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Christa Jansohn (Ed.)

Queen Elizabeth I: Past and Present

LIT

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Preface

By *Christa Jansohn* (Bamberg)

This interdisciplinary volume about “Queen Elizabeth I: Past and Present” marks the 400th anniversary of the death of the Queen, one of England’s most celebrated monarchs and a highly intelligent and successful ruler, whose name became the symbol of one of the most memorable chapters of England’s history.

It is less than two years ago that the Centre for British Studies in Bamberg commemorated the passing of another celebrated English ruler, Queen Victoria.¹ Thinking of these two monarchs and of course the present Majesty, Elizabeth II, it seems that Britain has been more fortunate in her Queens than in her Kings. Some of the most famously successful kings, like Henry V, enjoyed the briefest of reigns, and those who occupied the throne for the longest periods, like Henry VI, lost most of what their predecessors had achieved, if they did not lose their reason as well. Just think of the madness of King George.

Fortunately, the subject of our conference (22-24 May 2003) was Queen Elizabeth I, a monarch who “has most of the qualities of a star”, as characterized by David Starkey², author of the acclaimed BBC channel four series *Elizabeth I*. The *Sunday Times* noted in April 2003 that Elizabeth I – whether portrayed by Sarah Bernhardt or Judi Dench – was the only monarch who was consistently good box-office. This newspaper also drew attention to the international fame of the Queen, and I may be forgiven for feeling some local pride when I saw what it says about it:

What nobody can doubt is her grip on the popular imagination. You could always leave the country – but remember that Elizabeth worship has fallen prey to globalisation. America has anniversary exhibitions in Washington, California and Chicago, and next month, the University of Bamberg, in northern Bavaria, no less, is holding an international conference on Elizabeth I: Past and Present.³

¹ Cf. *In the Footsteps of Queen Victoria. Wege zum Viktorianischen Zeitalter*, ed. Christa Jansohn (Münster: LIT, 2003).

² Quoted after Peter Whittle, “Who’s queen!”, *Sunday Times*, 27 April 2003.

³ *Ibid.* The conference was reviewed by Oliver Jung, “Oscar für die beste historische Nebenrolle”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 3 June 2003, p. 36.

Imagining the Illusive/Elusive? Printed Accounts of Elizabethan Festivals

By Axel Stähler (Bonn)

In a “blurb”, whose sales-effective value would seem to be rather questionable, in 1592 Joseph Barnes, printer to the University of Oxford, introduced a new addition to his output: “I gathered these copies in loose papers I know not how imperfect, therefore must I craue a double pardon; of him that penned them, and those that reade them”, he says, and then concludes, “The matter of small moment, and therefore the offence of no great danger.”¹ Indeed, compared with most of the lofty subjects usually dealt with in the works that left his press the little quarto booklet of some 24 pages entitled *Speeches Delivered to Her Maiestie this Last Progresse, at the Right Honorable the Lady Rvssels, at Bissam, the Right Honorable the Lorde Chandos at Sudley, at the Right Honorable the Lord Norris, at Ricorte* may seem to be of overwhelming triviality. It was nothing like *The Pilgrimage to Paradise* by Nicholas Breton published by Barnes in the same year 1592, nor did it compare with the many Latin tracts and “godly and fruitfull”² sermons printed by Barnes, and it remains then only to ask why the printer took it upon himself to publish the imperfect “loose papers” that somehow must have come into his possession at all. Most likely, of course, he was commissioned to print an account of the festivities. Yet Barnes’s “blurb” suggests that the author was, in fact, unaware of their collection and subsequent publication. It is to be noted, however, that in spite of this suggestion and the general deprecation of the little booklet the pardon craved by Barnes of the author at the same time highlights the very fact of authorship, if anonymous³, and of the integrity of the literary composition. Yet still, the matter is by assertion of the printer only “of

¹ *Speeches Delivered to Her Maiestie this Last Progresse, at the Right Honorable the Lady Rvssels, at Bissam, the Right Honorable the Lorde Chandos at Sudley, at the Right Honorable the Lord Norris, at Ricorte* (Oxford, 1592) (STC 7600), sig. A1v.

² See STC 24277: *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475-1640*, ed. William A. Jackson, F.S. Ferguson and Katharine F. Pantzer, 2nd rev. and enl. ed. (London, 1986-1991).

³ The speeches collected in Barnes’s booklet are, in fact, attributed to John Lyly, see David M. Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry 1558-1642* (London, 1971), p. 62, and Jean Wilson, *Entertainments for Elizabeth I*, *Studies in Elizabethan and Renaissance Culture*, 2 (Woodbridge, 1980), p. 96.

small moment" although it seems as if in saying so he referred to the festive occasion itself and its elusive splendour rather than to the correct reproduction of the literary text. Modern scholarship would certainly take issue with such an evaluation. For while some doubts may be entertained as to the aesthetic quality of many of the like panegyric texts, the momentous significance of court festivals in Early Modern European culture has long been recognised. An ever growing number of scholarly works on the phenomenon proves the point. In fact, in critical opinion festivals have been established to have been instrumental to the creation and the symbolical enactment and representation of power structures in Early Modern European societies.¹

1. Ceremonies, Spectacles, and their Records

To our day ceremonial remains a vehicle for regulating social intercourse and access to authority. In general it may be useful to distinguish two types: an everyday procedure governing the daily routine of the court on the one hand and particular festive occasions on the other. The latter, as has been suggested by Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly in a recent article, may itself usefully be divided into two main types of event: ceremonies and spectacles.² Ceremonies, according to Watanabe-O'Kelly, are "those events which do not just demonstrate power relations in symbolic fashion but which actually bring power structures into being"³, they are "repeated according to a pre-ordained pattern of words and gestures, often enshrined in official documents but always sanctioned by usage and custom"⁴ – among them coronations, royal and princely marriages, baptisms and entries. Spectacles, on the other hand, are "theatrical events", they are "representations of the nature of power, their theme often the bringing of order out of chaos".⁵ Which, according to Watanabe-O'Kelly, "is not to say that ceremonies do not resemble performances, but rather that they are not performances in the same way that operas, ballets, *carrousels* and firework

¹ See, for instance, Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, "Early Modern European Festivals – Politics and Performance, Event and Record", in: *Court Festivals of the European Renaissance. Art, Politics and Performance*, ed. James R. Mulryne and Elizabeth Goldring (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 15-25, p. 16.

² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

dramas are."¹ Indeed, both types may be mixed in the actual festive event and both rely on the interaction of "performers" and audience, for they achieve significance and meaning only when an agreement exists between the two.

At the court of Elizabeth I ceremonial was not intrinsically different from Continental practice, although its imagery, revolving around the concept of the Virgin Queen, may, to a degree, be considered idiosyncratic and adapted to the particular situation of an unmarried Protestant Queen of a country at the fringe of a Europe torn apart by power play and religious strife.² Yet occasions for ceremony and spectacle were no less important in England than on the Continent, if with a notable emphasis on the latter type of festival events. For obvious reasons there were no royal wedding festivities or baptisms, nor (albeit for other reasons) were there any visits by foreign rulers and the concomitant entries.³ Indeed, up to the time of Elizabeth's funeral in 1603 throughout the forty-five years of her reign the single most significant event of "ceremony" was her own entry into London and her subsequent coronation in January 1559.⁴ Instances of spectacle were far more frequent during the same period of time. Most conspicuous among them were, perhaps, the royal progresses⁵, certainly blessings in dis-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

² See Ulrich Suerbaum, "Performing Royalty. The Entertainment at Elvetham and the Cult of Elisa", in: *Word and Action in Drama: Studies in Honour of Hans-Jürgen Diller on the Occasion of His 60th Birthday*, ed. Günter Ahrends et al. (Trier, 1994), pp. 53-64, p. 55, and, in more detail, Frances A. Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London, 1975); Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (London, 1977), and, more recently, Helen Hackett, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen: Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, rpt. (Basingstoke, 1996).

³ Charles V had visited Henry VIII in 1522, and only in 1606 did Christian IV of Denmark visit his brother-in-law James I of England (VI of Scotland).

⁴ The Queen's entry was commemorated in the anonymous *The Passage of our most draad Soueraigne lady Quene Elyzabeth through the cite of London to Westminster the daye before her coronacion* (London, 1559) (STC 7590). Also in: *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. John Nichols [1788], rpt. of the new edition in three volumes (London, 1823), rpt. (New York, 1965), I, 38-60. The magnificent funeral of Philip Sidney is another instance of "ceremony" of this kind which was, however, not royal. For a discussion of Sidney's funeral and Thomas Lant's illustrated account, *Sequitur celebritas et pompa funebris* (London, 1588), see Elizabeth Goldring, "The Funeral of Sir Philip Sidney and the Politics of Elizabethan Festival", in: Mulryne/Goldring, *Court Festivals*, pp. 199-224.

