” James places particular emphasis on this task of balancing power with humility:

Embrace trew magnanimitie, not in beeing vindictiue, which the corrupted
iudgements of the world thinke to be trew Magnanimitie, but by the contrarie, in
thinking your offendour not worthie of your wrath, empyring ouer your owne

²⁴⁰ See Alan Young, ed. “Henry Peacham’s Manuscript Emblem Books” in *Index Emblematicus, The English Emblem Tradition* 5, (Toronto: 1988).

²⁴¹ Jane Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: the writings of James the VI and I*, (Manchester: 2007); 2.

²⁴² James himself remarks upon Psalm 82:6—“I said, ‘You are gods... but you will die like mere men’”—in his speech before Parliament of 1609 (NIV).

passion, and triumphing in the commaunding your selfe to forgiue: husbanding the effects of your courage and wrath, to be rightly employed vpon repelling of injuries within, by reuenge taking vpon the oppressours; and in reuenging iniuries without, by iust warres vpon forraine enemies. And so, where ye finde a notable iniurie, spare not to giue course to the torrents of your wrath. The wrath of a King, is like to the roaring of a Lyon.²⁴³

Topsell likewise describes the lion as having a dual nature, as a number of his collected anecdotes present contrasting views of the lion: for each example he gives of the lion as a fearsome man-eater, he provides an opposing example of the lion's "gentleness," timorousness, and even humanity.²⁴⁴ The lions' sparing of the lamb has its parallel in James's advice to "empire" over one's own passions; the third lion's combat with the dogs is more likely to be seen as a "just war." Essentially, the behavior demonstrated by the lions serves as an ideal illustration to James's own interpretation of kingship. Even in the baiting-ring of the Tower, we find James embodying the lion: the king who is merciful but also bold, who fears no enemy, and who knows the "Lamb of God" when he sees Him.²⁴⁵

²⁴³ I am indebted to www.stoics.com for their electronic database of James's writings. See http://www.stoics.com/basilikon_doron.html [accessed 05/07/2010].

²⁴⁴ On page 463 he tells the story of how the soul of King Amasis was imprisoned in the body of a captive lion, whose true identity was discovered by Apollonius; he then follows this mythic example with information on the diet and behavior of actual captive lions, which may have been informed by his own observations of the Tower lions.

²⁴⁵ Fudge suggests this phrase in *Brutal Reasoning*, 113.

Justice and the Lion.

The trial of the lion and the lamb bears little resemblance to other lion-baitings carried out by James, most of all because of its relative success. Whatever James's expectations might have been at the outset, the lions responded to each offering in a way that was dramatically and allegorically effective, and even the third lion fought "valiantly" against the dogs. However, James's lion trials thereafter frequently disappointed him, and on one occasion in particular, caused him no small amount of embarrassment. The event was, almost literally, a trial—a criminal trial, in which the lions who were expected to serve as the arm of justice simply refused to cooperate.

Edmund Howes' chronicle tells us that on the 23rd of June, 1609, "the King, Queene, and Prince, Lady Elizabeth, and the Duke of York, with diuers great lords, and many others, came to the Tower, to see a tryall of the Lyons single valour, against a great fierce Beare, which had kild a child."²⁴⁶ The phrase "single valour" is especially evocative and associated with displays of courage on the field, either the tournament or the battlefield, and infers something of James's expectations. As in the previous trial, the star-studded audience that the king gathered for the occasion indicates that it was a high-profile event, which suggests that James felt very confident in his lions' ability to perform, at least in the beginning. His confidence turned out to be unwarranted. Stephen Dickey describes what was surely a mortifying scene:

When a lion declined to engage the bear in battle, two dogs were added, but they

²⁴⁶ Stow, *Annales*, 894. This was not the last time that a bear would be put to justice for the killing of a child. See my conclusion for another, later example.

attacked the lion instead of the bear. Then a horse was put in, but it began to graze “very carelessly... in the middle of the yard” between the lion and the bear. Six more dogs were introduced in a further effort to make the arena sufficiently volatile, but—no fools—they chose to attack the horse, which was rescued by “three stout bearwards... whilst the Lyon and Beare stared upon them.”²⁴⁷

To make matters worse for James, “diuers other Lyons” were put out into the ring, “one after another,” and even included “two young lustie Lions, which were bred in that yard, and were now grown great,” but none of them made any attempt to attack the bear, only “ran hastily into their dens” upon first sight of their intended opponent.²⁴⁸ The author’s observation that the back-up lions “shewed no more sport nor valour then the first,” communicates something of the disappointment, and possibly bemusement, that was presumably shared by those in attendance. For James, the failure of his own prodigies—lions who were reared in the walk’s nursery—to make a good demonstration of their mettle may have even been something of a personal failure. He had bred them “in that yard,” as creatures whose lives were not only violent, but *of* violence. Where could he have gone wrong?

As in the case of the “lion and lamb” spectacle, this particular event deviates from the normal course of an animal-baiting, exotic or otherwise. The bear’s perceived responsibility for the death of the child (although one wonders who “negligently” left the child in the bear-house in the first place) is the impetus for the “tryall”—literally, a show-trial. In this case, not only is the

²⁴⁷ Dickey, “Shakespeare’s Mastiff Comedy,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42:3, (1991), 259.

²⁴⁸ Stow, *Annales*, 894.

lion's "single valour" tested before a human audience, but so is the animal defendant in what amounts to a murder trial and, at least in theory, execution. Ultimately, the lion "failed" to perform his two-fold duties as examiner and executioner, and the bear, though already explicitly condemned for its actions by the Crown and the public, seems to have been the only combatant to escape with its valor intact. Although the bear was finally baited to death "upon a stage" a little over a week later, and the money collected from the audience given to the mother of the dead child, the bear unwittingly thwarted James in an attempt to make an unequivocal display of power and kingly justice.²⁴⁹ Had this show-trial been successful, the result would have been a gruesome but coherent allegory illustrating James's own words: "And so, where ye finde a notable iniurie, spare not to giue course to the torrents of your wrath. The wrath of a King, is like to the roaring of a Lyon."

