

Moving London: pageantry and performance in the early modern city

Andrew Gordon and Tracey Hill

What is pageantry and why does it matter? The term today calls up images of a tourist-oriented heritage industry and the paraphernalia of invented tradition. If we push back a little further, however, beyond the cream teas and commemorative crockery, we find in the early modern period a vivid and often dazzling culture of performance that brought political power into dialogue with popular festivity and deserves to be central to our understanding of the period. Much ink has been spilled on theatre as a popular entertainment form, but no form was as broad in its range of participants, performers, and audiences, as the pageantry of early modern London, whose practitioners and constituents ranged from monarchs to paupers. This was a performance culture that flourished in the heart of the city, beyond the confines of an auditorium, penetrating the everyday and animating the touchstones of communal memory. To repurpose a phrase from the historian Raphael Samuel, pageantry is a site 'where memory and myth intermingle, and the imaginary rubs shoulders with the real'.¹ As the contributions to this special issue show, the forms of civic pageantry were diverse and married custom with creativity. Innovation was fuelled by the investment of the city's commercial communities whose longstanding performance traditions sustained the livelihoods of writers, artisans, musicians, and actors. Pageantry both drew upon the life of the early modern city, to tell stories about its places and peoples, and reinvented it in different guises to publish a series of fictions that had to negotiate the unpredictable arena of street, river, and field performance. In doing so London's pageantry spoke to and for the world, making claims for the global reach of its trading networks and proto-colonial projects that showed the city's developing narratives of urban colonialism: the welcoming of the Lord Mayor's barge at Paul's Wharf finds a parallel in the allegorical pageant ships that figure in a number of mayoral pageants, bringing home representations of London's trading dominion through the performance of peoples and goods.

Although civic pageantry was an enormously popular form of entertainment in early modern London for its citizens and visitors alike, it has long been the punchbag of pundits. In the early modern period, the term could serve as a byword for insubstantial shows and crude spectacle.

¹ Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory Volume 1* (London: Verso, 1994), p.6.

We find it hauled into service to figure the decline of learning in the scholar who 'Turn[ing] Pageant-Poet... /Makes himselfe cheape', or to damn the idolatrous ceremonies of those who 'do make a pageant of the Church, the blessed Sacraments, the rites & ceremonies of religion'.² But it would be a mistake to take these engagements for denials of pageantry's power. Those modern-day critics whose distaste for pageantry can seem to echo past prejudices show a disregard for the impact of the form. Contemporary comments and critiques insist instead upon the pervasive presence and impact of pageantry in the early modern mind. When William Drummond of Hawthornden muses on the wonders of the firmament, we find him contrasting the mysteries of divine creation with more worldly works produced 'Pageant-like to please the vulgare Sichte'.³ Drummond's comment rehearses a commonplace that speaks to the accessibility of pageantry, providing a testament to the popularity of this representational form and its ready availability to view. At the same time Drummond's focus on the scopic, and his conception of pageantry as something apprehensible by the populace, betrays an anxiety over the very openness of the form.

If pageants were understood to be popularly accessible, so was the artifice that brought them to life. Railing against peacetime posturing, that wildly prolific professional soldier and textual terrier, Barnaby Rich, likened his fellow Londoners' pretensions to greatness 'to the *Giants* that are accustomed at *London* once a yeare, to march before the *Lord Mayors Pageantes*, that outwardly do make semblance to be men of great might and valiance, but inwardly are nothing else but Lathes, towe and ragges'.⁴ Rich's undercutting of urban masculinity draws on the vocabulary of civic performance and its recognisable generic features, illustrating once again the ready availability of the form to the early modern imagination. More specifically, Rich's anatomisation depends upon an appreciation of the very *fabric* of pageantry: its raw materials, and the skills of those artificers whose creations were an integral element of these performance events.

As much as Rich speaks to the existence of familiar conventions within pageant form, pageantry in the early modern period was also a field of invention in which new effects were

² John Day, *Lawe-trickes* (London: Printed [by E. Allde] for Richard More, 1608), B1r; [Samuel Harsnett], *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures* (London: Printed by James Roberts, 1603), A2v.

³ William Drummond of Hawthornden, 'Hyme to the Fairest Fair' in *Flowres of Sion* (Edinburgh, 1623), p.34.