⁵ Among the best known progresses, all of which were documented by contemporary festival accounts, are the Queen's visits to Bristol in 1574, to Kenilworth in 1575, to

guise for the nobles and cities who had the honour but also the expense of entertaining the monarch and her court. In 1823 the untiring collector of historical documents and antiquary John Nichols managed to fill three heavy tomes with documents relating to *Progresses, Public Processions, &c. of Queen Elizabeth* (1st edition 1788).¹ Documentation therefore may seem rather adequate. However, only a minuscule fraction of these documents was originally intended for public distribution and published at the time. Probably due to this relative dearth of contemporary printed festival accounts in England as well as to the distinctly more lavish furnishings and documentation of festivals in Continental traditions, in the massive *Spectaculum Europaeum*, a compendium of essays on theatre and spectacle in Europe between 1580 and 1750 edited by Pierre Béhar and Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly in 1999, a mere five pages, including bibliographical references and an illustration, are dedicated to festivals in England.²

In this article I would like to add to the number of scholarly works attempting to close the gap so evident in the *Spectaculum Europaeum*. For this purpose I will first give some general reflections on the genre of the festival book and its particular use in Elizabethan England. My specific concern will be to enquire into different strategies of making the reader imagine the illusive (or illusory) and the elusive (or ephemeral) recurring in festival books of the Elizabethan period. The homophone adjectives are both, in their own way, very apt to characterise key features of festivals of the Early Modern period in Europe. In most of them it was attempted to create an illusion, Wild Men appearing in the woods, sea-gods ploughing through the waves or something much more elaborate altogether like temples seemingly being transformed into rock and then, to the tremors of a terrible earthquake, into another much more splendid edifice. This kind of scenic/dramatic illusion, as it may perhaps be termed, is, however, not the only illusion conveyed by both festival and festival book. Usually they also convey the sometimes no less illusory image of political power. The punning title of Stephen Orgel's study of the Caroline masque, *The Illusion of*

Norwich in 1578, to Woodstock in 1585, to Elvetham and Cowdrey in 1591, to Bisham, Sudley and Rycorte in 1592, and to Wanstead in 1598.

¹ See p. 49, note 4.

² See *Spectaculum Europaeum. Theatre and Spectacle in Europe. Histoire du spectacle en Europe (1580-1750)*, ed. Pierre Béhar and Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Wolfenbütteler Arbeiten zur Barockforschung, 31 (Wiesbaden, 1993), pp. 699-704. The corresponding sections on Italy and France comprise 18 and 16 pages respectively, see *ibid.*, pp. 643-61 and 663-79.

Power (1975), may come to mind here.¹ The quality of these illusions, certainly of the scenic/dramatic ones, and sometimes also of the political ones, was, owing to their very nature, usually rather elusive. Once performed, hardly any trace was left of them: a scroll, perhaps, with the text of a speech that may have been handed to the monarch, an entry in a journal or figures for the payments for costumes. The festival book was an attempt to address the transitoriness of the historical event. It gives an account of the scenic/dramatic illusions and is itself "illusive" in that it is the mediator between some historical event, contained in place and time, and a (usually) widely dispersed audience to which it conveys an "edited" version of this event. As Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly states, "it is in the nature of festivals that they be recorded"² – mainly for reasons of self-representation, of propaganda, and of *memoria*. One conclusion Watanabe-O'Kelly draws from this is that

[thus] any modern scholarly discussion of festivals must of necessity concern itself with the means by which a festival has been recorded, for it is obvious that we only know of festivals because they have been recorded. [...] We can never discuss the actual festival. We are always discussing the records of that festival, in whatever form they have come down to us.³

This may seem a rather unnecessary reminder. But not so. More often than not even scholarly work on festivals slides into a descriptive mode seemingly accepting the printed account at face value, although sometimes the texts themselves make their readers aware of the illusive (illusory) quality not only of the festival event but also of its textual witness.

2. Festival Books: Texts and Contexts

As a mode of princely representation the courtly festival in Early Modern Europe was an instrument of rule which served to demonstrate palpably the glory, the (sometimes illusory) power and usually also the political interest of those celebrated, who were frequently also its organisers. Mediated by the new print media, festivals acquired, if in a Eurocentric sense, "universal" significance and, in a temporal dimension, "eternity". In a process of accumulation and reference a particular literary form and a system of refer-

¹ Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theatre in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley, 1975).

² Watanabe-O'Kelly, "Early Modern European Festivals", p. 19.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

ence emerged in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries which were disseminated all over Europe as well as in her overseas possessions. Through this system of reference festival accounts and the festivals thus documented became available as exemplary instances of princely representation. At the same time, within a rather comprehensive discourse of art, festivals and festival accounts provided models for critical examination and, frequently, appropriation for the planners and organisers of other festivals: models *inter alia* of "performed" drama, poetry or prose, of executed works of art and (mostly ephemeral) architecture, of choreographic patterns, of costume and stage design, of music and ceremonial and, most importantly in the present context, also of literary modes of representation. The balance of these several elements varies of course in different festival books, owing to the form of the festival itself, to the particular type of festival book in question (for there are distinct types¹), and to the interests and abilities of its author.² The objective of all festival books, however, regardless how matter-of-fact they pretend to be, is to re-constitute an event with literary, and sometimes also visual, means and thereby to create a new reality at least once removed from the actual event. In other words, what the festival book does, whether it be acknowledged or not, is to create a fiction.

As a medium of political discourse the Early Modern European festival and the message(s) it carries are always directed at an audience.³ Usually they are intended to confirm the legitimacy and authority of princely rule or to pay homage to the prince or both. Yet festival and festival book do not necessarily have the same objective. Once the festival has been "translated" into a festival book the manipulative potential inherent in the discursive and material aspects of the festival itself is run through another manipulative filter. To render the multimedially mediated experience of a festival event by means of the printed word or image in itself requires a selective representation. This very selection is manipulative and the accents it sets by necessity diverge from the "reality" of the event and from the observers' perceptions. Frequently this shift is deliberate, with the intention of having

¹ See Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, "Festival Books in Europe from Renaissance to Rococo", *The Seventeenth Century*, 3 (1988), 181-201, pp. 183-91, and Axel Stähler, "Perpetuall Monuments": *Die Repräsentation von Architektur in der italienischen Festdokumentation (ca. 1515-1640) und der englischen court masque (1604-1640)* (Münster, 2000), pp. 12-15.

² See Watanabe-O'Kelly, who also makes this point in her "Festival Books", pp. 195-96 and in her "Early Modern European Festivals", pp. 22-23.

³ For this and the following paragraphs, cf. Stähler, "Perpetuall Monuments", pp. 41-44.

the festival book represent an idealised, ready-interpreted version of the event and correct any accidents or accidentals of its enactment.

Subject to the limitations of the printed word or image, the festival book lacks the immediacy of the enacted festival. It can neither attain nor retain the impact of the material display of splendour of the historical event. Yet by dint of the literary and rhetorical means on which it relies it may succeed in sketching a coherent outline of the historical event in the mind of the reader, more coherent perhaps than the perception of any individual observer of the same event, bringing together and focusing the discursive elements of the festival and representations of its material aspects. Prerequisite to this success is the readers' ability to abstract and to draw analogies to similar phenomena familiar from first- or second-hand experience. The festival book thus aims not so much at a reconstruction in faithful detail in the manner of a photographic print. Rather it seeks to provide a choice of "realistic" elements which in the context of the festival book may serve to constitute an impression of the historical event, in effect, to re-constitute it, to create a "virtual", streamlined and already interpreted reality. For this the contemporary reader could usually fall back on two established systems of reference which ideally complemented each other. One is that of real festival events, contained in the individual and "collective" memories and providing the necessary models to complete the images evoked by the festival book. The other is that of festival books which, subject to accessibility, supply an archive of applicable literary analogies. Both systems of reference facilitate the re-cognition of internalised conventions and images and thus provide the tools for the construction of meaning. They may serve, on the one hand, to redress by substitution the lack of immediate experience. On the other hand they may provide a framework for the interpretation of a selectively constituted virtual reality.