An animal defendant was not an altogether unfamiliar sight for early modern and medieval England, but as Fudge notes, "animals were tried, not because they were considered culpable, but because thy had revealed a fragility within a very important human institution... [t]he stability of the law itself lies at the centre [sic] of the trials of animals."²⁵⁰ However, the majority of such cases involve domestic or working animals that either attacked a human, or simply failed to perform their "function" in serving humanity sufficiently.²⁵¹ Often, the trial of the animal (and usually, its subsequent execution) also incurred penalties for the negligent owner. In this case, the keeper of the "murderous" bear was almost certainly Henslowe, but no mention

²⁴⁹ Stow, *Annales*, 894.

²⁵⁰ *Perceiving Animals*, 121-2. A famous (though fictional) animal trial is that of Djali the goat in Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame of Paris*, who is accused of attempted murder and tried by an Ecclesiastical Court.

²⁵¹ For example, Fudge quotes from a curious case in which two horses were put on trial because their owners drowned while riding them through a flooded river. See *Perceiving Animals*, 123.

of him is made in the account. Only the bear was charged with a crime and suffered punishment for it. Two possible explanations emerge: either the author simply failed to record any information about Henslowe's reprimand (the fate of the bear being far more interesting), or the actual owner of the animal did not suffer a penalty because he was, in fact, James himself.

The most likely location for the "Beare-house" in which the "murder" took place would have been on the grounds of the New Bear Garden, owned and operated by Henslowe and Alleyn. The latter, according to James's signed patent to Henslowe and Alleyn appointing them Masters of the King's Games, housed "our said beares and others being of our saide games," or in other words, bears belonging to the King.²⁵² If the child was killed at the New Bear Garden, and by one of James's own bears, the need for James to exact "kingly" justice upon the animal would have been all the more urgent. The plan to use the lions bred in the Tower may have represented an attempt on James's part to fulfill this need, while also producing a spectacle that reinforced the sovereignty of the law and James's own mastery over nature. Had his prodigal lions performed as anticipated, such would have been an unambiguous demonstration of the king's ability to influence, inspire, and control natural forces—a divine attribute indeed. As for the other "players" in this show-trial, one in particular stands out: the author of the account describes the first lion put into the ring as "the great Lyon," probably a male of impressive size and appearance chosen for his strength, but certainly also for his aesthetic presence: in other words, James gave some consideration to casting. Looking the part of the king of beasts, the "great Lyon" would have made an ideal stand-in for James himself.

As stated above, James's personal identification with the lion heavily influenced the way

²⁵² In Collier, *Memoirs*, 73.

in which he directed the spectacle of the lion and the lamb. In that case, piety and mercy were at the heart of the dramatic climax. Here, the other side of the dual-natured lion, and by extension, the other side of the dual-natured king were to be put on public display: the lion's "sauage quality," and the king who makes "iust warres vpon... enemies." Had the spectacle been played-out as anticipated, its imagery would have amounted to a short-hand for royal justice and authority within both the context of human society and of the natural, nonhuman world. In this trial, James had no time for Baconian experimentation: the murderer bear may have been the one literally "at stake," but also at stake was the meaning of kingship itself. How could James prove himself a king by divine right if nature had gone into revolt?

To return to James the writer, "both subject and object in his own writing," his processes of self-invention bear an eerie resemblance to the culturally-endemic process that Derrida terms *l'animot*: a hybridized word combining singular *and* plural forms of "animal" with "meaning making."²⁵³ *L'animot* is a linguistic impossibility—a "chimera" in Derrida's words—that is both multiple and singular, both subject and object. In his writing, James offers a multitude of definitions, many of them conflicting, for what it means to be "kingly," approaching the question as both a monarch and a "private self."²⁵⁴ Rather than a king "of two bodies," James constructs a multiplied and refracted self. His implicit identification with the lion is fraught with metaphorical instability: which is, if anything at all, the real drama at the heart of the show-trial of the bear and the lion. As James becomes *l'animot* through his writing, so too is James as King refracted and

²⁵³ Jaques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills, New York: Fordham University Press, 2008. See also Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Inventing with Animals in the Middle Ages," in *Engaging with Nature: Essays on the Natural World in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Barbara Hanawalt, (Notre Dame: 2008), 39-62; 52-3.

²⁵⁴ Rickard, 2.

multiplied in meaning through the behavior of the “great Lyon” in the baiting-ring.

Unlike the Edenic imagery conjured up by the earlier spectacle of the lion and the lamb, the necessary violence associated with justice (the “execution” of the bear) constructs a world-view that is entirely postlapsarian. If there is peace and harmony to be restored, then the only means to do so are through bloodshed. In this microcosm, James’s agents, the lions, must fight to restore order, not passively defer to a divine power figured in the innocence of a lamb. From his position of (presumed) ultimate authority over this show-trial, James had a role to play in it also, as a deified judge, the highest order of being present for the enactment of justice. As Michael Murray describes, the rise of conflict within nature was seen a consequence of the Fall of Man: “all... pain, suffering and death occurred *after* the Fall.”²⁵⁵ Animal suffering is by no means excluded from this doctrine, but in the words of John Calvin, “the condemnation of mankind is imprinted on the heavens, and on the earth, and on all creatures.”²⁵⁶ By using the lions as agents of monarchical justice in a “trial” that dealt with the restoration of “natural order,” James’s spectacle would have resembled such violent Old Testament acts of divine wrath as the expulsion from Eden itself. The bear’s true crime was not in the mere act of bloodshed, but in its defiance of and offense against Mankind: a trespass with consequences every bit as chaotic as the eating of the apple. In *The Life of Adam and Eve*, a text of uncertain origin from before 70 CE, a “beast” attacks Seth as he and Eve attempt to return to the Garden, and Eve curses it:

You wicked beast, do you not fear to fight with the image of God? How was your

²⁵⁵ Michael Murray, *Nature Red In Tooth and Claw: Theism and the Problem of Animal Suffering*, (New York: 2008); 79.