⁴ [Barnabe Rich] *Opinion diefied [sic]. Discovering the ingins, traps, and traynes, that are set in this age, whereby to catch opinon. Neither florished with art, nor smoothed with flatterie. By B.R. Gentleman, seruant to the Kings most excellent Maiestie.* (London : Printed [by Thomas Dawson] for Thomas Adams, 1613), pp.17-18.

both perfected and popularised. Henry Peacham writes of the art of 'foreshortening' as a technique of draughtsmanship 'willingly overslipt by ordinary painters for want of cunning and skill to performe it', with barely one in a hundred attempting it, but he singles out for praise the creative team led by architect Stephen Harrison at James I's 1604 entry into London, observing 'I neuer beheld more absolute skill in [t]his kind then in some of the Pageantes at the coronation of his Maiesty'.⁵ That Peacham cautions his gentleman readers against meddling with the art 'till you were growen very cunning' in draughtmanship is a mark of the professional accomplishment to be found amongst the pageant artificers of early modern London.⁶

In these contemporary voices we find the field of pageantry emerging as an accessible popular form in which the skills and techniques of the pageant-makers find ready acknowledgement. What then of the interpretive skills of urban audiences and the appeal of pageantry to them? Robert Burton lists pageants under the cures available to the melancholic city-dweller 'to exhilarate [sic] their mindes, and exercise their bodies'.⁷ Like Drummond, Burton acknowledges the pleasure to be had 'To see some Pageant, or sight go by, as at Coronations, Weddings, and such like solemnities'.⁸ The pleasures of pageant-watching are here not markers of vulgarity, but sit with the gentle pursuits of virtuous physical and mental exercise. Strikingly, however, Burton's perspective on pageantry does not depend on a privileged audience position. It is as much the availability of pageant phenomena as part of the experience of urban inhabitation that Burton alludes to, citing for example an incident recorded by the humanist theorist Jean Bodin, who encountered a slice of English processional culture when he 'saw the Noblemen goe with their robes to the Parliament house', during his 1581 visit to London: Burton noted that 'hee was much affected with the sight of it'.⁹

⁵ Henry Peacham, *The Art of Drawing with the Pen* (London: Printed by Richard Braddock for William Iones, 1606), p.28.

⁶ Peacham, *Art of Drawing*, p.28. On Peacham's as a conduit of north European art theory and his construction of a practical programme in art education see L. E. Semler, 'Breaking the Ice to Invention: Henry Peacham's "The Art of Drawing" (1606)', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 35:3 (2004): 735-50. Accessed April 13, 2021. doi:10.2307/20477043.

⁷ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford: Printed by John Lichfield and James Short, for Henry Cripps, 1621), p.345.

⁸ Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, p.343.

⁹ Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, p.343.

Burton's attention to pageant-watching in the *Anatomy of Melancholy* speaks to the multiple ways in which pageantry *moved* Londoners, in both sensory and physical ways. Finding affect and exhilaration in the performances moving down London's streets or waterways does not here depend upon a totalising apprehension of the whole event. Pageant makers were of course aware of the sensory limitations on spectators' experience: mayoral pageants organised around the circulation of devices built recapitulation into their cumulative performance logic and could rely on the customary memory of annual attendees as a form of generic competence. Still the experience of the by-stander is inherently both partial and particular, rooted in the embodied self. And such experiences might be overwhelming. Our earliest eyewitness account of a Lord Mayor's pageant, Henry Machyn's 1553 chronicle entry, describes a disorienting sensory onslaught:

two tallmen bearing two great streamers of the merchant tailors' arms. Then came one with a drum and a flute playing and another with a great fife—all they in blue silk. And then came two great woodmen armed with two great clubs, all in green and with squibs burning, with great beards and side hair and two targets upon their back. And then came sixteen trumpeters blowing¹⁰

Machyn captures the immediacy of the corporeal effects in play. Strident visual stimuli are interspersed with auditory interventions from fireworks, cannons, drums and trumpets, ingredients that would be a staple of civic pageantry throughout our period. It is in this context of sensory competition that we might understand the occasional exasperation of pageant-authors such as Thomas Heywood, who acknowledged the inclusion of elements 'devised onely to please the eye, but no way to feast the eare'.¹¹ More pointedly, Machyn's record, with its 'tall men' and armed 'woodmen', demonstrates how far the management of crowds was a designed component of pageantry's assault on the senses, supported by an extended cast of whiffers, marshals and other attendants. For all that pageantry luxuriates in