Obviously, both reader and observer also need to tap into other systems of reference: mythology, for instance, or ceremonial, art, architecture, music and literature, to name but a few. All of these conjoin with the more narrowly defined systems of reference of historical festival events and festival books to facilitate the constitution of a meaningful "virtual" reality by the reader. While the first of these is no longer available today, the latter may be retrieved, if incompletely, from the number of festival books extant. Additional information may be gleaned from other sources: eye-witness reports, account books, sketches for costume or stage design, outlines of iconographic programmes and sometimes even surviving decorative

elements.¹ This kind of material has frequently been employed to contribute towards reconstructions of the sequence of events, the decorative furnishings and the socio-historical or political contexts of particular festivals. More often than not it has been overlooked that, by seeking to re-constitute reality, the festival book itself does indeed create a new, if virtual, reality and that it does so regardless of the probably quite outrageous expenditure for costumes or the actual complexity of an iconographic programme. Indeed, I would argue that this kind of supplementary information may even distort our view on the “virtual” reality as constituted by the festival book. (This is not, of course, meant to discredit any research done in this field but rather to open up a new perspective on festival books and to advocate their critical examination as “fictional” literature.)

Much more important, in my opinion, is the re-constitution of those contemporary systems of reference bearing on the subject. For while the genre of the festival book may have been developed with a vague concept of posterity in mind, the individual festival book is of course primarily directed at a contemporary readership. More precisely, different types of festival books are generally directed at different readerships with varying degrees of access to these systems of reference. The “virtual” reality is thus supposed to be constituted without having recourse to the kinds of additional information outlined above. For this reason my interest in this paper is focused on some particular festival books and the ways in which they enable the (contemporary) reader to constitute this virtual reality or, in other words, how (in establishing their own illusive quality) to imagine the illusive and the elusive of the festival event. On my part this is of course a kind of “imagining the illusive/elusive” squared because the pertinent systems of reference I mentioned above are either irretrievably lost or themselves subject to reconstruction. In fact, this approach seems analogous rather to the opening of a box in a box in a box in a box and so on almost to infinity. I will therefore attempt to confine myself to peering under the lid of only one of those boxes. The particular box I am interested in is labelled “Elizabethan festival books: system of reference of, progress entertainments, things that never happened, rain”. In other words, I will look at some Elizabethan festival books of progress entertainments, taking them to be parts of a particular system of reference and well aware of the fact that this can be only a very tentative step towards its reconstruction. As an example of the way in which they constitute a “virtual” reality I will focus on

¹ See, for instance, recently Peter Davidson, “The *Theatrum* for the Entry of Claudia de’ Medici and Federigo Ubaldo della Rovere into Urbino, 1621”, in: Mulryne/Goldring, *Court Festivals*, pp. 311-34.

the representation of the doubly illusive/elusive, that is on the representation of entertainments that were never enacted.

3. Of Fairies and Drowned Rats: Norwich 1578

The general validity of Dr Johnson’s profound observation that “when two Englishmen meet, their first talk is of the weather”¹ seems to be borne out even by the small number of festival books produced in the Elizabethan period. According to their evidence, rain appears to have been a regular feature of the English entertainments and one may wonder why none of the impresarios thought of actually making it a part of the show. Its entertainment value was, however, not lost on the poet Thomas Churchyard, who was one of those responsible for the reception of the Queen in Norwich in 1578. “But now note what befell after this great businesse and preparation”, he laments:

for as the Queenes Highnesse was appoynted to come to hir coatch, and the Lords and Courtiers were readie to mount on horsebacke, there fell suche a shoure of rayne (and in the necke thereof came such a terrible thunder) that every one of us were driven to seeke for coverte and most comfort; insomuche, that although some of us in boate stooode under a bridge, we were all so dashed and washed, that it was a greater pastime to see us looke like drowned rattes, than to have beheld the uttermost of the shewes rehearsed.²

Churchyard suffers, however, not only a thorough drenching. His account of the festivities reads unexpectedly rather like a narration of the mishaps which befell the staging of his shows. With rain and thunder and the monarch not turning up where she was expected, improvisation was called for and – according to his own testimony – Churchyard excelled. Indeed, his determination to provide the Queen with some entertainment in spite of the waywardness of things seems almost to foreshadow some of the guileless tenacity of the good Parson Adams. Unperturbed by lacking support and

¹ Samuel Johnson, *The Idler*, 11 (24 June 1758), in: *The Idler and The Adventurer*, ed. W. Jackson Bate, John M. Bullitt and L.F. Powell, *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, 1963), pp. 36-39, p. 36.

² Thomas Churchyard, *A Discourse of the Queenes Majestie’s Entertainment in Suffolk and Norfolk: With a Description of many Things then presently seene. Devised by Thomas Churchyarde. Gent. With divers shewes of his own invention, sette out at Norwich: And some rehearsall of hir Highnesse retourne from Progresses. Whereunto is adjoynd a Commendation of Sir Humfrey Gilbert’s Ventrous Journey* (London, [1578]), in: Nichols, *Progresses*, II, 179-213, pp. 200-01.

"crossing causes in the Citie"¹ the poet futilely rushes his boy actors from place to place² and finally decides to recycle his ill-fated "Show of the Nymphes": "The nexte day was the Queene to departe the towne; and I, fearing that all my labour shoulde be lost, devised to convert the Nymphes of the water, to the Fairies on the land, as hereafter shall appeare."³ But "[in] the meane while" Churchyard first gives a rather detailed account of what ought to have happened, so "that no one thing that was well meante, should sleepe in silence."⁴

Two entertainments, "The Show of the Nymphes" and "The Show of Manhode and Dezartes", had been planned but, according to Churchyard, were never performed. Yet his description of the way they should have been performed follows the same pattern he had established for the account of his "Show of Chastity" staged earlier in the week with some better luck. Before he commences with the actual description of this entertainment Churchyard explains his narrative technique for the constitution of a "virtual" reality: "and for that you shall (and please you) imagine you see the thing, I have heere set downe the whole manner of the shew, and after that every part as they were played, shall be heere expressed."⁵ His aim is, then, to provide readers with such stimuli as prove to be conducive to have them "imagine" they saw "the thing", that is not only to imagine the dramatic action but to imagine it as having been performed and witnessed by themselves. In effect, the text refers readers indirectly to their own first-hand experience of similar events to enable them to re-constitute this particular entertainment. The poet first gives a narrative summary of his invention, which is called an "argument". Then, emulating the by then well established conventions of dramatic scripts, he prints the speeches of his characters, complete with speech headings and stage directions in the present tense. But before launching into the speeches, Churchyard gives the reader another caution how to proceed: "Nowe, before you reade the partes", he admonishes the reader, "you must throughly note what my discourse thereof hath bin; and carrying that care and good-will with you, the matter shall seeme to have the better life, and I shall thinke my labour and studie well bestowed."⁶

In a similar way does Churchyard provide the arguments of the "Show of Manhode" and the "Show of the Nymphes". Here again does he emphasise

¹ Ibid., p. 188 and p. 211.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 201.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., p. 189.

⁶ Ibid., p. 190.

the role of the reader whose task it is to imagine both entertainments as if they had indeed been performed. Of the "Show of Manhode" he says that "first and foremost you must conceive, that [it] was invented to be playde in a garden, or wheresoever had bene found a convenient place, the Prince then being in presence."¹ Having thus set the intended scene, Churchyard then again supplies the dramatic text: "in order as followeth, in manner of a dialogue, the parts whereof are heere for you to reade at your leysure; and after the same, as the shewe of the Nymphes shoulde have bin, shall their parts followe in lyke sort."² For the "Show of the Nymphes" the setting was to have been somewhat more complex as it required a large hole to be dug in the ground close to the river bank and covered by a large canvas cloth that was to be drawn in several ways with a system of pulleys.³ On the one hand "deconstructing" the illusion, Churchyard on the other hand, enhances the readers' prospects of constituting a "virtual" reality because they are enabled to imagine a likely sequence of events by giving an elaborate description of this simple mechanism and revealing the mechanics of the intended illusion.⁴ Concluding the speeches of the nymphs, Churchyard accordingly refers once again to his description of the mechanical illusion:

Then suddaynely shoulde they all have departed into the ground, where was an heavenly noyse of all kinde of musicke prepared, and nothing seene at all, when the paynted canvas had bin drawn over their heads, [...] as the description thereof doth declare.⁵

But now to Churchyard's resourceful conversion of the nymphs into fairies. It is particularly interesting in the present context because, having "resolved to do somewhat might make the Queene laugh"⁶, the poet's invention plays on the very conventions of entertainments and the spectator's (and reader's) familiarity with the respective systems of reference. For it is the incongruity of costumes and dramatic action which Churchyard, and according to his testimony also the Queen, finds amusing. "And these boyes (you must understand)", he informs the reader, and we see him almost winking, tongue in cheek; these boys

¹ Ibid., p. 201.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 199.

⁴ For the "deconstruction" of the illusion in Early Modern European festival books, see Stähler, "Perpetuall Monuments", p. 43.

⁵ Churchyard, *Discourse*, p. 211.

