

“A SCENE ACTING THAT ARGUMENT”:
RHETORICAL REVISION IN
SHAKESPEARE’S *HENRIAD*

by

BRETTON HUGHES CHATHAM

SHARON K. O’DAIR, COMMITTEE CHAIR
TRICIA A. MCELROY-FAIR
STEVEN D. BURCH

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I read Shakespeare's second tetralogy, also known as the *Henriad*, and examine how King Henry IV revises the history of *Richard II* in subsequent plays. Henry must revise his rise to the throne in order to reconcile his inner conflict, conceived as a tension between his self and his royal role. Additionally, he must legitimize the Lancastrian dynasty, which is threatened on two fronts: by the rebel Percy family, who initially supported his questionable claim, and by his son Hal, who seems determined to squander his legacy. Since Shakespeare had dramatized the very history Henry tries to revise, I use textual evidence to confront, but also to explain, the King's revision, an attempt best exemplified in his interview with the Prince in *1 Henry IV* 3.2. Henry uses an analogy to teach his son a lesson, comparing Hal to the fallen Richard and the rebel Hotspur to Bolingbroke, Henry's younger self; the character foils are more problematic than Henry seems to think. I am most concerned with why Henry distances himself from his royal predecessor and successor but identifies with his mortal enemy, a lauded soldier. Henry must rewrite Shakespeare's descriptions of these characters, including Bolingbroke, to make his model work. But ultimately, he must accept his son as his heir in order to make peace with himself.

My argument depends on reading the *Henriad* as a unified dramatic work, a cycle of four history plays, even though they were never performed as such on the Elizabethan stage. Thus, I engage critics invested in the so-called "structural problem," such as Paul Yachnin, whose theory of sequence and revision most informs my approach. Also fundamental to my framework is Richard Lanham's dichotomy between "serious man" and "rhetorical man."

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to David and Jackie Chatham, Maggie Chatham, and Eadi Green, whose disinterest in my research was always a welcome distraction. My family did not need to know the details to trust that I could finish, and their faith in me meant more than my faith in the argument. I would not have made it this far without their warm encouragement and constant support.

I want to especially remember Mamaw Louise, whose passing during this time was the most difficult part. She liked to read but loved us more than I could ever write.

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1. Introduction: Historical Drama and Rhetorical Reality

At the heart of *1 Henry IV*, the King confronts his unruly son—his namesake and his successor—and laments the royal legacy that Prince Hal seems so apt to taint. Henry's own succession was not untainted, but that makes him all the more anxious to protect his crown. “Hal and his father,” notes Richard Lanham, “must legitimize their line, adopt a myth. This is the usual task of epic” (207). Despite Lanham’s droll remark, Shakespeare’s histories are hardly conventional, especially the genre-bending plays of his so-called *Henriad*.¹ Indeed, critics invoke the epic scope of Shakespeare’s second tetralogy whenever they refer to it as “the *Henriad*”—recalling Homer’s *Iliad* and Virgil’s *Aeneid*—and the Henrys who populate the plays appear ever aware that they are making history. When Hal promises his father, “I shall hereafter, my thrice-gracious lord / Be more myself” (3.2.92-93), he acknowledges, rather ironically, the historic role he must play. The context makes it clear he is not just reaffirming the rebellious reputation he has done little to deny so far. Rather, he is telling Henry what he thinks Henry wants to hear. In response, however, Henry ignores what might be and focuses instead on what has been:

For all the world,
As thou art to this hour was Richard then,
When I from France set foot at Ravenspur,
And even as I was then is Percy now.

¹ Polonius’s rambling list of classical genres—“tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, scene individable or poem unlimited” (*Hamlet* 2.2.334-336)—seems less absurd in light of how well it could describe the second tetralogy. In fact, Roberta Barker makes much of this in “Tragical-Comical-Historical Hotspur,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 54.3 (2003): 288-307. The article explores the play’s mixing of genres through the performance history of Hotspur’s character.

Now by my sceptre, and my soul to boot,
He hath more worthy interest to the state
Than thou, the shadow of succession...

(3.2.93-99)

Henry means to reprove his son with a history lesson but reveals much more about himself. After all, history, to kings, is personal.

* * *

History, of course, is also dramatic. Shakespeare often looked backward to move his plots forward, especially so in his histories, which comment just as much on his Elizabethan present as on the English past. Lanham explains,

What it was like then is what it is like now. Shakespeare seems less concerned to dramatize history than to point out its intrinsic dramaticality.... The past is as complex as the present. There is no absolute separation between art and life, and the style of the past can be reconstituted only through artistic means.... Shakespeare did not portray *only* a dramatic reality (would it be possible?) but such a reality had to remain, so long as he was a dramatist, a central element in his conception of the past. His history engages in a complex imitation, not adapting for theatre a referent history or—the opposite simplification—borrowing for purposes of “literary truth” a few historical motifs. To read the *Henriad* aright, we must credit the surface, believe what it says.

(197-199; emphasis original)

Though we can learn much from reading Shakespeare in light of his chronicle sources, we must ultimately ground our criticism in the world his plays create; for the literary critic as well as the willing theater audience, rhetoric *is* reality. In his introduction to *The Motives of Eloquence*, Lanham develops such a theoretical dichotomy between the “rhetorical” and the “serious.” In Lanham’s estimation, the Western discourse on rhetoric since Plato has not been based on “rhetorical” premises but on “serious” ones instead. These so-called “*serious* premises” presume

Every man possesses a central self, an irreducible identity. These selves combine into a single, homogeneously real society which constitutes a referent reality for the men living in it. This referent society is in turn contained in a physical nature itself referential, standing “out there,” independent of man.

(1)

In this “serious” view, man developed language to “communicate with his fellow man,” to express his essential self and to represent his objective world. We measure the success of his expression and his representation, respectively, “by something we call *clarity*” and “by something we call *sincerity*” (1). Clarity and sincerity necessarily imply transparency, a style that refers but does not show. The serious man may dress up his language, but he is always aware of the nakedness beneath. This description fits Henry uncommonly well, as I will show. Rhetorical man, however, lives consciously yet comfortably in his costume:

Rhetorical man is an actor; his reality public, dramatic. His sense of identity, his self, depends on the reassurance of daily histrionic reenactment.... He is not, like the serious man, alienated from his own language. And if he relinquishes the luxury of a central self, a soul, he gains the tolerance, and usually the sense of humor, that comes from knowing he—and others—not only may *think* differently, but may *be* differently.

(4-5; emphasis original)

Thus, rhetorical man recognizes he is not only an actor but a writer as well. He has no essence but performance. Like the serious man, rhetorical man cannot simply ignore the script that came before him—what Hayden White might call the “burden of history”—but unlike the serious man, he understands the creative power of revision and improvisation. History seems the most directive script of all, and the serious man feels bound to reconstruct—and to some degree, enact—an elusive, “objective” past. But rhetorical man sees the naiveté in such an attempt (Lanham 12). Instead, by reconstructing the past through words, we create the very history we are trying to recount—the way it is *told* becomes the way it *was*. History does not represent the objective past any more than language expresses the essential self, because the past and the self are never independent of their interpretations.² I will return to this point later.

² Though he does not acknowledge it, Lanham appears to have been influenced by the so-called “linguistic turn” in historical discourse, popularized by Hayden White in his seminal *Metahistory* (1973) several years before Lanham’s *The Motives of Eloquence* (1976).

Shakespearean scholarship also moves back and forth, to and fro—*toward* a new understanding of his work through a *foward* engagement with its critical tradition, creation through confrontation.³ Thus, I must begin my reappraisal of the *Henriad* by revisiting one of its oldest debates, what Harold Jenkins dubs, in the title of his seminal essay, “The Structural Problem in Shakespeare’s *Henry the Fourth*.” Jenkins traces the origin of the structural problem back to John Upton’s *Critical Observations on Shakespeare*, published in 1746, and emphasizes how the debate has gone unresolved for over two hundred years since. Perhaps, however, he should have looked even further back and questioned why, for a century and a half before Upton, the plays’ structural relationship was not a “problem.” Rather, as Paul Yachnin would later point out in “History, Theatricality, and the ‘Structural Problem,’” eighteenth-century editors of Shakespeare, such as Upton, created the structural problem by shifting the emphasis “from theater to text” (116). Jenkins, however, condenses this centuries-old critical crux into a seemingly simple question: Is *Henry IV* “one play or two?” (100). The question is both one of narrative structure and, despite Jenkins’s denial, one of authorial intent. Jenkins speculates that Shakespeare did not plan a second part until realizing, somewhere in the fourth act of what became the first part, he had too much material and too little space (110-112). He adds, “I do not of course mean to imply that *Henry IV*, or indeed any other of Shakespeare’s plays, ever had a plan precisely laid down for it in advance” (110). This is a telling aside, revealing Jenkins’s hesitancy to commit too firmly. It is quite reasonable to imply such planning, as Sherman Hawkins would later demonstrate in “The Structural Problem Revisited” (see 301). Above all,

³ Sherman Hawkins’s evaluation of Harold Jenkins’s criticism represents this attitude of indebted opposition: “So deft and lucid is its argument, so sharp its summary perceptions, so heady its blend of bold speculation and tough skepticism that the reader instinctively wishes to agree with so persuasive an advocate. Treated as a stimulus to further thought, the essay is invaluable. Accepted as orthodox doctrine, it seems to me pernicious, all the more dangerous for its eloquence” (282).

Jenkins seems to aim for compromise. He then famously concludes with a paradox that does little to resolve the debate: “The two parts are complementary, they are also independent and even incompatible” (114). Jenkins relies on an unlikely suspension of disbelief. If Part 2 both “depends on” and “denies” the existence of Part 1, as Jenkins maintains, then “the ideal spectator of either part...must sometimes remember what he knows and sometimes be content to forget it” (113).

Hawkins argues that “collective amnesia of the central action of a play in that play’s immediate sequel seems more than any dramatist should ask of us—and surely more than we should concede” (300; see also Yachnin 121). The audience should not forget; the characters certainly have not. Shakespeare encourages us to look back on each play in light of those that follow.

Most critics have allowed Jenkins the final word on the structural problem, though a few, such as Hawkins and Yachnin, have understood the issue’s implications and offered thorough rebuttals. Still, most critics seem to prefer ignoring the matter altogether, reading the plays individually or collectively to suit their own arguments. But the structural problem does matter, especially as it provokes discussions beyond those about narrative structure. Much like the chronicle sources that inspired Shakespeare, this old critical debate can lead us toward fresh insight. Although Jenkins’s insights into the plays’ particulars are quite firm, his comprehensive conclusion is perhaps too nimble, a feat of critical acrobatics. Writing a quarter-century later, Hawkins takes a more grounded approach, critiquing Jenkins’s attempt to have it both ways and arguing instead for a single play planned in two parts; the intricacy of their structure necessarily reflects the planning of a “seasoned dramatist” (284). More recently and more persuasively, Yachnin undermines both Jenkins and Hawkins and, ultimately, the critical foundation on which they build their structural arguments:

[T]he “structural problem in *Henry IV*” lies not in the plays themselves, but rather in the “structural” approach which has both created the problem and has gone on to produce a range of correspondingly problematic solutions.... [T]he seeming

puzzle of the two *Henry IV* plays can be solved merely by replacing the term “structure” with the term “sequence”.... This model dissolves rather than resolves the “structural problem in *Henry IV*.... If Hawkins’s argument fails (as I think it does), it is probably not the fault of the advocate, but rather the necessary consequence of attempting to apply structural terms to material whose meaning is produced temporally and sequentially.

(115-117)

Yachnin mentions that he is hardly the first to refer to the second part as a “sequel” to the first but argues that we should insist on applying the term more literally. Critics have mistakenly, according to Yachnin, approached the plays as literary texts, seeking a fixed meaning “outside the movement of time,” whereas they should consider them as performance texts—as in, texts intended for performance—with a “revisionist” meaning “produced in time” (115). Yachnin explains, “Since...neither play is a structure, there is no logical dilemma attendant upon their relationship—the second play merely follows the first, in basically the same way as scene follows scene within the individual plays” (116; see also Kastan “Introduction” 22). Of course, such a view of performance texts is also the way in which the dynamic study of history renders meaning from the supposedly static, sequential events of the past (see 126-127). Again, history is dramatic. What happened, it seems, happened, but, writes Yachnin, “History’s consequent failure to resolve itself into determinate shape means, then, that the full significance of events is unknowable at any time” (125). We can only understand those happenings through some interpretation imposed on them.

Still, Yachnin seems to suggest that some objective antecedent exists and that historians continually revise prior interpretations of that event to more accurately recreate what “happened.”⁴ Writing fifteen years before Yachnin, Lanham critiques this rather traditional view

⁴ Lanham writes, “We make a reality, polish, remake, keeping faith to something alternately ‘out there’ and in our minds” (23). Lanham is describing the recursive writing process of the serious man but suggests that, even in his repeated attempts to reflect an objective reality in writing, the serious man is actually recreating his perception of it in spite of himself.

of historical revision: “It has been assumed to be just out there, to have certainly happened, all events ‘happening’ in the same way and accessible to the same correct method, could it but be found.... It all happened in one way, whatever that way might be” (191). Lanham then turns this view on its head, suggesting that historical interpretation—more specifically the rhetoric that constitutes that interpretation—is all we can really know of what “happened.” He writes,

Shakespeare is approached as an historical dramatist by asking how he adopted or adapted history for the stage. This puts the problem backwards. He is not retelling dramatically a kind of history which could be told another way. He is putting forward a dramatic history which could be told only the way he has told it.