¹⁰ Entry for 29.10.1553. *A London Provisioner's Chronicle, 1550-1563*, by Henry Machyn: Manuscript, Transcription, and Modernization, Richard W. Bailey. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/machyn/5076866.0001.001/1:8.4.96/--london-provisioners-chronicle-1550-1563?rgn=div3;sort=occur;subview=detail;type=simple;view=fulltext;q1=Lord+mayer> [accessed 14.04.2021]

¹¹ Thomas Heywood, *Londini Sinus Salutis* (London: printed by Robert Raworth, 1635), A7r.

the bodily pleasure supplied by the tastes and textures of conduits running with wine, the odour of sweet-smelling spices, and the distribution of assorted comfits, its effects are also inscribed with the threat of violence.¹² Among the many, more festive, props purchased by the Pewterers' Company as part of their contribution to Elizabeth I's formal entry into London to mark the opening of Gresham's Royal Exchange in January 1571 one finds an indication of the danger latent in civic pageantry: 'four small staves' were obtained to equip 'those which were appointed as wyfflers to garde the companie from the thruste and violence of people'.¹³

The contingency of the bystander's experience and the temporality of pageant performance can be set against the particularities of the reading experience presented by pageant texts. We know for example that Burton was a consumer of pageant texts as well as an appreciator of performances, acquiring printed editions of several Lord Mayor's pageants some years after the events they describe.¹⁴ The published pageant texts which survive tend to focus overwhelmingly on the speeches composed for the event, accompanied by a description of pageant stations or cars. In most cases they form an ostensibly authoritative, curated record of the design into which performance details and the disruptions of the day intrude only occasionally or indirectly. As such pageant-reading should be acknowledged as a discrete form of cultural consumption. In the year Burton's great compendium was published, his close contemporary Thomas Middleton published his own curious compilation of devices to mark his appointment as City Chronologer, *The Honorable Entertainments Composed for the Service of this Noble Cittie*.¹⁵ In this calendrical collection, dedicated to the named aldermen and other key office holders of the City, Middleton brought together occasions of indoor civic hospitality with devices for the revival of some lapsed civic customs at outdoor sites around the City's jurisdiction. The range of the entertainments described in Middleton's book provides an insight into the extent of pageant occasions in the early modern city and allow us

¹² See Kara Northway, ' "[H]urt in that service": The Norwich Affray and Early Modern Reactions to Injuries during Dramatic Performances', *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 26:4 (2008), pp. 25-52.

¹³ Pewterers' Company Audit Book, 1530-72: LMA: CLC/L/PE/D/002/MS07086/002, f. 325r.

¹⁴ Tracey Hill, 'Owners and Collectors of the Printed Books of the Early Modern Lord Mayor's Shows', *Library and Information History* 30:3 (2014), 151-171.

¹⁵ On the broader context of Middleton's *Honorable Entertainments* see Andrew Gordon, *Writing Early Modern London* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp.192-199, and Tracey Hill, "'Euer Obedient in His Studies': Thomas Middleton and the City, 1620-1622." *The London Journal*, 42 (2) (2017), 137-150.

to think through the possibilities and the challenges of researching early modern pageantry that our contributors address.

Amongst the shortest of the entertainments is the one performed 'at Bunhill on the Shooting Day'.¹⁶ Comprising a mere 55 odd lines of verse with only the briefest of descriptive headings, the text nevertheless shows a careful design, investing the annual archery competition with a layering of symbolic associations that involves rehearsing the place of archery as sport in the historical memory. Having elaborated the civic custom, Middleton draws on Ascham's *Toxophilus* to parallel music and archery as kindred arts of Apollo – a detail that both suggests the unrecorded presence of the city waits or other musical accompaniment, and underscores the integral unity of custom and art celebrated in this microcosm of urban pageantry.¹⁷ On the back of this, Middleton's speaker, himself 'habited like an archer', stretches the rhetorical applications of the bow to analogise the careful work of the 'cunning bowman' to the deliberative duty of that 'grave magistrate', the watching Lord Mayor.¹⁸ The text as we have it, then, is an address to the Lord Mayor, the council of Aldermen and key officials that performs a reframing of the archery contest at the intersection of civic custom, art and the duties of governance. Of the archery contest itself, the music and the processional element, there is no trace in the text beyond the note that the speeches began 'after they [LM and Aldermen] were placed in their tent' – that 'were placed' both suggesting and occluding the choreographed unfolding of procession and installation.¹⁹ Such elision is typical of the temporal equivocation in pageant texts' narration of time. But in reviving a pageantic attention to civic archery not seen since the entertainments of the 1580s, it is of a piece with the military stylings of Sir William Cockayne's mayoralty, who as head of the City's Trained Bands, was central to the promotion of a civic military capability. In common with the planned entertainment at the Artillery Garden in the same volume, the Bunhill Shooting exercised the City's civic claim to contested sites in the face of objections whilst both celebrating and appropriating a civic pastime.