²⁵⁶ Quoted in Murray, 79.

mouth opened? How were your teeth made strong? How did you not call to mind your subjection? For long ago you were made subject to the image of God.²⁵⁷

In his attempt to execute a “wicked beast” using other beasts as his scourges, James embodies more than merely lions. His position here is superhuman, transcending the postlapsarian world of pain and violence to bid the animal “call to mind [its] subjection.”

However, such a bold and awe-inspiring show of majesty was not to be. His nonhuman avatars, the lions, behaved according to their own designs and not those of the king, leaving James with an urgent need to restore confidence in his ability to keep nature in check. The fact that his second “trial” of the bear did not feature a single lion to be found seems to indicate that his faith in this ability, or in the lions themselves, had finally crumbled. Following this embarrassment, James never attempted to bait lions again on such a grand scale, and certainly not for the public. The second attempt to execute the “murderous” bear, which was carried out using mastiffs, and successful, can therefore be construed as a monarch’s desperate attempt to deflect unwanted attention away from his “cowardly” lions, and onto the valor of a thoroughly English animal that James had made the mistake of doubting before, supposedly born of a chimerical mating between a lion and a dog: the “Arcadian curre.”

²⁵⁷ Quoted in Murray, 78.

Conclusion:

Watching People Watching Bears

A Match, a match; Gentlemen, pray stand off: Be it known unto all men by these presents, that I the Man in the Moon, in behalfe of my Dog Towzer, doe challenge all the Dogs, Bitches, Puppies, and all in the Citie of Westminster; to play with them all one after another, severally three Courses at the Winsor-Bull, at the Hope on the Bankside, on Thursday Feb. 28. for three Crownes a Dog; and that Dog that hits, or fetches Blood first, to winne the Wager, and be rewarded with a Parliament Collar: hee desireth Godfrey to see that his Bull be ready, and his Seats and Galleries strong, for I intend to bring many Friends, and there all my Enemies, Pusivants, Dogs, Setters, Bitches, &c. if they have any Warrants, or any other matter else against me, shall be sure to find me; else hereafter let them not presume to come in my presence under the penalty of a stab at least. There shall also be seen the most excellent sport of an old Munkey dancing on a Rope, and riding on a Tukesbury Hobby-horse for a wager of three pounds of the States-money, to please the Sisters of the Separation, and some other rare Tricks shall make you merry. VIVAT REX.²⁵⁸

Henslowe's death in 1616 seems to have signaled the end of the Hope as a dual-purpose space. Nathan Field's contract was at its end, theatrical performance was occurring indoors with ever increasing frequency, and perhaps Meade did not share Henslowe's vision. Ultimately, the Hope reverted to a full-time bear garden in the years to come, until 1655 saw it singled out for condemnation by Cromwell's nascent government.

The Hope's demise was slow and painful (justifiably so, one could argue), for the beginning of the end came as early as 1642, by which time Thomas Godfrey managed the building. In that year a petition came before the House of Commons demanding the closure of the Hope, to which Godfrey demonstrated "violent opposition":

²⁵⁸ A fake bill of advertisement for a baiting from *The Man in the Moon* (1650). The passage reads as if a direct parody of the bill quoted at the beginning of chapter 3. Quoted in J. Leslie Hotson, "Bear Gardens and Bear-Baiting During the Commonwealth," *PMLA*, 40, 2 (1925), 276-88; 281.

...the Masters of the Beargarden, and all other persons who have interest there, be enjoined and required by this House, that for the future they do not permit to be used the game of bear baiting in these times of great distraction, until this House do give further order herein.²⁵⁹

Godfrey was imprisoned in Newgate for at least two years afterwards. Despite the House's injunction, baiting did not cease at the Hope for nearly two decades more, leading Leslie Hotson to attest that "[t]here seems to be no lack of new evidence to show that the Bear Garden was one of the most uninterrupted and satisfactory amusements during the Interregnum."²⁶⁰ Indeed, the Parliamentary Army appears to have sullied itself with attendance at the bear garden on a number of occasions: soldiers and constables would allegedly lure young men to the Hope by proclaiming "a new kind of bear-baiting" was on show there, and not to be missed.²⁶¹ When the gulls made to leave after the end of the show, they would be arrested and pressed into military service.

In 1647, and again in 1653, the House passed an order that "[t]he bear baiting, bull baiting, and playing for prizes by fencers hitherto practiced in Southwark and other places, which have caused great evils and abominations, to be suppressed from this time."²⁶² Still Godfrey, now released from Newgate, continued to hold bear baitings, though in its final years the Hope was

²⁵⁹ Quoted in Brownstein, 359.

²⁶⁰ Hotson, 281.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 278.

²⁶² Council of State proceedings, 5 May 1653, quoted in Brownstein, 359.

plagued with disease and hunger amongst its animals, and finally by tragic accidents. Perhaps devastating to the Hope's continuance was the death of a child in 1655: having wandered unattended into the stables, the child was mauled to death by a bear. Justice was subsequently meted out to the "guilty" party:

The Bear for killing the child fell to the Lord of the Soil, and was by the Bearward redeemed for fifty shillings; and the Bearwards told the Mother of the Child that they could not help it (though some think it to bee a design of that wicked house to get money) and they told the Mother that the Bear should bee baited to death, and she should have half the mony, & accordingly there were bills stuck up and down about the City of it, & a considerable summe of mony gathered to see the Bear baited to death; som say above 60 pound, and now all is don, they offer the woman three pound not to prosecute them; som other have been lately hurt at the Bear-garden, which is a sinfull deboyst profane meeting.²⁶³