(192)

In other words, Shakespeare is not doggedly dramatizing Holinshed’s *Chronicles*; he is not attempting to write the history of Henry IV so much as *The History of Henrie the Fourth*. To a modern audience, influential historical actors often appear to realize that they were producing drama as well, though the script may have preceded them by generations. Lanham anticipates by half a decade this theme of power and spectacle so prominent since the early 1980s: “The theatre is not a medium to which this kind of history need be adapted, but rather the form from which it comes” (193).⁵ The dramatic present and historical present converge, operating under similar premises. Lanham maps this concept onto his dichotomy between the “serious” and the “rhetorical”: “For serious reality, there is a past and there are events and they can be narrated by someone standing in a present separate from them. For rhetorical reality, not so. *All is present*” (208; emphasis added). Yachnin would seem to argue from this “serious reality,” but the dramatic characters he analyzes defy it. Lanham clarifies,

And so, in these four plays, the characters live in a true past inasmuch as they are essentially dramatic selves and fixed only in the past. At the same time, since their being is flux, they can know only a present and their drama is in real time.

⁵ Stephen Greenblatt, for example, follows this line of thinking, writing, “Theatricality then is not set over against power but is one of power’s essential modes” (300).

Shakespeare wants it both ways. And so the history play supplies an apt vehicle since such an alternative—the creation of a dramatic present—is essential to it.

(208-209)

This approach provides another layer—building a better theoretical framework—for reading the plays sequentially. Historically and rhetorically, time privileges those who come afterward, but not by virtue of hindsight alone. Rather, meaning is made in the present. Shakespeare could not have predetermined the lasting influence of his plays, as Prince Hal attempts to predetermine his own legacy (see, for example, Yachnin 121). But Shakespeare certainly sought to make sense of what came before him.

Shakespeare does not, however, “seek an explanation in underlying social movements or economic forces. Shakespearean history is character in action” (Hawkins 296). I would add that, to many of Shakespeare’s characters, especially Henry IV, that present “action” is the remembrance and the revision of what they have already enacted—historical actors thus become historians of their past selves.⁶ One such maker of self-myth is the larger-than-life Sir John Falstaff. For many generations, critics have fixed the plays’ navel firmly in Falstaff’s fat belly; his body of scholarship exceeds that of any other literary character, not just Shakespearean ones (Kastan “Introduction” 2). More recently, scholars have placed the critical crux on Hal’s narrow shoulders. Though Falstaff calls him a mere “starveling” (*1 Henry IV* 2.4.239), the Prince of Wales

⁶ In *Notorious Identity*, Linda Charnes examines several characters whose infamy precedes the plays they populate—namely, Richard III, Troilus and Cressida, and Antony and Cleopatra—but her insight could apply to the characters of the *Henriad* just as well: “Inhabiting dramatic texts that are linguistically saturated with their prior textual histories, these figures nevertheless act out a sense that there may still be something undisclosed about themselves, something that will not ‘merely’ be reproduced, something that exceeds the containment of their own citationality.... Each carries into the plays this history, a knowledge which is shared by the audience.... Moving through textual terrains that relentlessly confront them with what is already ‘known’ or disclosed about them, these figures *sympтомatically* enact the desire to be, in Coriolanus’ words, ‘authors of themselves’” (7-8). Henry’s desire to establish a ruling dynasty, however, differentiates his attempt at self-authorship from the subjects of Charnes’s study; he does not seem to care for the audience’s empathy or complicity. He would rather his son be legitimated than himself understood.

has proven to be a weighty subject in the modern critical discourse. If we read the *Henry IV* plays as the education of a prince—as, indeed, most modern critics have—Hal’s ability to command the English language anticipates his ability to command the English forces at Agincourt in *Henry V*. Since legitimacy is the primary problem facing Henry IV, it is only natural that the two plays bearing the King’s name seem so concerned with the Prince’s preparation to rule (Grady 133). Lanham and Yachnin look to Hal as their respective proofs of concept, the rhetorical man and the revisionist man made manifest (Lanham 207; Yachnin 127). But Hal is not the only character in the *Henriad* who attempts to revise reality with his rhetoric. He focuses too much on the promise of the future to serve as my focus for exploring how historical legacies are compromised and revised. The character most conducive to such an investigation is the very man who embodies the English nation, that crowned head that lies so uneasily. Indeed, Henry speaks less effectively than Hal, but his effort is insightful. Henry frequently looks back, but as king, his personal past represents national history. At first glance, Henry may seem to represent the serious man in contrast to Hal, Lanham’s rhetorical man. Yet, while Hal rhetorically creates his present self, Henry attempts to rhetorically revise his past self in the present moment, an important distinction. The extent to which he is successful is telling. How Henry and others tell his story directly affects whether or not his son will have one to tell posterity.

There could be no Agincourt without Shrewsbury, no Shrewsbury without Flint Castle—no *Henry V* without *Henry IV*, no *Henry IV* without *Richard II*. Henry certainly cannot forget the “by-paths and indirect crook’d ways” by which he “met” his crown (2 *Henry IV* 4.5.184-185), dramatized earlier in *Richard II*. Jenkins, Hawkins, and Yachnin focus most on the *Henry IV* plays in particular, but the implications of their arguments can—and should—be applied to the second tetralogy as a whole, a continuous dramatic action with recurring, developing characters. I, like Lanham, take this broader view. Henry certainly sees “all [his] reign” as “a scene / Acting” a

particular “argument” (*2 Henry IV* 4.5.197-198). Indeed, the continuity between *Richard II* and *Henry IV* is just as important to my argument as the continuity between the two parts of *Henry IV* is to the arguments of Jenkins, Hawkins, and Yachnin.⁷ Rather than arguing for a premeditated plan that unfolds over four plays—a critical position privileged, of course, by hindsight—I follow Yachnin’s suggestion that each play looks back and revises what came before it.⁸

* * *

Focusing on *Henry IV*’s narrative structure and the Prince’s character development, Jenkins maps out the plot of Part 1 in order to show how it stands on its own as a literary text. Important to his argument is the idea that a “nodal point” must exist in the third act, and he locates it in the second scene of the third act, when King Henry confronts Prince Hal. From this point, he writes, “The curve of the plot could hardly be more firmly or more symmetrically drawn” (104). Jenkins further elaborates on his Aristotelian view of beginning, middle, and end by demonstrating how scenes and lines are mirrored accordingly around this structural axis. In Jenkins’s example, Hal’s promise to himself in act one—“*Redeeming time when men think least I will*” (1.2.207)—is reaffirmed before his father in act three—“I will *redeem* all this on Percy’s head” (3.2.132)—and confirmed by his father in act five—“Thou hast *redeemed* thy lost opinion”

⁷ As CWRD Moseley observes, *Richard II* “ends in scenes which, far from tying up the issues raised, deliberately extend them forward in time beyond the play’s end” (86-87). Not only does Shakespeare carry over *Richard II*’s action and characters into *1 Henry IV*, but he also ends the earlier play and begins the later one with Henry’s dialogue. Even the subject of Henry’s speech, his crusading intention, is a continuation: “This continuity is much more than the picking up and carrying over of a speech at the end of *Richard II*; it is the continuation of running strains in the earlier play, and their especial concentration now in the mind and personality of King Henry” (Black 23). Unlike tragedies, the plot of history continues long after one protagonist finishes his part.

⁸ While the implications of my argument bear on *Henry V*, in order to make that argument, I will necessarily concentrate on the three plays in which Henry IV appears. Thus, unless otherwise noted, I unconventionally employ the term *Henriad* throughout to refer to *Richard II*, *1 Henry IV*, and *2 Henry IV* only.

(5.4.47; emphasis added). For Jenkins, Hal's reformation hinges on this "nodal point." However, Yachnin complains,

[W]hat this structural analysis overlooks is not merely that Hal returns to the tavern in act 3, scene 3 (a minor derogation which in any case is easily assimilated into the proposed pattern), but more importantly that Hal revises the meaning of the interview with his father in such a way as to destabilize it and to disable it as a "nodal point" in the proposed pattern of reformation. "O, my sweet beef," Hal says to Falstaff after the apparently decisive interview with his father, "I must still be good angel to thee. The money is paid back again...I am good friends with my father and may do anything" [3.3.176-181].... Hal's revisionist glance backwards to his interview with his father forces a reevaluation of that apparently decisive turning-point in terms of Hal's apparent desire to persist in delinquency.

(119-120)

Yachnin shrewdly argues that Hal undoes Jenkins's structural notion of a "nodal point," but Yachnin's insight should not lessen the earlier scene's significance. The private interview between father and son *is* a "nodal point," just not in the way Jenkins and Yachnin understand it, i.e. in terms of structure and of Hal's reformation. The scene at court also provides Henry, more so than Hal, the occasion to revise the Lancastrian narrative. (Indeed, if we consider *Richard II* and *I & 2 Henry IV* as Henry IV's sequential story—and not just as a prelude to Henry V's—then *I Henry IV* 3.2 is also, structurally, the "nodal point," underscoring Jenkins's initial notion, but in a way different from what he intended.) Jenkins adds, "That this interview is to be dramatically momentous is clear enough in advance: before we come to it, it is twice prefigured by the Prince and Falstaff in burlesque [2.4]" (108). I should note that, in the tavern, Hal and Falstaff are rehearsing for a scene to be staged soon whereas, in that promised scene, Henry rehearses a drama already performed. As far back as 5.3 of *Richard II* (1-22), Shakespeare foreshadows this confrontation between father and son, and he revisits and revises it as late as 4.5 of *2 Henry IV*.

Shakespeare uses almost every dramatic tool at his disposal to emphasize the scene's significance, but I would sharpen this "nodal point" even further, to the very exchange with which I began (3.2.92-99). Dialogue here links past, present, and future kings by scrutinizing each

man's character and asking whether his conduct is becoming of the office. I will use Hal's resolution and Henry's response to structure my extended essay, their scene to act my argument. In the first section, "I Shall Hereafter...Be More Myself," I will explore, within the context of Lanham's distinction between serious man and rhetorical man, the tension Henry feels between his Platonic concept of an essential self and his very real, royal role. In the next section, "As Thou Art to This Hour...Even as I Was Then," I apply Yachnin's argument to Henry's analogy in 3.2, exploring the revisionist potential of dramatic sequence: King Henry attempts to distance himself from his royal role—represented by traditionally legitimate monarchs, Richard and Hal, his predecessor and his successor, respectively—and further, Henry identifies his younger self with the rebel Hotspur—a character with whom he shares a tenuous resemblance at best. The final section, "The Shadow of Succession," concerns Henry's initial reconciliation with Hal at Shrewsbury and his later acceptance of his heir upon his deathbed, representing a resolution of his internal tension.

If Hal looks forward as Henry looks back, then eventually, the father will see his reflection in the son.

2. “I Shall Hereafter...Be More Myself”

In plays as crowded with competing personalities as those of the *Henriad*, the eponymous king stands out for being so reserved. Even when they are cunning, Hal, Hotpsur, and Falstaff all direct our attention to themselves—they candidly confess their motives to us and occasionally to other characters. In his histrionic capitulation and hysterical captivity, Richard also arrests his audience. But the “silent King” (*Richard II* 4.1.290) keeps his own counsel, even in soliloquy.⁹ Henry uses his only moment alone on stage to philosophize on the burden of kingship rather than to personalize the man who bears it (*2 Henry IV* 3.1.4-31). The King is ever aware of having an audience, but he does not relish it as other actors do. However, before we can properly examine how character foils distinguish Henry, we must first understand the extent to which he distinguishes his central self from his royal role.¹⁰ Henry insists on a distinction between his private person and public persona, and further, he tries to protect the former from the latter. Robert Fehrenbach notes that Shakespeare denies us “intimacy with this necessarily private man.... However advantageous masking is to Henry the King ruling a beleaguered state, it does

⁹ Hugh Grady writes, “Certainly one of the most extraordinary qualities of [*Richard II*]...is its complete and strategic silence concerning Bolingbroke’s interiority.... In contrast...Richard himself, after his defeat, becomes a paragon of interiority, especially in his extraordinary soliloquy in Act 5” (68). In calling Bolingbroke “silent King,” Richard reveals his awareness of this contrast, even if he does not fully understand its implications.

¹⁰ Of course, we might question whether a dramatic character could even have a “self” or how our assumptions about such an “essence” are informed by an actor’s performance. Further, we might consider which is more “real”: the fictional character, revealing himself to us on stage, or the actual actor, concealing himself behind a persona? While Shakespeare’s plays are certainly performance texts, for practical considerations, I must limit us to *reading* the second tetralogy as texts *intended for performance*.

not make Henry the man a warm and sympathetic figure” (43). But Henry never appeals to the audience’s sympathy; even in his only address to the audience—“Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown” (*2 Henry IV* 3.1.31)—the King seems as if he would rather be left alone, absolutely alone. This indirect characterization explains why Henry reveals the most about himself not in soliloquy but in a private conference with his son (*1 Henry IV* 3.2; see Black 23). He can only let down his guard so much. Even then, he feels too vulnerable and asks his attendants to be “near at hand” (2).

As the King complains of his son’s reputation, the Prince attempts to appease him by resolving, “I shall hereafter, my thrice-gracious lord, / Be more myself” (3.2.92-93). Hal could not know how familiar he sounds; he was not at court when the King confronted those other Henrys—the Earl of Northumberland and his son, called Hotspur.¹¹ But King Henry could hardly forget the earlier threat he made to the rebellious Percys, later echoed by Hal:

My blood hath been too cold and temperate,
Unapt to stir at these indignities,
And you have found me, for accordingly
You tread upon my patience; but be sure
I will from henceforth rather be myself,
Mighty and to be feared, than my condition,
Which hath been smooth as oil, soft as young down,
And therefore lost that title of respect
Which the proud soul ne’er pays but to the proud.

(1 Henry IV 1.3.1-9; emphasis added)

Though Henry and Hal are estranged, the similarity in these lines thickens the blood that binds them. The two men resemble one another much more than either would acknowledge, as I will further demonstrate in the next section. Both are cunning political strategists, each in his own way, and both assert themselves in these similar scenes to pacify their doubting interlocutors.