¹⁶ Thomas Middleton, *Honorable Entertainments* (London: printed by G[eorge].E[ld], 1621), B4v.

¹⁷ Anthony Parr, 'Introduction to Honorable Entertainments and an Invention' in *Thomas Middleton, The Collected Works* ed Garry Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: OUP, 2007), p.1433. On the influence of Ascham see Matthew Woodcock, 'Shooting for England: Configuring the Book and the Bow in Roger Ascham's "Toxophilus"', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 41:4 (2010), 1017-1038.

¹⁸ Middleton, *Honorable Entertainments*, B4v-B5v.

¹⁹ Middleton, *Honorable Entertainments*, B4v.

In one of the shortest of pageant texts, then, we find many of the expansive features that demonstrate the vitality of urban pageantry and the methodological possibilities it opens up for conceptualising the place of entertainments performed ‘In public court for all eyes to behold’.²⁰ Collectively and individually, the essays in this special issue demonstrate the tremendous energy of a field coming into its own after too long in the shadows of early modern studies. Although *Records of Early English Drama* has for decades been publishing copious evidence of pageantry and other types of extra-playhouse performance in London as well as in a number of counties and provincial cities, its findings are still only slowly permeating mainstream early modern drama studies.²¹ In part this is a consequence of the focus on single authorship which has dominated the field for so long. Innovations like the (somewhat controversial) *New Oxford Shakespeare* and *The Oxford Thomas Middleton*, both of which look to identify multiple authorship wherever possible, have attempted to move the focus of attention away from this misleading model but it is scholarship on pageantry that has for many years led the way in showing how collaboration was the main engine of cultural production in the period.

Collaboration was absolutely central to pageant production. Thomas Middleton’s name may appear on the title page of the printed book of the 1613 Lord Mayor’s Show, *The triumphs of truth*, but turn to its last page and a different story emerges. Other contributors’ names appear: Humphrey Nichols is praised as ‘a Man excellent in his Art’ (pyrotechnics), the artificer John Grinkin takes even more credit for ‘the whole Worke and Body of the Triumph, with all the proper Beauties of the Workemanship’, and Anthony Munday, Middleton’s senior partner and a man much more experienced in the genre, is acknowledged as having ‘furnished’ the Show with ‘Apparrell and Porters’.²² This marks a striking departure from the habitual concentration on a solo dramatist one finds in relation to stage plays, but even so, Middleton has not (for whatever reason) given Munday full credit for his role. Unlike mainstream early

²⁰ Middleton, *Honorable Entertainments*, B5v.

²¹ REED has published some forty collections to date, some of which are accessible online at <https://ereed.library.utoronto.ca/>. *Civic London 1558-1642*, the REED collection most closely associated with the subject matter of this special issue, is underway and some of its findings are also online at <https://civiclondon.wordpress.com/>.

²² Thomas Middleton, *The triumphs of truth* (London: printed by Nicholas Okes, 1613), D2v-3r.

modern drama, where documentary sources are scant, pageant scholars have a wealth of material to draw on in order to discover the material (both literal and metaphorical) conditions of performance. Scrutiny of the Grocers' Company accounts for 1613 reveals that Munday had a more encompassing role than Middleton concedes, and these sources also disclose in extraordinary detail what went into creating the spectacle described in Middleton's book. We learn, for example, that quantities of ginger, nutmeg, and other spices were purchased in order to be thrown to the watching crowds.²³ In the context of the materiality of early modern modes of performance, an emerging preoccupation in the field, civic pageantry scholarship is thus once again in the vanguard. Archival sources such as the one cited above provide a wealth of information to help scholars better understand the centrality of what Ben Jonson (a characteristically ambivalent contributor to the genre) disparaged as the 'mechanical' aspects of pageantry, the prosaic 'body' rather than the poetic 'soul'.²⁴ In so doing these records foreground the essential creative agency of artisans as well as dramatists, men like Garrett Christmas and his sons, who were greatly respected in their day but whose input into civic pageantry has often been overlooked.