⁶ Ibid.

were dressed like Nymphes of the water, and were to play by a device and degrees the Phayries, and to daunce (as neare as could be ymaged) like the Phayries. Their attire, and comming so strangely out, I know, made the Queene's Highnesse smyle and laugh withall.¹

We may, however, wonder whether his description of the event is not rather an elaborate re-interpretation. The Queen may have been amused, but was it really intended by Churchyard that she laugh at his show?

All in all, reading between the lines, may the entertainment at Norwich be considered a *débâcle*? Not only were the elements unfavourable. If we are to believe Churchyard, the city's preparations were obviously not sufficient and ill co-ordinated; moreover, the enactment of the entertainments seems to have been hampered by petty differences among the city's dignitaries.² And how are we to interpret that the Queen rode away without listening to the Mayor's final oration in Latin, an occurrence which another account of the festivities informs us of:

Maister Maior brake to my Lord Chamberlaine, that he was to utter to hir Majestie another oration, whereof my Lord seemed to have good lyking: but before they came to the sayde confines, Maister Maior was willed to forbear the utteraunce of the same his oration, bicause it was about seven of the clock, and hir Majestie had then fyve myles to ride. Neverthelesse, he gave to hir Majestie both his orations in writing, whiche she thanked him for.³

What happened to those scrolls, we may wonder? Finally, we may ask whether Churchyard's *Discourse* was not a failure as festival book.

Festival books, as Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly states about the Continental variety, "frequently recount what *ought* to have happened or what the court concerned would *prefer* had happened, rather than what actually did happen".⁴ Churchyard's *Discourse* does certainly not conform to this formula, for what Watanabe-O'Kelly means is that the accidental was purged from the accounts and the event represented in an idealized version. There should have been no talk of "drowned rattes" and the cancelled shows

¹ Ibid.

² See Churchyard, *Discourse*, pp. 188, 198 and 211.

³ Ber[nard] Garter, *The joyfull Receyving of the Queene's most Excellent Majestie into hir Highnesse Citie of Norwich: the things done in the time of hir abode there; and the Dolor of the Citie at hir departure. Wherein are set downe divers Orations in Latine, pronounced to hir Highnesse by Sir Robert Wood, Knight, now Maior of the same Citie, and others: and certaine also delivered to hir Majestie in writing. Every of them turned into English* (London, [1578]), in: Nichols, *Progresses*, II, 136-78, p. 166.

⁴ Watanabe-O'Kelly, "Festival Books", p. 193.

should have been presented not the way they might have been performed but as if they had been performed indeed. Yet the poet seems to have been confident. He announces a sequel to his labours: "looke for presentlye at my handes the rest of that Progresse whiche I am truely instructed of, or may come to my memorie."¹ Furthermore, he is "trusting to set forth other workes as tyme will permitte, and that right shortly, that shall hold you longer tacked, and better please you."² Both ventures, if with "other workes" the poet refers to prospective festival books, seem to have been abortive. Nonetheless, Churchyard must have thought his *Discourse* a proper advertisement for the free-lance purveyor and chronicler of entertainments.

4. Of Fair Weather and Tempestuous Affairs: Kenilworth 1575

Let us talk once more about the weather:

*Friday and Saterday wear thear no open sheawz abrode, becauz the weather enclynde too sum moyster and wynde; that very seasonably temperd the drought and the heat, cauzed by the continuans of fayr weather and sunshyne afore, all the whyle syns her Majestiez thither cumming.*³

I am not aware of any other Elizabethan festival book where the occurrence of some good weather is particularly emphasised.⁴ Of course, we may think, if it is usually rain and storm, they would mention a lucky spell of good weather. Ironically, however, the very fact that the author in this case sketches an Arcadian idyll with the occasional spot of rain tempering the summer's heat is used to argue for his absence from the events he describes. The quote is from Robert Langham's *A Letter: Whearin, part of the Entertainment, untoo the Queenz Maiesty, at Killingworth Castl, in Warwik Sheer, in this Soomerz Progress, 1575, iz signified*. The same entertainment was chronicled by another account, anonymously published as *The*

¹ Churchyard, *Discourse*, p. 182.

² Ibid.

³ Robert Langham [Laneham], *A Letter: Whearin, part of the Entertainment, untoo the Queenz Maiesty, at Killingworth Castl, in Warwik Sheer, in this Soomerz Progress, 1575, iz signified: from a freend officer attendant in the Coourt, unto hiz freend a Citizen, and Merchaunt of London*, in: Nichols, *Progresses*, I, 420-84, p. 441. For editions of the *Letter* see Frederick J. Furnivall, ed., *Robert Laneham's Letter* (London, 1890) and Rutger J. Kuin, *Robert Langham: A Letter* (Leiden, 1983). The alleged author's name occurs in various spellings: Laneham, Lanham, Langham. Of these I adopt the last, following the most recent edition by Kuin.

⁴ See also Langham, *Letter*, in: Nichols, *Progresses*, I, pp. 435, 456 and 468.

Princely Pleasures at the Courte at Kenelwoorth. In his preface to this booklet the London printer Richard Jones informs the reader that “sundry pleasaunt and poeticall inuentions were there expressed, aswell in verse as in prose. All which”, he continues,

haue beene sundrie tymes demaunded for, aswell at my handes, as also of other printers; for that in deede, all studious and well-disposed yong Gentlemen and others were desyrous to be partakers of those pleasures by a profitable publication: I thought meete to trye by all meanes possible if I might recover the true copies of the same, to gratifye all suche as had requyred them at my handes, or might hereafter bee styrred with the lyke desire. And in fine, I have with much trauaile and paine obtained the very true and perfect copies of all that were there presented and executed; ouer and besides, one morall and gallant deuyce, which neuer came to execution, although it were often in a readinesse. And these (being thus collected) I have (for thy comoditie, gentle Reader) now published: the rather, because of a report therof lately imprinted, by the name of “The Pastime of the Progresse;” which (in deede) doth nothing touch the particularitie of euery commendable action, but generally reherseth hir Majestie’s cheerefull entertainment in all places where shee passed [...] which report made verve many the more desirous to have this perfect copy: for that it plainely doth set downe every thing as it was in deede presented, at large: and further doth declare who was the authour and deviser of every poeme and invencion. So that I doubt not but it shall please and satisfy thee both with reason and contentacion: in full hope wherof I leave thee to the reading of the same, and promise to be styl occupied in publishing such workes as may be both for thy pleasure and commoditie.¹

Jones did not keep his promise to continue to publish festival books. In fact, the *Princely Pleasures* remained the only instance of his productivity in this field, at least there is no evidence of any other festival book printed by his workshop.² One may wonder whether books of this kind were rather less in demand than Jones anticipated and whether this putative lack of interest, compounded by the lack of events of “ceremony”, is not, perhaps, one of the reasons for the relative dearth of English festival books in the Elizabethan period.³

¹ *The Princely Pleasures at the Courte at Kenelwoorth. That is to saye, The Copies of all such Verses, Proses, or poetical inuentions, and other Deuices of Pleasure, as were there deuised, and presented by sundry Gentlemen, before the Quene’s Majestie, in the yeare 1575* (London, 1576), in: Nichols, *Progresses*, 1, 485-523, p. 486.

² See STC.

³ Watanabe-O’Kelly explains the same dearth with the “history of the book as an object in a particular territory [...]”. Some countries have a developed festival culture without having a tradition of the printed festival book: Britain is an example, with festival books only becoming numerous after the Restoration of Charles II in 1660”, Watanabe-O’Kelly, “Early Modern European Festivals”, p. 21.

Yet Jones refers to another, inaccurate account of the Kenilworth entertainment, and it has been suggested that the book he has in mind is, in fact, Langham’s *Letter*.¹ Funnily enough both the *Letter* and the *Princely Pleasures* concur in the reason they give why the “morall and gallant deuyce”, George Gascoigne’s *Zabeta*, was not performed. “[Becauz] the weather enclynde too sum moyster and wynde”, says Langham. “I cannot attribute [it] to any other thing than to lack of opportunity and seasonable weather”², says the author of the *Princely Pleasures*. But what about Langham’s summer idyll? A farewell speech composed by George Gascoigne and printed in the *Princely Pleasures* suggests that heavy storms and rain were sweeping across the country for five days.³ The discrepancies between the two accounts in this case as well as in some other instances have been interpreted in support of the theory that the author of the *Letter* could not have been present at Kenilworth in the summer of 1575 and that it was not, in fact, Robert Langham, the Keeper of the Council Chamber, who wrote it.⁴ There is indeed some evidence which makes his authorship doubtful.⁵ Instead, Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, has been put forward as its possible author and the *Letter* may then have been written even some months before the event as Oxford left England for Italy in February 1575.⁶

Regardless of the “elusive” identity of its author, the suggestion that the *Letter* was written by some unknown person or persons who may not have been present at the events described seems rather intriguing since it indicates its distinctly fictional character and, to the best of my knowledge, in

¹ Although this must have been suppressed by then; according to a letter by William Patten, only nine copies were distributed of which only one is not accounted for, the others presumably having been destroyed, see *Edward de Vere Newsletter*, ed. Nina Green (Kelowna, 1989-1994), 29 (1991, 2001), 2. [From: www3.telus.net/oxford/ (access: 15 May 2003)]; Langham’s *Letter* is discussed in Nos. 5-7, 12-13, 26-31 and 63-67], and David Scott, “William Patten and the Authorship of Robert Langham’s *Letter* (1575)”, *English Literary Renaissance*, 7 (1977), 297-306, p. 301; the second edition of the *Letter* appeared only in 1577, see Green, *Edward de Vere Newsletter*, 29 (1991, 2001), 1 and 63 (1994, 2001), 1-2.