¹¹ For clarity’s sake, critics usually reserve “Henry” for referring to the King alone, but historically, Hal, Hotspur, and Northumberland all bore that same name. Of course, Shakespeare makes much of that fact, and the critical term “*Henriad*” captures the profusion of signifiers quite nicely.

Scene 1.3 begins *in medias res*, with Henry's opening lines, presumably, continuing a heated argument from offstage. He claims his "blood hath been too cold and temperate," but he raises the point in order to counter it: "I will from henceforth rather be myself, / Mighty and to be feared[.]" Notably, throughout this speech, Henry uses the personal singular pronoun rather than the royal plural, implying he has not been so "cold and temperate" as he claims. In his apparent anger—he is threatening the Percys here, after all—the King has already forgotten his royal self.¹² Further, he draws a distinction between his "blood" and his "self," a distinction that he discerns between who he *is* and who he *should be*. James Black observes that, throughout the *Henriad*, Henry "seems fated never quite to be himself" (23). The King keenly senses this tension and even suggests that his personality has become a political liability. The moral of Richard's reign and ruin, according to Lanham, would exacerbate Henry's hardly-personal identity crisis:

Richard II offers a series of dramatic occasions that dissolve not only an event, the deposition, but a theme, the legitimization of power. Both event and theme turn on a sense of theatre and the skillful identity flowing from it. *The crown is held by force of personality, legitimacy becomes a matter of style.*

(200; emphasis added)

Bolingbroke may not seem like such a master of style and personality to the audience of *Richard II*, but apparently, England approves his performance willingly enough. Even the Duke of York, royal uncle and loyal to Richard, praises his other nephew's acting and changes his allegiance (5.2.23-40). Once King, however, Henry struggles to control his narrative.

His courtly confrontation with the Percys in *1 Henry IV* 1.3 betrays such awkwardness, but as I will soon show, the scene also teaches Henry how words may manage history. In lines 1-9, Henry acknowledges that his lack of action has enabled the insolence of the Percys, but he attempts to conceal that inertia as mercy. Fehrenbach writes, "He now plays the role of a long-

¹² David Scott Kastan, Arden editor of *1 Henry IV*, also notices the irony between Henry's words and tone but suggests that it is his "conventional similes"—rather than his pronouns—that betray him (1.3.7n; see also Fehrenbach 45). Undoubtedly, both devices are undermining him here.

suffering ruler whose patience has been mistaken for weakness by his subjects. But a perceptive audience will probably laugh silently at such a picture of Henry” (45). I would not describe Henry’s self-portrayal here as “laughable”; typically, the scene’s comedy comes a few lines later, when an outrageous Hotspur explains how he, hardy and fresh from battle, had been “pestered” by Henry’s emissary, a pretentious “popinjay” (1.3.29-63). Though slightly misconstruing its effect on the audience, Fehrenbach does, however, see through Henry’s affectation, much like Hotspur saw through his messenger’s. I would also include the Percys—though Fehrenbach explicitly excludes them (45)—among that “perceptive audience,” those who may notice Henry’s discrepant representation. Whether or not the Percys actually see through him matters less than the fact that Henry senses they have “found” him; he betrays himself. He assures the Percys that his royal person is “to be feared,” but of course, broaching the subject raises the very doubt it was meant to resolve. His natural disposition may be “smooth” and “soft,” but for the sake of authority, he would rather identify more with his majesty, however awkwardly he may wear it.

In practice, as Stephen Greenblatt clarifies, “To be oneself here means to perform one’s part in the scheme of power as opposed to one’s natural disposition, or what we would normally designate as the very core of the self. Indeed it is by no means clear that such a thing as a natural disposition exists in the play as anything more than a theatrical fiction” (300). Greenblatt’s doubt about the existence of a “natural disposition” misses the point, however. Henry is convinced he possesses such a natural disposition, and though he suggests his role demands a performance in contradistinction to it, he still publicly insists on their consistency. But the image that Henry had worked so hard to project shows its questionable substance early on. The concern cuts to the very heart of Henry’s anxiety: can he, or any man, ever *be* king, or can he only *play* the part? The answer could not rest in legitimacy alone; Henry’s succession depended on the argument that Richard, though right by the laws of primogeniture, was not fit to be king. Indeed, Tim

Spiekerman interprets the second tetralogy as a struggle to resolve this political tension: “[A]uthority that is legitimately come by might not be legitimately exercised, and authority that is illegitimately come by might be exercised legitimately” (12). Spiekerman’s reading is persuasive, but Shakespeare avoids addressing such issues abstractly. Rather, he writes his characters to act that argument. Of course, a simple argument would make for a weak drama. Shakespeare, however, complicates eloquently. As Lanham notes in reference to *Richard II*, “The demande [sic] the play builds on—better a bad legitimate king or a good usurping one?—balances so nicely we must seek for guidance from style” (200). As the theatrical audience, we have the privilege of judging the contest based on Shakespeare’s words, but within the world of the *Henriad*, the *dramatis personae* also appear able to discern how words construct character and how personalities embody politics.

The Percys remember too well how Henry won the throne, and they see too clearly the man beneath the majesty. By claiming to have “lost that title,” the King implies that he once commanded the Percys’ respect, but their reply suggests otherwise. The Earl of Worcester, Northumberland’s brother and Hotspur’s uncle, reminds the king of an uncomfortable truth:

Our house, my sovereign liege, little deserves
The scourge of greatness to be used on it,
And that same greatness, too, which our own hands
Have help to make so portly.

(1 Henry IV 1.3.10-13)

According to Worcester, Henry’s “greatness,” his royal self, is really a role, one that he could not play without the Percys’ patronage. In *Richard II*, Northumberland supported Bolingbroke’s claim to the Duchy of Lancaster with his own men and money, not only making the usurpation possible but also making it more probable with each treasonous speech.¹³ As a younger brother,

¹³ See, for example, *Richard II* 2.1.277-298; 2.3.148-151; 3.3.5-11, 101-120; 4.1.222-227; and 5.1.51-54.

Worcester had less influence to offer Bolingbroke, and the character never appears in the earlier play. Still, as Richard's Lord High Steward, Worcester revolted more abruptly and more dramatically, reportedly breaking his staff of office, abandoning Richard's person, and taking the rest of Richard's household with him (*Richard II* 2.2.58-61; 2.3.26-28; see also Kastan's accompanying footnote). Perhaps no other character could have contributed to Richard's immediate sense of encroaching alienation more than Worcester. In *Henry IV* 1.3, Worcester refers to Henry's reprimand as the "scourge of greatness," but the suggestion of divine punishment would condemn both men, who are complicit in this context. Later, in 3.2, Henry similarly accuses Hal of being a "scourge...[t]o punish my mistreadings," God's punishment for some vague, perhaps unwitting, sin (4-7).¹⁴ The lines introduce Henry's complicated analogy accompanied by drawn-out descriptions of Hal (4-17, 29-38, 85-91, 122-128), Richard (60-84), Hotspur (97-118), and Bolingbroke (39-59), all in an effort to revise the past. However, back in 1.3, Henry would keep the focus of the conversation on the present situation, but Worcester will not allow him to forget that he was a rebel before he was regal. Though he feigns fealty, Worcester is too quick to remind Henry that this King was not born great, ironically affirming Henry's own words: his "blood" and "condition" are not, indeed, "[m]ighty and to be feared." Worcester further provokes the King by hinting at his ingratitude and his excess; the Percys

¹⁴ Ronald R. MacDonald writes, "The return of the repressed...operates with full force in these lines, for even as Henry struggles to mitigate his sense of sinfulness by calling usurpation and regicide 'mistreadings,' his conviction of guilt is bound upon him afresh with the inflated terms he chooses for divine vengeance" (36). Larry Champion further elaborates, "[Henry] seems to attempt to sublimate his fear of providential retribution into an adversarial relationship with Hal...as if he believes that he need fear no divine political recriminations so long as Hal plagues him" ("The Noise" 114-115). MacDonald's and Champion's explanations correctly identify Henry's projection, but I would argue it reflects his personal anxiety more than "his sense of sinfulness" or "his fear of providential retribution." In other words, Henry's problematic relationship with Hal really reflects his problematic relationship with his royal role.

expected more privileges from such a “portly” prince.¹⁵ Bolingbroke had, in fact, twice promised the Percys material “recompense” for their support (*Richard II* 2.3.48-50, 60-62), but there is no textual support—apart from Worcester’s partial accusation—to suggest King Henry reneged on his word. Finally, hidden in Worcester’s words is a warning: Henry’s ascending the throne does not guarantee the security of it any more than Richard’s right protected his. For the Percys, “revisionism is a pragmatic necessity. Well they understand that Henry will never trust them, having so effectively demonstrated their ability to overturn a seated king, and they know their safety now depends upon this king’s overthrow” (Kastan “Introduction” 30). Worcester will recite his family’s revised narrative again, in more detail, just before the climactic battle (5.1.30-71). Though the stakes are considerably higher at Shrewsbury, in both instances, he speaks to provoke more than to make peace.

With a half-line to finish Worcester’s speech, Northumberland begins, “My lord—” (1.3.13), but the King cuts him off. Northumberland is either about to add to his brother’s speech or to apologize for it. The characterization of Northumberland—“thou haught insulting man” (4.1.254)—in *Richard II* would suggest the former. His speech is much bolder and more defiant than Bolingbroke’s or any other rebel’s, anticipating the swagger of his aptly nicknamed son, Hotspur, in *1 Henry IV*. But the *Henry IV* plays reveal Northumberland to be more insidious in his rebellions against his former ally. When he finally has the opportunity to speak fully a few lines

¹⁵ The adjective reminds the audience of the “portly” Falstaff, whom we met so memorably in the previous scene. This is one of many ways Shakespeare juxtaposes Hal’s father, who reached beyond his station, and his father figure, who lives “out of all order, out of all compass” (*1 Henry IV* 3.3.19-20). I would note that Henry stands accused while Falstaff accuses himself. After all, Falstaff’s excess is undeniably palpable. Countless critics have compared the two characters, and I will do so when necessary. I focus more, however, on those characters whom Henry recognizes as his foils—Richard, Hal, and Hotspur. Though Falstaff is a foil and Plump Jack would be hard to miss, Henry never acknowledges him, even in the only scene they share (*1 Henry IV* 5.1). In fact, the only time the fat knight speaks in the King’s presence, Hal hushes him, but no other character seems to notice (28-29).

later, Northumberland apologizes for the perceived insolence of his son but not for the more obvious insolence of his brother, whom the King has just dismissed. As this two-word interjection (1.3.13) marks his first speech since *Richard II*, the audience of *1 Henry IV*, likely familiar with the former play, might reasonably expect a more assertive Northumberland. The line has received virtually no critical attention, but it shows Shakespeare playing with our expectations about the continuity of his characters. More precisely, I should say, we can see the playwright revising his characters as the action progresses from one play to the next.

Regardless, Henry's interruption allows Northumberland the opportunity to rethink whatever he was about to say—an opportunity to revise, which he may soon appreciate as the King's tone quickly turns more authoritative, more befitting his position. He even assumes the royal "we" mid-speech, commanding,

Worcester, get thee gone, for I do see
Danger and disobedience in thine eye.
O sir, your presence is too bold and peremptory,
And majesty might never yet endure
The moody frontier of a servant brow.
You have good leave to leave *us*. When *we* need
Your use and counsel *we* shall send for you.

(1 Henry IV 1.3.15-21; emphasis added)

Worcester has held up a sort of mirror to Henry, and the King sees himself reflected in a man he would much rather forget: "However accurately Henry judges Worcester to be a danger, therefore, the temper of the King's reaction, his defensive imperiousness, reveals that the Earl has touched a sensitive nerve and that one subtle plotter has recognized the threat of another almost intuitively" (Fehrenbach 45; see also 48). The "[d]anger and disobedience" Henry sees in Worcester's eye may further trigger a memory of Richard's abdication. In that earlier scene, Northumberland demands that Richard read before Parliament the accusations against him, and Richard replies, "Mine eyes are full of tears; I cannot see. / And yet salt water blinds them not so

much / But they can see a sort of traitors here” (*Richard II* 4.1.244-246). King Richard then confesses an irony that King Henry will later refuse to see:

Nay, if I turn mine eyes upon myself,
I find myself a traitor with the rest;
For I have given here my soul’s consent
T’undock the pompous body of a king...

(4.1.247-250)

Richard makes himself complicit in his own undoing—the body natural against the body politic—and diminishes some of Bolingbroke’s success. After all, Richard handed over his kingdom before Bolingbroke could take up arms. If the difference between deposition and abdication is a matter of agency, then Richard has denied Bolingbroke honor in battle by offering him the crown in Parliament.¹⁶ Thus, Richard finds himself “a traitor with the rest.” Likewise, Henry could see treason in himself if he would dare to look. But he still—even through most of *Henry IV*—thinks of himself too “seriously,” in Lanham’s terms:

Rhetoric’s real crime, one is often led to suspect, is its candid acknowledgement of the rhetorical aspects of “serious” life. The concept of a central self, true or not, flatters man immensely.[¹⁷] It gives him an identity outside time and change that he sees nowhere else in the sublunary universe.... How flattering that we, at whatever brave cost to ourselves, penetrate to the way things are, look, at the end of our quest, upon the true face of beauty.... How humiliating to be all this time only looking in a mirror.

(7)

¹⁶ In glossing Henry’s later interpretation of this event—“Though then, God knows, I had no such intent / But that necessity so bow’d the state / That I and greatness were compell’d to kiss” (*2 Henry IV* 3.1.72-74)—Arden editor AR Humphreys insists, “These lines, important in the judgment of Bolingbroke’s action, should be taken as fact, not as hypocritical extenuation. *Necessity* (England’s plight under Richard’s misrule), together with Richard’s despairing haste to yield power, virtually thrust the crown into Bolingbroke’s hands” (3.1.72-74n; emphasis original). Humphrey’s point seems to assume Henry’s revisionism; Henry can make this claim precisely because he did not have to win Richard’s crown in battle. Bolingbroke’s intention would be much more apparent had it come to that.