Other forms of human agency come into play too. Urban street theatre is nothing without an audience, and people attended these events in vast numbers. There may be a dearth of first-hand accounts of early modern theatre-going at the professional playhouses, but pageant scholars can draw on numerous contemporary witnesses from across the period, ranging from Henry Machyn (quoted above) in the 1550s to Samuel Pepys a century later. Indeed, Heather Easterling's essay in this special issue draws on one of these, Venetian emissary Orazio Busino's eyewitness account of the 1617 Lord Mayor's Show. His testimony is a fascinating mixture of enjoyment of the colour, spectacle and the unruly behaviour of the crowd, and perplexity at some of the niceties of civic ceremonial. However they understood these events, these disparate spectators all testify to the multi-media entertainment on offer: they experienced speeches, songs, dancing, trumpeters, mock sea battles on the Thames, mythical beasts, cannons, fireworks, and more. Civic pageantry may have been grounded in solemnity, often presenting serious messages about governance, but for its spectators it

²³ Grocers' Company Charges of Triumphs Account Book, 1613-41: LMA: CLC/L/GH/D/036/MS11590, fols. 6r-v.

²⁴ Jonson lays out his opinion of the relative status of the 'soul' versus the 'body' of art in a satirical poem directed towards his erstwhile creative collaborator, 'An expostulation with Inigo Jones'.

might be as much an enormous free party as anything else, a spectacle taking place on a more capacious, ambitious stage than plays performed at the Rose on Bankside or the Theatre in Shoreditch.

The ubiquity of civic pageantry, as well as demonstrating Londoners' appetite for performance, also challenges the erroneous but persistent idea that the early modern City of London was a place entirely averse to fun, ruled by dour 'City Fathers' whose sole aim was to suppress and exclude theatre. The essays collected here therefore make an important contribution to a body of revisionist criticism which, rather than perpetuating artificial boundaries between performance genres, seeks out connections between personnel, location, and subject matter. Dramatists like Middleton, Dekker, Heywood, Munday, and others appear in this special issue in their guise of pageant poets and impresarios, testifying to the richness and diversity of their careers as well as to the considerable creative energy and expense that went into the making of the Lord Mayor's Show, the Royal Entry, and the occasional civic celebrations marking the installation of the Prince of Wales or the marriage of a Stuart princess. Although they brought the novelty of playhouse experience to pageantry, the work of these dramatists was following long-established traditions. The inauguration of the Lord Mayor of London – an office which itself dates back to the twelfth century – has been celebrated since the medieval period, well before the inception of the printed pageant book in the 1580s; in the middle of the sixteenth-century Lord Mayor's Day began to inherit aspects of another important form of civic festival, the Midsummer Watch, now almost forgotten but once, in Anne Lancashire's words, 'the city's largest, most spectacular annual occasion for processional display'.²⁵ Royal entries and processions for visiting dignitaries too had a long history as well as family resemblances with the royal progress outside of London: Margaret of Anjou, for instance, was formally welcomed into London in 1445, and all of Henry VIII's queens received a coronation entry. Although Charles I's coronation entry was postponed due to the 1625 plague outbreak and (unlike his father's) did not take place the following year as planned, the convention held strong. The varying routes of all these festivities were laid down by custom and practice and were only amended at times of crisis such as especially severe plague epidemics.

²⁵ *Records of Early English Drama: Civic London to 1558* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2015), xxxiv.

