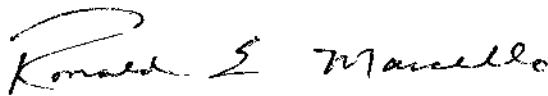



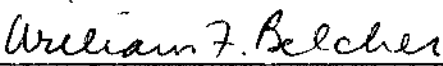
MYTH AND HISTORY IN
TWO PLAYS BY NICHOLAS ROWE

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study is to examine two plays by Nicholas Rowe, eighteenth-century English poet, dramatist, editor, and translator, in order to ascertain their historical content, as opposed to their mythological and fictional content. Myth, as used in this paper, refers to events which have their origin in history but which themselves are not historical. The two plays are The Tragedy of Jane Shore (1714) and The Tragedy of the Lady Jane Gray (1715). The principal sources of data are the plays, the English chronicles, Thomas More, and Rowe's biographer, James R. Sutherland.

Rowe, a man admired by his friends for his allegiance to his religion, was especially well-suited by his temperament and his sense of ethics to write the kind of pathetic tragedy which was just coming into vogue in the early part of the eighteenth-century. He claims for himself the innovation of the "she tragedy." In Jane Shore and Lady Jane Gray he chooses hapless damsels as his heroines. Though one is a harlot and the other a queen, both are helpless victims of circumstances who somehow manage to maintain a sweet saintliness in the face of the most adverse circumstances. Both are historical figures.

Rowe never strays so far from history that he loses his historical perspective; on the other hand, he never allows the historical facts to squeeze his story. In both plays, while he relies on a framework of history, he still permits his fancy freely to invent characters and situations which would appeal to his audience. In nearly every instance, when he strays from history, it is in order to create or to augment a romantic theme. In numerous details Rowe illustrates his interest in the history of England and skillfully creates drama from his nation's past.

The study is organized in four chapters. The first is a biography of Nicholas Rowe; the second is a brief survey of the literary trends which influenced Rowe. The third and fourth chapters examine the two plays.

MYTH AND HISTORY IN
TWO PLAYS BY NICHOLAS ROWE

THESIS

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CHAPTER I

THE LIFE OF NICHOLAS ROWE

In his preface to the works of Samuel Daniel, Alexander B. Grosart laments the absence of information regarding his subject. He says, "It is infinitely pathetic to find how very little the world knows of its most elect spirits."¹ The same lament could be expressed over Nicholas Rowe, eighteenth-century poet, dramatist, editor, and translator. Two memoirs were written shortly after his death, but unfortunately little is known beyond the meager facts they present. One of the memoirs was written by Dr. James Welwood, who tended Rowe in his final illness. At Rowe's request Dr. Welwood wrote a preface to Rowe's translation of Lucan's Pharsalia, which was published posthumously in 1719. In the preface, he includes a brief biography of Rowe, but the light he sheds on Rowe's life is more akin to candle-glow than to the brilliance of day. James Sutherland, Rowe's twentieth-century biographer, complains that Welwood seems to "muse over his task with a curious helplessness."² Stephen Hales,

¹Alexander B. Grosart, editor, The Complete Works in Verse and Prose of Samuel Daniel (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Inc., 1962), I, x.

²James R. Sutherland, "The Life of Nicholas Rowe," Three Plays by Nicholas Rowe (London, 1929), p. 1.

who wrote the other memoir within days following Rowe's death, provides little more illumination. It is unfortunate for Rowe's admirers that these two men were not more diligent in writing their accounts, for their memoirs seem particularly meager considering that both had excellent opportunities to interview Rowe's widow and his son (who was twenty years old at the time of his father's death), to say nothing of his numerous literary friends.

In addition to Welwood and Hales, both Theophilus Cibber and Dr. Samuel Johnson include vignettes of Rowe in their respective Lives. However, they add very little additional information. It is not until the twentieth century that Sutherland, in spite of the paucity of information emanating from Rowe's "biographers," pieces together from a variety of sources the most comprehensive account of Rowe's life.

Nicholas Rowe was born June 20, 1674, into an old and distinguished Devonshire family. Theophilus Cibber claims Rowe "could trace his ancestors in a direct line up to the times of the holy war, in which one of them so distinguished himself, that at his return he had the arms given him, which the family has borne ever since."³ John Rowe, Nicholas's father, was a respected figure in the legal world of London. A sergeant-at-law, he would have been appointed to the next vacancy on the Bench had he not died in 1692. Rowe was not quite eighteen

³Theophilus Cibber, The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland (London, 1753), III, 272.

years old at the time, but his father lived long enough to see his son admitted to the Middle Temple just the year before.⁴

John Rowe had been eager for his son to follow in his footsteps and had planned his education to that end. Rowe started his schooling in a private grammar-school in Highgate, continued it at Westminster, where he was elected a King's Scholar at the age of fourteen, and went straight to the Middle Temple, by-passing both universities. George Sewell, "in a letter to a friend" written after Rowe's death, expresses perplexity concerning "by what Accident it happened that those Studies he so much delighted in, were not continued to a University Education; but it is most likely that under the gainful Study of the Law was his Father's best Prospect."⁵

Young Nicholas could easily have succeeded at the Temple for several reasons. In the first place his father's friends were interested in him, particularly Sir George Treby, Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas. More important, Rowe was an intelligent young man and an apt pupil. Cibber admired Rowe's intellectual abilities, perhaps to the extreme, since he claims that Rowe was "capable of any part of knowledge." As evidence, Cibber points out that Rowe was skillful in Latin and Greek (even composing verses in these languages) and "made a tolerable proficiency in the Hebrew."⁶

⁴Sutherland, pp. 2-3.

⁵George Sewell, in Miscellaneous Works of Nicholas Rowe, 3rd ed. (London: W. Feales, 1733), p. v.

⁶Cibber, p. 273.

According to Welwood, Rowe did not like the law, finding it "dry and tasteless to his palate,"⁷ but Cibber claims that he threw himself into his study, not being "content to know it, as a collection of statutes, or customs only, but as a system founded upon right reason, and calculated for the good of mankind." Regardless of his interpretation of Rowe's approach to law, Cibber acknowledges that the "charms in Euripedes, Sophocles, and Aeschilus" lured Rowe from the "records of antiquity . . . and he began to think with contempt of all other excellences, when put in the ballance with the enchantments of poetry and genius."⁸ Welwood poetically observes that "the Muses had stolen [Rowe's] heart from his Infancy."⁹

Nevertheless, Rowe continued his legal career and was admitted to the bar in 1696. At the same time he wrote verses and circulated them among his friends, a customary procedure at that time. By 1700 he was more actively engaged in writing, and it was in that year that his first play, The Ambitious Stepmother, was produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields. He did not immediately forsake his work at the bar, however, because new obligations--a wife and son--made it necessary to be practical. Congreve indicates that Rowe was still practicing law as late as 1701, and Stephen Hales says that Rowe "kept his chambers

⁷James Welwood, "A Character of Mr. Rowe," Miscellaneous Works of Nicholas Rowe, p. xii.

⁸Cibber, pp. 273-4.

⁹Welwood, p. xii.

[while] a Play or two of his came upon the Stage."¹⁰ George Sewell makes a similar observation: "while he still kept his Chambers, he had a Play or two come upon the Stage with great Success."¹¹

Ultimately, however, Rowe did forsake the bar in favor of a literary career. He continued to write plays and to engage in other literary ventures, primarily editing Shakespeare and translating Lucan. During this period he also constantly sought public office but met only with disappointment until finally, in 1709, he was appointed secretary to the Duke of Queensberry, whom he served until the Duke's death in 1711.¹²

From 1700 to 1718 Rowe wrote six tragedies and one comedy, edited one edition of Shakespeare's works, translated Lucan's Pharsalia, and wrote several shorter works. Among the lesser works is his translation of The Golden Verses of Pythagoras, published in 1707. That same year he wrote a poem, On the Late Glorious Successes of Her Majesty's Arms. The following year he "prefixed some account of Boileau's writings and of this translation" to a translation of Boileau's Lutrin by John Ozell. He also published An Original Chapter of the Manner of Living with Great Men, after the Manner of de la Bruyère. In 1712 he collaborated with Cobb, Diaper, and Sewell on Callipaedia, or the Art of Getting Beautiful Children. From 1709 to 1711, while in the service of the Duke of Queensberry,

¹⁰Hales, cited in Sutherland, p. 4.

¹¹Sewell, p. v.

¹²Sutherland, pp. 9-10.

he wrote only "vers de société, of varying merit but all helping to establish his position as a wit."¹³

When George I came to the throne in 1714, he made Rowe poet laureate, an honor Rowe held until his untimely death in 1719 (he was 45), albeit his tenure was "unmarked by any circumstances of great interest, literary or political."¹⁴ Perhaps one reason for Rowe's failure to achieve renown as poet laureate can be found in the times. For instance, George I could scarcely be considered "an heroic figure"; furthermore, there were no wars to celebrate, either local or international, after the rebellion of 1715 subsided, a rebellion which Rowe rather casually mentioned in his first ode. Another reason for Rowe's unspectacular performance is that he was, essentially, "a dramatic poet; he needed the larger canvas provided by five acts."¹⁵

Although Rowe had his share of detractors, most of his contemporaries spoke highly of his literary ability; for instance, Pope ranks him with Shakespeare in his ability "to draw the tender tear."¹⁶ Even the caustic Gildon agrees he has "excell'd all his contemporaries in correctness of Language."¹⁷

¹³Sutherland, pp. 9-10.

¹⁴Walter Hamilton, The Poets Laureate of England (1879; rpt. Detroit: Book Tower, 1968), p. 135.

¹⁵Kenneth Hopkins, Poets Laureate (New York: Library Publishers, 1955), p. 59.

¹⁶Hamilton, p. 137.

¹⁷Staring B. Wells, editor, A Comparison Between the Two Stages (1702; rpt. London: Princeton University Press, 1942), pp. 97-98.

Theophilus Cibber is lavish in his praise of Rowe, calling him "an excellent poet" and saying that "his cadence is the sweetest in the world, his sentiments chaste, and his language elegant."¹⁸

Not only was Rowe respected in literary circles, but he also had a large public following. Rowe's name alone on a new publication increased its sales appeal. On at least two occasions publishers tried to capitalize on Rowe's popularity. The first incident occurred in 1708 when he wrote the preface to Ozell's translation of Boileau's Lutrin; the publisher advertised the book in such a way as to imply that Rowe, not Ozell, was the translator. The second involved the 1712 translation of Callipaedia. Although Rowe translated only the first book with the rest being done by Cobb, Diaper, and Sewell, "the translation generally passed for Rowe's and the publisher took some pains to deceive the public on this point."¹⁹

Although Rowe's drama tends toward soberness with little or no levity, and even though his one attempt at comedy was a failure, he was not a somber person. Rather he was witty, vivacious, and charming. A contemporary describes him: "He had a natural Sweetness and Affability, that it was impossible not to be obliged by something in the tone of his Voice so soft and winning, that every Body us'd to be sorry when he left off speaking. He was of an open communicative Temper, and discours'd very freely; not lavish of Speech, but exceeding generous."²⁰ Welwood expresses admiration, saying, "His

¹⁸Cibber, pp. 272, 275.

¹⁹Sutherland, p. 9.

²⁰Sutherland, p. 5.

Conversation was Pleasant, Witty, and Learn'd, without the least Tincture of Affectation or Pedantry; and his inimitable Manner of Diverting and Enlivening the Company, made it impossible for any one to be out of Humour when he was in it,"²¹ and Pope finds occasion to comment on his "vivacity and gaiety." He had a generous and thoughtful spirit which made him loyal to his friends, among whom were such men as Pope, Addison, Steele, and Swift, as well as other literary figures less well known. Sutherland thus concludes that Rowe had "most of the qualities that make a man loved."²²

Not only had he an endearing personality and keen mind, but he was also endowed with physical beauty and natural grace. "Take this Description of his Person," writes Welwood. "It was graceful and well made, his Face regular and of a Manly Beauty. As his Soul was well lodged, so its Rational and Animal Faculties excelled in a high Degree."²³ Hales records that he "made as handsome a figure in the world as a good man and a good poet could do."²⁴

The personable, sociable Rowe enjoyed a cup of wine in the company of friends, sometimes "till the third watchman's toll." Dennis describes him as "a Gentleman who lov'd to lie in Bed all Day for his Ease, and sit up all night for his Pleasure." On one occasion Swift noted that after dinner he accompanied Rowe and several others to a tavern where they drank wine "Till twelve."²⁵

²¹Welwood, p. xvi. ²²Sutherland, p. 5. ²³Welwood, p. xv.

²⁴Hales, cited in Sutherland, p. 5. ²⁵Sutherland, p. 10.

But Rowe was more than merely convivial; he was also a serious student of divinity and ecclesiastical history and "a sincere member of the established church." He firmly adhered to his religious beliefs and openly defended them, and while he "pitied . . . those who dissented from it," he neither condemned them nor persecuted them for it. He found the thought of persecuting a man for his religious beliefs abhorrent. His interest in religion and history revealed itself in his plays, for he often chose religious and historical themes. Welwood observed "that to raise the highest Ideas of Virtue, he has with great Art (especially in the Fair Penitent) made Use of those Sacred Expressions and Metaphors, in his Tragedies which taste most of the Sublime."²⁶

Rowe enjoyed moderate to good success with his drama, but he did not become wealthy as a result of his literary efforts. It is for this reason that he constantly longed for public office, always seeking a post. In 1706 (after four plays, including the defunct Biter, had been produced), his wife died, and he found it necessary to sell part of his Devonshire estate in order to pay his debts. In a letter to Lord Halifax he almost begs for an office: "I wish nothing with more pleasure than to be taken in among the least of those that yr. lds'p honours with your favour and protection, and entirely to depend upon and owe everything in this world to so good a man as my Lord Hallifax."²⁷ Finally in 1709 he became secretary, not

²⁶Welwood, pp. xiv-xvi.

²⁷Sutherland, p. 7.

to Lord Halifax, but to the Duke of Queensberry, and served in that office until 1711, when the duke died.

Rowe's success as a dramatist was uneven. His first play, The Ambitious Stepmother, was universally applauded, according to Theophilus Cibber. Sutherland says it was "tolerably successful" and quotes a contemporary critic who thought Rowe at least showed promise: "I believe he will be able to show us Wonders in time."²⁸ His second play, Tamerlane, was the one he valued most highly himself.²⁹ For a time it was performed annually on November 4 and 5 in commemoration of the Gunpowder Plot and the landing of William of Orange. His third play, The Fair Penitent, although ultimately popular, was "a comparative failure on its first performance."³⁰ But it quickly recovered and became a perennial favorite with eighteenth-century theater goers. Along with Tamerlane and Jane Shore, The Fair Penitent "attained more frequent production than those of any other dramatist of the Restoration and early eighteenth century. Eight hundred twenty-two performances are recorded between 1702 and 1776" for these three tragedies.³¹

²⁸Sutherland, p. 4.

²⁹Cibber, p. 275, and Samuel Johnson, Lives of the English Poets, ed. George Birkbeck Hill (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1967), II, 67.

³⁰Sutherland, p. 6.

³¹Robert Gale Noyes, The Neglected Muse (Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University Press, 1958), p. 83. Between 1702 and 1776 Tamerlane was performed 282 times, Jane Shore 279 times, and The Fair Penitent 261 times.

It is ironic that a man of Rowe's wit and affability would suffer his only true failure on the stage in his one effort at comedy, but such is the case. The Biter, his fourth play and his only attempt at farce, was a "notorious failure."³² Apparently he was the only member of the audience who laughed. Dr. Johnson describes the scene: "Rowe is said to have sat in the house laughing with great vehemence, whenever he had in his own opinion produced a jest. But finding that he and the publick had no sympathy of mirth he tried at lighter scenes no more."³³

Rowe salvaged his reputation somewhat with the production of Ulysses, which ran at the Haymarket from November 22, 1705, to December 1, "and must therefore be regarded as a fairly successful play."³⁴ His next play, The Royal Convert (1707), enjoyed a run of six nights at the Haymarket, but the play is considered worthy of very little attention by critics. Theophilus Cibber thought so little of it that he dismissed it with a single statement in his Lives.³⁵ Nor has the passing of time done very much to improve its stature, for Sutherland also devotes but little space to it.³⁶

After a seven years' absence from the stage, Rowe made a triumphant comeback with his highly regarded production of Jane Shore. This, his most successful play, was preceded by an intensive advertising campaign conducted in part by Rowe himself, for he published The History of Jane Shore so

³²Sutherland, p. 6. ³³Johnson, p. 69. ³⁴Sutherland, p. 7.