¹⁷ Katharine Eisaman Maus would seem to agree, writing, “The point of such distinctions is normally to privilege whatever is classified as interior” (4). After giving several representative examples, she adds, “Persons and things inwardly *are*, all these [English Renaissance] writers assume; persons and things outwardly only *seem*” (5).

At his abdication, when Richard finally looks at himself, he shatters a literal mirror, reifying the densely layered metaphor he had articulated just before as he gazed into the glass (see Lanham 203):

Is this the face which faced so many follies,
That was at last outfaced by Bolingbroke?
A brittle glory shineth in this face—
As brittle as the glory is the face! [*Shatters glass.*]
For there it is, cracked in an hundred shivers.
Mark, silent King, the moral of this sport,
How soon my sorrow hath destroyed my face.
(Richard II 4.1.285-288)

Richard increasingly shows a tragic self-awareness that was barely present in the public ceremony of the play's first scene. In contrast, as King, Henry would rather not look at his reflection at all, afraid as he is of shattering his self-image. Upon seeing “[d]anger and disobedience in [Worcester's] eye,” Henry dismisses his mortal mirror from the royal hall with an impatient rebuke—not unlike his earlier response to Richard's showy gesture, “The shadow of your sorrow hath destroyed / The shadow of your face” (*Richard II* 4.1.292-293). Bolingbroke would expose the façade of Richard's play-acting, but Worcester does the same to Henry. So, the King faces down the rebel Earl, warning, “majesty might never yet endure / The moody frontier of a servant brow.”

Henry dismisses Worcester from his presence in an attempt to dismiss the Percys' part in his past. They remind him of his dependency and the depreciated valor of his prize. The act of looking back can be both visual and temporal, and Henry will not soon forget the powerful effect of Worcester evoking the past. Fehrenbach adds, “Henry's testy reaction and his dismissal of Worcester with a self-serving statement about his majesty call our attention to his extreme sensitivity to the history of his climb to the throne—a subject he scrupulously avoids speaking about candidly throughout the entire play” (45). Though Henry is hardly candid concerning the

details of his ascension, he does have plenty to say about it, *broadly speaking*, in his most candid moment, his private confrontation with Hal. Henry would emphasize the moral of the story, his story, to teach his son a lesson—so long as Hal does not ask too many questions. So, when Hal inadvertently echoes Henry’s earlier assertion to “be myself,” the King sees not only a glimpse of himself in his son but also the opportunity to look back, reflect, and revise.

* * *

At Coventry, Henry learns the power of a king’s word from his cousin Richard. Scene 1.3 of *Richard II* features a related threat of treason and another father and son: John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, and Bolingbroke, Duke of Hereford. Bolingbroke stands ready to fight Thomas Mowbray, the Duke of Norfolk, in a trial by combat—a contest on which they had earlier insisted to “make good” their mutual accusations of treason (1.1.37, 76, 99)—but King Richard interrupts the battle and banishes both men.¹⁸ As Mowbray exits the stage, he fires a parting shot at Bolingbroke: “But what thou art, God, thou and I do know; / And all too soon, I fear, the King shall rue” (204-205). The Duke of Norfolk suggests that, despite his repeated assurances,¹⁹ the Duke of Hereford is not as good as his word. In other words, Bolingbroke’s language conceals rather than reveals. This is a considerable problem for Lanham’s serious man, whose concept of language is referential—linguistic expression *should* reflect a central self. In other words, as Katharine Eisaman Maus concludes, “It was because hypocrisy was so easy that it was so dangerous” (24).²⁰ The King’s credulity makes him vulnerable to likely dissemblers, but Norfolk

¹⁸ With a confidence that could only come from hindsight, Mowbray’s son singles out this moment as the beginning of Richard’s end: “O, when the King did throw his warder down, / His own life hung upon the staff he threw” (*2 Henry IV* 4.1.125-126).

¹⁹ Bolingbroke swears on his life so frequently in the play’s first scene (1.1.36-38, 46, 75-77, 87, 92, 98-99, 107-108) that even Richard derides, “How high a pitch his resolution soars!” (109).

²⁰ Writing in a different context, Maus’s remark sums up her longer examination of how early modern Protestants understood interiority and its manifestation. Considering Richard’s

is hardly so naïve. Mowbray's warning might have seemed prophetic to Shakespeare's audience, who would likely have known banished Bolingbroke's ultimate destination, and perhaps, they might have ascribed Mowbray's character with some especial insight. But more likely, Mowbray merely recognizes his own treachery in Bolingbroke, in much the same way as Henry later recognizes Worcester's “[d]anger and disobedience.” Still, Mowbray's final accusation points to one of the play's essential themes, the distinction and the distance between self and role, essence and performance.

King Richard, the man who knows no such distinction, embodies a political metaphor. Richard does not, according to James Calderwood, “conceive of himself as the right king but...simply as *the* king. For him “King” and “Richard” are not two words but one indissoluble name” (17; emphasis original). So, he lives a lie, rhetorically speaking. Calderwood claims, “Bolingbroke's usurpation of the name ‘king’ brings into dramatic being both the lie and metaphor.... And in the person of Henry IV the lie is on the throne of England” (6; see also 15n2). Calderwood is not, I think, suggesting that Richard's kingship is somehow “true” by contrast. Rather, the usurpation reveals Richard's kingship as a metaphor, and Henry's awareness of that vulnerability distinguishes his reign from the beginning. As Lanham insists, “Language is always the issue. Never take it for granted” (202). His reign depends on political and religious rhetoric, but God's anointed does not appreciate how words have made him. Though kingship is a role, the revelation would devastate Richard, an unwitting actor who was born wearing his costume. Indeed, Calderwood sees this as the crucial conflict, writing, “[I]t is the purpose of the play to divest Richard of these views—to drive a wedge between words and their meanings, between the world order and the word order, between names and metaphors”

insistence on divine right, however, Bolingbroke's alleged hypocrisy could seem just as damning, as an attempt to deceive God's deputy.

(13). Richard had ascended the throne at age ten, and the power of his office has virtually made his every word a command (1.1.196).²¹ When the King had commanded Hereford and Norfolk to “[f]orget, forgive, conclude and be agreed” (1.1.156), the Dukes’ insistence on trial by combat had called the King’s command into question. In light of the challenge to his authority in 1.1, Richard’s sentences in 1.3 seem an attempt to reassert the power of his word, most notably so as he banishes Mowbray: “The hopeless word of ‘never to return’ / Breathe I against thee, upon pain of life” (152-153). Richard’s diction suggests a hesitancy to speak with such finality, but the permanence of his power is, of course, a matter of perspective. His words seem, to him, supernatural, almost beyond his own control. Richard must find it reassuring when Mowbray complains, “Within my mouth you have engaoled my tongue.... What is thy sentence then but speechless death, / Which robs my tongue from breathing native breath?” (166-173). Richard’s word has silenced opposition, both by removing Mowbray from his presence in England and by rendering Mowbray’s English moot in foreign courts. Only for a decade, Bolingbroke’s banishment is less permanent but a harsh punishment nonetheless. After Mowbray’s exit, Richard spies Gaunt standing by and, feigning pity for the aged father, further exercises his royal command, commuting Bolingbroke’s sentence by four years (208-211). Similar to Henry’s claim before the Percys, Richard would have his audience think his justice is tempered with mercy, but both Bolingbroke and Gaunt immediately recognize the flaunting of royal prerogative. Still, Richard must find it reassuring when Bolingbroke exclaims, “How long a time lies in one little word! / Four lagging winters and four wanton springs / End in a word; such is the breath of

²¹ Moseley observes, “Richard’s mistake was to act and speak—for him, where is the distinction?—as if the two were glibly coincident” (197). I will return to this rather orthodox interpretation of Richard’s character in the next section. More precisely, rather than challenge this view, I will explore how Henry tries to distance himself from this other kind of king.

kings” (213-215). Bolingbroke’s tone is ambiguous, but Richard usually hears what he wants to hear.

Regardless of his tone, Bolingbroke is acknowledging that the King’s word has exceptional power. The source of that power, however, intrigues him even more. After all, Bolingbroke meets little resistance when he breaks the King’s binding sentence in the next act, returning home before his time is up. By doing so, Bolingbroke prepares the ground for his future enemies, providing them with the very argument that could lead to his own downfall. Certainly, this is one reason revision later becomes so crucial to his reign. Ronald R. MacDonald sees the seeds of future uprisings in Bolingbroke’s return, writing, “A king who is in the curious position of having denied that the king’s words have any privileged efficacy, who has rightly seen that the power of the word lies in its context and not in itself, will be hard pressed to keep his discovery a secret” (30).²² The fruit of this forbidden knowledge does not ripen until *1 Henry IV*, but the serpents are already present in this “other Eden, demi-paradise,” Gaunt’s memorable reference to his romanticized England (*Richard II* 2.1.42). Like Eve and Adam, Richard is also tempted to think himself a god in this “demi-paradise,”²³ but old Gaunt puts Richard’s power into perspective. “The king is not called ‘God’s anointed,’” notes MacDonald, “one does not speak of the divinity that hedges a king because the king really *is* supreme and untouchable, but because he is patently vulnerable, because in many ways his position is the shakiest one in the pluralistic

²² In deposing a king, Henry “has brought power into range of popular contestation or control” (Kastan “The King” 340). Shakespeare never lets Henry forget it, either, giving him, “a self-consciousness that allows him to see the very vulnerability in his own situation that he exploited in Richard’s” (Moseley 86). As I argue throughout this essay, Henry’s “self-consciousness,” which I frequently interpret as “anxiety,” better explains the King’s behavior in the *Henry IV* plays than any guilt regarding Richard’s murder, which has been a more common critical ascription.

²³ Not only is *Richard II* filled with Edenic imagery, but according to Stanley R. Maveety, “most of the imagery in *Richard II* is derived” from this “single bold metaphor” (176). In other words, the story of the Fall directs the play’s metaphors rather than the imagery merely reflecting Genesis’s influence (see also Forker 69-70, 75-76). Shakespeare makes the metaphor most explicit when the Queen questions the articulate Gardener (3.4).

feudal world” (23; emphasis original). His power is political rather than supernatural and depends on men rather than God to enforce it (see Calderwood 22). Gaunt laments that six years is still a long time for an old man with little time left (1.3.218-224). When Richard lamely attempts to comfort him—“Why uncle, thou hast many years to live”—Gaunt replies, “But not a minute, King, that thou canst give. / Shorten my days thou canst with sullen sorrow, / And pluck nights from me, but not lend a morrow” (225-228). Richard can take time away, but only God can grant Gaunt more of it. The King’s command may be impressive, but it is far from limitless.

Bolingbroke’s appreciation of language’s political power may define, but does not limit, his character in *Richard II*. Rather, words may move men...but not him. Bolingbroke is not, however, above feeling altogether. Once he and his father are left alone to share farewells following Richard’s shortening sentence, Bolingbroke makes clear his sentiment as well as his disillusionment with language. Gaunt tries to console his son by counseling, “*Call* it a travel that thou tak’st for pleasure,” but Bolingbroke replies, “My heart will sigh when I *miscal*l it so, / Which finds it an enforced pilgrimage” (1.3.262-264; emphasis added).²⁴ Bolingbroke may occasionally resemble Lanham’s rhetorical man—using language rather than letting it use him—but in this scene, his insistence on language as having an irrefutably referential function marks him instead as a serious man at heart. A few lines later, Gaunt again encourages his son to imagine a better fate:

Think not the King did banish thee,
But thou the King. Woe doth the heavier sit
Where it *perceives* it is but faintly borne.

²⁴ Considering this and an earlier line (1.3.49-50), James Black argues that Bolingbroke had a pilgrimage on his mind as early as act one of *Richard II* (20-22). In “Henry IV’s Pilgrimage,” Black examines evidence that suggests the historical Bolingbroke crusaded in the Holy Land long before Richard banished him, although Shakespeare “did not know [it], or at least could not have learned [it] from his chronicle sources” (19).

Go, *say* I sent thee forth to purchase honour,
And not the King exiled thee; or *suppose*
Devouring pestilence hangs in our air,
And thou art flying to a fresher clime.
Look what thy soul holds dear, *imagine* it
To lie that way thou goest, not whence thou com'st.
Suppose the singing birds musicians,
The grass whereon thou tread'st the presence strewed,
The flowers fair ladies, and thy steps no more
Than a delightful measure or a dance;
For gnarling Sorrow hath less power to bite
The man that mocks at it and sets it light.

(1.3.279-293; emphasis added)

Gaunt's fanciful speech is peppered with the language of perception—"think," "perceives," "say," "suppose," "imagine"—but his son takes it with more than a grain of salt, refusing such delusions by questioning his very word choice. Bolingbroke asks,

O, who can hold a fire in his hand
By *thinking* on the frosty Caucasus?
Or cloy the hungry edge of appetite
By bare *imagination* of a feast?
Or wallow naked in December snow
By *thinking* on fantastic summer's heat?
O no, the apprehension of the good
Gives but the greater feeling to the worse.
Fell Sorrow's tooth doth never rankle more
Than when he bites but lanceth not the sore.

(1.3.296-303; emphasis added)

His father would have him "imagine" goodness in his grief, but Bolingbroke "apprehen[ds]" too keenly the starkness of the contrast. Charles R. Forker observes, "Bolingbroke understands, as successful politicians must, that changing the name of a thing does not change its reality" (67). Words may express his travail but cannot commute it to a holiday tour of the Continent.