The bias evident in this reporting of events may have distorted the truth in order to garner public support for the closure of the Hope. Contrary to the anonymous author's suggestion that Godfrey may have arranged the child's death in order to collect money, the incident more likely spelled doom for his livelihood, and the bear's "punishment" not so much a scheme to turn a profit but a desperate bid to save face before his most important allies, the London public. Unfortunately for Godfrey, and ultimately the bears, the piece of Parliamentary propaganda

²⁶³ *Perfect Proceedings of State Affairs*, quoted in Hotson, 286.

worked. Five months later, the Hope came to a bloody end:

Colonel Pride, by reason of some differences between him and the keeper Godfrey of the Beares in the Beare Garden in Southwark, as a Justice of the Peace, caused all the beares to be fast tied up by their noses, and then valiantly brought some files of musketeers, drew up, and gave fire; and kill'd six or more beares in the Place (only leaving one white innocent cubb) and also cockes of the game. It is said all the mastives are to be shipt to Jamaica.²⁶⁴

The account implies that Pride may have acted partially out of spite, but makes a point of mentioning that the Colonel also exercised Christian mercy even in this act of wholesale slaughter, sparing a “white, innocent cubb.” This suggests that the bears who were killed by firing-squad were by extension neither white nor innocent—they had participated in the evils of the baiting ring, and such was enough to condemn them. The animals’ willingness to participate was of course not a matter of consideration. Being nonhuman, they had no will of their own, and “think no more of death than the brute beast that is without understanding.”²⁶⁵

Despite this, Pride’s slaughter of Godfrey’s bears became a Royalist rallying-point in years to come. Four years after the incident, an anonymous epitaph for Blind Bess, one of the bears killed by Pride’s men, appeared in the Royalist publication *The Man in the Moon*:

²⁶⁴ Chancellor, *Pleasure Haunts of London*, quoted in Brownstein, 360.

²⁶⁵ David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England*, (New York, New York: 1997); 381.

Here lyes old Bess, the ransome of Prides fury
Who was condemn'd without a Judg or Jury.
A valiant champion was she, many prize
'Gainst Butchers Dogs she won, till that her eyes
She lost in service, Godfrey then lament,
'Twas she that got thy food, and paid thy Rent.
And Butchers all keep you that fatal day
When Pride and Hewson took her life away;
Your very dogs shall not forget her name
That many years together kept the Game.
You that the sport now keep in St. Johns-street,
Will never such a Bear or Garden meet
As Godfreys was, for such as did resort
To see her, will extol the place and sport.
Then Butchers mourn, for you have lost a prize
Of her that here entomb'd in Hony lyes.²⁶⁶

The poem's strange balance of satire and eulogy makes it one of the most puzzling contemporary writings on animal baiting: just how far it swings in the direction of comedy or tragedy is all but impossible to determine. Because the suppression of bull and bear baiting struck a powerful chord amongst sympathizers with the Crown, it is entirely possible that the poem is meant to

²⁶⁶ From an epitaph printed in *The Man in the Moon*, 1660. Quoted in Hotson, 287.

elicit tears, or outrage, more so than laughter. Here, Blind Bess is treated as the “white innocent cubb” reportedly spared by Pride, according to Parliamentary accounts: now not spared at all, but martyred for the memory of an England that was rapidly being swept away.

“Honest William,” whose remark that Paris Garden was more like a Garden of Paradise opened this dissertation, continued his letter to touch on the whipping of the blind bear:

I had almost forgot to speak of the blind bear, who, when he is tied to the stake, contrives to loosen the knot with his nose and claws; and, as soon as he has freed himself, bolts off to his den, upsetting all in the way, making the men tumble over one another, and putting all into confusion, so that men with eyes in their heads appear to be blinder than the blind bear himself. Why need I tell you of the bull, with the great bollocks; or of the pony and monkey which gambol about, and afford a truly royal pastime? Therefore it is that good and wise Monarchs patronize this spectacle; and come once a year to partake of it, in Whitsun week. It is, to say the truth, sport worthy of a King; and I would rather enjoy the sport afforded by that blind bear than witness a hundred masques[.]²⁶⁷

Although the Hope’s chief patrons were ordinary London citizens, the notion of baiting as an aristocratic—indeed royal—pastime persisted, which accounts for its being especially targeted by Cromwell’s government. Perhaps most remarkable about this passage is that it places bear baiting and theatre, specifically masques (an exclusively courtly form of theatre) into contest.

²⁶⁷ Quoted in Brownstein, 353.

Unequivocally, bear baiting comes out on top.

Animal baiting flourished for a brief period following the Restoration of the monarchy. A new Bear Garden was built in 1662 by William Davies, which took the thirst for blood to a whole new level. According to descriptions by Samuel Pepys, an infrequent visitor of the Davies, combined with recent archaeological discoveries, the Davies is believed to have been an entertainment complex like no other. Half-elliptical in shape, and divided into three separate spaces, the Davies featured bear and bull baiting and cockfighting in one of its two arenas, and prizefighting in the other. A taphouse extending the length of the two arenas had windows cut into a wall so that its patrons could view the carnage while they ate and drank—reminiscent of a modern-day sports-bar, with its walls emblazoned with flat-screen TVs.²⁶⁸

Throughout the eighteenth century, however, the scale of bear baiting as a spectacle seems to have steadily decreased, leading it to eventually return to its humble beginnings as a rural entertainment staged in dug-outs or ad hoc corrals. Bull baiting maintained a more popular hold during this time, while badger baiting (no doubt easier to supply than bears) grew in importance.²⁶⁹ Following the outlawing of bear baiting in the early nineteenth century, bears became more commonly associated with the far more benign “dancing bear” shows, some of which—like Clark’s Trained Bears in Lincoln, NH—still exist today, and feature bears balancing on barrels, performing agility feats, and (since the late nineteenth century) riding bicycles.²⁷⁰ Although even these performances have their antecedents in bear baiting—Philip Henslowe may

²⁶⁸ This information I obtained from David Saxby, head archeologist in the excavation of the Davies Bear Garden, now underway on Bankside. Samuel Pepys, who visited Davies Bear Garden, also suggested the unusual configuration of the building in his recollections of it. [9/13/11].