³⁵Cibber, p. 267. ³⁶Sutherland, p. 32.

that patrons could become cognizant of the events of her life prior to opening night. In addition, the players cried it throughout the town, and the producers advertised it in the local press. So well accepted was the play that it provoked a reprint of all Rowe's plays, except The Biter, and Edmund Curll published a pirated edition of Rowe's poems. He also hired "the facile Gildon to attack Rowe in print, and the upshot of this venture was A New Rehearsal, or Bays the Younger, in which, by way of a tavern dialogue, Rowe's plays were torn to pieces one after the other."³⁷

Rowe got the idea for his last play, Lady Jane Gray (1715), from a friend who died before completing his drama; but as Rowe carefully explains in his Prologue, the play is wholly his.

Rowe's low-water mark occurred in 1704, when he attempted to write farce (The Biter), and his high moment of achievement was Jane Shore (1714), but his claim to fame resides more in his work as editor and translator than as dramatist and poet. During the several years when no new play of his was being produced on stage, Rowe was not idle. He was busy editing Shakespeare's works and translating Lucan's Pharsalia. His edition of Shakespeare was published in 1709, his Lucan posthumously in 1719. It is for these two achievements, more than for his plays and poetry, that he continues to be remembered.

When Rowe died in 1718, he received tribute both public and private. One friend said of him, "All good and learned

³⁷Sutherland, p. 11.

Men loved him. . . . The Openness of a Gentleman, the un-
 studied Eloquence of a Scholar, and the perfect Freedom of
 an Englishman, attended him in all his Actions."³⁸ The news-
 papers reacted variously to his illness and death. While
The Whitehall Evening Post treated the news rather casually,
 saying simply that "on the same day died Nicholas Rowe, Poet-
 Laureat to his Majesty, and surveyor of the landwaiters,"
The Weekly Pocket paid more heed to the occasion, making this
 editorial comment following the announcement of his death:
 "He was a Poet of the first rank; he had a strong masculine
 fancy, and an uncommon genius for tragedy."³⁹ In December of
 1718 a volume of poems "To the Memory of Mr. Rowe," dedicated
 to Congreve and edited by Buckingham, was published. Con-
 tributors included Buckingham, Nicholas Amhurst, Mrs. Cent-
 livre, and Thomas Newcomb.

Rowe was buried in Westminster Abbey near Chaucer with
 an epitaph by Pope engraved on his tomb. Cibber, perhaps
 overrating Rowe, maintains that the flattering epitaph has
 "not one word . . . which is hyperbolic, or more than he
 deserves."⁴⁰

Thy reliques, Rowe! to this sad shrine we trust,
 And near thy Shakespeare place thy honour'd bust,
 Oh next him skill'd, to draw the tender tear,
 For never heart felt passion more sincere:
 To nobler sentiment to fire the brave.

³⁸Sutherland, p. 15. ³⁹Sutherland, p. 12.

⁴⁰Cibber, p. 282.

For never Briton more disdain'd a slave!
 Peace to thy gentle shade, and endless rest,
 Blest in thy genius, in thy love too blest!
 And blest, that timely from our scene remov'd
 Thy soul enjoys the liberty it lov'd.

To thee, so mourn'd in death, so lov'd in life!
 The childless parent and the widow'd wife
 With tears inscribes this monumental stone,
 That holds their ashes and expects her own.

Although Rowe cannot be considered a major poet, he had a great spirit. He was, indeed, "blest" in his love, for he had many friends, even though Pope was, perhaps, being generous when he said Rowe was "Blest in thy genius." Nevertheless, his evenness of temper, devotion to the Church, and scholarly interests combined to serve him well both in his personal relationships and in his drama. His interest in history and in exotic lands led him initially to seek settings and plots far from England's shores. It was not until his sixth play that he turned his attention to English history; but once at home, he stayed there, for his last three plays are set in England.

The first of these, The Royal Convert, has little literary merit and less of English history. Set in Saxon England, it concerns itself with the traditional love and honour themes of heroic drama. A. T. Bartholomew frankly calls the play "very dull,"⁴¹ but Sutherland rationalizes that its lack of success was due to its timing. By 1708, he reasons, the audience "was

⁴¹A. T. Bartholomew, "The Restoration Drama," The Cambridge History of English Literature (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932), VIII, 222.

expecting more than heroic bluster and a hero who is mainly concerned with weighing the outworn claims of love and honour."⁴²

Rowe may have misread his audience's tastes with regard to love and honour themes, but he read rightly their readiness for godliness on the stage, for, as he sagely observes in the epilogue, "Some good souls there are/Would gladly be instructed anywhere."⁴³

The Royal Convert is set in Kent, about twenty years after the first invasion of Britain by the Saxons. The period is one for which no definitive history is available, although "the legend of Vortigern and Hengist, fixed down to the years following 447 or 449 A. D., appears in every history of England." Sir Charles Oman, English historian, explains the dilemma:

From the landing of Julius Caesar down to the year 410 the history of Britain can be traced with a fair amount of continuity, though it is full of dark corners. But for more than a hundred and fifty years after the obscure revolution that followed the Edict of Honorius which bade the British Communities "defend themselves," there is a sheer break in the sequence of the narrative. We know what was the condition of the island in 410, and we know what was its condition in the end of the sixth century. But of the stages of the transformation, by which the Roman provincial Britain of Honorius became the Anglo-Saxon Britain of Aithelbert and Aetherfrith, we have little certain knowledge . . . six generations pass by in which we have but the scantiest glimpse of what was going on in the island.⁴⁴

⁴²Sutherland, p. 32.

⁴³Nicholas Rowe, The Royal Convert in The Dramatick Works of Nicholas Rowe, Esq.; Volume the Third (London: W. Peales, 1733).

⁴⁴Charles Oman, England Before the Norman Conquest (New York: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1923), I, 186.

The chronicles which purportedly recount the period were all written more than a hundred years after the fact. Rowe, of course, had access to the chronicles, imperfect though they may be. However, his drama fails almost completely to adhere to their story, and, therefore, can be considered historical only in the most casual sense. For this reason, The Royal Convert will not be treated with the two plays of Rowe which can be considered to be truly historical, The Tragedy of Jane Shore and The Tragedy of the Lady Jane Gray. It is the purpose of this paper to examine these two plays in order to ascertain their historical content, as opposed to their mythological⁴⁵ and fictional content.

⁴⁵Myth, as used in this paper, refers to events which have their origin in history but which themselves are not historical.

CHAPTER II

ROWE'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE LITERARY TRENDS OF HIS DAY

By the time Nicholas Rowe presented his first dramatic offering to early eighteenth-century playgoers, Jeremy Collier had published his scathing attack on the state of the stage. For nearly a quarter of a century the witty, brittle, sophisticated comedy of manners had held sway over the stage, with rakes, fallen women, unfaithful husbands and wives, and fops following in a more or less steady procession, presenting a view of life which Collier considered altogether immoral.

As early as 1668 Dryden, the Father of English literary criticism, had set forth his idea of what a play should be: "A just and lively Image of Humane Nature, representing its Passions and Humours, and the Changes of Fortune to which it is subject; for the Delight and Instruction of mankind."¹ Dramatists of the period seemed to agree, because their plays did, indeed, seem to present a "lively image of human nature" (who was livelier than Dorimant in The Man of Mode, with his

¹John Dryden, The Works of John Dryden, Prose, 1668-1691 (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), p. 15.

five love affairs--all in the space of five short acts!); they graphically "represent[ed] its passions," as in the scene between Loveless and Berenthia in The Relapse; they wove into their plots changes of fortune, as Aimwell's in The Beaux' Stratagem. The dramatists certainly delighted their audiences--and even in some subtle fashion instructed them. For instance, Wycherley's The Plain Dealer engages in social criticism which would not have gone unnoticed by its audiences, and Congreve's The Way of the World points out the dangers of flirting with folly and castigates the marriage of convenience.

But Collier, a clergyman, considered the offerings of the dramatists to be thoroughly profane and immoral. He believed the Puritans had done the correct thing when they had closed the theaters in 1642. Claiming that his complaint is reasonable and that he will prove it by showing the disrespect of the stage toward morality and religion, he cites his specific displeasures with the plays:

Their smuttiness of expression; their swearing, profaneness, and lewd application of Scripture; their abuse of the clergy; their making their top characters libertines, and giving them success in their debauchery.²

In other words, Collier believed the plays provided too much "delight" and not enough "instruction."

Collier's book produced a storm of controversy, with attacks and counter-attacks continuing for years. F. T. Woods has catalogued pamphlets, sermons, letters, and essays

²Jeremy Collier, A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage, 3rd ed. (London, 1698), p. 2.

which were inspired by Collier's work; the majority (forty-six) support his position, thirty-two oppose him, and five maintain neutrality.³ That Collier spoke to a responsive public is evident, for a moral revolution is apparent prior to Collier's attack. The controversy he provoked did not erupt in a vacuum; rather it emerged in an atmosphere friendly to such charges. Collier's attack was timely and in many ways deserved; and society, on the whole, seemed responsive to the new mood.⁴

Even though little outspoken criticism of the theater had taken place during the Restoration period, there had been an undercurrent of discontent. It had not been politically expedient, of course, to speak too noisily or obviously about the moral laxity of the theater. For after all, it had been "theater-haters" who had brought about the revolution which resulted in the death of the king and the closing of the theaters;⁵ also, both Charles II and James II had patronized the theater. Nevertheless, ripples of protest had been undulating throughout the community almost from the date of the reopening of the theaters. For example, John Evelyn in 1664-5 registered his complaint in a letter to Viscount Cornberry, wherein, after disassociating himself from Puritanism,

³F. T. Woods, "The Attack on the Stage in the XVIII Century," Notes and Queries, CLXXIII (Sept., 1937), 218-222.

⁴John Palmer, The Comedy of Manners (1913; rpt. New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1962), pp. 10-11.

⁵John Loftis, Comedy and Society from Congreve to Fielding (1959; rpt. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1966), p. 25.

he nevertheless expressed his belief that the plays have "become a licentious excess, and a vice, and need severe censors that should look as well to their morality, as to their lines and numbers." Burnet, the historian, saw the stage as a corrupting influence on the town, and numerous ministers railed against the stage in their weekly sermons and writings. Lesser known playwrights expressed their distaste also. For example, Sir Richard Blackmore in 1695 in the preface to his Prince Arthur attacked the stage with an argument similar to Collier's, contending that the stage should instruct the minds of men and cause them to lose their vices.⁶

William and Mary also contributed to the spirit of reformation. William was a dour man, not given to jest, and not a patron of the theater. Instead, he spent his time on the affairs of government. Mary followed in his train. Though she might admire a playwright like Congreve, still her attention was directed primarily to reform. William, concerned with profaneness, issued several edicts warning against that particular vice. One of these, dated January 21, 1691-2, was "a proclamation against vicious, debauched and profane persons" and commanded those in authority "to execute the laws against blasphemy, profane swearing and cursing, drunkenness, lewdness, prophanation of the Lord's Day, etc."⁷ Other proclamations

Joseph Wood Krutch, Comedy and Conscience after the Revolution (1924; rpt. New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), pp. 93-101.

⁷Cited in Krutch, p. 166.

followed in 1697-8 and 1699. The public supported the king, sometimes to a degree which became immoral in its very fanaticism. Societies for the Reformation of Manners sprang up, and self-appointed watchdogs of the public morals became spies and informers in their zeal to stamp out profaneness. Following the publication of Collier's book, informers appeared in the pit to take notes on what was said on stage in order to bring about prosecution. When it became apparent in Anne's reign that the informers were pursuing their task more out of greed (for they were paid) than out of conscience, the practice was ordered stopped.⁸ In A Comparison between the Two Stages Ramble, Sullen, and Critick discuss the problem:

Sull. But did you hear the News?

Ramb. What News?

Sull. The Trial between the Play-Houses and Informers, for Prophane, Immoral, Lewd, Scandalous, and I don't know how many sad things, utter'd on the Stage.

Cri. Who were the Persons that spoke 'em and what were the words?

Sull. Betterton, Bracegirdle, Ben Johnson, and others; but the words may not be repeated. Are you so cunning? For ought I know, Critick, you're a Spy; they are sly Rogues, they say, and lurk in all Companies for matter of Accusation, that a Man is not safe, tho' he be with the Minister of the Parish.

The conversation continues to point out the paradox that, while the actors and actresses could be arrested for speaking

⁸ John Genest, Some Account of the English Stage from the Restoration in 1660 to 1830 (London: H. E. Carrington, 1832), III, 124.

⁹ Staring B. Wells, editor, A Comparison between the Two Stages (1702; rpt. London: Princeton University Press, 1942), pp. 76-7.

profanity, the playwrights routinely escaped such treatment even though they had written the profanity.

There were other signs of support for the king's campaign to bring about a sense of morality and decency. One citizen was inspired to print the following advertisement in a London periodical during March, 1698:

An Humble and Hearty Thanksgiving to Almighty God For His great mercy to this Nation, in that he hath put it into the Heart of his servant William, to send forth such a Proclamation wherein his utter Dislike, and Hatred is shewed against all manner of Wickedness: At the reading of which, there was not only a rejoicing in some, that had mourned for the vile abominations of the People; but also a hearty Prayer, that the Lord would reward the King a Thousand fold, for the great Uprightness of his Heart therein.¹⁰

When Anne became queen in 1702, upon William's death, she continued the reforms begun by William. She, too, issued proclamations "for the encouragement of piety and virtue, and for the preventing and punishing of vice, profaneness, and immorality."¹¹

History has tended to regard the Restoration period as being highly immoral, a view supported by the theory that drama reflects the spirit of the times. The social historian G. M. Trevelyan offers an explanation for the debauchery of the age, as practiced primarily by the Court. He points out that England, in general, was wholesome, but the younger generation of aristocrats had been deeply affected by

¹⁰Sister Rose Anthony, S. C., The Jeremy Collier Stage Controversy, 1698-1726 (1937; rpt. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1966), p. 18.

¹¹Krutch, p. 167.

the political events surrounding the execution of Charles I and the advent of the Commonwealth. Their education had been interrupted, their families broken up, their property confiscated; and they themselves had been exiled. In addition to being suddenly thrust into poverty, they keenly felt the injustice of what was happening to them. The worst part was that they were forced into these indignities by the very ones who professed allegiance to the teachings of Christ, and who ought, therefore, to have been able to practice a little charity. As a consequence of this paradox, Trevelyan reasons, the young aristocracy became hardened against the practice of a Christian way of life. They were inclined to scoff at morality and to take lightly the necessity of practicing virtue of any kind. Since the reopened theaters existed primarily for the benefit of the Court, the stage rather naturally reflected these tastes.¹²

Other theories regarding the immorality of the period seem equally reasonable. One of the more popularly held opinions is that the indecency of the comedy of manners began as a backlash against the Puritans, who, in a misguided sense of purity, had closed the theaters following their victory over Charles I in 1642. The Puritans were able to make drama illegal, but they were not able to make it unattractive. Even burning the buildings which housed the theaters did not

¹²G. M. Trevelyan, English Social History (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1942), pp. 260-61.

delay the rescheduling of performances following the restoration of Charles II in 1660. J. H. Wilson admits to the licentiousness of the period and to the reaction against Puritan hypocrisy but argues that the immorality of the times was not greater than that of any other period. The difference was that the king was so openly scandalous that the people, following his example, simply became not more immoral, but more brazen.¹³ P. F. Vernon offers the interesting theory that what appears to be immorality actually is the natural result of an unnatural social practice, that of the marriage of convenience. As political power became more nearly synonymous with the ownership of land and less dependent on royal favor, the practice of treating marriage like a complex business arrangement rather than a simple love match became widespread. The result was to reduce the sacredness of marriage and to increase cynicism. "And so," reasons Vernon, "many of those comedies which take delight in a triumphant cuckolding are making an indirect comment on an important social theme."¹⁴

Whether the times and the drama were more or less immoral than previous ages simply is not the issue. The fact is that Jeremy Collier viewed the drama as being highly immoral, and he said so--verbosely and for publication.

¹³John Harold Wilson, A Preface to Restoration Drama (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), p. 6.

¹⁴P. F. Vernon, "Marriage of Convenience and the Moral Code of Restoration Comedy," Essays in Criticism, XII (1962), pp. 373-74

Furthermore, others shared his views, and the public heeded his call for a moral revolution within the theater. Later Rowe was to acknowledge the tempering effect of the reformers, led by Collier, on the stage. In his Epilogue to *Tamerlane*, he said:

Time was, when busy Faces were a jest,
When Wit and Pleasure were in most request;
When chearful Theatres with Crouds were grac'd;
But those good days of poetry are past:
Now sour Reformers in an empty Pit,
With Table-Books, as at a Lecture sit,
To take Notes, and give Evidence 'gainst Wit.¹⁵

Actually change had already slipped in prior to Collier's harangue. Colley Cibber's *Love's Last Shift*, produced in 1696, two years before *A Short View*, has traditionally been regarded as the play which marks the beginning of change toward moralizing on the stage. His theme was new--that even the most hopeless rake could be redeemed by virtue. Cibber's fellow playwrights scoffed at his moralizing, notably Vanbrugh, who quickly retorted with *The Relapse*. But the public responded to Cibber's moralizing, and a new era was launched.

