

S P E C T A C L E



J A C K A N D E R S O N

Perhaps the authorities thought
there was a certain kindness to this –
the kindness of a distraction for the condemned
that would also be a spectacle for viewers.
Everyone would have something to gaze upon.
The crowd could enjoy the sight of someone
about to take extravagant leave of this world,
someone to cheer or mock, depending on
the charges brought against that person
or the moral temper of the time.
And for the condemned this might be
a final great diversion, something to take
the mind off the event to follow.
There would be so much to see in
the ride through the town affording grand,
though final, glimpses of familiar streets, or,
depending on the route, strange alluring roads with views
of fields, rivers, and hills beyond known roofs,
vistas to admire and contemplate, every last one
culminating in the steps up to the platform
to greet the official stationed there with his best
honed blade or other instrument – surely
a sight to be savored by everyone involved,
although one that was, like all in life, fleeting.