²⁶⁹ Robert Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society, 1700-1850*, (Cambridge: 1973); 46.

²⁷⁰ See <http://www.clarkstradingpost.com/attractions.php> [accessed 4/23/13].

have been the owner of a Bankside pub known as the Dancing Bears, after all—through their popularity public perceptions of the bear altered drastically. Whereas in early modern accounts bears are described as “savage,” “fearsome,” and “cruel,” by the twentieth century bears had become infantilized, leading to, of course, the Teddy Bear.

So what ultimately happened to bear baiting? Although the idea of a major metropolitan sports-arena dedicated to the torture of animals is unthinkable to many people, vestiges of animal baiting still survive. As mentioned earlier, bear baiting persists in isolated pockets: notably in Pakistan, Russia, and even in South Carolina, where animal rights activists are currently petitioning the governor to outlaw the bloodsport:

The supposed objective of South Carolina bear baiting contests is for the dogs to corner the bear, make eye contact, and keep her “at bay.” These events are billed as training events for hunting dogs, but for some, bear baiting is a spectator event for those who enjoy watching dogs attack a bear. [...] There are currently 26 captive black bears in South Carolina, many likely used for bear baiting. The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources issued permits for their possession, but has turned a blind eye to the cruelty they endure. The South Carolina DNR does not inspect bear baiting competitions. [...] Not only do bears endure abuse in these public events, but many are subjected to the same treatment in frequent backyard events.²⁷¹

²⁷¹ http://www.humanesociety.org/news/news/2010/08/bear_baiting_082310.html, 8/23/10 [accessed 2/12/13].

Colloquially referred to as a “bear bay,” these shows are reportedly attended by spectators numbering in the hundreds, and have been known to last as long as four hours. One account claims that as many as 300 dogs may be set upon an individual bear over the course of a “bay.”²⁷² Even more sinister is the allegation that “Bear baiting events are hosted by breed clubs associated with the American Kennel Club and the United Kennel Club,” and that “The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources issues permits for the possession of the bears.”²⁷³ As of my writing of this dissertation, bear baiting remains perfectly legal in South Carolina.

In Pakistan, where bear baiting is illegal but not closely monitored, the culture built up around bear baiting feels hauntingly similar to what existed in early modern England. There, bearwards are known as “Kalanders,” and serve a local landlord whose dogs are supposedly trained through the staging of these spectacles, which continue to draw crowds of thousands.²⁷⁴

Bear baiting most likely came to Pakistan through British colonizers in the eighteenth century, when, as one activist group puts it, “bull terriers were imported and gypsies were asked to use their bears for this filthy act, after which they were heavily rewarded by the landlords.”²⁷⁵ The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act of 1890, which extended to the British Empire’s holdings throughout Southeast Asia, stipulates that an owner will be penalized fifty rupees if he:

- (a) incites any animal to fight, or
- (b) baits any animal, or

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ <http://forcechange.com/28658/outlaw-bear-baiting-in-south-carolina/> [accessed 2/12/13].

²⁷⁴ <http://www.wspa-international.org/wspaswork/bears/bearbaiting/#.URrV3qU0WS0> [accessed 2/13/13].

²⁷⁵ <http://www.pbrc.edu.pk/bearbaiting.htm> [accessed 2/12/13].

(c) aids or abets any such incitement or baiting²⁷⁶

Nevertheless, the Punjab and Singh provinces of Pakistan continue to host the largest bear baiting spectacles known to exist.



Illustration 8: A frequently circulated image from a bear baiting held in Pakistan in 2008. <http://observers.france24.com/content/20110308-pakistani-landlord-idea-fun-pitting-dogs-against-bears-bear-baiting> [accessed 2/12/13].

Clearly, bear baiting is not a thing of the past, but neither is our enduring interest in the suffering and struggles of animals. In some cases, this interest manifests violently, but most often it is far more passive, even acceptable. Nature shows, which have experienced a recent resurgence in popularity following BBC’s series *Planet Earth* (2006)—followed by *Life* (2009), *Human Planet* (2011), *Frozen Planet* (2011), and *Nature’s Great Events* (2011)—enable people from diverse parts of the world to observe “wild” animal behavior that they would otherwise

²⁷⁶ “Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act” 1890 (modified December 1937), section 6-C; 5.

never be able to witness.

Beginning with David Attenborough's (by twenty-first-century standards) somewhat unecological *Zoo Quest* series aired on BBC between 1954 and 1963, epic television documentaries in which animals are shown in their natural habitats occupy a very important place in our culture, and in the development of television history. With viewers appetites whetted for "wild" subject matter by *Zoo Quest*, Attenborough and the then experimental channel BBC2 introduced British audiences to what are now standards of the "nature-show" genre: color, aerial photography, intimate scenes shot using a concealed cameraman, and of course, hunting sequences and other violent behaviors that often result in death. Not only could the viewers at home look into the quiet den of a nursing mother bear for the first time, they could also watch as that same bear stalked, chased, and killed an elk to feed its cubs. Inevitably, the thrill of witnessing animals engaged in such intense and usually gruesome struggles of life and death grew to be of particular interest for "couch-naturalists."

For those of us who grew up watching American public television in the seventies and eighties, spectacles of animal violence and bloodshed are inextricable from the experience of remotely viewing nature. From Attenborough's *Life On Earth* in 1979 to 2010's Attenborough-narrated *Life*, nature-shows are structured around points of climax that feature bloodshed and/or mortal danger. Those who watch nature-shows on a regular basis may soon grow accustomed to the sounds of animals screaming in pain and to the sight of animals dying violent deaths. Our interest as humans, or so the presenter(s) remind us in voice-over, is in bearing witness to animals' relentless struggle for survival in a brutal, amoral, unhusbanded world. The message we take away is Darwinian, of "survival of the fittest," but it is also unavoidably entangled in pre-

Darwinian notions of wildness, of a world “lapsed” into bestial anarchy.