Into this mood stepped Nicholas Rowe in 1700 with his first play. Although Rowe was not destined to write comedy, the spirit of the times created an audience receptive to his moralistic though not didactic tragedies, for the audience in 1700 was different from the audience of 1660. Two contemporaries describe the changes. John Dennis rather plaintively

¹⁵Nicholas Rowe, *Tamerlane*, collected in *The Dramatic Works of Nicholas Rowe, Esq.; Volume the Second* (London: W. Feales, 1733).

points out the "three sorts of People now in our Audiences, who have had no education at all; and who were unheard of in the reign of King Charles the Second." He then lists the "sorts":

A great many younger Brothers, Gentlemen born, who have been kept at home, by reason of the pressure of Taxes. Several People, who made their Fortunes in the late War; and who from a state of obscurity, and perhaps of misery, have risen to a condition of distinction and plenty. . . . But a 3d sort of People, who may be said to have had no education at all in relation to us and our Plays, is that considerable number of Foreigners, which within these last twenty years have been introduc'd among us.¹⁶

George Farquhar describes a "pit full of Covent-Garden gentlemen, a gallery full of cits, a hundred ladies of court-education, and about two hundred footmen of nice morality."¹⁷ In a word, the audience was becoming less courtly and more middle-class both in composition and in taste.

As the merchant class began to prosper during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, merchants began to gain social status. The artificial barriers between the classes began to yield as individuals in each class moved into a realm traditionally associated with the other. For instance, many younger sons of aristocratic families entered the trades; on the other hand, many wealthy merchants became land holders. In addition, intermarriage between the classes

¹⁶John Dennis, "A Large Account of the Taste in Poetry, and the Causes of the Degeneracy of It," in Edward Niles Hooker, editor, Critical Works of John Dennis (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1939), I, 293.

¹⁷George Farquhar, cited in Loftis, p. 16.

was not uncommon. As the middle-class prospered, the theater audiences began to include more and more merchants and tradesmen, and the playwrights began to take notice. Many early eighteenth-century comedies mock the attempts of merchants to gain social status. Conversely, not a small number of dramatists gradually adapted themselves to the middle-class moral code, as the deliciously obscene comedy of manners drifted from its star position.¹⁸

A conservative Whig and a strict Anglican, Nicholas Rowe found no difficulty in responding to the new demands for decency on the stage. Sutherland notes that "excepting some innocent naughtiness, [he] was quite willing to comply with the altering taste of his generation,"¹⁹ and Welwood piously observes that Rowe was never guilty of "nibbling at Scripture, or depreciating Things in themselves Sacred," and that "there runs through all his Tragedies a strong vein of Religion and Virtue." He points out the link between Rowe's private life and his public writings:

His muse was so religiously chaste that I do not remember one word in any of his plays or writings, that might admit of a double meaning in any point of decency, or morals. There is nothing to be found in them, to flatter a depraved populace, or humour a fashionable folly.

Mr. Rowe's plays were written from the heart. He practiced the virtue he admired, and he never,

¹⁸Loftis, pp. 1-18.

¹⁹James R. Sutherland, "The Life of Nicholas Rowe," Three Plays by Nicholas Rowe (London, 1929), p. 20.

in his gayest moments, suffered himself to talk loosely or lightly upon religious or moral subjects; or to turn any thing sacred, or which good men revered as such, into ridicule.²⁰

By 1701 Rowe was ready openly to bring even religion to the stage, and he did so with The Royal Convert, then repeated the theme in The Tragedy of Lady Jane Gray in 1715. He half apologizes for the religious element in The Royal Convert, however, in the Epilogue:

To some, I know, it may appear but odly,
That this Place, of all others, should turn godly:
But what of that? Since some good Souls there are,
Would gladly be instructed anywhere.²¹

The play was not a success, but its failure should be attributed more to its outdated style of heroic drama than to its religious theme. Rowe, aware of the tastes of his audience, confidently expected his presentation of religion in the theater to be accepted.²²

Rowe was not unaware of his debt to earlier playwrights, notably Otway, whom he consciously imitated. In his Prologue to The Ambitious Stepmother, his first play, he pays homage to "moving Otway."²³ Critick remarks that "He seems ambitious

²⁰James Welwood, "A Character of Mr. Rowe," Miscellaneous Works of Nicholas Rowe, 3rd ed. (London: W. Feales, 1733), p. xiv.

²¹Nicholas Rowe, The Royal Convert, collected in British Drama, John Bell, editor (London, n.d.), XXV, 79.

²²Sutherland, p. 32.

²³Nicholas Rowe, The Ambitious Stepmother, collected in The Dramatic Works, p. vii.

of following Otway in his Passion; but, alas! how far off?"²⁴ Other contemporaries are a little kinder in their estimation of Rowe's success in imitation of Otway. Thomas Wilkes says that "Otway and Rowe, in their Dramatic Exhibitions, spoke more immediately to the heart than any of their successors."²⁵ Pope goes even further in his praise of Rowe's ability "to draw the tender tear," ranking him with Shakespeare.²⁶ Rowe imitated Otway by attempting "to move his audiences to pity and terror,"²⁷ and even though he was "equipped with a smaller genius, he touched people of tenderness and humanity genuinely and sometimes deeply, for two generations."²⁸

Otway's drama was more pathetic than heroic, and it was this aspect of his writing which appealed to Rowe. In the Epistle Dedicatory of The Ambitious Stepmother, Rowe explained that

The audience should be struck with Terror in several parts of the Play, but always conclude and go away with Pity; a sort of Regret proceeding from Good-nature, which, tho' an uneasiness, is not always disagreeable to the Person who feels it. It was this

²⁴Wells, p. 97.

²⁵Cited in Robert Gale Noyes, The Neglected Muse (Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University Press, 1958), p. 84.

²⁶Cited in Theophilus Cibber, The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland (London, 1753), III, 282.

²⁷A. T. Bartholomew, "The Restoration Drama, III," The Cambridge History of English Literature (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932), VIII, 223.

²⁸Alfred Jackson, "Rowe's Historical Tragedies," Anglia, LTV (1920) 56

Passion that the famous Mr. Otway succeeded so well in touching, and must and will at all times affect People, who have any Tenderness or Humanity.²⁹

Even though Rowe strove for the sense of the pathetic, there are shades of the heroic in his first tragedies. The Ambitious Stepmother, observes Sutherland, employs "the heroic blasphemy, the apostrophe, the habit of flattering self-description, the air of conscious worth in the heroes, the lengthy simile, the oaths, the conflict between love and honour." Tamerlane, his second drama, continues in the same style.³⁰ However, even though both plays depend on the heroic theme, both also are steeped in sentiment, for, of course, it was Rowe's intent that his audience should be filled with pity rather than with awe. In the prologue to The Ambitious Stepmother he openly confesses to the audience that this is his intent:

If Dying Lovers yet deserve a Tear,
If a sad Story of a Maid's Despair,
Yet move Compassion in the pitying Fair;
This Day the Poet does his Art employ,
The soft Accesses of your Souls to try.³¹

It was not until Rowe wrote The Fair Penitent in 1703 that he was able to achieve his goal of writing pathetic tragedy. For this play he deliberately chose a domestic rather than a

²⁹Rowe, The Ambitious Stepmother, p. v.

³⁰Sutherland, pp. 22-23.

³¹Rowe, The Ambitious Stepmother, p. vii.

noble set of characters in order that his largely middle-class audience could more easily identify with what was happening on stage and thus be more likely to experience the pity which Rowe so persistently sought to arouse:

Long has the Fate of Kings and Empires been
 The common Bus'ness of the Tragick Scene,

 Stories like these with Wonder we may hear;
 But far remote, and in a higher Sphere,
 We ne'er can pity what we ne'er can share.

 Therefore an humbler Theme our Author chose,
 A melancholy Tale of private Woes;
 No Princes here lost Royalty bemoan,
 But you shall meet with Sorrows like your own.³²

In The Fair Penitent Rowe strove to make tragedy "an experience communicated to an audience: not something which happens, but the human reaction to something which happens, as shared by audience and protagonist."³³

Like other playwrights of the period, Rowe favored exotic settings, for he set four of his seven tragedies in foreign lands: The Ambitious Stepmother in Persepolis in the Orient, Tamerlane in Persia, The Fair Penitent in Italy, and Ulysses in Greece. For the other three plays he came home to England (The Royal Convert, Jane Shore, and Lady Jane Gray). The plots and characters of all seven of Rowe's tragedies are inspired by history, although the historical evidence in The Fair Penitent and The Royal Convert is quite weak. Four of the plays were inspired by the English chronicles.

³²Nicholas Rowe, The Fair Penitent, collected in The Dramatic Works, p. vii.

³³Frank J. Kearful, "The Nature of Tragedy in Rowe's The Fair Penitent," Papers on Language and Literature, II (1966), 352.

The first of these is Tamerlane, which, although set in Persia, was inspired by the landing of William of Orange in England. Though Charles II had come to the throne of England as a Protestant, he secretly became Catholic in 1669. His brother James, heir to the throne, was publicly Catholic, which caused many Englishmen, notably the Whigs, considerable unrest. They much preferred to have Mary, James's elder daughter, and her husband, William of Orange, both protestants, to assume the throne. Nevertheless, James II became king when in 1685 Charles died. He was able to make himself so completely unpopular with the people that three years later he found himself deposed when Mary and William were invited to come to the throne; they accepted the invitation and became the first queen and king to be elected to the monarchy in England. It was a day of triumph for parliamentary government because the new monarchs ruled by the will of the people rather than by the will of God or by divine right. Naturally the occasion lent itself well to the pen of a Whig dramatist who favored historical themes. But though the inspiration for Tamerlane sprang from an event in English "history" (it had happened, after all, just thirteen years before), Rowe removed the scene from England to Persia and renamed the chief characters Tamerlane (William III) and Bajazet (Louis XIV, with whom William had been engaging in a more or less constant feud). More for its strong political overtones than for its dramatic quality the play was successful; moreover, for political reasons the play was regularly revived throughout

the century on the anniversary of William's landing in England. It was a topical play with merely topical appeal; Johnson said of it that "occasional poetry must often content itself with occasional praise."³⁴

The historical background for The Royal Convert is even more remote. Set in Saxon England, almost its only claim to history is in the character of Hengist and in its setting. The time is approximately twenty years after the first invasion of Britain by the Saxons. The play is a variation of the love and honor theme; in this case the honor is religious honor. Rowe pits the pagan Saxons against the Christian English in the persons of Aribert, brother of the Saxon King Hengist, and Ethelinda, a Christian maiden; neither character is historical. Johnson describes the play as a "fable [which] is drawn from an obscure and barbarous age to which fictions are most easily and properly adapted." He is almost alone in praising the play, albeit his praise is faint: "The scene lies among our ancestors in our own country, and therefore very easily catches attention."³⁵ Theophilus Cibber is a friendly biographer, full of praise for Rowe, even going so far as to blame actors or managers for the failure of a role to make its proper impact (Altamont in The Fair Penitent, for instance); but even he can find nothing good to say about The Royal Convert. He devotes one sentence to it: "The next play Mr. Rowe brought upon the stage, was his Royal Convert,

³⁴Samuel Johnson, Lives of the English Poets, George Birkbeck Hill, editor (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1967), II, 67.

³⁵Johnson, Lives of the English Poets, II, 67.

acted at the queen's Theatre, in the Haymarket, and dedicated to the earl of Hallifax."³⁶ Later criticism has not been any kinder. The Cambridge History calls it a "dull" play which deserves no "special comment."³⁷ Jackson says it "has no claim to greatness."³⁸ Sutherland explains that the play was not popular because by 1708 the audience "was expecting more than heroic bluster and a hero who is mainly concerned with weighing the outworn claims of love and honor."³⁹ Both Ethelinda, the Christian maiden, and Rodagune are admirable characters, but the two ladies were unable to carry the play, and it was only occasionally revived.

Rowe wrote two other historical plays drawn from events in English history: Jane Shore and Lady Jane Gray. Both are rich in historical characters and events, though Rowe readily fabricates whatever he needs in order to heighten his drama. Jane Shore became his masterpiece, but Lady Jane Gray faltered and died before the end of the nineteenth century.

Rowe's claim to continued recognition by scholars interested in the drama of the period rests not on the greatness of his plays but rather on his development of what he called the "she-tragedy." Rowe, of course, did not write the first domestic tragedy, but riding the crest of public interest in sentimental drama and cognizant of the more middle-class audience of the times, he took the idea of the domestic tragedy and reshaped it into his specialty. Rowe would have had to acknowledge

³⁶Cibber, pp. 276-7.

³⁷Bartholomew, p. 22.

³⁸Jackson, p. 309.

³⁹Sutherland, p. 32.

as forerunners such authors as Banks, Granville, and Mateux, who, in the latter part of the seventeenth century, wrote "pathetic tragedies which prepared the way for the 'she-tragedy' of the eighteenth century, as it was developed by [Rowe]."⁴⁰ The most important of these seventeenth century dramatists was John Banks, who began by writing heroic drama, then moved to writing pathetic plays. Some Restoration dramatists developed "pathetic and pitiful sentiments and scenes" in reaction to the psuedo-classicists of the period. Shakespearian drama had been almost entirely masculine; even those few roles which favored women had actually been portrayed by men, so that femininity on the stage was rare. But the love and honor plays of the Restoration theater demanded that dramatists create roles for women; however, women's progress in the theater

was hindered in the days of pure heroics by the presence of martial prowess from which--for few heroines were Amazons--she was banished. The advent of pathos, on the other hand, distinctly favored the heroine, who came more and more to usurp the prominent position, until towards the end of the century we reach the "she-tragedy," where the hero has almost completely vanished, and a woman figure dominates the entire action of the drama.

While it is true the she-tragedy began its evolution before Rowe's time, it took Rowe's touch to bring the form to its "final culmination."⁴¹ In introducing the she-tragedy to

⁴⁰Wilson, p. 118.

⁴¹Allardyce Nicoll, British Drama, 5th ed. (Toronto: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1962), pp. 148-50.

eighteenth-century audiences, Rowe was tacitly recognizing the change in the audience as it became more and more middle-class and less and less aristocratic. He frankly said that he sympathized with their sorrows and realized that they, too, suffered misfortune, just as the nobility did, and they deserved to have it, too, celebrated on the stage. The audience responded, for The Fair Penitent, his first she-tragedy, became one of his most popular plays. Although this was his first, he had given evidence of the advent of the she-tragedy in Tamerlane, which is primarily a political play, but which, in "the unhappy loves of Moneses and Arpasia, anticipates the 'she-tragedies' which were to follow."⁴² Eleven years later in 1714, Rowe presented his next she-tragedy, The Tragedy of Jane Shore, followed by the last in 1715, The Tragedy of the Lady Jane Gray.

In the history of English drama, Rowe forms a link between Otway and Lillo. He imitates the pathos of Otway while developing his own distinctive approach, the she-tragedy. At the same time, his she-tragedies anticipate the domestic themes of George Lillo.

⁴²Noyes, p. 85.

CHAPTER III

MYTH AND HISTORY IN

THE TRAGEDY OF JANE SHORE

In 1714, when he began his drama of the well-known Jane Shore, Nicholas Rowe was simply continuing a long tradition of literary interest in the fifteenth-century mistress of Edward IV. Although little is recorded about Jane in the chronicles and histories, she had long been a popular favorite with the balladeers, poets, and dramatists. Even before her death in 1532, when she was more than eighty years old, ballads, poems, and doggerel began to appear, celebrating her story. Almost universally writers had treated Jane sympathetically, but at the same time they held her up as an example of what their wives and sweethearts should not be. Although the details of her life with William Shore and especially with Edward IV vary from poem to play to ballad, almost in concert the poets praise her beauty and her spirit of selflessness and generosity.

In spite of the interest of the people in the saga of Jane Shore, as evidenced by both literary and popular treatments of her life in ballad and poem, the chroniclers give her scant attention. Only Thomas More renders an account of

her part in the affairs of state during the times of Edward IV and Richard III. Nevertheless, her story was apparently well known during Rowe's day, for, even though he saw fit to publish a pamphlet containing her biography prior to the opening of his Tragedy of Jane Shore, he also acknowledged her long-standing popularity. His prologue to the play states that hers is

A tale which told long since in homely wise,
Hath never failed of melting gentle Eyes:
Let no nice Sir despise our hapless Dame,
Because recording Ballads chant her name.¹

The only twentieth-century treatment of Jane's life is C. J. S. Thompson's The Witchery of Jane Shore. Thompson has pieced together her biography from various sources, both historical and traditional, drawing heavily on the ballads, as well as More's account, for information. Thompson's "biography" blends "the dry facts [he] gleaned . . . with some of the more interesting traditions concerning [Jane] which have been preserved in poems, ballads and tracts, that have come down to us from the sixteenth century."² Unfortunately, his work is not documented.