² *Princely Pleasures*, p. 515.

³ See *ibid.*, pp. 521-2 and Green, *Edward de Vere Newsletter*, 64 (1994, 2001), 10-11.

⁴ See Green, *Edward de Vere Newsletter*, 64 (1994, 2001).

⁵ See esp. *ibid.*, 5-7 (1989, 2001), 13 (1990, 2001), 30 (1991, 2001) and 63 (1994, 2001).

⁶ See *ibid.*, 7 (1989, 2001), p. 4. Although she argues for Oxford’s authorship Green inconsistently accepts the date given in the *Letter* (“at the Citee of worceter, the xx of August, 1575”, Langham, *Letter*, p. 484) and comments on the rather short period of only three weeks between its dating and its suppression on 10 September, see Green, *Edward de Vere Newsletter*, 5 (1989, 2001), p. 3.

this respect the *Letter* is unique.¹ Yet a fake, especially a good fake, may well facilitate a better understanding of the original and for this reason a closer look at the *Letter* seems worthwhile. For if a fake, it is remarkable that the *Letter* should have fooled generations of scholars; only recently was its authenticity challenged.² There is, however, some evidence that the *Letter* did not deceive its contemporaries. William Patten, himself a contributor to the Kenilworth entertainments and also suggested to have been the author of the privately printed *Letter*³, saw to its distribution and, more interestingly in this context, also to the suppression of its first edition of 1575 for which the poet, writing to Lord Burghley on 10 September, gave two reasons: “the book waz too be supprest for that Langham had complayned upon it, and ootherwise for that the honorabl enterテインment be not turned intoo a jest.”⁴ Recent critical opinion agrees that this is evidence for the fact that Langham had merely lent his name to the publication and that, once it had provoked her Majesty’s disapproval, he was quick to sever that connection.⁵ Much more interesting is of course the other reason Patten gives for the suppression of the *Letter* – “that the honorabl enterテインment be not turned intoo a jest” – which seems to confirm the unreliability of the text and raises, furthermore, the question why anyone would want to write an entirely fictional account of a historical event in the first place. It has been suggested that the *Letter*, privately printed and meant to be distributed among the courtiers, was intended to be “a diverting entertainment in itself.”⁶ This seems plausible enough and it suggests that on the one hand the *Letter* was meant to be recognised for the pastiche it was, for only then would it be entertaining, and that on the other hand it would employ the conventions of the festival book to be parodied. Indeed, Green concludes that

¹ Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly distinguishes two basic types of festival books, the factual account (plain or illustrated) and the unhistorical, purely fictionalised account, see Watanabe-O’Kelly, “Festival Books”, pp. 183-91; a third type she distinguishes is the German “Pritschenmeister” account, see *ibid.*, pp. 190-1. Langham’s *Letter*, being not fictionalised but (allegedly) fictional, does not belong to either category.

² See esp. Green, *Edward de Vere Newsletter*, 7 (1989, 2001) and 64 (1994, 2001).

³ See Scott, “William Patten”, and Brian O’Kill, “The Printed Works of William Patten (c. 1510 - c. 1600)”, *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 7 (1977), 28-45.

⁴ Quoted from Scott, “William Patten”, p. 301.

⁵ See *ibid.*, and Green, *Edward de Vere Newsletter*, 5 (1989, 2001) and 29 (1991, 2001).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 64 (1994, 2001), p. 12.

[there] is nothing inherently implausible about the account given in the *Letter*; on the contrary, events are reported with astonishing verisimilitude. It is only when an attempt is made to reconcile the details given in the *Letter* with the account in the *Princely Pleasures* that it becomes clear that events did not take place as the author of the *Letter* says they did.¹

It is this “verisimilitude” acknowledged by Green I am interested in here because I would argue that this is all a festival book ever offers. Moreover, I would caution against establishing the “rival” account of the Kenilworth entertainment, the *Princely Pleasures*, sometimes attributed to George Gascoigne², in critical opinion as a reliable historical source instead.³ Indeed, as we have seen, it had been advertised as such by its printer and the fact that the *Princely Pleasures*, meant to refute an earlier publication (possibly the *Letter*), escaped censorship while the *Letter* did not has been interpreted as a sign of the Queen’s approval of the former and it has been argued that this was proof of the faithfulness of the account.⁴ Any discrepancies between the *Princely Pleasures* and the *Letter* have then been used further to discredit the historical accuracy of the latter.⁵ However, that the *Princely Pleasures* may have been approved of by the Queen does not, of course, mean that it is necessarily any more faithful in the representation of the historical event. To suppose this would be to ignore the basic rule of festival criticism never to take any festival book at face value.⁶ To the contrary, the *Princely Pleasures* may be the product of the Queen’s own agenda to gloss over some unpleasantness. For, as Green infers,

there seems to have been an emotional contretemps between the Queen and Leicester [i.e. her host] while she was staying at Kenilworth. It has been suggested that she learned at that time of Leicester’s affair with Lettice Knollys. The result appears to have been the Queen’s abrupt departure from Kenilworth seven days before she was scheduled to leave.⁷

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

² See, for instance, John W. Cunliffe’s edition of *The Complete Works of George Gascoigne*, Cambridge English Classics (Cambridge, 1910), 2 vols, II, pp. 91-131. For a discussion of Gascoigne’s doubtful authorship see Green, *Edward de Vere Newsletter*, 64 (1994, 2001), p. 1.

³ See, for instance, the discussion in *ibid.*

⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 13.

⁵ See, for instance, Green, *Edward de Vere Newsletter*, 64 (1994, 2001).

⁶ See, for instance, Watanabe-O’Kelly, “Festival Books”, pp. 192-3, or Richard Cooper, “Court Festival and Triumphal Entries under Henri II”, in: Mulryne/Goldring, *Court Festivals*, pp. 51-75, p. 66.

⁷ Green, *Edward de Vere Newsletter*, 64 (1994, 2001), p. 12.

There is certainly something "illusive/elusive" to be imagined here and I would suggest that it may be well worthwhile to have a closer look at the ruminations filling the gap of those seven days in the *Letter* because they may contain some veiled hints towards the solution of this riddle. However, this is not the kind of the illusive/elusive I am interested in within the scope of the present article.

As indicated above, it is rather the "verisimilitude" of the *Letter* that intrigues me. How is it achieved by the unknown author? He must not only, as Green suggests, have been "sufficiently familiar with court life to be able to write a plausible account of the Kenilworth entertainment"¹, but without doubt must have been well acquainted with the system of reference of the festival book. Since the English segment of this system of reference was still rather slender at the time, the author of the *Letter* may have had recourse to such samples of the Continental tradition accessible to him and, more particularly perhaps, to his own first-hand experience of similar events. It has been argued that an earlier festival at Kenilworth in 1572 and the author's intimate knowledge of the presumably rather elaborate preparations for the entertainment of 1575 provided the grounds on which the narration of the *Letter* was based.² Of course it was not all that unusual that things were not enacted as planned and this may be one reason for the alleged historical inaccuracy of the text. The *Princely Pleasures* indicates that indeed there may have been, in at least one instance, a change of plan in the 1575 entertainments: "and surely, if it had bene executed according to the first invention, it had been a gallant shewe"³, the author states somewhat petulantly of the "Pageant of the Lady of the Lake" before he proceeds to give a detailed summary of the (allegedly) original plan which he then comments: "This had not onely bene a more apt introduction to her deliverie [i.e. of the Lady of the Lake], but also the skirmish by night woulde have bene both very strange and gallant; and thereupon her Majesty might have taken good occasion to have gone in barge upon the water, for the better execution of her deliverie."⁴

In any case, while the author of the *Letter* may have had recourse to the system of reference of the festival book the *Letter* itself became at the same time of course a part of that system of reference, although in effect proba-

¹ Ibid.

² See Green, *Edward de Vere Newsletter*, 31 (1991, 2001).