The popularity of the nature-show and the centrality of animal-suffering in such programs speaks to our enduring fascination with bloodshed in nature. Mainstream Western culture now largely condemns any sort of entertainment in which animals are made to experience physical or psychological pain, and yet, when we are given the opportunity to see animals in distress, we cannot look away. I would be loath to suggest that nature-shows are simply violent pornography for animal-abusers, but as they have shaped and continue to shape current perceptions of nature, they also unwittingly (and unavoidably, I would argue) service a darker side of our culture as a whole. They are educational, but they are also *entertainment*.

Music, sound-effects, and voice-over are employed by nature show producers to provide that entertainment. Narrative is often constructed around the struggles of individual characters, such as “Maya” the baby elephant born “exceptionally small” to “Zadie,” a “first-time mum.”²⁷⁷ Given names and backstories, viewers could just as easily be watching a fictional drama as a documentary, and may be coaxed into responding to the action that unfolds as though it does so at the will of a human author. However, the use of dramatic narrative in nature shows, while it removes the viewing experience from the chaos and catastrophe of lived experience, is something of a necessary evil: without dramatic narrative, the footage veers along without discernible cause and effect, and the animals that parade across the screen are simply that—“animals.” Going back to Erica Fudge’s words, anthropocentrism “collapses the binaries” of human and animal: for early modern men and women, the consequence of this collapse was the possibility that humanity may not be as solid as presumed; for modern men and women, the consequence is that we move closer

²⁷⁷ Transcribed from *Planet Earth Live*, ep. 8 (2010).

to a state wherein humanity is not merely solid, but all-encompassing. As early modern accounts of bear baiting cast the combatant animals with human roles (gladiator, coward, villain) and human motivations (avarice, cruelty, cunning), modern viewers of nature shows are guided through imposed narrative into making precisely the same presumptions. The anthropocentrism of animals in the media is perhaps most succinctly illustrated by the “tagline” of the television network *Animal Planet*: “Surprisingly Human.”²⁷⁸

What then, is the difference between a twenty-first-century “couch naturalist” white-knuckling her armchair before a pair of battling mountain-goats, and an early-modern bloodsport enthusiast roaring with excitement while a bull is torn apart by dogs? The difference, of course, lies in the complicity of the audience in creating that violence. Animals behaving violently toward one another within a “natural” environment, without having been goaded into that behavior by human-beings, can hardly be classified as “blood-*sport*.” Animal-baiting in early-modern England and now requires human intervention on a number of levels, not least of all being the fabrication of a contained “environment” wherein dogs and bears and bulls may all enter into continual combat with one another.

The old bear gardens of London are long vanished, but animal baiting persists, as does our tendency to see animal behavior and read it theatrically. Such may be in part our attempt to understand that which is entirely outside the bounds of human experience through something which is “above” the bounds of everyday human experience, in which case the anthropomorphism of the baiting ring and of modern-day nature shows is embedded in the same impulse to interpret. Thus it could be said that theatre is the most human response possible to

²⁷⁸ See <http://animal.discovery.com/> [accessed 4/23/13].

actions, events, and worlds that are incontrovertibly inhuman.

“The Rather Troublesome Question”

In the preceding pages I have attempted to demonstrate the uncanny relationship between bear gardens and playhouses throughout the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I. This is not in answer to E.K. Chambers’ “rather troublesome question,” but perhaps will provide us with new ways to articulate that question—which, in point of fact, Chambers never actually puts into words. The “question” he points to is, in my opinion, “Why is it that whenever we speak of the unprecedentedly complex and innovative theatre of this era—theatre which not only changed English literature, but the English language itself—we are drawn back inexorably to the bloody spectacles of the bear gardens?” Taken out of context, the two forms would seem to be no more interconnected than are football games to television dramas. The act of watching, and the medium through which we watch (the television, in the modern example) appear to be the only point of intersection. However, a close study of the history of bear baiting’s ritual antecedents, the bear gardens’ architectural legacy, and of the various modes of interpretation exercised by its audiences, reveals animal baiting to be inextricable from the story of early modern theatre, and possibly vice-versa. Ultimately, this research represents an effort to give a very long answer to the troublesome question.

In “Ritual/Play,” I was surprised to find that ancient practices relating to the coming of spring shared such an intimate history with the spectacle of bear baiting. If the early medieval tradition of baiting bears and boars close to Candlemas Day, with its “Groundhog Day” reminiscent weather-predicting bear, is not a coincidence—and I truly doubt it is—then the

possibility that bear baiting's spectacular aspects harken back to animistic religious celebrations remains tantalizingly open. In addition, the similarities between French Candlemas Day plays and English Plough Plays may indicate a migration of this ritualized performance from France, where some of the very earliest references to bear baiting are found, to England via the Norman Conquest. Although the Candlemas Day bear seems to have evolved into a knight or a fool in the English version, the bear figure's survival in France (as recently as the mid-twentieth century at that) speaks to the animal's symbolic power. Exactly how bear baiting first arose in England, whether it arrived through the Normans or even as early as the Roman occupation, requires further research to fully grasp. However, it is my hope that the answers may be traced through the Candlemas Day bear—which is, in fact, a creature situated somewhere between the live bears of early bloodsport and the human-enacted bears of the Candlemas Day plays.

As said in the introduction, I have not attempted to wrest the history of bear baiting into a chronology, as the forms discussed in this dissertation are in most cases simultaneous. Nowhere is this more important to keep in mind than in “Sport,” which places bear baiting within the context of early modern hunting practices—through, notably, Philip Henslowe, the entrepreneur behind some of London's greatest playhouses and bear gardens. Although Henslowe is most often discussed in terms of his contributions to the theatre, a look into his biography reveals him to be a man steeped in the “spectacular” and ritualized hunting practices of his time. One could almost say that Henslowe, although clearly a consummate showman, had a greater impact on animal baiting during his lifetime than he did the theatre, through his innovative—or devious—marrying of the two forms. In effort to satisfy early modern audiences' taste for violence, combined with a desire for sensational storytelling, Henslowe may have been among the first to

recognize animal baiting's potential as a large-scale amphitheater entertainment. Influenced by the Bowes Brothers' combining of bloodsports and professional theatre, Henslowe's tenure as manager of the Rose, the Bear Garden, the Hope, and finally as Master of the King's Game saw some of the most startling developments in animal baiting to date, and may be the reason why the "rather troublesome question" exists in the first place. Without Henslowe, the overlap between animal baiting and theatre would certainly still exist, but its implications for the study of both forms may not be so complex, nor quite as unsettling.