Thompson relates that Jane Shore, born when the fifteenth century was half spent, was a beautiful child with a sparkling

¹Nicholas Rowe, The Tragedy of Jane Shore, in British Dramatists from Dryden to Sheridan, George H. Nettleton and Arthur E. Case, eds. (Dallas: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969). Hereafter all quotations from the play will be from this edition and will be cited in the text.

²C. J. S. Thompson, The Witchery of Jane Shore (London, 1933), p. 11.

personality. Her yellow gold hair and voluptuous figure, as well as her gaiety, made her much sought after by men of varying ages as she grew into womanhood. In fact, on more than one occasion her father had reason to fear she would be kidnapped because of her beauty.³

Jane's father, Thomas Wainstead, was "a mercer of good figure and reputation in Cheapside London"⁴ who provided his fair daughter with a better than usual education by the standards of his day. Because of his fear that some ill would befall her as a result of her great beauty, he married Jane to William Shore when she was still but a girl. Shore was a goldsmith, rather dour and staid, and several years Jane's senior. Needless to say, the vivacious Jane found little joy in her marriage.

One of Jane's persistent suitors, both before and after her marriage, was Lord Hastings, confidant of (and, as some believed, procurer for) King Edward IV. Hastings became a regular visitor to the Shore household, at first as a patron of Shore, then more and more frequently as a guest in the home. Ultimately Shore, his jealousy aroused, banished Hastings, even though he well knew he was incurring the wrath of a very influential member of the Court.

Hastings took his wounded spirit home and brooded, searching for a way to retaliate against "a mere city merchant." At length he decided "to send a rival whom neither the husband's authority nor the wife's chastity should be able to

³Thompson, p. 35.

⁴Dictionary of National Biography, XVIII, 147.

resist." It was the king, of course, whom he had in mind. Bringing the king and Jane together would accomplish two things, both important to Hastings: It would free Jane "from the thralldom of her marriage" and bring about his revenge against her husband. He also nourished the hope that Edward would soon tire of Jane and that he could then win her for himself.⁵

Ever willing to vie for a pretty face, Edward readily agreed to seek out the Rose of London, as Jane was known. According to the story pieced together by Thompson, Edward disguised himself and, with Hastings as his only companion, made his way to Shore's shop, pretending to be a merchant interested in buying some plate. Edward entered the shop alone, made his selection, paid his money, and then contrived to be invited to tea with Jane and Shore. Jane's famed beauty immediately captured his heart. Later, when he met Hastings outside the shop to return to the palace, Edward instructed him to find a way to bring Jane to court.

Edward made elaborate plans for enticing Jane from her husband's home. He arranged to give a masque to which Jane and her husband were invited. William Shore begged off, but because Jane was so eager to attend, he allowed her to go in the company of a chaperone. At the masque (where all guests, including the king, were disguised) Jane and Edward danced prettily together. As Edward bowed and thanked her at the

⁵Thompson, pp. 55-80.

end of the dance, he slipped a note into Jane's hand. She quickly secreted it in her bosom. Later in her room when she read the missive, she discovered that it was none other than the king who was inviting her to Court.

The next day Jane went to the home of the lace-woman whom Edward had designated as go-between. She carried with her a note containing the one word--"coming"--which was the code word suggested by the king to signify that she acquiesced to his request. The lace-woman delivered the note to Lord Hastings, who completed the arrangements. That night, on pretext of going to her father, who, she said, had suddenly become ill, Jane hurried to Bird-in-hand Court, where a man dressed in crimson waited with two horses. Jane mounted one of the horses, and the two rode off toward Westminster.

Several hours after Jane had left, Shore began to fret because his wife had not returned. Upon inquiry he learned that his father-in-law had not been ill and that Jane had not gone there to visit him. Days of frantic searching followed; then Shore received word that Jane had been seen at Court in the king's company. He realized with sorrow that he could not hope to win his wife back, and "bowing to fate, he abandoned her to her royal lover."⁶

At Court Jane quickly became a favorite. She also became one of the most influential figures in the kingdom, though she never used her power for her own good. Instead,

⁶Thompson, pp. 79-80.

she regularly sought to intervene in behalf of those who had been abused by the state. Thompson explains "that she never employed her great interest with the king to hurt anyone, or to serve herself in any act of spleen or revenge. . . . Further, we learn that she was never known to accept bribes, or to sell her favours. . . . Her kindness and generosity were in marked contrast to the selfishness of the queen."⁷ More muses that "if the world was as grateful as it is revengeful, and as apt to remember good as ill turns, it would ever think of gentle Jane Shore," and perhaps she would not then have suffered the humiliation and indignities to which she was later submitted.⁸

For the day came when Edward died and Jane found herself an outcast, stripped of her possessions, forced to do public penance as a harlot, and bereft of all her "friends." She lived long, lonely years of mere existence after her disgrace, surviving on meager handouts and prostitution and dying a pauper. The date of her death is given variously, as early as 1527 or as late as 1532. Thompson favors the latter date, for he acknowledges that "we know not how or where the end came, nothing beyond the fact that she died about 1532, in the eighteenth year of the reign of Henry VIII. No stone marks the place where her body was laid, yet the name of gentle Jane Shore, immortalized by poets and dramatists, will

⁷Thompson, pp. 82-84.

⁸Thomas More, cited in Thompson, p. 82.

ever live in history as the best-loved mistress of a great and illustrious king." Thompson does not give a source for the date of Jane's death.

D. F. Rowan speculates that interest in Jane's life gave birth to not one, but two traditions, one literary and the other popular.¹⁰ The two traditions, he maintains, would account for the variations in the details of her story. For instance, Shore is known both as William Shore and as Matthew Shore. Rowan finds this confusion "curious," suggesting "that it helps to confirm his [belief] that there are two separate sources for the story."¹¹

The earliest literary treatment of Jane Shore appeared in 1563 in The Mirror for Magistrates. The poem "Shore's Wife" was written by Thomas Churchyard, who was a lad of twelve when Jane died. Thirty years later in 1593 Anthony Chute published his Beautie Dishonoured, obviously inspired by Churchyard's work. In fact, Churchyard "charged Chute with plagiarism and in self-defence reprinted his 'Shore's Wife' in 'Challenge' in 1593."¹² Rowan intimates that Churchyard should not have become so agitated over Chute's lachrymose effort. He believes that "the quality of the verse lends credence to the story that the author died in the year of its

⁹Thompson, p. 169.

¹⁰D. F. Rowan, "Shore's Wife," Studies in English Literature, VI (1966), p. 458.

¹¹Rowan, p. 449 f.n.

¹²Thompson, p. 190.

publication; whether by his own hand or as the result of a public stoning is not known."¹³ He then offers as evidence one of the opening stanzas:

Bleed pen in black tears, dumb yet pity moving
 The weeping elegies to the worthiest fair,
 Weep pen in warm blood to the world approving,
 How fair, how good, how dear, old age did way her,
 Bleed tears. Weep blood pen, sing, sigh on her hearse
 Her grateful obsequies in a funeral verse.

Both Churchyard's and Chute's poems concern themselves with Richard III more than with Jane. Her story is merely "a foil to set off the vicious tyranny of Richard." Jane is pitied as being "Fortune's toy, one betrayed by the giddy turns of the Wheel of Fortune."¹⁴ Both poems follow the Tudor myth, drawing heavily on More and the Tudor chronicles for historical perspective.

The third literary treatment of Jane Shore in verse follows a different theme. In 1597 Michael Drayton published his England's Heroicall Epistles. He composed two "verse epistles" concerning Jane. The first is a letter from Edward to Jane, "Edward the fourth to Shore's Wife"; the second is Jane's reply, "The Epistle of Shore's wife to King Edward the fourth." Drayton's interest is neither political nor historic; rather it is romantic. Typically Elizabethan, Drayton dwells on "the traditional arguments of the courtly love debate, the dazzlingly intricate conceits with which the war between the sexes should be waged."¹⁵

¹³Rowan, p. 459.

¹⁴Rowan, p. 460.

¹⁵Rowan. p. 460.

In the popular tradition, the balladeers shift attention from the tyranny of Richard to the infidelity of Jane. They do not treat her as sympathetically as do the poets and playwrights; instead "she is held up as an example of the wages of sin."¹⁶ The titles reveal their themes. For instance, one of the oldest ballads, which appeared in Percy's Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, bears the loquacious title, "The Woefull Lamentations of Mrs. Jane Shore, a Goldsmith's Wife of London, sometimes King Edward the Fourth's Concubine, who for her wanton Life came to a miserable End. Set forth for the Example of all wicked Livers to the tune of 'Live with me.'" The ballad is a warning, as well as a lament, that "maids and wives in time amend/For love and beauty will have end."¹⁷ A second seventeenth-century ballad continues the didactic theme. Its full title is "Woeful Lamentation, The Second Part of Jane Shore, wherein Her Husband Bewails Her Wantonness the Wrong of Marriage and the Fall of Pride." The Restoration Period yielded "A new Ballad of King Edward and Jane Shore To the tune of 'St. George for England and the Dragon.'" "

In 1600 was acted the first play which borrowed the story of Jane Shore. John Heywood called his play "The first and second parts of King Edward the fourth, containing his

¹⁶Rowan, p. 461.

¹⁷"The Woefull Lamentations of Jane Shore," in Thompson, p. 251.

merry pastime with the Tanner of Tamsworth as also his love to faire Mistress Shore, her first promotion, fall and misery and lastly the lamentable death of both her and her husband." Heywood's play differs in several respects from Rowe's, which was to follow more than a century later. Heywood dramatized Edward's wooing of Jane from her husband; Rowe dramatizes her fall. Heywood, contrary to all biographical accounts, establishes a romantic relationship between Jane and William Shore; Rowe dramatizes Shore's devotion to Jane but creates no domestic scenes. In Heywood's play, Jane calls her husband,

My joy, my hope, my comfort and my love,
My dear, dear husband, kindest Mathew Shore.

Later she avers that she ever will be his "honest loyal wife," saying,

The greatest Prince the Sun did ever see,¹⁸
Shall never make me prove untrue to Thee.

In all likelihood Jane had no romantic feelings for her husband. She was little more than a child when her father wed her to Shore, an older man, sober and sedate, who had little more than financial security and protection to offer his vivacious girl-bride.

The ballads dwell on this theme. Churchyard's Jane first blames her friends, then herself, for her predicament. She complains

Before my time my youth they did abuse;
For marriage apprentice was I bound;

¹⁸John Heywood, cited in Thompson, pp. 216-17.

The that [sic] mere love I knew not how to use,
But welaway that cannot me excuse.¹⁹

Drayton's Jane rationalizes:

And what though married when I was but young,
Before I knew what did to love belong?²⁰

In one of the popular ballads, "Woefull Lamentations," Jane sounds bitter:

My parents they, for thirst of gain,
A husband for me did obtain,
And I, then pleasure to fulfill,
Was forced to wed against my will.²¹

In another popular ballad Shore deals gently with his child-bride. Like a parent soothing a weeping tot, he comforts her with these words:

I married thee whilst thou wert young,
Before thou knewest what did belong,
To husband's love or marriage state.²²

Rowe's interest in Jane concerns itself with the days of her tragic eclipse, rather than with her season of adulation. Assuming a knowledgeable audience, prompted by his artful advertising and biography of Jane, Rowe plunges into his story, breaking into the historical narrative at the point where it gathers momentum and hastens poor Jane along to her piteous demise.

¹⁹"Shore's Wife," in Thompson, p. 179.

²⁰"The Epistle of Mistress Shore to King Edward the Fourth," in Thompson, p. 236.

²¹ Thompson, p. 251.

²²"Lamentation of Mathew Shore," in Thompson, p. 260.

The curtain rises on Gloster (Rowe's spelling for Gloucester, the historical form), gloating over his apparently successful coup. With Gloster's opening speech, Rowe establishes that, although his drama springs from historical fact, he does not intend to be bound by the chronicles. Rowe's attention to history is almost evenly balanced with his allegiance to the Tudor myth and the inventiveness of his own imagination.

Rowe's major inventions involve the characters of Alicia and Bellmour, the premature death of Jane Shore, the altered relationship between Jane and Hastings, and the reconciliation of Jane and William Shore. Rowe rearranges chronology and omits some historical events. His allegiance to the Tudor myth is apparent in his characterization of Gloster and in Gloster's charge that Jane is a sorceress. In his attention to history, Rowe alludes to numerous details: Edward IV's arrangements for the succession and the care of his sons, Dr. Shaw's sermon, Edward's love for Jane, Jane's great influence at court and her reputation for being a charitable woman. Major historical events which Rowe narrates with accuracy are Gloster's trap for Hastings in the council meeting, Hastings' immediate execution, and Jane's penance for being a harlot.

Rowe carefully chose the time for the action of the play, for historically the month of June, 1483, was a critical period in the affairs of England. From April 9, 1483, when Edward IV died, to June 13, 1483, when Gloster suddenly

accused Hastings of treason, events had proceeded in a more or less predictable fashion. Edward IV's queen, Lady Elizabeth Woodville, had made moves to establish herself as protectress of young Edward, but the Duke of Gloster readily put down the budding treachery. By May 4, 1483, the young king was being escorted into London by Gloster. Shortly thereafter Gloster's position "as Lord Protector was ratified by the Council, and preparations for the coronation of Edward immediately put in hand, the date being fixed for June 22nd."²³ On May 19 young Edward moved into the Tower, as was traditional, to await his coronation day.

This is the situation, then, when Gloster speaks his opening lines in Rowe's play and the audience is immediately plunged into a mixture of Tudor myth, Rowe invention, and historical fact. Speaking to Ratcliffe and Catesby, Gloster says:

Thus far success attends upon our councils,
 And each event has answered to my wish;
 The queen and all her upstart race are quelled;
 Dorset is banished, and her brother Rivers
 Ere this lies shorter by the head at Pomfret.
 The nobles have with joint concurrence named me
 Protector of the realm. My brother's children,
 Young Edward and the little York, are lodged
 Here, safe within the Tower. How say you, sirs,
 Does not this business wear a lucky face?
 The scepter and the golden wreath of royalty
 Seem hung within my reach. (I, i, 1-12)

The tone of the speech casts Gloster in the role of usurper, which is the Tudor interpretation of how Richard got to be

²³V. B. Lamb, The Betrayal of Richard III (London: Caram Ltd., 1959), p. 28.

king. In fact Richard intended only to assume his rightful authority as protector of young Edward in accordance with the stated wishes of Edward IV.²⁴ It was to this end only that he "quelled the queen and all her upstart race."

In the same speech Rowe rearranges chronology to suit his purpose. He says, "Dorset is banished." The opening scene of the play occurs twenty-four hours before the famous council meeting of June 13 (I, i, 19-20); yet Dorset did not leave England to seek safety in Brittany until late October or early November, after the rebellion led by Buckingham had failed. In addition Jane Shore became Dorset's mistress after the incident of her public penance, another indication that he was not yet banished. The reference to the beheading of the queen's brother Rivers is a second example of altered chronology. Rivers was arrested April 30, 1483, but not executed until sometime after June 23, since he made his will at Sheriff Hutton on that day; probably he was executed June 25.²⁵ The Tudor chronology, however, has Rivers and his companions beheaded on the same day that Hastings was executed, which would be June 13, or the day following the opening dialogue in the play.²⁶ A third example of rearranged

²⁴Lamb, p. 16.

²⁵James Gairdner, History of the Life and Reign of Richard the Third (Cambridge, 1898), pp. 51-58, 133-141.

²⁶Thomas More, History of King Richard III, J. Rawson Lumby, editor, (Cambridge, 1924), p. 55. The preface states that the text is from the "folio edition of Sir Thomas More's Works, London, 1557."

chronology is the placing of both "young Edward and the little York" in the Tower. Young Edward moved to the Tower May 19, but his younger brother did not join him until June 16, three days after the council meeting.²⁷

The one accurate historical fact in Gloster's entire opening statement is that he has been named "Protector of the realm." That Edward IV wanted his brother rather than his wife to occupy such a place of influence in the government was made clear before his death when he instructed that "the care of his son's person and kingdom should be transferred to Richard, Duke of Gloucester."²⁸ In the play Hastings reminds Gloster of that instruction:

Did not the king,
Our royal master Edward, in concurrence
With his estates assembled, well determine
What course the sovereign rule should take henceforward?
(III, i, 174-77)

Behind Ratcliffe's rejoinder to Gloster's opening remarks is an interesting tale. Ratcliffe says the following:

you are
The last remaining male of princely York:
(For Edward's boys, the state esteems not of 'em)
And therefore on your sovereignty and rule
The commonweal does her dependence make,
And leans upon your highness' able hand.
(I, i, 13-18)

The amours of the handsome King Edward IV were indulged by his advisers, but his marriage was of supreme importance since the stability of his line of succession depended on it. While his council were busy trying to arrange an appropriate

²⁷Lamb, pp. 28-9.