A "successful politician" must further understand that the masses often find such misrepresentation persuasive, hearing what they want and believing what they wish. Apprehension, then, raises the "successful politician" above the less appreciative, someone such as Richard. On this premise, Lanham contrasts Bolingbroke and Richard, writing, "Bolingbroke,

the ‘Silent King,’ stands prisoner neither to language nor ceremony, functions in the world of deeds, while Richard has come to believe his own myth, to take it seriously” (201). This may explain why Henry later becomes so upset—with Hal certainly but with himself, too, I would argue—when he exhibits at court wishful thinking similar to the kind Bolingbroke rejects at Coventry:

O, that it could be proved
That some night-tripping fairy had exchanged
In cradle clothes our children where they lay,
And called mine “Percy,” his “Plantagenet”;
Then would I have his Harry, and he mine.
But let him from my thoughts.

(*1 Henry IV* 1.1.85-90)

He allows himself to get carried away for a moment in the presence of the Earl of Westmorland and other royal attendants. MacDonald views such fantasy as a kind of nostalgia, writing, “King Henry, shrewd man of the new order that he is, is yet not immune to this danger. He is certainly capable of wishing, and his wishes are revealing. He wishes, for instance, that his eldest son would behave better, be an old-fashioned gentleman like Northumberland’s son” (35). But thinking does not make it so.²⁵ Looking back can be useful, even to those with regrets, and Henry will eventually learn that revising is more useful than wishful thinking. But he interrupts his current thoughts, considering, perhaps, his earlier concern—“the apprehension of the good / Gives but the greater feeling to the worse.” He then quickly concludes, “For more is to be said and to be done / Than out of anger can be uttered,” and postpones the discussion (105-106). Henry reveals an anxious awareness of how his court might perceive him, concerned they might

²⁵ Or, as MacDonald quips, “[A]s the example of Richard made clear, you can’t make a thing so by saying it, nor a friend true by heaping him with honorific adjectives. Wishes are not horses, they are words, and that is why beggars have to walk” (34). The Bishop of Carlisle similarly advises the soon-to-be unseated King, “My lord, wise men ne’er sit and wail their woes, / But presently prevent the ways to wail” (3.2.178-179). Still, Richard keeps wishing and wailing while Bolingbroke mounts ever higher.

see the man behind the King: “The style suggests this man is consciously being a king, aware of his insecurity in the role” (Moseley 197). This opening scene establishes an anxiety that influences Henry’s internal and external conflicts throughout this play and the next. While Henry’s identity crisis may not unilaterally weaken his position, the struggle to unite his kingdom and preserve his legacy does reflect his own peace of mind. Linda Charnes, appropriating Jean-Joseph Goux, explains,

Since a legend is always constructed through a mode of symbolization that is a “collective task,” and since it is also always constituted as legend “after the fact,” the social enactment of the original significant social conflict is always already superseded. To be “a legend in one’s own time” is to be the “neurotic individual” *whose own life* is the “era left behind.”

(4; emphasis original)

Neurosis binds the head that wears a crown...but nostalgia helps relieve such restraint. This partly explains Henry’s unnatural fondness for his political enemy, the “old-fashioned gentleman” Hotspur.²⁶ When Henry next appears on stage, to confront the Percys, the King is wroth with Worcester but allows Hotspur to explain, at length without interruption, why he refused to hand over his prisoners (1.3.29-69). Henry then permits Hotspur to defend a claimant to his throne with impunity (93-112). Rather than dismiss the young rebel as he had the uncle moments before, Henry, still apparently upset, dismisses himself from the Percys’ presence (123SD). Though he later claims that Hotspur “hath more worthy interest to the state” than his own son, Henry should be careful not to cede ground himself. Henry’s acquiescence has a dangerous precedent, as Richard remarks to Bolingbroke, “Well you deserve. They well deserve to have / That know the strong’st and surest way to get” (3.3.200-201).

²⁶ Henry’s fondness for Hotspur is “unnatural” for several reasons. Most notably, his admiration for his mortal enemy makes him even more vulnerable than the situation demands. But also, the historical Henry IV was three years *younger* than Hotspur. Appropriating his sources accordingly, Shakespeare rejects Raphael Holinshed’s historical detail in favor of Samuel Daniel’s poetic conceit, making Hotspur Hal’s contemporary (Kastan “Introduction” 13). I will later insist that this “unnatural fondness” forces Henry to displace his natural son, a more striking likeness.

As I have mentioned, Bolingbroke appreciates the potential of language as a means to direct the thoughts of others. “It is very well to *use* myth,” writes Lanham, “But it is fatal to believe it” (202-203; emphasis original). The rhetoric Bolingbroke uses to climb the throne is further evidence of this apprehension. He uses the vengeance of his uncle’s murder as a pretext to challenge Richard’s judgment (*Richard II* 1.1.87-108), and later, he uses his disinheritance as a pretext to challenge Richard’s right to rule:

As I was banished, I was banished Hereford;
But as I come, I come for Lancaster.

.....
If that my cousin king be King in England,
It must be granted I am Duke of Lancaster.

.....
What would you have me do? I am a subject,
And I challenge law. Attorneys are denied me,
And therefore personally I lay my claim
To my inheritance of free descent.

(2.3.113-136)

Bolingbroke’s actions are blatantly treasonous, but his language emphasizes legitimacy, a noble subject insisting on his legal rights of inheritance. Notably, however, this very legitimacy does not extend to Henry as King. This legal argument draws an army to his cause. Worcester cites it as the reason the Percys supported him in the first place (*I Henry IV* 5.1.41-45). Indeed, Richard’s name may represent legions, but Bolingbroke commands them: “At Flint Castle, where Richard descends to the base court with many words and few soldiers, Bolingbroke listens politely and says little: his twenty thousand soldiers are all the eloquence he requires” (Calderwood 22). In calling attention to his rhetoric here, I am not suggesting that Bolingbroke’s claim misrepresents his person, only that it may misrepresent his reason for returning. In fact, his understanding of his own identity—“I am Duke of Lancaster”—is bound up with his titles. The same concept of identity, so tied to inherited titles, applies to the King he threatens and to the lords who join him,

making their eventual acceptance of Bolingbroke as King all the more ironic.²⁷ It also makes the Percys repeated references to the King as “Bolingbroke” all the more insidious in *1 Henry IV* (1.3.136, 175, 227, 239, 244; see Fehrenbach 49). However, due to his serious view of language, Bolingbroke is much less accepting of his new title than the noblemen who support—or in Richard’s case, acquiesce to—him: “A silent king indeed, not fooled by words, he can play, use, a scene but does not mistake ceremonial rehearsal for power itself” (Lanham 203). I would note, however, that Henry occasionally uses but does not fully embrace “ceremonial rehearsal” as a stage for enacting “power itself”; the two are not mutually exclusive. MacDonald adds, “To insist on what is ultimately fictional power ends up in exposing real weakness. But real weakness, properly managed, may result in real power” (29). Whereas Richard fails to appreciate the role of king as a role, Henry assumes too much the opposite, that the role of king can only be artificial, in perpetual conflict with his true self.

* * *

Others may call him “King,” but Henry hardly embraces it as his identity. In fact, he rather views kingship as a disguise to protect his self, a metaphor made manifest on the battlefield at Shrewsbury in act five of *1 Henry IV*. As Worcester approaches him on the eve of battle, Henry

²⁷ Forker adds, “Moreover, the speciousness of Bolingbroke’s argument that his new title, Duke of Lancaster, has annulled the crime of his early return, since he was banished only as Hereford, has an alienating effect” (29). Forker misreads Bolingbroke’s speech, however. While his actual argument may be just as “specious,” it is not that his new title annuls the crime committed under his old one. Rather, Bolingbroke’s argument is that, in confiscating the Duchy of Lancaster, Richard has invalidated his own inherited title of King of England, which would annul his sentence of banishment on Bolingbroke. Bolingbroke argues that his return will pressure Richard to set things right. The aforementioned “alienating effect” must refer to the theater audience since Bolingbroke’s noble, onstage audience apparently finds his argument compelling, as his interests affect their own. Even York, who disapproves of Bolingbroke’s action, sympathizes with his cause (*Richard II* 2.3.141-147). Still, Forker does concede, “The situation nevertheless allows him to describe with eloquence the legal injustice of which he has been the victim—an injustice that is seen once more (as in 2.1) to weaken Richard’s implied position that inheritance alone is enough to make and protect a king” (29).

reasserts his authority in a way that echoes their earlier exchange, publicly announcing, “You have deceived our trust / And made us doff our easy robes of peace / To crush our old limbs in ungentele steel” (5.1.11-13). As before, Henry again blames the Percys for provoking his uncharacteristic wrath. Whether as a prince of peace or as a warrior king, Henry describes his royal role, speaking in the royal plural, as if it were a costume, changing between scenes; still, he claims to wear “our easy robes of peace” more comfortably than “ungentele steel,” assuming ownership of the looser garment. He will resort to battle, as it befits his position, but does so reluctantly, as it does not suit his disposition.

Henry’s field strategy depends on apparel just as much as his statecraft does. The Scottish Earl of Douglas, Hotspur’s former captive and current ally, kills at least two noblemen disguised as the King before uncovering the ruse. When Hotspur points out his mistake, the Douglas addresses the fallen fake:

DOUGLAS

A fool go with thy soul, whither it goes!
A borrowed title hast thou bought too dear.
Why didst thou tell me that thou wert a king?

HOTSPUR

The King hath many marching in his coats.

DOUGLAS

Now, by my sword, I will kill all his coats.
I’ll murder all his wardrobe, piece by piece,
Until I meet the King.

(5.3.22-28)

Henry’s deception is not novel for a medieval king on the battlefield, but it is particularly pertinent to this king’s predicament (see Grady 131). As Duke of Lancaster, Henry conflated his identity with his inherited title, but as King of England, he is conflicted about whether he *becomes* his title or merely *wears* it. If his kingship is like a garment, then others can wear that “borrowed title” when it suits his, or their, interest. But apart from renting the coat in battle, even the torn

monarch who claims ownership may find the costume's cost "too dear," as the ravenous Scot swears to "kill all his coats," to "murder all his wardrobe, piece by piece."

The closeted King—who prefers to shut everyone out, including, especially, his closest kin—now seems to have been hiding something all along: his fear that his majesty might fit others just as well, if not better (see Fehrenbach 46). When the Douglas finally confronts the King, the Scot mocks him and threatens to lay bare Henry's deepest anxiety:

DOUGLAS

Another king! They grow like Hydra's heads.
I am the Douglas, fatal to all those
That wear those colours on them. What art thou
That counterfeit'st the person of a king?

KING

The King himself, who, Douglas, grieves at heart
So many of his shadows thou hast met
And not the very King. I have two boys
Seek Percy and thyself about the field,
But seeing thou fall'st on me so luckily
I will assay thee; and defend thyself.

DOUGLAS

I fear thou art another counterfeit,
And yet, in faith, thou bearest thee like a king.
But mine I am sure thou art, whoe'er thou be...

(5.4.24-36)

Both men identify themselves, but the King is less convincing; we should not, however, mistake this public announcement as Henry's personal acceptance of his role. Though he claims to be "The King himself," "the very King," the Douglas is underwhelmed, seeing only "[a]nother king," "another counterfeit."²⁸ Henry seems to expect his royal presence will be self-evident but

²⁸ We might contrast Henry with Falstaff, who, upon meeting the Douglas a few lines later, willingly "counterfeits" by falling down as if he were dead (5.4.75). Rising up again when the danger has passed, Falstaff defends himself, "Counterfeit? I lie; I am no counterfeit. To die is to be a counterfeit, for he is but the counterfeit of a man who hath not the life of a man. But to counterfeit dying when a man thereby liveth is to be no counterfeit but the true and perfect image of life indeed" (5.4.114-118). Lanham adds, paradoxically, "[Falstaff] possesses the only genuine central self in the play.... It is not that he is sincere, dear heaven, but that he possesses a central self to be false to" (206). MacDonald further views Falstaff's dissembling as a dangerous

his deception has apparently worked all too well. As David Scott Kastan points out, “Henry’s majesty can be effectively mimed” (“The King” 343). As with the Percys in 1.3, Henry has again provoked the very question he now hopes to resolve: *is* he King, or does he only *play* one? Had Henry not had “many marching in his coats,” the Douglas would have little reason to doubt the King when he finally appears, but in the midst of the melee, Henry will have to prove himself in single combat (see Kastan “Introduction” 63). Though Henry says, “I will assay thee,” it is himself, rather than the Douglas, who is being tested. The Douglas does concede, “And yet, in faith, thou bearest thee like a king,” but we should not mistake this simile as his acknowledgement or affirmation of Henry as King—*like* is not *is*. Rather, the Douglas is only certain that, “whoe’er thou be,” the man before him will die at his hands; the King’s fate will be no different from that of his counterfeits.

They fight, and at the moment the King almost falls, the Prince of Wales enters to defend his father, declaring to the Douglas that he “never promiseth but he means to pay,” a reiteration of his earlier claim to “redeem all this on Percy’s head” (5.4.42; 3.2.132).²⁹ Then, they fight, and the Douglas, who had resisted an army of actors, is now overwhelmed and flees the authentic article, a single legitimate prince. The weakened King commends his successor—“Thou hast

critique of the King, referring to the tavern play extempore: “For in presenting himself as a clumsy actor, Falstaff manages to insinuate with utter impunity the very disloyal suggestion not only that the real king is a player-king (because he has no lineal title to the office of anointed king which he now fills), but that his monarchical impersonation is transparent and unconvincing” (33). In this way, Falstaff anticipates the Douglas even though the Scot later takes the fat knight by surprise.