³ *Princely Pleasures*, p. 501.

⁴ Ibid., p. 502. There is a distinct note of criticism here with the suggestion of an author's vanity thwarted; as the printing of the *Princely Pleasures* seems to have been commissioned, one may wonder at whom this criticism was aimed and who was, then, responsible for the commission.

bly not before 1577 when a second edition appeared¹ which may, as Green argues, have suffered some substantial alterations, especially with respect to the rambling pages covering the mysterious seven days but also regarding the account of Gascoigne's *Zabeta*.² To determine the precise situation of the *Letter* in the interaction of accumulation and reference is, of course, impossible. Yet quite clearly did it leave its mark, not least because with the *Princely Pleasures* its first edition provoked a competing and serious account which conforms largely with the established tradition of the Continental festival book.

An instance of its possible significance for the system of reference of Elizabethan festival books is the narrative technique of the *Letter* where it concerns the imagining of the illusive/elusive. Before launching into a description of the events the author (or, in view of the fictional character of the text, the narrator) sets the scene: "the better for conceyving of my minde and instruction of yoors, ye must gyve mee leave a littl, az well to preface untoo my matter, az to discoors sumwhat of Killyngwoorth Castl, a territory of [...] the Earl of Leyceter".³ This technique, which may seem simply economical, was, however, also established in the Italian tradition of festival books. Agostino Arienti for instance commenced his account of *Il tempio d'Amore*, a scenic tournament held in Ferrara ten years earlier in December 1565, with an *argomento* followed by a detailed description of the location of the tournament in the *Giardino della Duchessa* and of its *apparato* (stage set), before embarking upon a continuous narration of the action interspersed with the verses spoken or sung.⁴ One year after the

¹ See, for instance, O'Kill, "Printed Works", pp. 41-42, Rutger J. Kuin, "The Purloined *Letter*: Evidence and Probability Regarding Robert Langham's Authorship", *The Library*, 7, 6th series (1985), 115-25, pp. 120-2, and Green, *Edward de Vere Newsletter*, 29 (1991, 2001), 1 and 63 (1994, 2001), pp. 1-2.

² See *ibid.*, 64 (1994, 2001), p. 10. Green's suggestion that the original account of the missing seven days may have been substituted in the second edition of the *Letter* after the event had turned out to be very different from its conception is, to my mind, not entirely persuasive. If the Queen's unexpected departure in a huff was to be glossed over it does not make much sense to insist on her continued presence at Kenilworth and simply to substitute the envisaged festive programme for this period. According to the tradition of the festival book one would have expected either the announcement that the Queen did indeed leave or the idealised relation of her continued presence. The passage may therefore have been included even in the first edition of the *Letter* and may have been intended to be no more than a "jest" turning the conventions of the festival book upside down with the loquacious digression.

³ Langham, *Letter*, p. 426.

⁴ See Agostino Arienti [attr.], *Il tempio d'Amore nelquale si contengono le cose d'arme fatte in Ferrara nelle nozze del Duca Alfonso et della Regina Barbara d'Avstria*

publication of the second edition of the *Letter* the same narrative technique, somewhat modified, was applied by Churchyard to the description of his Norwich entertainments.¹ In 1591 it appears again in the anonymous account of *The Honorable Entertainment giuen to the Queenes Maiestie in Progresse, at Eluetham in Hampshire*. There the author commences with a "Proeme" as follows:

Before I declare the iust time or manner of her Maiestie's arriual and entertainment at *Eluetham*, it is needful (for the Readers better vnderstanding of euerie part and processe in my discourse) that I set downe as well the conueniencie of the place, as also the suffising, by art and labour, of what the place in it selfe could not afford on the sodaine, for receipt of so great a Maiestie, and so honorable a traine.²

This is clearly reminiscent of the *Letter*, although the application is explained in more detail:

To what vse these particulars serued, it shall euidently appeare by that which followeth. And therefore I am to request the gentle Reader, that when any of these places are briefly specified in the sequele of this discourse, it will please him to haue reference to this fore-description; that in auoiding tantilogies, or reiterations, I may not seeme to them obscure, whom I studie to please with my plainnesse.³

(Ferrara, 1566), pp. 2-5 (argomento), pp. 5-11 (apparato and guests), pp. 11-109 (action and verses); in this case, however, this sequence is concluded on pp. 116-81 by a detailed "exegesis" attributed by Arienti to Giovanni Battista Pigna (i.e. Niccolucci) and commissioned by Alfonso II d'Este.

¹ In his earlier account of the Queen's reception at Bristol in 1574 Churchyard did not yet follow the same pattern; yet here, too, he included in his text speeches which had not been delivered or, due to the distance of the events, had not been intelligible to the spectators. Included in *Churchyarde's Chippes* (1575), a collection of his works, the purpose of this publication seems to have been rather to do justice to the poet's labours than to commemorate the Queen's entertainment. For the text, see Thomas Churchyard, *The whole Order howe our Sovereigne Ladye Queen Elizabeth was receyved into the Citie of Bristowe, in August, and the Speeches spoken before her presens at her Entry; with the residue of Versis and Mutter that might not be spoken (for distance of the place), but sent in a Book over the Waetter*, in: Nichols, *Progresses*, I, pp. 393-407. [Originally in: *The Firste Parte of Churchyarde's Chippes* (1575).]

² *The Honorable Entertainment giuen to the Queenes Maiestie in Progresse, at Eluetham in Hampshire, by the right Honorable the Earle of Hertford* (London, 1591) (STC 7583), sig. A2r. Also in: Nichols, *Progresses*, III, pp. 101-21, p. 101.

³ *Honorable Entertainment*, sig. A3v; see also Nichols, *Progresses*, III, p. 103. Later in the text the author reverts to the same technique: "By the way it is needfull to touch here many things abruptly, for the better vnderstanding of that which followeth"; once he has given the pertinent information he continues: "All this remembred and con-

Intriguingly, there is some evidence that the third edition of the *Letter* appeared in 1590 or sometime after.¹ It may then well have been a model of current interest for the author of the *Honorable Entertainment* published in 1591 which, in turn, may then suggest a date *ante quem* for the third edition of the *Letter*.²

Most probably owing to its fictional character the *Letter* is highly concerned with constructing an elaborate authenticity fiction. This is most conspicuous in the lively and life-like characterisation of the narrator and alleged author who appears to be a slightly pompous yet interested observer of the events, well educated, prone to digressions and grateful to his patron, the Earl of Leicester and host of the Queen. The figure of the narrator is, however, only part of the convoluted authenticity fiction which in addition to mentioning precise dates³ rests mainly on the relation of seemingly well observed details. As, for example, when he reports that the Queen's horse shied at the address of the Wild Man (according to the *Princely Pleasures* impersonated by Gascoigne):

sidered, I nowe returne to the Sea-gods [...]", *Honorable Entertainment*, sig. C2v; see also Nichols, *Progresses*, III, p. 111.

¹ For a discussion of the date of the third edition of the *Letter*, see Green, *Edward de Vere Newsletter*, 63 (1994, 2001).

² Another rather tentative analogy is the recurrence of a metaphor used by the author of the *Letter*. With regard to Gascoigne's cancelled *Zabeta* he concludes: "Of the particulariteez whereof I ceas to entreat, least, like the boongling carpentar, by missoorting the peece, I mar a good frame in the bad setting up", Langham, *Letter*, in: Nichols, *Progresses*, I, p. 459. The same metaphor is used by Bernard Garter in his account of the entertainment at Norwich published in 1578, one year after the second edition of the *Letter*: "Accept my rude and rashe dealing in this my doying, I beseech you, for that your worshipful request carrieth me to my uttermost limite: wherein, though the sodayne chop of an unskilfull carpenter perhaps disquareth the strong tymber of this beautiful frame; yet let the skilfull eye of your Worship, and other learned Readers (to whom I submitte me), place the same to the best purpose, and holde my good will as recompence of my fault", Garter, *Joyfull Receyving*, in: Nichols, *Progresses*, II, p. 137. It reappears, again somewhat modified, in the *Honorable Entertainment*: "[...] nowe to the matter itselfe: that it may be *ultimum in executione* [...] *quod primum fuit in intentione*, as is usuall to good carpenters; who intending to build a house, yet first lay their foundation, and square many a post, and fasten manie a rafter, before the house be set up: what they first purposed is last done. And thus much for excuse of a long foundation to a short building." *Honorable Entertainment*, sig. A3v; see also Nichols, *Progresses*, III, p. 103.

³ The accuracy of the dates given in the *Letter* is disputed by Green, *Edward de Vere Newsletter*, 64 (1994, 2001), pp. 5-6 *et passim*.