²⁸Gairdner, p. 44.

marriage for him, Edward met, fell in love with, and secretly married a beautiful young widow who was six years his senior-- Elizabeth Woodville, Lady Grey. Apparently Lady Grey refused to become his mistress, and Edward, determined to have her no matter what the cost, married her on May 1, 1464, "very secretly at Grafton . . . and by that rather furtive little May-day ceremony he doomed his dynasty and his whole family to extinction."²⁹

Nineteen years later on June 22, 1483, Dr. Shaw, in a sermon preached at St. Paul's Cross, called that marriage illegal and the sons of that marriage, young Edward and little York, illegitimate. Dr. Shaw contended that when Edward married Lady Grey, his councillors had already completed legal arrangements for his marriage to Lady Eleanor Butler. He cited John Stillington, Bishop of Bath and Wells, as his authority, saying that Stillington claimed he had performed a marriage ceremony between Edward and Lady Eleanor.³⁰ Thomas More, Richard's early biographer, adds credence to the story by citing a letter written by the Duchess of York to her son in which she pleads with him not to marry the young widow. Among other arguments is her plea that he "not be defouled with begamy in his first marriage."³¹ In light of the evidence that Edward's sons were illegitimate, Richard laid claim to the throne; and on June 25, 1483, a gathering "which was a Parliament in all but legal name," drew up a

²⁹Lamb, pp. 9-10. ³⁰Lamb, p. 29. ³¹More, p. 60.

petition requesting him to accept the crown. On June 26 the petition was presented to Richard by the Duke of Buckingham, spokesman for the deputation sent from the "Parliament." Buckingham made "an eloquent plea that he should accept so that the country might escape the dangers of title and a minority. . . . In any case, he said, they would not have the sons of Edward IV to reign over them."³²

In an effort to discern the extent of Hastings' loyalty to him, Gloster alludes to Dr. Shaw's sermon in a conversation with Lord Hastings:

Have you not heard
How, on a late occasion, Dr. Shaw
Has moved the people much about the lawfulness
Of Edward's issue . . .
Discoursing on my brother's former contract
To lady Elizabeth Lucy, long before
His jolly match with the same buxom widow,
The queen he left behind him . . ."
(III, i, 159-169)

In conversation with Jane Shore, Gloster makes a similar explanation:

The state, for many high and potent reasons,
Deeming my brother Edward's sons unfit
For the imperial weight of England's crown--
. . . Therefore have resolved
To set aside their unavailing infancy
And vest the sovereign rule in abler hands.
(IV, i, 103-108)

In these two speeches Rowe again telescopes time to suit his purpose, invents nonhistorical situations, and draws on the Tudor myth. Since Dr. Shaw did not preach his sermon until June 22, Gloster could not make public use of it on

³²Lamb, p. 30.

June 12, and it is not likely that Richard ever conversed with Jane regarding her loyalty to him or his reasons for assuming the throne. By having Gloster allude to a previous contract with Lady Elizabeth Lucy rather than to Lady Eleanor Butler, Rowe adopts the Tudor position. According to More, Dr. Shaw's sermon was prepared under the advice of Gloster, and More only, among the chroniclers, claims Shaw said that "dame Elisabeth Lucy [instead of Lady Eleanor Butler] was verely the wife of King Edward, and so the prince and all his children bastardes that were gotten upon the quene."³³ Lamb says More is wrong since "we know from the subsequently discovered draft of the Titulus Regius and from the Croyland Chronicle [that] both . . . name the Lady Eleanor Butler."³⁴ Gairdner explains that the change in names occurred under Henry VII, who overthrew Richard, assumed the throne, and married Elizabeth Woodville, daughter of Edward IV. After that "any allusion to the pre-contract which could not be disproved was treated as disloyal." Further, "the pre-contract was said to have been with Elizabeth Lucy, one of Edward's mistresses, instead of with Lady Eleanor Butler."³⁵ Lamb explains why the change in names was so necessary. Since Henry VII could not disprove the Butler pre-contract story because Lady Butler and Edward were both dead, and since he needed to disprove it in order to sustain his allegation that Richard was a usurper, he had to substitute a situation which

³³More, pp. 63-64. ³⁴Lamb, p. 81. ³⁵Gairdner, p. 92.

could be disproved. Lady Elizabeth Lucy testified "that although the King had seduced her under promise of marriage there had in fact been no legal contract between them, and that in consequence there had been no impediment to the Woodville marriage."³⁶

Catesby's first speech raises the next historical question, that of the famous council meeting held June 13, the next day after the opening scene. Catesby points out that, even though it appears Gloster will be crowned king, apparently plans are continuing for young Edward's coronation. Rowe's Tudor bias appears in Gloster's explanation. He says the lords who will sit in the council are his "approved, good friends," and that no matter what the appearance, each is loyal to him and ready to move with him when he gives the sign (I, i, 19-27).

The only account of the June 13 council meeting is that of More, who received his information from Bishop Ely, an eye-witness, albeit a prejudiced one. More says that the purpose of the meeting was to plan "the honorable solemnite of the kings cornacion." He describes the meeting:

The protectour came in among them, fyrst aboute ix. of the clock, saluting them curtesly, and excusing hymself that he had ben from them so long, saieng merely that he had bene a slepe that day. And after a little talking with them, he sayd unto the Bishop of Ely, my lord you have very good strawberies at your gardayne in Holberne, I require you let us have a messe of them. Gladly my lord, quod he, woulde God I had some better thing as redy to your pleasure as that.

³⁶Lamb, p. 81.

And therewith in al the haste he sent hys
servant for a messe of strauberries.

At this point More records that Richard left the council room (he does not say why). When he returned his manner was greatly altered from the genial good nature he had earlier exhibited. It is possible that it was at this moment he received word of the illegitimacy of Edward's sons, thus leaving the throne vacant for him to take, or he received word of further plots on the part of the Woodville party, or it was a combination of both. In any event he came back into the room in great anger. More describes the scene:

Then when he had sitten still a while, thus he began: What were they worthy to have, that compassse and ymagine the distruccion of me, being so near of blood unto the king and protectour of his riall person and his realme? At this question, al the lordes sat sore astonied, musyng much by whome thys question should be ment, of which every man wipt himselfe clere. Then the lord chambelen, as he that for the love betwene them thoughte he might be boldest with him, aunswered and sayd, that thei wer worthye to be punished as heighnous traitors whatsoever thei were.

Richard then accused the queen of treason and both the queen and Jane of sorcery:

Then said the protectour: ye shal al se in what wise that sorceres and that other witch of her counsel Shoris wife with their affynite, have by their sorcery and witchcraft wasted my body. And therewith he plucked up hys doublet sleve to his elbow upon his left arme, where he shewed a werish withered arme and small, as it was never other.

After a strained silence wherein every man present pondered his accusation, Hastings is reported to have said the following:

Certainly my lorde if they have so heinously done, thei be worthy heinouise punishment. What, quod the protectour, thou servest me, I wene, with iffes and with andes, I tel the thei have so done, and that I will make good on thy body, traitour. And therwith as in a great anger, he clapped his fist upon the borde a great rappe.

After a general uproar in which others were taken prisoner also and Lord Stanley was wounded, Richard demanded Hastings' immediate execution. He said, "for by saynt Poule . . . I will not to dinner til I se thy hed of."³⁷

Rowe loosely follows More's account, omitting the homely incident of strawberries and the incident of Richard's leaving the room. Immediately after the scene gets underway, Gloster raises the question which More says Richard had asked:

I yield myself in all things, and demand
 What punishment your wisdom shall think meet
 T'inflict upon those damnable contrivers
 Who shall with potions, charms, and witching drugs,
 Practice against our person and our life.
 (IV, i, 217-21)

Hastings responds, as in More's account, that "whoe'er they be, they merit death" (IV, i, 226). Then Gloster pulls up his sleeve, shows his withered arm, and accuses the queen and Jane Shore:

This is the sorcery of Edward's wife,
 Who in conjunction with that harlot Shore
 . . . torture and despoil me of my life.
L. Hast. If they have done this deed--
Glost. If they have done it!
 Talk'st thou to me of if's audacious traitor?

 Lord Hastings, I arrest thee of high treason!
 --Seize him, and bear him instantly away;

³⁷More, pp. 45-48.

He sha'not live an hour. By holy Paul!
 I will not dine before his head be brought me!"
 (IV, i, 232-49)

Rowe's reliance on More is obvious in the speeches of Gloster and Hastings.

According to More, it was not Alicia, but a priest who visited Hastings in his last hour.³⁸ Rowe has Ratcliffe supervise the execution, but More, Lamb, and Gairdner do not say who carried out Richard's orders.

Rowe shows Catesby as responsible for Gloster's knowledge that Hastings was loyal to Edward IV and the young king (I, i, 38-40). Historically this is accurate. The Dictionary of National Biography says Richard "endeavored through Catesby to ascertain" whether or not Hastings would be loyal to Richard's "intended usurpation of the crown."³⁹ More says Lord Hastings trusted Catesby implicitly, adding "but surely great pity was it, that he had not had either more truth or less wit." Catesby's motive in betraying Hastings, who was his patron, was that "he trusted by his death to obtain much of the rule that the Lord Hastings bare in his country."⁴⁰

Rowe's version of Gloster's treatment of Jane Shore is partly rearranged chronology, partly imagination, and partly historical fact. For instance, Rowe has Gloster accuse and

³⁸More, p. 48.

³⁹Dictionary of National Biography, III, 1193.

⁴⁰More, p. 45.

punish Jane prior to the council meeting on the thirteenth; however, she was despoiled of her goods and sentenced to do penance after Hastings' execution.⁴¹ In the play both Hastings and Jane comment on the loss of her possessions. Hastings, in conversation with Gloster, says that officers

Have seized upon the lands which late she held
By grant from her great master Edward's bounty.
(I, i, 93-94)

And Jane mourns to Alicia that

The hand of pow'r has seized almost the whole
Of what was left for needy life's support.
(I, ii, 102-03)

The seizure of Jane's property is attested to by More. He says Richard reduced Jane to poverty out of anger rather than covetousness, entering her house and taking "al that ever she had," about two or three thousand marks.⁴² Gairdner reasons that Richard confiscated her property because she still enjoyed great influence at court, and he wanted to destroy her favored position since she opposed him.⁴³ Although the reference to Jane's loss of property is historic, her appeal to Gloster for the recovery of her property is not. Other Rowe inventions in this part of the plot are Hastings' intervention with Gloster on her behalf and her betrayal of Alicia.

⁴¹ Grafton's Chronicles (1569; rpt. London, 1809), II, 100-101.

⁴² More, p. 53.

⁴³ Gairdner, p. 69.

Rowe's description of Jane's penance closely resembles More's account. More describes the sentence, Jane's demeanor, and the reaction of those who observed her:

[Richard] caused the bishop of London to put her to open penance, going before the crosse in procession upon a Sondag with a taper in her hand. In which she went in countenance and pace demure so womanly, and albeit she were out of al array save her kyrtle only: yet went she so fair and lovely, namelye while the wondering of the people caste a comly rud in her chekes (of whiche she before and most misse) that her great shame was her much praise. And many good folke also, that hated her living, and glad were to see sin corrected, yet pitied thei more her penance, then rejoyced, therein, when thei considered that the protector procured it, more of a corrupt intent then ani vertuous affeccion.⁴⁴

Rowe has Bellmour describe the scene to Jane's husband, and it bears remarkable resemblance to More's description:

With the gentlest patience
 Submissive, sad, and lowly was her look;
 A burning taper in her hand she bore,
 And on her shoulders, carelessly confused,
 With loose neglect her lovely tresses hung;
 Upon her cheek a faintish flush was spread;
 Feeble she seemed, and sorely smit with pain,
 While barefoot as she trod the flinty pavement,
 Her footsteps all along were marked with blood.
 (V, i, 20-28)

Churchyard's poem describes her manner as she walked her lonely, ignominious way: Her "quiet looks were praised of every man."⁴⁵

There is historical ground for Rowe's belief that Shore was still living when Jane fell from grace. When More tells of the seizure of Jane's goods, he makes it a point to say "for her husband dwelled not with her."⁴⁶ Gairdner also

⁴⁴More, pp. 53-54. ⁴⁵Thompson, p. 186. ⁴⁶More, p. 53.

reasons that Shore may have been alive during the time of Jane's troubles. Following Jane's affair with Dorset, "she became a prisoner in the city prison of Ludgate." When Richard's solicitor fell under her spell and requested permission to marry her, Richard wrote the Bishop of Lincoln concerning the matter. In the letter Richard gave grudging consent "if it may stand with the law of the Church," implying her husband still lived and she had been divorced from him.⁴⁷ There is no historical ground, however, for Rowe's scenes which cast Shore in the role of Jane's forgiving husband come to rescue her from her perils.

Rowe's characterizations of Jane and Shore are drawn from historic accounts. His characterization of Richard, on the other hand, is the standard Tudor portrait. In his desire to make Jane a sympathetic figure, Rowe manipulates her story, as has already been pointed out. His characterization of Jane's nature, however, is historically accurate. Alicia first describes Jane's charitable nature:

Think not, the good,
The gentle deeds of mercy thou has done
Shall die forgotten all; the poor, the pris'ner
The fatherless, the friendless, and the widow,
Who daily own the bounty of thy hand,
Shall cry to heav'n, and pull a blessing on thee.
(I, ii, 169-173)

Jane defends herself against Gloster's harsh actions by appealing to her charitable deeds:

What have I done
To kindle such relentless wrath against me?

⁴⁷Gairdner, p. 71.

If in the days of all my past offences,
 When most my heart was lifted with delight,
 If I withheld my morsel from the hungry,
 Forgot the widows' wants, and the orphans' cry;
 If I have known a good I have not shared,
 Nor called the poor to take his portion with me,
 Let my worst enemies stand forth and now
 Deny the succor which I gave not them.

(V, i, 265-74)

These are not idle boasts. More describes Jane's benevolent nature, reluctantly perhaps, because he says "for sinne it wer to belie the devil," but he affirms

She never abused to any mans hurt, but to many a mans comfort and relief: where the king toke displeasure she would mitigate and appease his mind: where men were out of favor, she wold bring them in his grace. For many that had highly offended, shee obtained pardon. . . . She stode men in gret stede, either for none, or very smal rewardes.⁴⁸

Not only was Jane compassionate, but she also was persuasive. On two occasions in the play Gloster complains of Jane's ability to influence people in high places. He blames Jane for what he considers to be Hastings' treachery:

I hold it certain,
 This puling, whining harlot rules his reason,
 And prompts his zeal for Edward's bastard brood.

(IV, i, 20-22)

He also accuses Jane personally of meddling "in affairs of state (IV, i, 72-75). Gairdner affirms Rowe's notion of Jane's influential status. He says that unlike Edward's queen, Edward's mistress "maintained her influence at least for some little time after Edward's death."⁴⁹

Little is known about Jane's husband, William Shore, except that he was "a man of very fair character both for

⁴⁸More, pp. 54-55.

⁴⁹Gairdner, p. 70.

religion and morals."⁵⁰ Rowe's description of Shore, spoken by Jane, agrees with this brief hint:

He wears the mark of many years well spent,
Of virtue, truth well tried, and wise experience.
(I, ii, 23-24)

In his treatment of Gloster, Rowe follows the Tudor myth, seeking to affirm the concept of his vicious nature, as well as his usurpation of the throne. In a speech wherein he threatens Jane, Gloster, in an oblique way, reveals his nature:

Doest thou know
How vile, how very a wretch, my pow'r can make thee?
That I can let loose fear, distress, and famine,
To hunt thy heels like hell-hounds through the world?
That I can place thee in such abject state
As help shall never find thee--where repining
Thou shalt sit down and gnaw the earth for anguish,
Groan to the pitiless wind without return,
Howl like the midnight wolf amidst the desert,
And curse thy life in bitterness of misery?
(IV, i, 159-69)

The Tudor myth would say that not only did Richard have it within his heart to do such vile things, but he also actually performed them.