²⁹ Several scholars have noted the richness of economic language in *1 Henry IV*. Kastan explains why credit and currency are so pressing to Henry’s concerns: “What makes rulers sovereign in this new world, like that which makes coins ‘current’ (2.3.90), is finally the nation’s willingness to accept them as such” (“Introduction” 68). See also: Sandra K. Fischer, “‘He Means to Pay’: Value and Metaphor in the Lancastrian Tetralogy,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40 (1989), 149-164; Nina Levine, “Extending Credit in the *Henry IV* Plays,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51 (2000), 403-431; and Jesse Lander, “Crack’d Crowns and Counterfeit Sovereigns: The Crisis of Value in *1 Henry IV*,” *Shakespeare Studies* 30 (2002), 137-161.

redeemed thy lost opinion” (5.4.47)³⁰—who soon turns his attention to Percy. The head rebel has no trouble identifying the Prince:

HOTSPUR
If I mistake not, thou art Harry Monmouth.
PRINCE
Thou speak’st as if I would deny my name.
HOTSPUR
My name is Harry Percy.
PRINCE Why then, I see
A very valiant rebel of the name.
I am the Prince of Wales...
(5.4.58-62)

The Harrys’ introductions are noticeably more direct than the exchange between the King and the Douglas just a few lines before. This should not be seen as some reflection of the younger characters’ economy of language; in fact, next to Falstaff, Hal and Hotspur have the most lines in the play. Rather, their directness is due to the immediacy of their mutual recognition. They have less to say because each knows exactly whom he faces. Since there has been no proliferation of princes like that of the counterfeit kings, words now refer, and names now identify. Prince Hal defeats Hotspur—and in effect, the rebellion, for now—as himself, or more precisely, wearing well his royal role as if it were a natural fit. Hal has been rehearsing the whole play in order to play the Prince here.

Part 1 ends with the King looking yet again at his own reflection in the rebel Worcester, now taken prisoner and preparing for execution. Henry announces, triumphantly, “Thus ever did rebellion find rebuke” (5.5.1), but the line captures one of the *Henriad*’s greatest ironies. Kastan writes, “Henry chides Worcester, asserting the inevitability of the victory of legitimacy,

³⁰ Yachnin understands this scene more cynically, as an example of how Part 2 revises the meaning of Part 1: “Whereas from the point of view of the first play, the moment of rescue authenticates the reconciliation between father and son, from the point of view of the sequel, the moment is burdened by continued mutual distrust and resentment—the father’s praise is grudging and the son’s response is uncomfortably defensive” (122). The words only appear to be sincere.

but certainly Henry's own rebellion found no such 'rebuke,' as he successfully opposed Richard's legitimate kingship" ("The King" 331). But the whole of Part 1 seems to dispute Kastan's conclusion. Henry's troubled mind and troubled land rebuke him quite chidingly, and the King's final couplets are hardly final:

Rebellion in this land shall lose his sway
Meeting the check of such another day;
And since this business so fair is done,
Let us not leave till all our own be won.

(5.5.41-44)

Shakespeare may have been planning a sequel at this point. He may have had in mind the Archbishop's Rebellion that followed in the chronicles, which he would later decide to dramatize in Part 2. Or, he may simply be making a generic distinction, "asserting the necessary contingency of any historical moment" (Kastan 5.5.43-44n). Regardless of Shakespeare's intentions, Henry suggests that, in his mind, the matter is not settled. His rhetoric has effectively supported his argument and his army, but it has not changed him. He still struggles to make good his promise to "be myself," or as Hal puts it, to "be more myself." With Hal's help, Henry may have won the day, but the external conflict was always only a symptom of his greater internal conflict. To resolve that—before he can go forward, before his son can succeed him legitimately—Henry must look back on his rise to the throne. He must learn to revise his own history and reenact "that argument."

3. “As Thou Art to This Hour...Even as I Was Then”

No work of Shakespeare's depends on characterization through contrast more so than the *Henriad*. Accordingly, Henry IV, a character as divided as the two parts of his titular play, defines himself differentially, not by who he is but by who he is not—namely, Richard and Hal (see Fehrenbach 48). In the first scene of *Richard II*, Shakespeare implies a comparison between Richard and Bolingbroke that informs how we should interpret the action that follows.³¹ Similarly, in the first scene of *I Henry IV*, Shakespeare allows Henry to make a more explicit comparison between Hal and Hotspur that foreshadows the climactic confrontation between them later in the play. Jenkins writes,

There is talk of two young men who do not yet appear, both called “young Harry,” yet apparently unlike.... Already, before Prince Hal is even named, a contrast is being begun between a man who behaves like a prince though he is not and another who is in fact a prince but does not act the part. The King makes this explicit.... We expect that central to the play will be the antithesis between these two young men and the lives they lead. And we shall find that this antithesis precipitates a moral contest which is an important aspect of the historical action of the drama.

(102-103)

Jenkins touches on the very distinction between identity and role that distracts Henry throughout his reign. But Jenkins focuses more on how this first scene foreshadows not only the young Harry's climactic confrontation but also signals the play's balancing structure. However, Hawkins warns us of Jenkins's “eloquence,” and we should not allow the “sharp[ness]” of

³¹ I have already mentioned several examples of this contrast between Richard and Bolingbroke in the previous section and will further elaborate within this section.

Jenkins's "summary perceptions" to dull our own critical faculties (282). Many critics have made observations comparable to Jenkins's, but character foils are hardly ever so neat. Perhaps Jenkins simply follows the King's lead, as Henry simplifies the Harrys' characters to the point of interchangeability, wishing "[t]hat some night-tripping fairy had exchanged / In cradle clothes our children where they lay / And called mine 'Percy', his 'Plantagenet'" (*I Henry IV* 1.1.86-88). If the comparison were so easy, Shakespeare would not have structured an entire play around their juxtaposition; after all, Part 1 begins with their mention and ends with their meeting, but the three acts in between are hardly so straightforward, resembling what Henry later calls Bolingbroke's "by-paths and indirect crook'd ways" (*2 Henry IV* 4.5.184-185). Again, a simple argument makes for a weak drama. Moreover, Henry is the very one who complicates such foiled characterization by applying it across generations—across plays—and he does not, I would add, complicate as eloquently as Shakespeare. When Hal declares he will "be more myself," Henry replies with an analogy,

For all the world,
As thou art to this hour was Richard then,
When I from France set foot at Ravenspur,
And even as I was then is Percy now.
(*I Henry IV* 3.2.93-96)

Whereas Shakespeare juxtaposes these characters laterally—Richard and Bolingbroke in *Richard II*, Hal and Hotspur in *1 Henry IV*—Henry seems to resist the roles assigned by his playwright. He is, after all, trying to tell Shakespeare's earlier history in his own way. Attempting to revise his past, Henry casts Hal as Richard, who inherits legitimacy and accompanies the commons, and Hotspur as Bolingbroke, who merits authority and commands an army. Lest Hal misunderstand Henry's example—quite unlikely, given his ability to discern others and mirror them to his advantage—Henry makes its application clear: "And in that very line, Harry, standest thou, / For thou hast lost thy princely privilege / With vile participation" (3.2.85-87). One can almost

hear Henry spitting out those alliterative “P’s” in contempt. Although Henry argues that common familiarity makes the difference, it is actually legitimacy that distinguishes the men in Henry’s analogy. Henry directs his moralizing argument at Hal, but the hall of mirrors made by his foiling actually reflects his own character from multiple angles. Despite his reserve, Henry inadvertently reveals more about himself than the characters he means to illuminate.

Before exploring how Henry’s analogy works, we should examine his reasons for revising history. MacDonald notes, quite plainly, “He is a man, and in this he is like most of us, not entirely happy about bearing the consequences of his irreversible historical actions” (30). Added to his dissatisfaction, however, is his attempt to make meaning of his past. Yachnin explains, “History’s consequent failure to resolve itself into determinate shape means, then, that the full significance of events is unknowable at any time” (125). Similarly, Henry’s younger son, John of Lancaster, scoffs at another’s forecasting, “You are too shallow, Hastings, much too shallow, / To sound the bottom of the after-times” (*2 Henry IV* 4.2.50-51). Still, one can revise more easily than prophesy. “In the face of the open-endedness and ‘unpatterning’ of history,” Henry imposes a cyclical—and I would add moral—model onto history in order to explain his own past to his son and himself; Yachnin sees in Henry’s example evidence of “a fatalistic nihilism,” “a rationalizing attempt” to “construct history as repetitive and cyclical” (125). According to Yachnin, Henry expresses this cyclical view of history in Part 2:

O God, that one *might* read the book of fate,
And see the revolution of the times....

.....
O, *if* this were seen,
The happiest youth, viewing his progress through,
What perils past, what crosses to ensue,
Would shut the book and sit him down to die.

(3.1.45-56; emphasis added)

The speech seems to me more cynical than cyclical, but the two attitudes need not be mutually exclusive.³² I would not deny that Henry conceives of history in cycles, but I disagree with Yachnin's emphasis on this particular speech as representative of that view. After all, the history of the usurpation did not repeat in Part 1, and the history of the Northumberland rebellion did not repeat in Part 2, where Shakespeare seems especially keen to structurally tease the audience's expectations. Henry expects Hotspur to be as successful as Bolingbroke—as his analogy makes clear—but his victory at Shrewsbury would require him to revise his historiography just as he had earlier revised his history. Although Henry speaks of “read[ing] the book of fate” and “see[ing] the revolution of the times,” he qualifies the actions with a conditional “might” and again, a few lines later, adds, “O, if this were seen....” “[R]evolution of the times” seems to mean, literally, cyclical history (see Yachnin 125). But within the context of the *Henriad*, the phrase refers more to political revolution, as an overall theme, and within the context of the speech, the phrase suggests that history progresses, like the narrative of a book, more so than coming full circle. History *may* repeat, like a literary motif, but it hardly *must* do so.³³

Henry does, however, marvel at Richard's uncanny ability to predict Northumberland's next treachery, as if the debased King had attained the power of prophecy after his fall (3.1.67-79). Responding to Henry, the Earl of Warwick actually articulates more acutely what we would better recognize as a cyclical view of history, saying,

There is a history in all men's lives
Figuring the nature of the times deceas'd;

³² Black points out, “But the speech is reminiscent as well as premonitory, and the reminiscence is of Richard II. For just as Henry says that the most optimistic youth reading the book of fate and viewing the dreary whirligig of the revolution of the times would be persuaded to sit him down and die, so too did that less-than-optimistic youth Richard contemplate an unvarying catalogue of sad stories of the death of kings and seat himself on the ground to yield to despair [Richard II 3.2.144-170]” (24).

³³ Jenkins quite clearly claims, however, “The one thing about history is that it does not repeat itself” (112).

*The which observ'd, a man may prophesy,
With a near aim, of the main chance of things
As yet not come to life, who in their seeds
And weak beginnings lie intreasured.
Such things become the hatch and brood of time;
And by the necessary form of this
King Richard might create a perfect guess
That great Northumberland, then false to him,
Would of that seed grow to a greater falseness,
Which should not find a ground to root upon
Unless on you.*

(3.1.80-92; emphasis added)

As I noted earlier, the usurper has sown the seeds of future uprisings, though Warwick here marks him as the reaper of bad fortune. Warwick attributes Richard's clear vision to mere observation. Warwick's own insight anticipates, in a later scene, his uncanny ability to explain the Prince's conduct quite accurately, echoing Hal's earlier confessions to the audience in soliloquy—"I know you all..." (*1 Henry IV* 1.2.185-207)—and to Ned Poins in confidence—"I can drink with any tinker in his own language..." (*1 Henry IV* 2.4.5-20). Warwick clarifies for Henry,

My gracious lord, you look beyond him quite.
The Prince but studies his companions
Like a strange tongue, wherein, to gain the language....
.....
The Prince will, in the perfectness of time,
Cast off his followers, and their memory
Shall as a pattern or a measure live
By which his Grace must mete the lives of others,
Turning past evils to advantages.

(*2 Henry IV* 4.4.67-78)

Warwick sees the Prince rehearsing for rule while Henry sees him ruining "the expectation of [his] time" (*1 Henry IV* 3.2.36-37). Similar to how Mowbray had recognized another traitor in Bolingbroke—and as Henry later had in Worcester—Warwick recognizes another keen observer of human behavior in Hal. Yachnin simply calls it "a pragmatic analysis of personality types (past behavior determines future behavior)" (125).

Looking back even further, Yachnin observes that Henry's "despairing speech [in *2 Henry IV*]" is set "in telling opposition to [Bolingbroke's] earlier view (in *Richard II*) of his own revolutionary role in history, then conceived as linear, progressive, and avowedly providential" (125).³⁴ The ambition of youth has grown into the cynicism of age. His prior persona and its accompanying perspective, Bolingbroke's ambition, make Henry's current disposition even more bitter by contrast—especially since he has gotten his royal wish and has found it wanting. Again, we might consider Bolingbroke's reply to Gaunt: "the apprehension of the good / Gives but the greater feeling to the worse" (*Richard II* 1.3.300-301). Nostalgia, then, feeds Henry's fondness for Hotspur, a desire to see his younger self in that gallant soldier. Hal resembles Henry more, but the reflection is less flattering. I would further argue that, while Henry's nostalgia is certainly romantic, it is not merely reflective; as I will explain soon, nostalgia also motivates his attempt to revise the Lancastrian narrative. Yachnin, however, attributes Henry's revisionism to an assumed remorse for Richard's deposition and murder, writing,

Henry draws a parallel between Hal and Richard II which assumes a cyclical view of history. Henry's reasons for seeing history in this way are far from disinterested: he seems to desire a repetition of the original regicide, this time with Hal as Richard and Hotspur as Henry Bolingbroke, as expiation for his own crime. However, Hal is not like Richard for a number of reasons, the most immediate being that Hal is not king, that even if he were, he would not have Richard's *de jure* claim to the crown, and that Hal will not be overthrown.

(126n1)

³⁴ Yachnin continues, "Henry's fatalistic and inadequate construction of history in the second *Henry IV* play, and in his interview with Hal in the first play, *implies* a critique of history (as record of events) as fundamentally a misdirected and covert legitimization of the present. In this sense, the past *is revealed* to be a product of the present, a history (as record of events) as well as history (as the events themselves) *is shown* to be constructed in terms of revisionism" (125-126; emphasis added). Yachnin's language makes it unclear whether only he, as the critic, or Henry, as a character in addition to the critic, perceives this "impie[d]...critique of history," but Yachnin's use of passive voice—"the past *is revealed*" and "history...*is shown*"—seems to deny Henry such self-awareness and agency. Still, Henry would hardly benefit from the revelation that the history he is writing is "fundamentally a misdirected and covert legitimization of the present."