Az thiz Savage, for the more submission, brake hiz tree asunder, kest the top from him, it had allmost light upon her Highness hors head; whereat he startld, and the gentleman mooch dismayd. See the benigntee of the Prins; as the footmen lookt well to the hors, and hee of generositee soon calmd of himself – “no hurt, no hurt!” quoth her Highness. Which words I promis yoo wee wear all glad to heer; and took them too be the best part of the Play.¹

Or, when he describes how the bearer of a bride-cup in one of the more popular entertainments was beset by flies:

This gentl cup-bearer, yet had his freckld fiznemy sum-what unhappily infested az hee went, by the byzy flyez that floct about the bride-cup for the sweetness of the sucket that it savored on; but hee, like a tall fello, withstood their mallis stoutly (see what manhood may do), bet them away, kild them by scores, stood to hiz charge, and marched on in good order.²

Little occurrences like this do not, of course, usually feature in festival books;³ the *Princely Pleasures* mentions none of them. However, in this particular case their verisimilitude is meant to lend substance to the authenticity claim of the text, a claim individual festival books normally do not make (or it is then just confined to their titles⁴) because the genre itself rests on the silent agreement to accept the “virtual” and idealised reality it projects as “authentic”. Accidentals of this kind are therefore usually faded out.

More germane to the genre is the subject matter of another observation in the *Letter*. Describing the progress of the royal train into the castle the narrator mentions the Royal coat of arms and a table fixed above the castle gate. As Jones had put it, the *Letter* “doth nothing touch the particularitie of every commendable action, but generally reherseth hir Majestie’s cheereful entertainment in all places where shee passed”⁵ and the inscription of this table is indeed the only instance where the author quotes *verbatim* any of the verses supposedly delivered to her Majesty.⁶ Because it was already

¹ Langham, *Letter*, pp. 437-8.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 443-4.

³ There are, however, some examples to the contrary; see Cooper, “Court Festival and Triumphal Entries”, p. 67, and Watanabe-O’Kelly, “Festival Books”, pp. 192-3.

⁴ See, for instance, the anonymous *Vera e piena relatione* (Florence, 1589), Samuel Daniel’s *The True Description of a Royal Masque* (London, 1604) or John Nodes’s *The True Description of such Part of the Fireworks* (London, 1613).

⁵ *Princely Pleasures*, p. 486.

⁶ For the author’s usual way of referring to the verses see, for instance, Langham, *Letter*, p. 437: “After this sort the matter went, with little differens, I gesse, saving only

dark and the torch light not sufficient to decipher the inscription, he explains, it had additionally been declaimed by a poet “in a long ceruleoous garment”.¹ The reason he is able to quote the Latin inscription in full is that “becauz [the table] remained unremoved, at leizure and please I took it out”.² Sketching in some further “authenticating” detail in his representation of the table he adds: “All the Letters that mention her *Majesty*, which heer I put capitall, for reverens and honour wear thear made in Gold.”³ The situation is indeed plausible and I know of at least one instance where a similar occurrence is described in an Italian festival book. Marco Publio Fontana recounts in his *Il sontuoso apparato* that, prior to the entry of Cardinal Francesco Morosini into Brescia in 1590, people leisurely viewed the triumphal arches, making sketches and copying the inscriptions.⁴ However, the verses recounted in the *Letter* do not agree with those related in the *Princely Pleasures* and, indeed, Green cites this among the discrepancies which in her view show that the author of the *Letter* did not attend the entertainment. Yet some of those discrepancies could easily be explained away with the different vantage points of the writer involved in the preparations for the entertainments or who at least had access to the official documents relating to it (the *Copies of all such Verses, Proses, or poetical inuentions, and other Deuices of Pleasure, as were there deuised* mentioned by Jones) and the distanced observer composing an account from memory, even if aided by some notes, as the *Letter* suggests.⁵ In fact, there is no evidence that the anonymous author of the *Princely Pleasures* was present at Kenilworth. The attribution of the text to George Gascoigne, who

in this point, that the thing which heer I report in unpolisht proez, waz thear pronounced in good meeter and matter, very wel indighted in rime.”

¹ Langham, *Letter*, p. 434. Another instance of the light being not sufficient to discern the decorations is given by Maurice Scève in his *La magnificence de la superbe et triumpante entrée* (Lyons, 1548), see Cooper, “Court Festival and Triumphal Entries”, p. 66.

² Langham, *Letter*, p. 433.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ See Marco Publio Fontana, *Il sontuoso apparato fatto dalla magnifica città di Brescia nel felice ritorno dell’illustrissimo e reverendissimo [...] Cardinale Morosini* (Brescia, [1591]), p. 74.

⁵ See Langham, *Letter*, p. 467. Merely the result of some misunderstandings, due to the limited vision of the spectator, may be, for instance, the fact that the author of the *Letter* missed the identification of the Porter as Hercules, see Langham, *Letter*, p. 430 and compare *Princely Pleasures*, p. 490; that he thought the oversized trumpets had actually been sounded, see Langham, *Letter*, p. 430 and compare *Princely Pleasures*, p. 490; and that he mixed up Arion and Proteus, see Langham, *Letter*, p. 458 and compare *Princely Pleasures*, p. 500.

was and who did, according to this text, deliver some of the speeches is doubtful at best.¹ Passages like the following, describing the same occasion and betraying some uncertainty, do not argue in favour of the author witnessing the event:

These verses were devised by Master Muncaster, and other verses to the very self same effect were devised by M. Paten, and fixed over the gate in a frame. I am not very sure whether these, or Master Paten's, were pronounced by the Author; but they were all to one effect.²

Rather, in view of Jones's reference to the original papers used and the author's acknowledgement that "now you have as much as I could recover hitherto of the devices executed there"³, it seems that a compiler was at work who possibly may have had access not only to the scripts but also to the "memory" of some eye-witness. Yet he might as well have been briefed exactly what version he was to give of the event.

That the *Princely Pleasures* is an edited version of the whole affair becomes quite clear with regard to some more popular entertainments offered to the Queen. The author of the *Letter* quite extensively describes a rustic "bride-ale" and a "Coventry Play" only to conclude with another detail to enhance its verisimilitude:

This waz the effect of this sheaw; that, az it waz handled, made mootch matter of good pastime; brought all indeed into the great Coourt, een under her Highnes' windo to have been seen; but (az unhappy it waz for the bride) that cam thither too soon (and yet waz it a four klok); for her Highnes beholding in the chamber delectabl dauncing indeed, and heerwith the great throng and unruliness of the people, waz cauz that this solemnitee of brideale and dauncing had not the full muster waz hoped for; and but a littl of the Coventree Plea her Highnes also saw, commaunded thearfore on the *Tuesday* folloing to have it full oout: az accordingly it waz prezented; wherat her Majestie laught well.⁴

While mentioning them the author of the *Princely Pleasures* did not deign these pastimes worthy of relating because they "were so plaine as needeth no further explication."⁵ Instead, he then goes on to describe something which never happened: "To proceede then; there was prepared a shew to

¹ See Green, *Edward de Vere Newsletter*, 64 (1994, 2001), p. 1; the STC too does not list the *Princely Pleasures* under Gascoigne's name.

² *Princely Pleasures*, p. 493.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 502.

⁴ Langham, *Letter*, pp. 455-6.

⁵ *Princely Pleasures*, p. 502.

have bene presented before her Majestie in the Forest".¹ This setting of the scene is followed by the familiar pattern of giving a summary and then printing a dramatic script with stage directions, in this case even divided in acts and scenes. "This shewe", the text explains, "was devised and penned by M. Gascoigne; and being prepared and redy (every Actor in his garment) two or three days together, yet never came to execution."² Because of the weather, as we already know from both the *Letter* and the *Princely Pleasures*.

5. Of personae, Dramatic and Otherwise: Bisham, Sudley, and Rycorte 1592

The last of the Elizabethan festival books to be published separately were the *Speeches* from Joseph Barnes's workshop mentioned at the beginning of this article. As its title suggests, and very much in contrast to the narrative structure of the *Letter*, the pamphlet printed by Barnes records the speeches, or dramatic interludes, performed on the occasion of the Queen's progress in the late summer of 1592 which took her *inter alia* to the stately homes of the nobles named in the title. There is almost no narrative or descriptive prose in this festival book and some scant stage directions (albeit in the past tense and thereby suggesting a particular performance in the past) provide the only framework for the re-constitution of the dramatic coherence of the entertainments.³ As is only to be expected, the weather strikes again, and again the author relates something that never happened: "The thirde day shoulde haue been presented to her Maiestie, the high Constable of Cotsholde but the weather so vnfit, that it was not. But this it should haue beene, one clothed all in sheepes-skins, face & all spake this by his interpreter [...]."⁴ In the process of relating this entertainment a subtle change of mode takes place: "After this speech her Maiesty was to be brought amonge the shepheards amonge whome was a King and a Queene to be chosen and thus they beganne [...]."⁵ From this point onwards the stage directions shift to the indicative mode: "Then espying her Maiesty, he

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*, p. 515.