History will not support Rowe's observations regarding Richard. Shortly after his coronation Richard left the capital city and traveled north to the relative quietness of his home. Lamb quotes Dr. Thomas Langton, the Bishop of St. David's, who, in a letter to a colleague, described the people's response to Richard as he journeyed through England. He said Richard was well received and that he tried

⁵⁰Dictionary of National Biography, XVIII, 147.

to help the poor who had been deprived of their goods during the civil wars and that he refused bribes offered to him. He said, "On my truth I liked never the conditions of any prince so well as his. God hath sent him to us for the weal of us all." Lamb relates other examples of Richard's largesse. When the Duke of Buckingham led a rebellion against Richard only three months after the coronation, Richard "showed great leniency toward the rebels" after he put down the rebellion; "there were few executions and he restored many forfeited estates to their dependents." Richard showed kindness to others who were his enemies. For instance, even though Elizabeth Woodville tried consistently to unseat him, he practiced mercy, placing her and her daughters under his protection and promising "before his council that he would respect their persons and provide suitably for their future as his kinswomen." Finally, Richard's letter to his chancellor, the Bishop of Lincoln, concerning Thomas Lynom's request to marry Jane Shore is described by Lamb as being "a model of tolerance and kindness."⁵¹

Rowe's major concern in writing his drama was to create for the stage a sympathetic presentation of Jane Shore's story, a story which would have been well known to eighteenth-century playgoers. To achieve his purpose he had to present Jane in a virtuous light. Even though the audience knew she was a harlot and really had got "what she deserved," the

⁵¹Lamb, pp. 34-36, 97.

effect would have been lessened if Rowe had pictured Jane as a woman who willingly left her husband to become one of several mistresses to the king, then became the mistress of Lord Hastings almost before Edward was buried, and finally drifted to the arms of the Marquis of Dorset after Hastings was executed. Rowe selected those events of history which served his purpose, omitted the ones which would have harmed his drama, created characters and events where he felt he needed them, and for history blended the well-known Tudor history with a convenient, if inaccurate, chronology to produce a play which was an immediate sensation, beginning with a run of eighteen performances in 1714. The play continued to be popular with audiences through 1776, and by the end of the century had been performed 381 times.⁵²

⁵²Nettleton and Case, p. 501.

CHAPTER IV

MYTH AND HISTORY IN THE TRAGEDY OF THE LADY JANE GRAY

Three years before his death in 1718, Rowe composed the third in his trilogy of English history plays, The Tragedy of the Lady Jane Gray. He borrowed the idea from a good friend, Mr. Smith of Christ Church, Oxon., as he explains in the preface. Mr. Smith died before completing a tragedy on Lady Jane; he had, however, left notes on his proposed drama. With the assistance of some mutual friends, Rowe was able to borrow the papers, thinking he would follow Mr. Smith's notions. But before the papers arrived, Rowe "had entirely form'd the Design or Fable of [his] own Play," as he is careful to point out.

In the same preface, which was published with the play, Rowe expresses disappointment with Smith's papers, believing Smith's ideas to be imitative of Banks, whose play on the same subject was then in print. He complains that when he examined the notes, he "found the quantity of about two Quires of Paper written over in odd pieces, blotted, interlin'd and confus'd. What was contained in 'em in general, was loose Hints of Sentiments, and short obscure Sketches of Scenes.

But how they were to be apply'd or in what order they were to be rang'd, I could not by any Diligence of mine (and I look'd 'em very carefully over more than once) come to understand." Rowe goes on to say there was one "pretty near perfect" scene, and from that scene he used as much as possible. This scene, wherein Guilford seeks to persuade Jane to accept the throne, is incorporated in Rowe's third act. Even so, Rowe maintains that not more than twenty-five or thirty lines in the entire play could be attributed to the late Mr. Smith. Still, Rowe felt it necessary to write such an explanation of how his play came to be written, for many of Smith's friends were claiming that he had "left a Play very near entire behind him," and Rowe did not care to be accused of plagiarism. Thus did he "turn this [his] youngest child out into the world."¹

The traditional English view of Lady Jane Gray, beheaded while still a teen-ager, a reluctant queen for nine days, is that she died a martyr to her faith, that of the Reformed Church of England. Nicholas Rowe, in his The Tragedy of the Lady Jane Gray, frames his drama in references to the religious crisis which ultimately destroyed Lady Jane. In the dialogue which opens the play, Suffolk comments on the impending death of young King Edward VI. He joins Northumberland in an attitude of despair because the death of the protestant king,

¹Nicholas Rowe, The Tragedy of the Lady Jane Gray (London: Bernard Lintot, 1715), viii-x. All other references to the play will be from this edition and will be cited in the text.

son of King Henry VIII, would no doubt spark a religious controversy throughout England. The Anglican faith was new, but both Suffolk and Northumberland were converts. They recognized the turmoil which could ensue should the Catholic Mary, half-sister to the dying king, inherit the throne. Suffolk personifies Religion grieving over the possibility that Anglicanism might pass from the scene to be replaced by the return of Catholicism:

Religion melts in ev'ry holy eye,
 All comfortless, afflicted and forlorn
 She sits on Earth, and weeps upon her Cross
 Weary of Man, and his detested Ways,
 Ev'n now she seems to meditate her Flight,
 And waft her Angel to the Thrones above.

Northumberland shares Suffolk's distress:

Ay, there my Lord, you touch our heaviest Loss,
 With him our holy Faith is doom'd to suffer.
(I, i, 1)

The religious theme, skipping in and out of the drama, not only opens the play but also closes it. The final scene depicts Lady Jane speaking before the executioner, praying that Heaven would "Raise up a Monarch of the Royal Blood . . . / [to] guard that Faith for which I die to day" (V, i, 65). And Pembroke affirms she died a martyr to her faith when he declares in the final speech of the play that

Those, who with honest Hearts pursue the Right,
 And follow faithfully Truth's Sacred Light,
 Tho' suffering here, shall from their Sorrows cease,
 Rest with the Saints, and dwell in endless Peace.
(V, i, 66)

The religious theme, which is historical, must share the spotlight with other, nonhistorical themes in the drama.

First, the romance between Dudley and Lady Jane supplies the

necessary love interest. Next, the friendship between Pembroke and Guilford Dudley and their rivalry for the hand of Jane are Rowe inventions. In addition to these themes, Rowe has as one of his purposes the desire to eulogize the character of Lady Jane. He explains in his dedication to her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales that "the Character of that Excellent Lady, as it is deliver'd down to us in History, is very near the same with the Picture I have endeavour'd to draw of her" (pp. iii-iv). And indeed he was faithful in nearly every aspect, not only of her character but also of her part in the events which rushed her along to a tragic, premature end. Rowe's Lady Jane is virtuous, loyal, intelligent, well-educated, obedient, religious, faithful, thoughtful. The same adjectives describe history's Lady Jane. Surely she was human, but her predominant spirit was evidently one of goodness; furthermore, her untimely demise has forever fixed her in that flawless character which England remembers--like Keats's figures on the Grecian urn, she can do nothing which will alter her character.

Rowe uses Pembroke and Guilford, both in love with Jane, to reveal many of her attributes. Pembroke calls her "that Universal Goodness,/Like Light a common Blessing to the World"; "the Crown of great Desert" (I, i, 7-8); "that lovely Maid" (III, i, 24). He says she is endued

With ev'ry Grace that Nature's Hand Cou'd give,
 And with a Mind so great, it spoke its Essence
 Immortal and Divine.

 The Virtues came,

Sorted in gentle Fellowship to crown her,
 As if they meant to mend each others Work,
 Candour with Goodness, Fortitude with Sweetness,
 Strict Piety and Love of Truth, with Learning,
 More than the Schools of others ever knew,
 Or her own Plato taught. A Wonder!

(III, i, 25-26)

Guilford describes Jane's "auspicious Beauty" and compares her to "the Silver Regent of the Night" (I, i, 9). Later, as she awaits her execution, he observes her religious faith and purity:

See! with what Zeal those holy Hands are rear'd!
 Mark her Vermilion Lip with Fervour trembling!
 Her spotless Bosom swells with sacred ardour,
 And burns with extasy and strong Devotion,
 Her supplication sweet, her faithful Vows,
 Fragrant and Pure, and grateful to high Heaven.

(V, i, 59)

Northumberland praises her, too, calling her a "pious Princess," and speaking of her "Holy Ardor, / And fervent Zeal" (II, i, 12). Even Gardiner, who wishes to see her dead, agrees that "She was a Wonder" (III, i, 25).

The historic Jane, was, indeed, all that Rowe claimed. She was intellectual, an unusually fine scholar who delighted in reading the Greek classics. She "had the innocence of childhood, the beauty of youth, the solidity of middle, the gravity of old age, and all at eighteen: the birth of a prin-
 cesse, the learning of a clerk, the life of a Saint, yet the death of a malefactor for her parents offenses."² She did not have a tender and loving relationship with her parents, the Duke and Duchess of Suffolk. They dominated their

²Thomas Fuller, The Holy State and the Profane State, ed. Maximilian Graff Walten (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), II, 308.

daughter's life with little regard for her desires and even less display of affection. For instance, they gained her consent to marry Guilford, son of the Duke of Northumberland, "by blows from the mother and curses from the father." Later, when Jane had been removed from the throne and incarcerated in the Tower, Frances Suffolk, Jane's mother, requested and received an audience with Queen Mary, not for the purpose of seeking help for her daughter, but for the purpose of trying to establish her own innocence and that of her husband.³

It is not hard to imagine Rowe's fascination with the tragedy of Lady Jane Gray. The dramatic events which occurred during the last year of her life are the stuff from which theater is made. Even so, Rowe thought it necessary to enhance her story by manipulating history in several ways but without distorting the major historical events.

Although all of Rowe's characters are based on historical figures and are, for the most part, reasonably faithful, his characterization of Guilford Dudley is almost wholly manufactured. Other characterizations are sometimes historical, sometimes fictitious; for example, the duchess of Suffolk easily slips in and out of her historical image. Among the major actions which Rowe invents are the ones involving the friendship between Pembroke and Guilford and the love triangle involving Jane, Guilford, and Pembroke. While certain minor variations from history occur, the inventions are not sufficient to spoil the historical perspective.

³Hester W. Chapman, Lady Jane Gray (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1962), pp. 77, 157.

But Rowe the dramatist does not obscure Rowe the historian. Over and over again throughout the play he reveals his attention to historical detail as well as to the larger matters of history--Edward's dying prayer, Jane's swoon, her interest in classical authors--all these and more attest to Rowe's concern with even the minutia of history. Among the larger issues which parallel history are the problem of succession; Jane's reluctance to be queen; her initial acclaim followed by the desertion of the Council; the roles of Northumberland, Suffolk, and Gardiner; and the executions of Jane and Guilford.

When Rowe introduces the problem of succession, his historical allusions are numerous. For example, he puts Northumberland in charge of engineering Jane onto the throne, draping Northumberland's machinations in religious robes; he shows Northumberland as the perpetrator of the marriage between Jane and his son Guilford; he establishes the unholy partnership between Northumberland and Suffolk; he paints a traditional word portrait of Mary; he begins his historical presentation of Jane, promised in the dedication; and he brings in, as a minor character, the historical Sir John Gates.

Northumberland's role in helping Jane to the throne is as much a matter of history as is her removal and execution. In the words of Thomas Fuller,

Northumberland projected for the English Crown:
But being too low to reach it in his own person,
having no advantage of royall birth, a match was

made betwixt Guilford his fourth sonne, and this Lady Jane; the Duke hoping so to reigne in his daughter-in-law, on whom King Edward the Sixth by will, passing by his own sisters, had entayled the Crown.⁴

Although it was by no means easy for Northumberland to persuade Edward to set aside his father's will in favor of Lady Jane, his task was made less difficult because of Edward's strong protestant faith, which Northumberland willingly exploited. Edward feared that Mary would lead the nation back to Catholicism; Foxe said he acted from the realization "that his sister Mary was wholly wedded to popish religion."⁵

Thus as the young king approached death, the Privy Council

with other Prelats & nobles of the realme, calling to them divers notable persons learned . . . fel to cosultation upo this weightie case, and lastly concluded according to the device of king Edwards will, to declare the said Lady Jane eldest neece to king Henry the eight, and wife to the said Lord Guilford to be rightful heyre in succession to the Crowne of England.

All the council and other nobles agreed to this move; that is, all except Sir James Hales, knight, and justice, who "would in no wise geve his assent either by word or writing."⁶

Rowe opens his play with the reactions of major characters to the news that King Edward is dying. He expresses the noblemen's fear of Catholicism and the popularity of Mary through Sir John Gates:

⁴Fuller, p. 308.

⁵W. Grinton Berry, editor, Foxe's Book of Martyrs (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1908), p. 371.

⁶Grafton's Chronicles (1569; rpt. London, 1809), II, 532.

Doubt not, your Graces, but the Popish Faction
 Will at this Juncture urge their utmost Force.
 All on the Princess Mary, turn their Eyes,
 Well hoping she shall build again their Altars,
 And bring their Idol-Worship back in Triumph.

(I, i, 2)

Northumberland, Suffolk, and Gates make plans to gather forces to fight against Mary, and Northumberland and Suffolk discuss the necessity for haste in arranging the marriage between Guilford and Jane before Edward dies. Lady Jane expresses genuine grief, but Pembroke and Guilford are more concerned with their struggle for Jane's affections than they are for the dying king.

Most of the first two acts is taken up with the rivalry between Pembroke and Guilford, which has no parallel in history, and with Northumberland's and Suffolk's efforts to persuade Jane to marry Guilford. Northumberland insists that Jane

. . . must be here and lodged in Guilford's Arms,
 E'er Edward dies, or all we've done is marr'd.

(I, i, 3-4)

In reality Jane and Guilford were married several months before Edward's death, in the summer of 1553. Their marriage was not the love match Rowe portrays. Instead it was a political arrangement, the brainchild of Northumberland, who was able to arrange two other weddings on the same day, all "compassed and concluded chiefly upon purpose to change and alter the order of succession to the crown," from Henry VIII's daughters Mary and Elizabeth "to the house of Suffolkes, in the right of the ladie Francis," Jane's mother. The

second of the three weddings was between Herbert, son of the earl of Pembroke, and Katherine, Jane's younger sister; the third was between Henry, Lord Hastings, and Katherine, youngest daughter of Northumberland. Thus did Northumberland hope "to establish a meete order of succession by the allyaunce of great houses by waye of marriage."⁷

Rowe, of course, makes no attempt to imply that the marriage did not have political value for Northumberland. From the beginning of the play, he makes clear the scheming of Northumberland and Suffolk. Where Rowe departs from history is in his romantic inclination to portray Jane and Guilford as being in love. Guilford's passionate desire for Jane is apparent in nearly every speech he makes; Jane's desire is more restrained. The most she can bring herself to say is, "My heart has fondly lean'd toward thee long" (II, 1, 15). In cooling Jane's ardor, however, Rowe is making no attempt to indicate the real Jane's feelings toward Guilford, for she not only did not love her husband; she actively disliked him. Apparently they did not even live together following their marriage, but instead each lived with his own parents. In a letter to Queen Mary, written while she was in the Tower, Jane related the pathetic aftermath of her marriage: "The Duchess of Northumberland promised me at my nuptials with her son, that she would be contented if I remained living at home with my mother." Later, when it became apparent that the king's death was imminent, and because the

⁷Grafton, III, 1063.

Duchess of Northumberland expected Jane to be crowned queen, she retracted her promise to Jane, ordering her instead to the Northumberland household. Jane tells Queen Mary that the Duchess "was resolved to detain me, [insisting] that it was my duty at all events to remain near my husband, from whom I should not go."⁸ Interestingly, Rowe hints at a similar separation between the newlyweds. When Guilford implores Jane to marry him, fast upon the heels of the news that Edward is dead, Jane hesitates; it hardly seems a suitable time to be considering marriage. In a burst of eagerness to gain her consent at any cost, Guilford even offers to "forego a Bridegroom's sacred Right, / And sleep far from thee" (II, i, 16). Jane refuses this magnanimous offer but consents to marry him.