Solemnity as well as pomp was thus the order of the day, but while we can study the pageant events sponsored by the crown, the City and its livery companies, the presence of pageantry in the streets of the early modern city made it a performance culture available for imitation, appropriation and subversion. The lines between official and unofficial performances are not always easily drawn. When Henry Machyn watches the ritual punishment of an offender paraded on horseback, garlanded with strings of small fry before and around her, is he attending a spectacle of civic punishment or a communal rite? His descriptions make no distinction between the two. Rites of protest frequently drew on the vocabulary of solemn pageantry – like the mock funerals which Nehemiah Wallington (who himself acted as a whiffler for the Lord Mayor’s Show) witnessed in protest against private water supply. These protests echoed both funerary pageantry and the evocation of the mock funeral and testament presented in entertainments ranging from Nashe’s *Summer’s Last Will* to Middleton’s *Honorable Entertainments*.²⁶ As the essays of this collection show, civic pageantry provided vocabularies of pageant symbolism and inscribed meanings in the civic memory that attached to the sites of the city as well as the routes of passage between them, and in so doing yielded fertile matter for creative response and critique.

The essays which comprise this special issue cover all this ground and more. They address civic pageantry and performance from a range of critical vantage points, and roam widely across London’s topography. Although their topics are various, all are concerned with movement across London spaces, and the ways in which urban performances mapped out routes, both authorised and unauthorised. Some focus on specific locations: Mark Kaethler, for example, uses Middleton’s Lord Mayor’s Shows to explore how the Show, as a form of ‘site-specific drama’, can engender meaning through a process of repetition, whereby spectators experience the same pageant device differently depending on their status vis-à-vis the event as well as the prevailing political context. Maria Shmygol’s focus is on a central spatial feature of London, the Thames, and its use as a liquid celebratory stage, a stage which

²⁶ Paul Seaver, *Wallington’s World* (London: Methuen, 1985), p.53; Andrew Gordon, ‘The Ghost of Pasquill: The comic afterlife and the afterlife of comedy on the early modern stage’ in *The Arts of Remembrance: Memorial Cultures of the Post Reformation* (2013) ed Gordon and Rist, pp.229-246; see also Gordon, *Writing Early Modern London*, pp.86-91, 170-176.

invokes mercantile and maritime achievements but which translates uneasily to the fixity of print. The mountebank, the subject of Sarah Mayo's essay, is the most mobile figure discussed in this special issue. Enacting a kind of 'theatrical vagrancy', the mountebank, Mayo argues, inhabits a liminal space between licence and illegality, testing the conceptual boundaries of urban performance. Another species of illicit performance is discussed in Kathleen Lynch's account of the pope burning processions of late Restoration London, where urban groups orchestrated 'rabid anti-Catholic' events which mimicked civic ceremonial to present a partisan form of national identity. She explores diverse textual and visual witnesses to these events, drawing out their contradictions to reveal a moment of great tension on the city streets.

Harmony, in contrast, is ostensibly the main subject of the Royal Entry for James VI/I in March 1604, an event of great splendour celebrating not just the accession of the new monarch but also the de facto (re)creation of 'Britain'. Katharine Blankenau traces the involvement of London's Dutch and Italian 'stranger' communities in creating a spectacle that showcased not uniformity but rather competing notions of hospitality and national identity. In 1604 King James (as did all the Lord Mayors whose inaugurations were marked with civic pageantry) played a dual role as both the subject and the chief spectator of the entertainments put on in his honour. Heather Easterling turns the lens out to a wider frame in order to discuss the crowds who assembled on these occasions. Reconceptualising the London crowd in a way that reframes understanding of the pageant event, she argues that the crowd may have 'helped to produce the spectacular city' – indeed, by the early seventeenth century the London crowd was famous across Europe. But at the same time, the presence of that large throng introduces a note of potential violence that threatened the integrity of civic ceremonial, challenging the passivity of pageant audiences in official accounts, and complicating our understanding of audience response to it. In a final contribution, Adam Zucker's epilogue makes a reflective voyage along the city streets, to speculate on the crowded cultural spaces in which pageantry operated at the local level amidst the 'experiential mess' of early modern street life. Mining contemporary jestbooks, Zucker plots the shared commonplaces on which urban anecdotes rely to sketch out some of the premises of street-level performance that formed a dynamic context for pageantry's projections. Pageantry, and the politics of street assembly and crowd interaction, has taken on an especial

poignancy in the period since the articles collected here were first plotted. The spectacle of deserted city thoroughfares and the absence of crowds during a global pandemic have impacted on our contemporary urban imaginary as they have on our experiences of the social and the communal. Working under conditions of lockdown our contributors have shown how the performance culture of the early modern city can be a rich site for reflection and imaginative expansion at a moment when access to urban and collective experience has been hauntingly out of reach.