"Theatre" represents the closest I can come to identifying a moment in which animal baiting and theatre become entirely intertwined, albeit briefly. Henslowe's Hope may not have lasted long as a dual-purpose entertainment venue, but the mere fact of its conception suggests that bloodsports and theatre may not have always been mutually exclusive as modes of *performance*. Such relates to the pleasures of interpretation which animal baiting evidently offered early modern audiences, whose accounts of baiting frequently characterize bears, bulls, and dogs as if they were players in an allegory or even a tragedy. As we find in Shakespeare's plays in particular, the bestialization of human characters into baited animals—such as Gloucester and Macbeth—provided audiences and players alike with ready insight into the experience of trauma, pain, and combat. That human emotions could be read through the staged suffering of animals is also evident in spectators' anthropomorphic readings of bloodsports, such as we see in Thomas Dekker. Until the Hope, however, such anthropomorphic or bestializing tendencies were not brought into physical overlap. Henslowe's unique insight into the way his audiences at the Rose and the Bear Garden informed and borrowed from one another speaks to his extraordinary acumen, able to render the seemingly distinct worlds of drama and genuine

bloodshed into a singular experience. Today, we would call this experience “entertainment.”

Grand as Henslowe’s vision for the Hope was, ultimately it was an experiment, and one that failed. Why it did so is not entirely clear, although I believe it is likely that basic mechanics, and not the insight behind its conception, were to blame. To solve this problem requires a clearer picture of exactly how the Hope worked as a “swing-space”: how difficult was it to transition from one kind of venue to the other? How expensive in terms of labor and materials? How long did it take? How was it possible for the same building to serve the needs of actors while housing a number of large animals? Unfortunately, a lack of archaeological evidence—indeed, the destruction of that evidence—leaves these questions unanswered, and for the time being, unanswerable.

In terms of chronology, “Theatre” should come after “Masque,” for Henslowe built the Hope in 1613, a full decade after James I began his reign, and his puzzling “trials” of the Tower menagerie’s lions. However, the lion trials represent a kind of animal baiting that veers well outside the mass-attended bear garden spectacles. Not unlike the masques which became so popular in James’s reign, the lion trials were an exclusively courtly pastime, performed for reasons other than mere entertainment: in the case of the lion trials, to probe, to edify, and to test. Court masques looked to allegory for their subject matter, portraying rigorous hierarchies delineated by moral certainty—and in one sense, the lion trials attempted to illustrate the same worldview, sometimes with the lion as a stand-in for the divinely appointed king, and sometimes with Nature itself wrenched into demonstrating monarchical “order.” James’s profound identification with the lion and interest in Francis Bacon’s experimental philosophy were often at odds in his elaborately staged “trials,” especially when his experiments did not go according to

plan. Although Bacon's science exhorted a reliance on observable evidence, James's desire to find a reflection of himself in the "king of beasts" often led him to engineer his experiments in effort to produce acceptable outcomes. Thus the shows staged at his purpose-built "lion-walk," though touted as experiments, took on the visually sumptuous, allegorical, and socially-regimented aspects of masque while simultaneously indulging in the bloodshed of the baiting-ring. Such is especially evident in the spectacle of "the lion and the lamb," which not only induced lions to perform certain natural behaviors such as killing and eating, but also to enact Christian symbolism through their perceived reverence of the "innocent" lamb. James's efforts to manipulate the behavior of the animals separates his "trials" from any other form of animal baiting in this period, and perhaps best demonstrates the limits of bloodsport's relationship to theatre—James was not simply looking for animal gladiators like the famous bears Harry Hunks or Sackerson; his engineered spectacles demanded animals that were also *actors*. Here is where theatre and animal baiting diverge.

Appendix to Chapter 3:

Muniment 49 of the “Henslowe Papers,” the building contract for the Hope

[29 August 1613]²⁷⁹

Articles Covenantes grauntes and agreements Concluded and agreed vpon this Nyne and Twenteithe daie of Auguste Anno Dni 1613 Betwene Phillipe Henslowe of the pische [parish] of St Savior in sowthworke within the countye of Surr Esquire, and Jacobe Maide of the pische of St Olaves in sowthworke aforesaide waterman of thone partie, And Gilbert Katherens of the saide pische of St Saviours in sowthworke Carpenter on thother partie, As followeth That is to saie[:]

Imprimis the saide Gilbert Katherens for him, his executors administrators and assignes dothe convenaunt promise and graunt to and with the saide Phillipe Henslowe and Jacobe Maide and either of them, the executors administrators & assignes of them and either of them by these partes in manner and forme followinge That he the saied Gilbert Katherens his executors administrators or assignes shall and will at his or their owne proper costes and charges vpon or before the last daie of November next ensuinge the daie of the date of the date of these pntes above written, not onlie take downe or pull downe all that Same place or house wherin Beares

²⁷⁹ Taken from W.W. Greg, “The Henslowe Papers,” 19-22. I have made some changes in formatting and spelling (bracketed) for the reader’s comfort.