³ In fact, the account even provides precise dates; see, for instance, *Speeches Delivered*, sig. C1v.

⁴ *Speeches Delivered*, sig. B3r.

⁵ *Ibid.*, sig. B3v.

& al the shepherds kneeling, concluded thus [...].¹ Thus, again, the doubly illusive/elusive is represented in the same way as those portions of the festival which were, for all we know, actually enacted.

The “theatricality” of Elizabethan court and popular culture has variously been pointed out. Ulrich Suerbaum, for instance, states that “[the] culture of the Elizabethans was [...] theatrical to the core”, and then explains more fully that this “involved not only a general readiness to take part in role-playing, ritual and ceremony, but also a constant awareness that roles, rituals and ceremonies are performances – something you begin or terminate, enter into or step out of.”² The readers’ familiarity with these conventions seems indeed to be taken for granted in the *Speeches*. The *dramatis personae* are not introduced here as one might expect like: “there the Queen was met by someone dressed as a Wild Man”, or something to this effect. Rather the text says simply: “Sunday, Apollo running after Daphne, a Shepherd followed vttering this [...].”³ Into this dramatic fiction the person(a) of the Queen is fully integrated: “This speech ended, her Maiesty sawe Apollo with the tree, hauing on the one side one that sung, on the other one that plaide [...]. The song ended, the tree riued, and Daphne issued out, Apollo ranne after, with these words [...]”, and then: “Daphne running to her Maiestie vttered this [...].”⁴ Already in the *Princely Pleasures* the same technique had been made use of: “when her Majestie entred the gate, there stood Hercules for Porter”.⁵ And in the *Letter* the Queen even assumes a speaking part when she meets the Lady of the Lake: “It pleased her Highness too thank this Lady, and too add withall, ‘we had thought indeed the Lake had been ours, and doo you call it yourz noow? Well, we will herein common more with yoo hereafter.’”⁶ At the same time the dramatic illusion is “deconstructed” in the same way the scenic illusion was “deconstructed” by Churchyard. The script character of the spoken verses and the fact of authorship are emphasised: “These verses were devised and penned by M. Ferrers”,⁷ the *Princely Pleasures* adds after the speech of the Lady of the Lake and in the *Letter* it is explained that she “met her Majesty with a well-penned meter”.⁸ The effect is, again, to enable readers not only to imagine the (dramatic) action but to imagine it as a

¹ Ibid., sig. C1r.

² Suerbaum, “Performing Royalty”, p. 55.

³ *Speeches Delivered*, sig. B1r.

⁴ Ibid., sigs B2r-B2v.

⁵ *Princely Pleasures*, p. 490.

⁶ Langham, *Letter*, p. 431.

⁷ *Princely Pleasures*, p. 492.

⁸ Langham, *Letter*, p. 431.

scripted performance and thus to refer them to their first-hand experience of similar events for its re-constitution. In the *Speeches* no author is mentioned, of course. Yet it relies, if anything, even more on the readers’ access to the respective systems of reference. It deviates from the established pattern of setting the scene and giving an argument. In its very conciseness it assumes an even more extensive co-operation of the reader to constitute a virtual reality.

6. Conclusion

It is, obviously, a fallacy to believe that only the English talk about the weather. Of course there is also some talk of the weather in Continental festival books, of triumphal arches ripped to tatters by raging storms¹ and of torrential rains swamping the lists and thus cancelling any thoughts of holding a tournament.² However, considering their relative number those examples make up only a niggardly part of the whole³, while in Elizabethan England comments on the weather appear to be a regular feature of festival books and rain was to continue to haunt outdoor festivals. Yet apart from some feelings of sympathy and commiseration the fact is mainly interesting because it necessitated the cancellation of so many entertainments and thereby occasioned a practice to describe what might have happened and to make readers imagine the doubly “illusive/elusive”. Focusing on the representation of this doubly illusive/elusive in Elizabethan festival books I have attempted to sneak a look into one of those boxes in boxes in boxes I mentioned earlier, that of printed accounts of Elizabethan progress festivals. Of course it would really be necessary to open many more of these boxes to attain that vantage point on early modern European festivals and festival books I envisaged in my introduction. Yet I hope to have spotlighted, however inadequately, some of the recurrent literary strategies used in Elizabethan festival books to constitute a “virtual” reality which, contrary to

¹ In Copenhagen triumphal arches were blown down by the wind in 1634; see Watanabe-O’Kelly, “Festival Books”, p. 193.

² In Stuttgart constant rain had made the planned tournament impossible in 1674; see Watanabe-O’Kelly, “Festival Books”, pp. 192-3. For accounts of other mishaps in festival books see, for instance, also Cooper, “Court Festival and Triumphal Entries”, p. 67.

³ For the infinite variety of Continental festival books see, for instance, *Festivals and Ceremonies: A Bibliography of Works Relating to Court, Civic and Religious Festivals in Europe, 1500–1800*, ed. Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly and Anne Simon (London, 2000).

Barnes's assertion, was certainly not considered such a "small matter".¹ Most notable among those strategies are the accumulation of realistic details to achieve verisimilitude; what I termed the "deconstruction" of the illusion which paradoxically allows its reassembly by the readers; and the representation of dramatic actions according to a pattern reminiscent of theatre scripts of the drama of realism and naturalism, adding descriptive and narrative passages to the dramatic script to provide its setting and thus to facilitate its mental re-constitution in the imagination, a practice which is conspicuously missing in purely dramatic texts of the period. In later years there may have been a tendency to reduce the descriptive apparatus, as in the *Speeches*, although the corpus of Elizabethan festival books is really too small to allow a conclusive estimate. Looking beyond the Elizabethan corpus the same tendency seems, however, to persevere in the work of Ben Jonson who eschewed the more traditional conception of the festival book as supported by Samuel Daniel and, later, by Inigo Jones and aimed less at the re-constitution of the event and the construction of a "virtual" reality than rather at the elevation of his entertainments to the rank of "proper" poetry.² Yet Elizabethan festival books, without, perhaps, being proper poetry, still succeeded in transporting the reader into the realms of fiction.

¹ That both festivals and their representations in printed accounts were not to be trifled with, at least not when the prince did not feel represented adequately, had been made sufficiently clear by the suppression of the first edition of the *Letter*.

² Reminiscent of the title of Barnes's festival book and in its emphasis on the poetic text similar to it is, for instance, Jonson's *The Speeches at Prince Henry's Barriers* (1610), first published in *The Workes of Benjamin Jonson* (1616). For a more detailed discussion see Stähler, "Perpetuall Monuments", pp. 281-9 et passim.

Edmund Spenser's *Gloriana: Elizabeth as "Faerie Queene"*

By Dieter Mehl (Bonn)

Eliza, her name gives honour to my singing,
Whose fame and glory still are bringing;
Her name all bliss, with voice demiss,
I sing adoring, humbly imploring.
That my rude voice may please her sacred ears,
Whose skill deserves the music of the spheres.

This is the text – author not named – of a song by the Elizabethan composer John Bennett¹, just one of countless literary and musical tributes to this English sovereign who, more than any of her predecessors, became a symbol, an icon, or, to use a more up-to-date term, a cult figure that, at first sight, seems to be rather far removed from historical reality. Yet, for all the flowery homage of poets, songwriters and courtiers, power politics and calculated strategy played a significant part in the general cult of Elizabeth. This seemed to grow in genuine enthusiasm as well as sycophantic opportunism the more it became certain that the monarch would forever remain that unprecedented phenomenon, the Virgin Queen, married, as she proclaimed, to her country and her people.

Of the many poetic monuments ostentatiously erected in her praise, Edmund Spenser's epic poem *The Faerie Queene* is arguably the most impressive and, in terms of literary history, the most influential, but at the same time the most sophisticated and intellectually demanding. It has to be admitted, though, that its reception among readers for the last two or three generations can make one wonder whether its "powerful rhyme" will in the long run outlive marble or gilded monuments. For many generations Spenser's reputation as one of the great classics of English literature, alongside Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton, was undisputed. *The Faerie Queene* was read at home and in school, and some thirty children's versions alone show that it has not always been considered a text merely for highbrow intellectuals. In fact, often it has been poets who were among the most enthusiastic lovers of the poem. More recently, however, it seems to have become a comparatively small, yet dedicated scholarly community that keeps *The Faerie Queene's* fame alive,

¹ For the text see: *Magic*. Opus 111 OPS 30-272. Flanders Recorder Quartet & Friends (2000).