Rowe's reasons for making his Jane a reluctant bride are to give him an opportunity to extol the virtues of Edward as well as the religious devotion of Jane. Her whole attention throughout the first two acts is directed toward Edward. In her opening speech she expresses grief which never wanes until she is forced, through elevation to the throne in the third act, to consider other matters. It is primarily through Jane that the audience receives news of Edward's progress toward death, of his faith in God, which does not desert him in the face of death, and of his last words, which are a prayer for England. Although Jane was not with Edward when he died, Rowe places her at his side in order to promote the Anglican

⁸ Richard Davey, The Nine Days' Queen, 2nd. ed. (London: Methuen & Co., 1910), p. 236.

faith; thus Jane is able to report that Edward plead with her to "keep to that Faith in which we both were bred." She also reports his dying prayer for England, which parallels in substance, if not in form, the historical prayer of Edward VI:

Mercyful, great Defender!
 Preserve thy holy Altars undefil'd,
 Protect this Land from Bloody Men and Idols,
 Save my poor People from the Yoak of Rome,
 And take thy painful Servant to thy Mercy.
 (II, 1, 13-14)

Grafton records this prayer of the dying king: "O my Lorde God defende this realme from Popistre, and maintaine thy true religion."⁹

Jane speaks with such emotion regarding Edward that he appears to be more Guilford's rival than does Pembroke, whom she never encourages. Yet Rowe's triangle involves Pembroke, Guilford, and Jane, not Edward, Guilford, and Jane. The purpose of the triangle seems simply to supply a love interest in the play. To have Jane and Guilford love each other would create little dramatic tension. Yet Rowe's triangle lacks dramatic conviction. Almost as soon as it is revealed, it is over. Pembroke never encounters Jane; he never declares his love for her to anyone but Guilford. The rivalry exists in a private way between the two men without Jane's ever becoming aware of it. Instead of developing the triangle, Rowe makes use of Pembroke's disappointment in love in order to set other intrigues into motion.

While Rowe fails at making Pembroke become a believable rival, he succeeds all too well in making Edward appear to

⁹Grafton, II, 533.

be a rival. If indeed Edward was, Guilford skillfully manages to overlook it. Nearly all of Jane's protestations of love are directed toward her dying kinsman, albeit her emotion is attributed to her patriotic fervor and religious devotion. Rowe would have his audience perceive Jane and Edward as being exceedingly close, making it more believable that he would name her as his successor.

Historically, plans had once been made to wed Lady Jane to Edward. Because Jane was his ward, Thomas Seymour agreed to help in arranging a marriage between the two. But political intrigues involving Seymour and his brother, Somerset, who was protector of the realm, prevented the marriage from taking place; however, after Jane's father became Duke of Suffolk, Jane often visited at court and was frequently in the company of both Princess Mary and the king. When political expediency created a liaison between Suffolk and Northumberland following the fall of Somerset, thereby resulting in the marriage of Jane and Guilford, Northumberland was embarked on his course to alter "the succession from the Tudors to the Dudleys upon the decease of Edward VI. The young king was the readier to accede to this project, which set aside his sisters, because of his attachment to Jane."¹⁰

It is not altogether certain, however, that Jane and Edward were really close, and some evidence exists that they rarely, if ever, saw each other, nor was Jane particularly overwhelmed by Edward's death. One of her biographers argues

¹⁰Lee, Sidney, "Dudley, Lady Jane," Dictionary of National Biography (London: Oxford University Press, 1917), VI, 105.

that

not a tinge of affection or regret for her cousin is expressed in any of Lady Jane's letters, and we have no proof whatever that she was specially affected by his early death. There is but little evidence, indeed, of her having been much in his company, nor any proof that he, on his side, held her in exceptional esteem.¹¹

Certainly they were not as close as the Duchess of Suffolk implies when she describes their relationship in the play:

From the first early Days of Infant Life,
A Gentle Bank of Friendship grew betwixt 'em.
And while our royal Uncle Henry reign'd,
As Brother and as Sister bred together,
Beneath one common Parent's Care they liv'd.
(II, i, 12-13)

The triangles really are of little importance as a love theme in the play. More important, from a historical perspective, is Rowe's treatment of Guilford Dudley. For dramatic purposes Rowe creates a charming young man, impetuous, even rash at times: he is ready to draw his sword to defend his beloved, no matter what the odds; he is unselfish, always putting Jane's interests before his own; he is loyal to his friend, Pembroke, even when such loyalty threatens his life. Pembroke speaks of his "gentle Temper" (I, i, 7); Jane comments on his "Sweetness, Virtue, and unblemish'd Youth" (II, i, 16). She is able to look to him as a source of strength when she learns that the great burdens of the nation have been placed on her young shoulders. He is "The noblest Youth our England has to boast of,/The gentlest Nature and the Bravest Spirit" (I, i, 6). In a later scene Rowe develops a kind of altruism in Guilford's character. Guilford

¹¹Davey, pp. 247-48.

learns that Northumberland plans to murder Pembroke since Pembroke has turned from Jane to support Mary's claim to the throne. Defying his own father, Guilford warns Pembroke that he is in danger, frees Pembroke from the guards who have seized him, provides him with a sword, and urges him to make haste in getting away. Pembroke is awed at the generosity of one whom he has so recently castigated as a traitor. He cries out, "What is there Good or Excellent in Man,/That is not found in thee? Thy Virtues flash? (IV, i, 44).

Rowe could not have used the historical Guilford as his model. Jane's husband was still a child, as was Jane, when they married. But whereas the historical Jane exhibited a sweet maturity and inner strength, Dudley was babyish and immature. He was a spoiled young man, handsome, elegant, and selfish. One seventeenth-century historian observes that "of all Dudley's brood, he had nothing of the father in him." But he had his father's ambition; in fact, his ambition was to be king. Not forty-eight hours after Jane became queen, he approached her with the demand that she name him king. His mother, who had been accustomed all his life to helping him get his way, supported him. When Jane refused, the three quarreled violently; the argument ended when Guilford began to cry and had to leave the room.¹²

In Pembroke, Rowe has created an ambivalent character. He vacillates between friendship with Guilford and conspiracy with Gardiner, bishop of Winchester. Historically Pembroke

¹²Davey, pp. 260-61.

first embraced, then renounced Jane as queen. Even though he was a member of the council which proclaimed her, only nine days later, in order to save his neck, he betrayed her.¹³ Rowe seems to have blended two historical figures in order to create the role of Pembroke. In age, his character would appear to be that of young Lord Pembroke, son of the earl, who married Katherine Grey. (Their wedding was one of the three political marriages arranged by Northumberland.) But his involvement with the affairs of state make him appear to be the elder Pembroke, William Herbert, whose wife was sister-in-law to Henry VIII (her sister was Katherine Parr, Henry's last wife). He was knighted by Edward VI in 1551, thus becoming the Earl of Pembroke. Jane trusted him and consulted him when her husband and mother-in-law urged her to make Guilford king. But he did not deserve her trust because he proved to be a self-seeking man willing to sacrifice the life of an innocent girl in order to save his own. The degree of Pembroke's treason against Jane is best understood through the eyes of a contemporary who described Pembroke's reaction at the news of Mary's accession:

Most enthusiastic and excited of all was my Lord Pembroke, who filled and refilled his cap with small coin to be scrambled for by the mob. He could afford to be liberal; he knew Mary would reward him well for his share in her proclamation.¹⁴

In Rowe's tragedy Pembroke is young, unmarried, and not very powerful, though he is a member of the council and an

¹³Davey, pp. 283-84.

¹⁴Cited in Davey, p. 286.

earl. He is a foil to Guilford, a tool of Gardiner, and a messenger for Mary. He is more pathetic than tragic, more weak than strong, a man who does not know his own mind and who, consequently, can be used by those who are craftier than he. Instead of being a loyal follower of Northumberland in the play, Pembroke is wooed by the duke. Northumberland regards him as a "Bar which thwarts [his] Way," because of the rivalry between Pembroke and his son. He realizes that Pembroke could upset his plans should his unrequited love be turned into a vindictive spirit. Northumberland, therefore, approaches Pembroke with "crouching Courtesy, and honey'd Words" (I, i, 4).

Repeatedly Rowe emphasizes Pembroke's unbridled temper. Pembroke himself admits to "fiery Spirits which kindle him to rages" (I, i, 7). In an impassioned display of temper he lashes out at Guilford and breaks their friendship when Guilford tells him he is to marry Jane. Gardiner chastises him for letting his "Hair-brain'd Passion" (III, i, 24) control his actions. Not only does Pembroke have an uncontrolled temper, but he also has a vindictive spirit which Northumberland feared. When Gardiner promises that the Church will reward him if he will throw his support to Mary, Pembroke disdains such treasures as worthless, saying,

No keep your Blessings back, and give me Vengeance.
Give me to tell that soft Deceiver, Guilford,
Thus Traytor hast thou done, thus hast thou wrong'd me,
And thus thy Treason finds a just Reward.

(III, i, 27)

For the villain of the play, Rowe elects Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, whom he introduces at the beginning of Act III in a scene set in the Tower, where Gardiner is a prisoner. In two long conversations with Pembroke, Gardiner reveals his Catholic interest; he also draws Pembroke into a conspiracy to unseat Jane. He is devious, scolding Pembroke for his openhandedness in declaring boldly to Guilford his new enmity against him because of his winning the love of Lady Jane. Gardiner points out that by pretending to continue friendship, Pembroke could have used his favored position for gleaning information which might prove useful in unseating Guilford and Jane. Even though Gardiner is a prisoner (albeit a prisoner allowed a great deal of freedom), he is well informed, for a "trusty Spy" supplies him with information. He tries to cheer Pembroke by forecasting Guilford's death, implying that then Pembroke may become Jane's husband. But he has no regard for Jane as queen, since he strongly favors Mary. He declares that Mary will reign and will restore the Roman faith. Because of this belief, he advises Pembroke to have nothing to do with Suffolk and Northumberland. Instead he instructs him to wait in the city with friends gathered round, ready to aid Mary. If he will do this, he promises that Mary will amply reward him.

Rowe stresses the villainy of Gardiner throughout the play. Guilford describes him as "Deep-designing Gard'ner, dream of Vengeance" (III, i, 36). The Duchess of Suffolk calls him "Cruel Gardiner" (IV, i, 49). Even Pembroke breaks with

him, chastising him for his lack of Christian charity:

Thy narrow Soul
 Knows not the godlike Glory of Forgiving,

 And you, my Lord, too little of the churchman.
 Is not the sacred Purpose of our Faith
 Peace and Good-will to Man! The hollow'd Hand,
 Ordain'd to bless, shou'd know no Strain of Blood.
 (V, i, 56-57)

Pembroke goes on to call Gardiner a "froward Priest" and considers himself unlucky to be associated with him. Jane calls Gardiner a "Viper" and criticizes him for perverting the truth (V, i, 64-65). Finally, Pembroke describes Gardiner as "pitiless," taking up Jane's charge against him. With this speech the play ends.

Rowe's conception of Gardiner, advanced to Lord Chancellor of England by Queen Mary, is closely akin to the view that Foxe held of him. Foxe describes Gardiner as being both "arrogant and glorious," crafty and subtle. He collected Gardiner's letters so that his readers could perceive "his stubborn contumacy against the king, and malicious rebellion against God and true religion, with sleight and craft enough to defend his peevish purposes." He concludes that Gardiner was an opportunist; he was

neither a true protestant, nor a right papist:
 neither a true friend to the pope, nor yet a full
 enemy to Christ: false in king Henry's time; ob-
 stinate in king Edward's time; perjured, and a
 murderer, in queen Mary's time: but mutable and
 inconstant in all times.¹⁵

Gardiner was a Papist who loved Catholics and hated Protestants. When Northumberland realized that Mary would

¹⁵Josiah Pratt, editor, The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe, 3rd ed. (London, 1870), pp. 24, 258.

unseat Jane, he reverted to Catholicism, and Gardiner became his champion; he expressed compassion for Northumberland following the duke's conviction and death sentence for treason. In fact "he wept with him" and "plead for his life with the Queen." On the other hand, because Jane steadfastly rejected the attempts of Gardiner and others to convert her to Catholicism, he helped Jane to her death: "On February 10th, Bishop Gardiner, preaching before Queen Mary, insisted that Lady Jane as one of the 'rotten and hurtful members of the Commonweal' should be cut off."¹⁶

Several attempts were made to convert Jane to the Roman faith. Mary did not care to put her young kinswoman to death; in an attempt to avoid such a decision, she ordered that every effort be made to win Jane to what Mary believed was the only true church. When she sent Dr. Feckenham, an English Catholic priest, to try to convert Jane, it became apparent to Jane that conversion would mean pardon. Feckenham, conscious of this life and death struggle and confident of his ability to sway Jane, managed to have her execution postponed, because he "concluded that, given time, he would be able to effect [a] . . . really sensational conversion." Mary granted him three additional days and said "that if Lady Jane became a Catholic she should be reprieved. Feckenham, now on his mettle, hurried back to the Tower with the good news."¹⁷ But Jane did not consider such an offer to be good news, for she had no intention of forsaking her faith in order to save her life.

In Act V, Rowe dramatizes this episode in the story of Jane Gray, though he compresses the events, bringing out most of the action through a dialogue between Pembroke and Gardiner. Pembroke, still madly in love with Jane, dashes in to stay the execution, explaining breathlessly to Gardiner that "Mary, our Royal Ever-gracious Mistress,/Has . . . Granted the lives of Guilford and his Wife./Full, and free Pardon!" (V, i, 56). Gardiner, appalled at such a move, hastens to see the queen in an attempt to reverse this ruling. It is he who brings word to Guilford and Jane that they must renounce their faith if they would spare their lives:

By me she signifies her Royal pleasure,
That thou, Lord Guilford, and the Lady Jane,
Do instantly renounce, abjure your Heresy,
And yield Obedience to the See of Rome.
(V, i, 61)

Astonished at such an offer, both Guilford and Jane refuse. Guilford is the more eloquent:

By thee instructed to the fatal Block
I bend my Head with Joy, and think it Happiness
To give my Life a Ransom for my Faith.
(V, i, 63)

With the exception of his relationship to Pembroke, Northumberland's role in the play fairly well parallels his historic role. Beginning with his conversation with Suffolk in which the two men plan their children's wedding until his arrest by the Earl of Arundel, everything Rowe relates regarding Northumberland is corroborated by history. First of all, Northumberland expresses his obvious political intent

in arranging Guilford and Jane's marriage:

She must be here, and lodg'd in Guilford's Arms,
 E;er Edward dies, or all we've done is marr'd.
(I, i, 4)

Next, Pembroke expresses skepticism regarding Northumberland's loyalty to the Anglican faith (I, i, 6). Historically, Northumberland's religious inclinations were merely pragmatic; he could be what he needed to be, though some historians believed that he always, at heart, was Catholic. Ascham observes that Jane and Guilford's wedding was "conducted much in the old Papist fashion" and, as a kind of postscript, he adds that "Northumberland, notwithstanding his pretended zeal for the Reformation, was a Papist at heart."¹⁸ When Northumberland was arrested for treason and sentenced to death following Mary's successful claim, he reverted to Catholicism. In conversation with Gardiner, he wept and said, "I can be of no other faith but yours, . . . I never was of any other, indeed. I complied in King Edward's days only out of ambition, for which I pray God to forgive me--and I promise I will declare that at my death."¹⁹ When Jane, in prison, heard of Northumberland's conversion, she held him in contempt, believing that he did it only to save his life, and she scorned to follow in his train. Rowe does not mention Northumberland's vacillation.

With still other events involving Northumberland, Rowe is also consistently historical. For instance, immediately

¹⁸Cited in Davey, p. 235.

¹⁹Cited in Chapman, p. 165.

upon receiving word of Edward's death, Northumberland makes his move. He gives orders that word of the king's death should be withheld until Jane can be safely established as queen, explaining, "I hold it fit his Death be not made known/ To any but our Friends" (II, 1, 14). The Chronicle of Lady Jane explains the reason for this delay: "Northumberland's intention was to keep the death of the king a secret, until he should have obtained possession of the person of the lady Mary, who had been summoned to visit her brother."²⁰ He hoped to have Jane proclaimed before Mary could act upon the news that her brother had died.

Another historical event involving Northumberland is his riding out to meet Mary and her forces in an effort to keep her from making a claim. In the play, Gardiner, in conversation with Pembroke, reveals that Northumberland has left "To draw his Sword upon the side of Heresy/And War against our Mary's Royal Right." Pembroke acknowledges that he saw Northumberland ride out and mentions that

No Voice of friendly Salutation chear'd him,
None wish'd his Arms might thrive, or bad God-speed him,
But through a staring Gastly-looking Croud,
Unhail'd, unbles'd, with heavy heart he went.
(IV, i, 38-39)

The Chronicle tells that the Duke of Suffolk desired to ride out against Mary in his daughter's behalf, and at first this was agreed upon. But Jane wept when informed of the plan and requested that her father be allowed to say with her. The

²⁰John Gough Nichols, editor, Queen Jane and Queen Mary (New York: AMS Press, 1968), p. 1 f.n.