The point contends too much to be blunted and buried in Yachnin's footnote. I agree that, in drawing such parallels here, Henry clearly "assumes a cyclical view of history"—especially more so than in his "revolution of the times" speech in Part 2. Yachnin also correctly notes Henry's lack of detachment in reconstructing the past in that way but mischaracterizes his interest in making the analogy. Even if Henry does feel genuine remorse for Richard's murder—still a dubious assumption—the notion that he "desire[s] a repetition of the original regicide" has tenuous textual support and none that Yachnin offers.³⁵ (Perhaps this is why Yachnin did not develop the novel idea beyond a footnote.) Rather, Henry identifies Hal with Richard to warn the Prince, to prevent another regicide, and to circumvent another revolution. But, as Yachnin clarifies, "Hal is not like Richard for a number of reasons." They are most alike in their inherited legitimacy. "Richard's *de jure* claim" may not extend to Hal as *his* legitimate heir, but once wrested from Richard, the claim "purchas'd" by Henry "[f]alls upon [Hal] in a more fairer sort" (*2 Henry IV* 4.5.199-200). Legitimacy makes the distinction in Henry's analogy even though Henry insists that the commons make the king. He seems to think that familiarity obscures legitimacy and that men respect most a leader unlike them—a man apart. Henry frames his comparison on those terms. Indeed, an analogy based on character foils is an appropriate model for making an argument about royal distinction. He claims,

Had I so lavish of my presence been,

³⁵ Henry's only direct reference to repentance is made publicly, after Richard's murderer presents him with the body, and under the circumstances, sincerity matters less than the appearance of sincerity (*Richard II* 5.6.38-52). Further, he never suggests that he deserves a similar fate. Still, the Percys may perceive something like regicide in Henry. Newly crowned, Henry complains of his "unthrifty son" to Hotspur, who becomes, in *1 Henry IV*, not only Hal's martial rival but his filial one as well. Henry's comments in *Richard II* (5.3.1-22) may suggest the vulnerability Hotspur sees in the royal household in *1 Henry IV*: "But that I think his father loves him not / And would be glad he met with some mischance, / I would have him poisoned with a pot of ale" (1.3.229-231). For a king to wish his heir ill is political suicide, and the thought would only encourage Hotspur's already easy confidence in deposing the deposer. If interpreting this as a wish for regicide seems a stretch, it only confirms the tenuousness of Yachnin's claim.

So common-hackneyed in the eyes of men,
So stale and cheap to vulgar company,
Opinion, that did help me to the crown,
Had still kept loyal to possession
And left me in reputeless banishment,
A fellow of no mark nor likelihood.

(*1 Henry IV* 3.2.39-45)

The usurper defines himself differentially...just not in the way he thinks: Bolingbroke's and Hotspur's merited authority are distinguished from Richard's and Hal's inherited legitimacy. Henry's attempt to teach Hal a lesson requires him to revise Shakespeare's characterization, but of course, the playwright has the final word. Whereas Henry really resembles both princes more than either resembles the other, Bolingbroke hardly resembles Hotspur at all, as we shall see. Thus, the paradoxical analogy is both too complicated for application and too simple for accuracy, intended for Hal but reflective of Henry. Revision is recursive.

* * *

Henry revises history to prevent another revolution, as both a recurrence of past events and an overturning of the new order. His only plans for the future, his crusade to the Holy Land, are only plans, and even then, he publicly announces that they are a response to the past: "I'll make a voyage to the Holy Land / To wash this blood off from my guilty hand (5.3.49-50). The historical allusion to Pilate before Christ's crucifixion should cause us to doubt Henry's sincerity—as should the calculated couplets in his disavowal of Richard's murderer (5.3.34-44)—but that does not mean his interest in the past is disingenuous. In fact, Black writes,

In the King's reproaches to Hal we are given an indication of how difficult, if not impossible, it is for Henry IV to move forward—forward, that is, not just to his crusade but from the great and terrible event of his life, the displacement of Richard.... It is in this scene that we glimpse both the extent and the delimiting nature of Henry's obsession with the memory of Richard. His appeal to Hal to be more like him (the King) reveals that *in Henry's eyes there are only two kinds of king and indeed only two kinds of man, Henry and Richard*. He asks his son which one he is going to be, and he completely misses the splendid answer, which is 'Neither'.... It is not surprising that Henry finds it difficult to grasp that Hal would be himself.

(23; emphasis added)

Black understands Henry's "I shall hereafter / Be more myself" as a declaration that he will be his own man, but that reading does not fit the context of the scene, in which Hal's several replies to Henry's accusations are not designed to defy but to appease the old man.³⁶ Kastan more aptly glosses "Be more myself" as "behave as my birth and position suggest I should" (3.2.93n). Hal here acknowledges the expectations, and the fears, of his father. A few lines later, Hal tries to pacify Henry by promising to out-Hotspur Hotspur: "I shall make this northern youth exchange / His glorious deeds for my indignities" (132-159). Both responses affirm Henry's analogy even though Shakespeare's plays seem to reject such simplification. Black's two-man template predetermines the analogy at the center of Henry's history lecture. Essentially, Henry is not just telling his son to be more like Hotspur—but to be more like Hotspur because Hotspur is like his younger self (see Grady 136). Bolingbroke had much to gain whereas Henry has much to lose, and Henry does not want to be reminded of how much his situation resembles Richard's, threatened by a charismatic leader and the powerful Percy family.

Based on his description of Richard in *1 Henry IV* 3.2, Henry views inherited power as most vulnerable and least valuable to the very man who possesses it, and he projects that presumption onto his own son. He contrasts a description of his austere, younger self (3.2.39-59) with "The skipping King," who

ambled up and down
With shallow jesters and rash bavin wits,
Soon kindled and soon burnt; carded his state,
Mingled his royalty with cap'ring fools,
Had his great name profaned with their scorns,
And gave his countenance against his name

³⁶ Though his riotous behavior offends Henry, nowhere does Hal directly challenge his father. Even when given the opportunity to mock the King in the tavern play extempore, Hal instead insults "That villainous, abominable misleader of youth, Falstaff, that old white-bearded Satan" (2.4.450-451). Falstaff, of course, responds playfully and winsomely.

To laugh at gibing boys and stand the push
Of every beardless vain comparative...
(3.2.60-67; emphasis added)

This description ought to resonate with Hal, as Henry intends, but it is not an accurate description of the Richard we see in Shakespeare's earlier play. In fact, the details match the Hal we have just seen in the first two acts of *1 Henry IV*. At Gad's Hill (2.2) and later in the tavern (2.4), we witness the young Prince "skipping" and "ambl[ing] up and down," pranking, fooling around, and playing at serious matters, such as the armed robbery of the pilgrims, the cruel joke on Francis, and the play extempore with Falstaff. Falstaff's humor is certainly deeper than that of a "shallow jester" and more enduring than that of a "rash bavin wit," but I doubt Henry would be impressed or even amused by Plump Jack, a noble fool who knows the truth he speaks. Falstaff represents comedy out of bounds—"out of all compass," so to speak (3.3.20)—both in his physical form and in the way his comic plot undermines Henry's historical plot. In line 63, Henry reveals his disdain for mixing genres—for "mingling kings and clowns," as Philip Sidney would say³⁷—though Shakespeare does it so skillfully in the plays bearing Henry's name. Henry claims King Richard "[h]ad his great name profaned with their scorns, / And gave his countenance against his name," but it is Prince Hal who, even from the first scene wherein we meet him, "stand[s] the push" of "vain comparative[s,]" tolerating, and even encouraging, such offenses.³⁸ For example, Falstaff gibus with impunity, "Thou hast the most unsavoury similes and art indeed the most comparative, rascalliest, sweet young prince.... I would to God thou and I knew where

³⁷ Though Yachnin does not catch Henry's allusion to Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*, he does conclude his dissolution of the structural problem by claiming "the *Henry IV* plays represent Shakespeare's critique of Sidney's...attempts to remove dramatic literature from both the context of theatrical performance and the day-to-day world of time" (128).

³⁸ Of course, Henry is not present to witness any of Hal's unbecoming behavior, but as Hal complains, "the ear of greatness" has heard much from "smiling pickthanks and base newsmongers" (*1 Henry IV* 3.2.24-25). Hal also acknowledges as much in the play extempore. Playing the King to Falstaff's Hal, he mentions, "The complaints I hear of thee are grievous" (2.4.430).

a commodity of good names were to be bought" (1.2.76-80). Granted, Falstaff is a knight, but no one would argue he represents gentility. Nowhere in his play does Richard exhibit or permit such base behavior in his presence. The King does not mingle with common clowns or "cap'ring fools"; his formal play does not even allow its few commoners to speak in prose! Lord Ross, a supporter of Bolingbroke, even notes, "The commons hath he pilled with grievous taxes, / And quite lost their hearts" (*Richard II* 2.1.246-247), as if he might have had them once. Still, speaking to Hal, Henry continues, claiming Richard

Grew a companion to the common streets,
Enfeoffed himself to popularity,
That, being *daily swallowed* by men's eyes,
They *surfeited with honey* and began
To loathe *the taste of sweetness*, whereof a little
More than a little is by much too much.

.....
Being with his presence *glutted, gorged and full.*

(3.2.68-84; emphasis added)

Henry turns his description away from how Richard behaved to focus on how his conduct affected his subjects. The extended metaphor of digestive excess better describes Hal's corpulent companion than anyone surrounding Richard. One could even stretch the gluttonous metaphor to suggest that Hal is to blame for Falstaff's waste, his aged decadence; the fat knight even swears as much in a verbal joust with the Prince, jesting, "Thou hast done much harm upon me, Hal; God forgive thee for it. Before I knew thee, Hal, I knew nothing, and now am I, if a man should speak truly, little better than one of the wicked" (1.2.87-94). Falstaff might have met a better end.

Hal, though, has the final word in this scene—and in their relationship overall (see 2 *Henry IV* 5.5)—by ending with the play's only verse soliloquy. His tone-setting speech begins,

I know you all, and will awhile uphold
The unyoked humour of your idleness.
Yet *herein will I imitate the sun*,
Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
To smother up his beauty from the world,

That, when he please again to be himself,
Being wanted, *he may be more wondered at*
By breaking the foul and ugly mists
Of vapours that did seem to strangle him.

(1.2.185-193; emphasis added)

Hal demonstrates here—and of course, in the later fulfillment of this plan—that the King's fears about his son are unfounded. Hal understands how a king must play his part, but he must first set the stage. His awareness of language and its creative potential distinguishes him from Richard—and to some extent, Bolingbroke—who only understands language as referent to an external reality.³⁹ Hal better manages his metaphors.⁴⁰ Hal's sun will allow the clouds to “smother up his beauty” so that they may magnify his majesty by contrast. The clouds become curtains, dramatically drawn to reveal the star actor. Thus, he may be “more wondered at.” Henry speaks of his younger self in exactly the same terms (3.2.47, 57; see also Kastan's accompanying footnote), having a similar affinitive effect as Hal's unconscious echo of Henry's resolve to “be myself.” Both men understand the importance of appearance and presence (or lack thereof), but only Hal embraces his role on the public stage. Henry, however, does not even appreciate his son's apprehension. In his description of Richard—which is, of course, his perception of Hal—Henry also alludes to the sun-king imagery, so familiar to Shakespeare's audience:

So, when he had occasion to be seen,
He was but as the cuckoo is in June,
Heard, not regarded; seen, but with such eyes
As, sick and blunted with community,
Afford no extraordinary gaze
Such as is bent on *sun-like majesty*

³⁹ Lanham remarks, “Richard is usually thought too much a poet to be king. Isn’t it just the opposite? He takes literally, seriously, what was meant metaphorically, rhetorically; he believes his own myth” (202).

⁴⁰ Hal even uses material foil as a similar metaphor to clouds: “And, like bright metal on a sullen ground, / My reformation, glittering o’er my fault, / Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes / Than that which hath no foil to set it off” (1.2.202-205). Given the multiple foils within the play, Shakespeare almost seems to be elevating Hal to a similarly privileged position as himself, outside the text.

When it shines seldom in admiring eyes,
But rather drowsed and hung their eyelids down,
Slept in his face, and rendered such aspect
As cloudy men use to their adversaries,
Being with his presence glutted, gorged and full.

(3.2.74-84; emphasis added)

Hal means to use “cloudy men” to his advantage, precisely so that men’s eyes may not be “sick and blunted with community.” The attentive audience can imagine Hal’s temptation to roll his eyes at Henry’s inadvertent confirmation of his ultimate plan. In time, Hal will make his royal presence unmistakable.

Not only does Henry mistake his son, but he also mistakes Richard, if we consider Bolingbroke’s earlier contradictory impression. At Flint Castle, Bolingbroke remarks to York, Northumberland, and Hotspur,

See, see, *King Richard doth himself appear,*
As doth the blushing discontented sun
From out the fiery portal of the east,
When he perceives the envious clouds are bent
To dim his glory and to stain the track
Of his bright passage to the Occident.