and Bulls haue been heretofore vsuallie bayted, And also one other house or staple wherin Bulls and horsses did vsuallie stande, Sett lyinge and beinge vppon or neere the Banksyde in the saide pishe of St Saviour in sowthworke Comonlie Called or knowne by the name of the Beare garden But shall also at his or their owne proper costf and Charges vppon or before the saide laste daie of November newly erect, builde and sett vpp one other Same place or Plaiehouse fitt & convenient in all thinges, bothe for players to playe Jn, And for the game of Beares and Bulls to be bayted in the same, And also A fitt and convenient Tyre house and a stage to be carryed or taken awaie, and to stande vppon tressells good substanciall and sufficient for the carryinge and bearinge of suche a stage, And shall new builde erect and sett vp againe the saide plaie house or game place neere or vppon the saide place, where the saide game place did heretofore stande, And to builde the same of suche large compasse, fforme, widenes, and height as the Plaie house Called the Swan in the libertie of Parris garden in the saide pishe of St Saviour, now is And shall also builde two stearecasses w th out and adioyninge to the saide Playe house in suche convenient places as shalbe moste fitt and convenient for the same to stande vppon, and of such largnes and height as the stearecasses of the saide playehouse called the Swan, nowe are or bee And shall also builde the Heavens all over the saide stage to be borne or carryed w th out any postes or supporters to be fixed or sett vppon the saide stage, And all gutters of leade needfull for the carryage of all suche Raine water as shall fall vppon the same, And shall also make Two Boxes in the lowermost storie fitt and decent for gentlemen to sitt in And shall make the [partitions] betwne the Rommes as they are at the saide Plaie house called the Swan And to make Turned Cullumes vppon and over the stage And shall make the Principalls and fore fronte of the saide Plaie house of good and sufficient oken Tymber, And no furr tymber to be putt or vsed in

the lower most, or midell stories, excepte the vpright postes on the backparte of the saide stories (All the Byndinge Joystes to be of oken tymber) The Inner principall postes of the first storie to be Twelve footes in height and Tenn ynches square, the Inner principall postes in the midell storie to be Eight ynches square The Inner most postes in the vpper storie to be seaven ynches square The Prick postes in the first storie to be eight ynches square, in the seconde storie seaven ynches square, and in the vpper most storie six ynches square Also the Brest sommers in the lower moste storie to be nyne ynches depe, and seaven ynches in thicknes and in the midell storie to be eight ynches depe and six ynches in thicknes The Byndinge Jostes of the firste storie to be nyne and Eight ynches in depthe and thicknes and in the midell storie to be viij and vij ynches in depthe and thicknes [.]

Item to make a good, sure, and sufficient foundacion of Brickettes for the saide Play house or game place and to make it xiiij teene ynches at the leaste above the ground[.] *Item* to new builde, erect, and sett vpp the saide Bull house and stable w th good and sufficient scantlinge tymber plankes and bordes and [partitions] of that largnes and fittnes as shalbe sufficient to kepe and holde six bulls and Three horssees or geldinges, wth Rackes and mangers to the same, And also a lofte or storie over the saide house as nowe it is *Item* shall also at his & their owne prop costs and charges new tyle w th Englishe tyles all the vpper Rooffe of the saide Plaie house game place and Bull house or stable, And shall fynde and paie for at his like proper costes and charges for all the lyme, heare, sande, Brickettes, tyles, lathes nayles, workemanshipe and all other thinges needfull and necessarie for the full finishinge of the saide Plaie house Bull house and stable And the saide Plaiehouse or game place to be made in althinges and in suche forme and fashion, as the

saide plaie house called the swan (the scantling of the tymbers, tyles, and foundation as ys aforesaide without fraude or coven) *And the Same* Phillipe Henslow and Jacobe maide and either of them for them, the executors administrator and assignes of them and either of them doe covenant and graunt to and w th the saide Gilbert Katherens his executors administrator and assignes in manner and forme followinge (That is to saie) That he the saide Gilbert or his assignes shall or maie haue, and take to his or their vse and behoofe not onlie all the tymber benches seates, slates, tyles Bricks and all other thinges belonginge to the saide Game place & Bull house or stable, And also all suche olde tymber whiche the saide Phillipe Henslow hathe latelie bought beinge of an old house in Thames street, London, whereof moste parte is now lyinge in the Yarde or Backsyde of the saide Bearegarden *And* also to satisfie and paie vnto the saide Gilbert Katherens his executors administrator or assignes for the doinge and finishinges of the Workes and buildinges aforesaid the somme of Three Hundered and three score poundes of good and lawfull monie of England in manner and forme followinge (That is to saie) In hande at thensealinge and deliury hereof Three score poundes w ch the saide Gilbert acknowlegeth himselfe by these pntes to haue Receaued, And more over to paie every Weeke weeklie duringe the firste Six weekes vnto the saide Gilbert or his assignes when he shall sett workemen to worke vppon or about the buildinge of the premisses the somme of Tennepoundes of lawfull monie of England to paie them there Wages (yf their wages dothe amount vnto somuche monie,) And when the saide plaie house Bull house and stable are Reared then to make vpp the saide Wages one hundered poundes of lawfull monie of England, and to be paie to the saide Gilbert or his assignes, And when the saide Plaiehouse Bull house and stable are Reared tyled walled, then to paie vnto the saide Gilbert Katherens or his assignes, One other hundered poundes of lawfull

monie of England And when the saide Plaie house, Bull house and stable are fullie finished builded and done in mann r and forme aforesaide, Then to paie vnto the saide Gilbert Katherens or his assignes, One other hundred Poundes of lawffull monie of England in full satisfacon and payment of the saide somme of CCCLX And to all and singuler the Covenantes grauntes Articles and agreements above in theise pntes Contayned whiche on the parte and behalfe of the saide Gilbert Katherens his executors administrators or assignes are ought to be observed performed fulfilled and done, the saide Gilbert Katherens byndeth himselfe his executors administrators and assignes, vnto the saide Phillipe Henslowe and Jacob Maide and to either of them, the executors administrators and assignes of them or either of them by theise pntes *In Witnes* whereof the saide Gilbert Katherens hath herevnto sett his hande and scale the daie and yere firste above written

[mark "GK" Gilbert Katherens]

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