Council agreed and chose Northumberland in his stead. As Northumberland rode with his men through Shordich, he said to one of them, "The people prease to see us, but not one saith God speed us." Holinshed says it was because "the hearts of the people [were] mightilie bent unto [Mary]."²¹ Later, in the same scene, the Duke of Suffolk breaks the news to Jane and Guilford that Northumberland's cause (and theirs) is lost. Not even Northumberland's own men remained faithful. Suffolk describes the actions of his army; it shrank from him,

Moulder'd away and melted from his side,
Like falling Hail thick strown upon the Ground,
Which, e're we can essay to count, is vanish'd.
(IV, i, 48)

Fuller employs a similar analogy to describe what really happened: "His army like a sheep left part of his fleece on every brush it came by, at every stage and corner some conveying themselves from him, till his Souldiers were wash'd away before any storm of warre fell upon them."²² Suffolk then describes the falling away of Northumberland himself, saying he was "forc'd with heavy Heart and watry Eye" to proclaim Mary in Cambridge (IV, i, 48). The Chronicle of Queen Jane relates the same story. Both Rowe and the chronicler then tell how Northumberland was arrested, Rowe saying he was arrested by the Earl of Arundel and the chronicler saying by "the mayre of the towne of Cambridge."²³ With this, Rowe drops Northumberland from the play, but he continues his skillful weaving of fact and fantasy.

²¹Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and*

Although in actuality the Council informed Jane that she was Edward's successor, in the play Guilford breaks the news to her; however, her reaction in the play is akin to her reaction before the Council. She swooned as the magnitude of what was told to her sank into her consciousness. And then she protested that she did not want to be queen. Fuller says that "she lifted not up her least finger to put the Diadem on her self, but was onely contented to sit still, whilst others endeavored to crown her; or rather was so farre from biting at the bait of Sovereignty, that unwillingly she opened her mouth to receive it."²⁴ Durant defends her by pointing out that she consented only after her mother-in-law insisted and her husband commanded her to accept; as an obedient wife, she followed her husband's wishes.²⁵ Rowe's Jane protests that to be so suddenly and whimsically made queen is unthinkable. "Are Crowns and Empire . . . /Trifles of such light moment, to be left/Like some rich Toy?" Keenly aware of the crushing responsibilities being thrust upon her, she cries out again and again that the throne is not a thing to be desired. Rather she views it as a "Burthen," a "Misfortune," a "Sorrow"--all designed to "Make a Wretch of me for ever" (III, i, 32). In an outburst of unusual candor she flings a challenge:

Is it to be a Queen, to sit aloft
 In solemn, dull, uncomfortable State,
 The flatter'd Idol of a Servile Court?
 Is it to draw a pompous train along,

²⁴ Fuller, p. 309.

²⁵ Durant, *The Tudors*, p. 100.

A Pageant, for the wondering Crowd to gaze at?
 Is it in wantonness of Pow'r, to Reign,
 And make the World subservient to my Pleasure?
 Is it not rather to be Greatly Wretched,
 To Watch, to Toil, to take a sacred Charge,
 To bend each Day before high Heaven, and own,
 This People hast thou trusted to my Hand,
 And at my Hand, I know, thou shalt require 'em?
 (III, i, 33)

Jane's reluctance to become queen inspires Northumberland, Suffolk, and Guilford to use her faith as a club of persuasion. They paint bloody pictures of what life will be like under Mary, who will pervert the faithful. Guilford, in addition, appeals to Jane's loyalty to England, and in a burst of patriotism cries out:

Oh! my Country!
 Oh! Fairest Albion, Empress of the Deep,
 How have thy Noblest Sons with stubborn Valour
 Stood to the last, dy'd many a Field in Blood,
 In dear Defence of Birth-right and their Laws!
 (III, i, 35)

Against such bombastic arguments, poor Jane is helpless, and at last she mournfully complies with their wishes: "Take me," she says. "Crown me." And then prophetically she foretells what will befall her:

Yes, I will Die
 For that Eternal Truth my Faith is fix'd on,
 And that dear Native Land which gave me Birth.
 (III, i, 37)

Thus does Rowe conclude the third act with grandiose declarations of love for God and country, faithful in his portrayal of Jane as a reluctant queen persuaded to ascend the throne only from a profound sense of duty to her God and her nation. Such a view is not only historically accurate but would also be popular with the eighteenth-century audience for whom Rowe was writing. As has been stated, a sense of

morality was creeping back upon the English stage, and Rowe was peculiarly capable of taking advantage of the trend.

During this same act Rowe alludes to several minor historical concerns. For instance, while justifying the Council's actions in proclaiming her queen, Guilford points out that Jane has royal blood. Jane Gray, of course, was Henry VIII's great-niece. Her mother, Lady Frances, the Duchess of Suffolk, was the daughter of Mary, Queen of France and her husband Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk. This Mary was the sister of Henry VIII and daughter of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York. Lady Jane, then, was the great-granddaughter of Henry VII. She was mentioned in Henry VIII's will as being in line to the throne after the following persons: Edward VI; heirs by Katherine Parr, his wife at the time of his death; Mary, his daughter by Katherine of Aragon; and Princess Elizabeth, his daughter by Anne Boleyn. There is a second interesting sidelight to Jane's ancestry. She was James I's cousin (he was Henry VII's great-great-grandson). James I's daughter Elizabeth married the elector of Hanover, and her son became George I of England, succeeding Anne, James I's great-granddaughter. Thus Lady Jane Gray and the Princess of Wales, to whom Rowe dedicated his play were related by marriage.²⁶

A second historical allusion in Act III concerns the Duchess of Suffolk's right to the throne. Jane protests that

²⁶Edward P. Cheyney, A Short History of England (Dallas: Ginn & Co., 1904), p. 543.

she cannot be queen because

A thousand and a thousand Bars oppose me,
 Rise in my Way and intercept my Passage,
 Ev'n you, my gracious Mother, what must you be,
 E'er I can be a Queen?
 (III, i, 30)

The Duchess replies simply that she will be mother of the queen and nothing more. Then she adds that she will sacrifice herself to this end:

Yes, I will give up all my Share of Greatness,
 And live in low Obscurity forever,
 To see thee rais'd, thou Darling of my Heart,
 And fix'd upon a Throne.
 (III, i, 30)

But Pollino, the historian, relates that not all of England would agree that the Duchess should step aside in favor of Jane. Some citizens were indignant to see her performing the role of train-bearer for her daughter and behaving obsequiously to her, a situation they found to be "a most despicable and humiliating sight."²⁷ Davey indicates that Frances did not relinquish her claim willingly; he describes her as "very sore" about being overlooked.²⁸ Chapman explains that Northumberland felt it necessary to set her aside because she was headstrong and not easily manipulated; his power would be greatly diminished if she should gain the throne. For this reason, he much preferred seeing her young daughter become queen.²⁹

²⁷Cited in Davey, pp. 253-54.

²⁸Davey, p. 240 f.n.

²⁹Chapman, pp. 69-70.

A third historical allusion in Act III is to the matter of the succession. Northumberland remarks that

The Daughters of our late great Master Henry,
Stand both by Law excluded from Succession.
To make all firm,
And fix a Pow'r unquestion'd in your Hand,
Edward by Will bequeath'd his Crown to you
And the Concurring Lords in Council met,
Have ratified the Gift.
(III, i, 31-32)

This is true, of course, but Northumberland fails to mention that Henry VIII did not disinherit his daughters; Edward VI did. At first glance it would seem that Edward had the right to follow his father's example in choosing who should succeed him, but Henry had the authority of Parliament endorsing his decision; Edward did not. Had he gained Parliamentary support for his action, Jane might not have died. Although Jane wonders, in the play, whether Edward's will or twenty men sitting in Council have the authority to make her queen and refers to her "doubtful Title" (III, i, 35), Rowe does not attempt to develop all the intrigues which resulted in placing Jane on the throne.

Although the fourth act is largely taken up with events involving Pembroke and Guilford, none of which have any historical basis, one major historical event is dealt with--the removal of Jane from the throne. The first hint of trouble comes when Jane tells Guilford that "The faithless Councillors/ Are fled from hence to join the Princess Mary" (IV, i, 47). Later the Duke of Suffolk reports on Northumberland's treasonous actions toward Jane. Finally the Duchess of Suffolk, filled

with remorse, lets Jane know that she is no longer queen. She willingly takes upon herself the blame for directing her daughter to such ruin. She implies that the people are fickle:

Mary is come, and the revolting Londoners,
Who beat the Heavens with thy applauded Name,
Now crowd to meet and hail her as their Queen.
(IV, i, 49)

Chapman describes a quite different attitude on the part of the Duchess. She requested and received an audience with Queen Mary, but when she came into the queen's presence, she "wasted no time over her daughter's misdemeanours. . . . Neither she nor Suffolk made any attempt to exculpate Jane, or to see her. She had failed; they must try to ignore her existence." Instead their purpose was to prove their own innocence.³⁰

In the scene wherein Jane and Guilford are taken prisoner, Rowe interjects a reminder of romance. When Gardiner gives the order for them to be imprisoned, he instructs the Lieutenant of the Tower to keep them separated so that they cannot converse with one another. Jane reacts by saying, "That Stroke was unexpected," and Guilford seems astonished: "Wo't thou part us?" (IV, i, 51). Jane in reality, did not mind being separated from Guilford. In fact, from the day of her imprisonment until she watched his butchered body being returned from the gallows, she neither saw nor spoke with him again, even though he tried to see her before he died. Chapman says it is even possible that Jane was able completely to forget her husband.³¹ In the play Guilford is successful in his attempt

³⁰Chapman, pp. 156-57.

³¹Chapman, p. 202.

to see Jane before they die; thus Rowe gains another romantic moment (V, i, 59-60, 63).

When Jane is, in a moment, transformed from queen of the realm to traitor to Mary, she remains calm. Rowe, true to the historic Jane's character, lets her explain her source of strength. Guilford marvels at her spirit:

Oh teach me! say, what Energy Divine
Inspires thy softer Sex and tender Years
With such unshaken Courage?

Jane replies with admirable assurance:

Truth and innocence;
A conscious Knowledge rooted in my Heart,
That to have sav'd my Country was my Duty.
(V, i, 52)

Then Jane comforts Guilford by reminding him that they shall meet again on the other side of death.

The major event of the final act is the execution of Jane and Guilford, which Rowe accurately depicts. But action involving Pembroke's efforts to spare Jane and Guilford has no basis in history, aside from the attempts by Mary to convert Jane to Catholicism, which would have allowed Mary to keep Jane from the gallows. For Mary did not desire to see her young cousin executed. She delayed five months before finally taking action, because "her own disposition was inclined finally to pardon her, yet necessity of State was such, as she must be put to death."³² In the play there is no obvious time lapse between the events, since all seem to rush along to the foreordained conclusion.

³²Fuller, p. 311.

Rowe faithfully portrays Jane's last hours, but he continues to contrive Guilford's character, for the historical Guilford was hardly the stoic Rowe creates; instead, he went to his death weeping. Holinshed describes the scene:

The twelwe of Februaire being mondaie,
about ten of the clocke, there went out of the
tower to the scaffold on the tower hill, the
lord Gilford Dudlie. . . . Then holding up his
eies and hands to heaven with teares, . . . he
was beheaded.

Rowe foregoes the morbid business of Jane's seeing her husband's severed carcass pass by beneath her window, but Holinshed details the scene:

His bodie being laid in a cart, and his head in a
cloth, was brought into the Chappell within the
tower, where the ladie Jane, whose lodging was in
maister Partridges house, did see his dead carcasse
taken out of the cart.³³

Rowe's portrayal of Jane's behavior as a prisoner and of her quiet dignity bolstered by her religious faith in her last hours is historically accurate. Rowe shows her kneeling in prayer and allows her numerous opportunities to express her faith. He shows the scaffold prepared on Tower Hill, a private place of execution away from prying, curious eyes. He recounts the tender moments with her ladies, who assist her in preparing for death, and he tells of the gifts she leaves. Jane asks for help, then makes her bequests:

Help me to disarray,
And fit me for the Block: Do this last Service,
And do it cheerfully.
. These few Trifles,
The Pledges of a dying Mistress' Love,

³³Holinshed, IV, 22.

Receive and share among you. Thou, Maria,
 Hast been my old, my very faithful Servant;
 In dear Remembrance of thy Love, I leave thee
 This Book, the Law of Everlasting Truth.
 (V, i, 64)

Rowe omits all accounts of Jane's defense, leaving it for Pembroke to speak in her behalf. But in reality Jane did not die passively. She fought for her life, but never begged. In a farewell letter to her father, she said she was "constrained" to accept the Crown, and the queen then interpreted this as "consent."³⁴ To Mary she declared "that she was willing to extenuate her fault, if such great faults may be extenuated, by a full and ingenuous confession." She then recounted the events which placed the Crown on her head and asserted that she was "the passive victim of [Northumberland and Suffolk's] ambition."³⁵ Her last words were also a defense, although in the play her last words are a prayer for the people of England.

Fuller's description of Jane as a model prisoner and saint closely parallels Rowe's rendition of her character. He tells that

she made misery itself amiable by her pious and patient behavior: Adversity, her night-clothes, becoming her as well as her day-dressing, by reason of her pious deportment. On Tower-hill she most patiently, Christianly, and constantly yielded to God her soul, which by a bad way went to the best end.³⁶

³⁴Pratt, p. 418.

³⁵Agnes Strickland, The Queens of England (London: George Bell & Sons, 1901), II, 572.

The Chronicle of Queen Jane poignantly describes the final minutes of her life:

The saide lady, being nothing at all abashed, neither with feare of her owne deathe, which then approached, . . . came fourthe, the leuetenaunt leding hir, in the same gown wherin she was arrayned, hir countenance nothing abashed, neither her eyes enything moysted with teares, although her ij. gentylwomen . . . wonderfully wept, with a boke in hir hande, wheron she praied all the way till she cam to the saide scoffolde, wheron when she was mounted, she sayd to the people standing therabout: "Good people, I am come hether to die, and by a lawe I am condemned to the same. The fact against the queen's highness was unlawful, and the consenting thereunto by me: but, touching the procurement and desire thereof by me, or on my behalf, I do wash my hands thereof in innocency before God, and the face of you, good Christian people, this day. . . I pray you all, good Christian people, to hear me witness that I die a true Christian woman, and that I do look to be saved by no other mean, but only by the mercy of God.³⁷

Grafton relates that after her address to the people, she repeated a psalm, gave her gloves and handkerchief to one of her ladies and her book to a lieutenant, and untied her gown. One of her ladies handed her a handkerchief to cover her eyes. Then the executioner asked her forgiveness, which she gave. After that she was directed to

stande upon the strawe, which done shee sawe the block, and then she sayde I praye you dispatche me quickly. Then she kneeled downe saying, will you take it off before I laye me down? whereunto the executioner answered, no Madame, then tyed she the Handkerchefe about her eyes, and feeling for the block she sayde, where is it, where is it? One of the standers by guyded her thereunto, and shee layde downe her head upon the blocke, and then stretched foorth her bodie, and sayde. Lorde into thy hands I commend my spirite, and so finished her life in the yere of our Lorde, 1553, the xij. day of Februaire.³⁸

³⁷Nichols, pp. 55-6.

³⁸Grafton, pp. 543-44.

Rowe concludes his drama with an outburst of grief and remorse from Pembroke which is akin, in spirit at least, to the mad grief which fell upon Judge Morgan, who had pronounced sentence upon Jane. Foxe describes his raving: "[he] cried continually to have the lady Jane taken away from him; and so ended his life." Foxe calls Jane and Guilford "two innocents in comparison of them that sat upon them. For they did but ignorantly accept that, which the others had willingly devised, and, by open proclamation, consented to take from others, and give to them."³⁹ The attitude of Judge Morgan, Jane's contemporary, and Foxe, the martyrologist, is the attitude which prevails in history regarding Jane. Rowe faithfully caught the spirit of the tragedy which surrounded Lady Jane. In addition he faithfully reproduced her character as represented by the chronicles. In the Epilogue Rowe reasserts Jane's patriotic zeal, claiming she "Dy'd for the Land for which she wish'd to Live." Then he agains pays tribute to the Princess of Wales, seeming to liken her to Lady Jane. His final comment justifies his religious theme:

If from these Scenes, to guard your Faith you learn,
 If for your laws to shew a just Concern,
 If you are taught to dread a Popish Reign,
 Our Beautious Patriot has not dy'd in Vain.
V, i, 57)

In these two plays, The Tragedy of Jane Shore and The Tragedy of the Lady Jane Gray, Rowe never strays so far from history that he loses his historical perspective; on the other hand, he never allows the historical facts to squeeze his story.

³⁹Berry, p. 425.

In both plays, while he relies on a framework of history, he still permits his fancy freely to invent characters and situations which would appeal to his audience. In nearly every instance, when he strays from history, it is in order to create or to augment a romantic theme. In numerous details Rowe illustrates his interest in the history of England and at the same time skillfully creates drama from his nation's past.

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