(*Richard II* 3.3.62-67; emphasis added)

Though Henry later claims otherwise, looking on Richard’s majesty at this moment, Bolingbroke’s eyes do not appear “drowsed,” to “[hang] their eyelids down,” or to “[sleep] in his face.” Forker notes, “Bolingbroke’s rhetoric is unusually florid for the matter-of-fact politician who tends to speak more plainly, perhaps thereby suggesting a note of disingenuousness in the character; but, *just as likely*, Shakespeare may wish to dramatize the true awe which the grandeur of Richard’s presence inspires” (3.3.62-67n; emphasis added). Neither gloss reflects, however, a dimming of Richard’s majesty. York concurs with Bolingbroke and adds, “Behold, his eye, / As bright as is the eagle’s, lightens forth / Controlling majesty” (3.3.68-70), hardly the bathetic impression of “the cuckoo...in June.” When Richard speaks to Bolingbroke, he is still “[h]eard”

and “regarded,” even though the Duke’s army is at Flint to confront and silence him. Richard has the opportunity to force Bolingbroke’s hand, or call his bluff, but instead, he resigns without resistance. But he will not allow the Duke to have his show of courtesy (3.3.190-195). Richard ends the scene at Flint Castle by calling attention to the unnaturalness of the succession:

Cousin, I am too young to be your father,
Though you are old enough to be my heir.
What you will have, I’ll give, and willingly too;
For we must do what force will have us do.

(3.3.204-207)

Though Bolingbroke would play the King, Richard reminds him that he comes to it by force rather than inheritance, a noted difference in their legacies. Henry later claims Richard’s familiarity led to his downfall, but it is only after Bolingbroke’s return from banishment that Richard begins to speak more freely, less authoritatively—the more he has to say, the less he is regarded. The “silent King,” however, has his say, and Henry, the victor, may write his own version of history.

* * *

Henry is more concerned with using history than reflecting it accurately. After all, his son was not present—textually, at least—to witness Richard’s deposition and to corroborate Henry’s testimony. As the audience, though, we may judge him based on textual evidence. Henry’s description of Richard does not hold up to Shakespeare’s depiction of Richard in the earlier play. But Henry does not draw his parallel between Richard and Hal in order to recreate history as it “happened,” which, as Lanham might argue, would be missing the point (191-192). Henry draws his description of Richard in direct contrast to his description of Bolingbroke a few lines earlier:

By being *seldom seen*, I could not stir
But, like a comet, I was *wondered at*,
That men would tell their children ‘This is he!’
Others would say, ‘Where? Which is Bolingbroke?’
And then I stole all courtesy from heaven

And dressed myself in such humility
That I did pluck allegiance from men's hearts,
Loud shouts and salutations from their mouths,
Even in the presence of the crowned King.
Thus did I keep my person fresh and new,
My presence like a robe pontifical,
Ne'er seen but wondered at; and so my state,
Seldom but sumptuous, showed like a feast
And *won by rareness, such solemnity.*

(3.2.46-59; emphasis added)

Henry prides himself on distance; in order to be lofty, a king must be aloof. He emphasizes that his scarcity affected his worth, his uncommon value to the common man. Bolingbroke's absence, in other words, proved more persuasive than Richard's presence, "pluck[ing] allegiance from men's hearts."⁴¹ He speaks as if seclusion were stealth, allowing him to win the hearts of the English under Richard's very nose. Sharpening the contrast, Henry's descriptions of Bolingbroke and Richard are contained in a single utterance. Henry takes pride in the fact that men did not recognize him, which may contribute to the success of his battlefield deception at Shrewsbury in act five. Here at court as well as there at Shrewsbury, royalty is described as a garment, but Henry seems to acknowledge in 3.2 "the illegitimacy of his possession of the crown" (Kastan 3.2.51n) when he mentions to Hal, "I stole all courtesy from heaven / And dressed myself in such humility / That I did pluck allegiance from men's hearts" (3.2.50-52). Then, a few lines later, he attempts to whitewash his metaphor with religious imagery, claiming, "My presence [was] like a robe pontifical" (3.2.56).⁴² His own language here suggests thievery and deception,⁴³ but the text of *Richard II* suggests persuasion through populism.

⁴¹ One might also consider that Hotspur, who would "pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon" (*I Henry IV* 1.3.201), reports that Hal would "from the common'st creature pluck a glove / And wear it as a favour" (*Richard II* 5.17-18). Henry is not the only one insisting on the contrast.

⁴² Of course, a Romish reference would work against him in the presence of a freshly and firmly Protestant audience such as Shakespeare's.

⁴³ Regarding Falstaff's frank admission that thievery is his vocation (1.2.100-101), MacDonald writes, "Under other circumstances we would not allow this outrageous extension of the word's

Ironically enough, Henry describing Richard sounds much like Richard describing Bolingbroke, as the Duke departed on his journey into exile:

Ourselves and Bushy, Bagot here and Green
Observed *his courtship to the common people*—
How he did seem to dive into their hearts
With humble and familiar courtesy,
What reverence he did throw away on slaves,
Wooing poor craftsmen with the craft of smiles
And patient underbearing of his fortune,
As 'twere to banish their affects with him.
Off goes his bonnet to an oyster-wench.
A brace of draymen bid God speed him well,
And had the tribute of his supple knee
With 'Thanks, my countrymen, my loving friends',
As were our England in reversion his,
And he our subjects' next degree in hope.

(*Richard II* 1.4.23-36; emphasis added)

Bolingbroke appears much less withdrawn than Henry would like Hal to believe. Whereas Richard supposedly “[g]rew a companion to the common streets” and had “his great name profaned with their scorns,” Richard remarked Bolingbroke’s “courtship to the common people” and his “reverence...throw[n] away on slaves.” Still, Bolingbroke’s debasement pays off. Indeed, upon Bolingbroke’s return, loyal York worries, “The nobles they are fled, the commons they are cold / And will, I fear, revolt on Hereford’s side” (2.2.88-89). Richard and Henry each look down on the other for bending to those beneath his station though Shakespeare does not directly show either’s relationship to the commons. But Shakespeare does show their relationship to language, as I discussed earlier. Even in Richard’s description of Bolingbroke, the Duke reportedly uses language to identify with the commons and endear himself to them: “Thanks, my

reference; we would argue that the criteria in virtue of which we apply the word ‘vocation’ are simply not present in the area of thievery. But if the man now sitting on the throne has, indeed, stolen his crown, has he not in some sense sanctioned the extension of reference that we would otherwise be prone to disallow? If the king resents being called a thief (and he surely does), must he not buy the silence of thieves by allowing them to call their thievery a vocation?” (30). In other words, to some extent, Henry’s usurpation has also uprooted language.

countrymen, my loving friends.” Similar to Bolingbroke’s legal argument for returning and his later public repentance for Richard’s murder, we can see in Richard’s description of the Duke another example of the “successful politician” who knows how to say exactly what the masses want to hear. Hal, as King Henry V, will later use a similar strategy of identification to persuade his men to fight with him at Agincourt, crying, “We few, we happy few, we band of brothers. / For he today that sheds his blood with me / Shall be my brother” (*Henry V* 4.3.60-62).

In leading the English army to France, King Harry follows the advice of his manipulative father: “Be it thy course to busy giddy minds / With foreign quarrels, that action hence borne out / May waste the memory of the former days” (*2 Henry IV* 4.5.213-215). Henry reveals that such distraction was the motive behind his crusading intentions all along (208-212), which should hardly surprise the audience who remembers his opening speech of *I Henry IV*:

Those opposed eyes
.....
Shall now in mutual well-beseeming ranks
March all one way and be no more opposed
Against acquaintance, kindred and allies.
.....
Therefore, friends,
As far as to the sepulcher of Christ
.....
Forthwith a power of English shall we levy....
(1.1.9-22)

Henry advocates for a crusade in seemingly self-less terms, as a means to mend a divided nation. Of course, he here fails to mention that he is the cause of that division but later admits that his solution was meant to divert those “opposed eyes” from looking “[t]oo near unto my state” (*2 Henry IV* 4.5.212). Lanham explains how rebellion is personal, writing,

You can direct violence, channel it, but you cannot eliminate it. If identity is dramatic, it will always be challenged, if not from outside then from within. To sustain itself, identity has, as we have seen repeatedly, to be played, defined by opposition, talked about to be fully felt.... And the more these two selves struggle, the more alive we feel. Thus rebellion is implicit in how we create ourselves and

how society creates itself. Rebellion can never be abolished, it can only be orchestrated.... If you cannot contain it in England, you must lead it to France.

(204-205)

As I mentioned earlier, civil war reflects inner conflict. But Lanham further suggests that what makes this struggle unique to Henry is that the King represents the English nation; thus, since Henry cannot direct his forces outward, his struggle can only be resolved through Hal, whose presence among the people is his greatest strength.

* * *

Noticeably absent from my discussion thus far has been Hotspur as Bolingbroke in Henry's analogy—simply put, he does not fit, especially in the terms that Henry establishes. Henry foregrounds his comparison on the “lavish[ness]” of royal “presence.” Hotspur is not a member of the royal family, as even Bolingbroke was before his rebellion, and Hotspur’s familiarity with the commons is apparently a moot point. For, when Henry finally mentions him, the aged King praises the young soldier for his valor, not his restraint—not that he has any restraint:

For, of no right, nor colour like to right,
He doth fill fields with harness in the realm,
Turns head against the lion’s armed jaws,
And, being no more in debt to years than thou,
Leads ancient lords and reverend bishops on
To bloody battles and to bruising arms.
What never-dying honour hath he got
Against renowned Douglas, whose high deeds,
Whose hot incursions and great name in arms,
Holds from all soldiers chief majority
And military title capital
Through all the kingdoms that acknowledge Christ.
Thrice hath this Hotspur, Mars in swaddling-clothes,
This infant warrior, in his enterprises
Discomfited great Douglas; ta’en him once,
Enlarged him, and made a friend of him,
To fill the mouth of deep defiance up
And shake the peace and safety of our throne.

(*1 Henry IV* 3.2.100-117)

It is a small wonder that Henry would want to compare Hotspur to his younger self; I would imagine, though, the influence works in the other direction, with Henry wanting Hotspur's reputation to reflect upon Bolingbroke, whose valor is never explicitly mentioned in *Richard II*. Hotspur represents Henry's desire to see his past more honorably. After all, despite his open defiance, Hotspur is not duplicitous. But he can be duplicated, effectively mimicked, as when Hal jokes to Ned,

That ever this fellow should have fewer words than a parrot, and yet the son of a woman! ...I am not yet of Percy's mind, the Hotspur of the North, he that kills me some six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast, washes his hands, and says to his wife, 'Fie upon this quiet life! I want work'.... I prithee, call in Falstaff. I'll play Percy, and that damned brawn shall play Dame Mortimer his wife.

(2.4.96-107)

Hal's impression reflects the Hotspur we have witnessed, a rebel who revels in his own violence, hardly the impression we get of Bolingbroke. Shakespeare juxtaposes this scene (2.4) between two others wherein Hotspur showcases his single-mindedness with his wife (2.3) and with the other rebel leaders (3.1). Lanham notes, "Hotspur's responses are mechanically predictable. Thus he can be manipulated, all-warrior though he be.... Pure chivalry, pure play; he is as doomed as Richard and as silly" (205-206). Perhaps the most surprising aspect of Hotspur's character is that Lanham can make such an unexpectedly exact observation: regarding their command of language, Hotspur most resembles Richard and defies Henry's analogy altogether. Neither fully appreciates the creative and manipulative potential of language, and both fall victim to those who better understand how to wield it. Though Richard and Hotspur talk incessantly, it seems, Hotspur speaks for both when he claims, "I...have not well the gift of tongue, [that] [c]an lift your blood up with persuasion" (5.2.77-78). They occasionally speak with inspiration, but never when it matters most. Expiring breath can hardly inspire men.

4. Conclusion: “The Shadow of Succession”

Henry sees too little in his son—his heir, his namesake, his likeness—and too much in the rebel Hotspur, whose resemblance to Henry seems most confined to their confidence in the young Percy. Henry concludes his analogy with a cutting remark to Hal: “Now by my sceptre, and my soul to boot, / He hath more worthy interest to the state / Than thou, the shadow of succession” (*I Henry IV* 3.2.97-99). Swearing by his “sceptre” and his “soul,” respective symbols of his role and his self, Henry again reveals the tension he feels between the two. Hal has his name and will claim his “sceptre,” but Hotspur has his admiration and charms his “soul,” so to speak. Hal responds, “I will redeem all this on Percy’s head / And in the closing of some glorious day / Be bold to tell you I am your son” (132-134). When Hal saves Henry’s life and takes Hotspur’s at Shrewsbury, he proves what the King should have, “a more worthy interest to the state.” Henry had earlier used those words to rebuke Hal, to contrast the prodigal Prince with the honorable rebel, but the King’s own “worthy interest to the state” has been at stake throughout the plays that bear his name. In fact, at Shrewsbury, Hal not only “redeem[s]” his own “lost opinion” but rescues his father’s waning reputation as well (5.4.47).

Still, Jenkins wonders why Hal must, it seems, re-redeem his twice-lost opinion in *2 Henry IV*, as we witness Henry lamenting Hal’s behavior yet again (112-113; see 4.4.54-66). But, much like Yachnin would later criticize structural critics like Hawkins for solving problems of their own creation (115-116), Hawkins criticizes Jenkins, arguing, “Jenkins’ analysis of *I Henry IV* triumphantly solves a problem which Jenkins himself creates” (288). We seem to be going in

circles, but as I mentioned, revision is recursive. Revision is, as Yachnin defines it, “the way the meaning of actions and words is changed and destabilized by subsequent actions and words” and “constitutes the central condition of the production of meaning in the plays” (120). So, to understand Henry and his rhetorical revision of history, we must be willing to travel similar “by-paths and indirect crook’d ways” by which Henry “met this crown.” While the direction may seem damnable, it need not be, as Thomas Browne traced “that serpentine and crooked line [whereby God] draws those actions that his wisdom intends in a more unknown and secret way” (quoted in Yachnin 124). Indeed, as Joseph Campbell suggests in his circular structure of the monomyth, if one’s path continues to turn, the way leads one back to the beginning.

* * *

So, as father and son reconcile upon the King’s deathbed, Henry returns to his ascension and attempts to unburden his mind by revising what it all meant.⁴⁴ Though it is “the very latest counsel / That ever I shall breathe,” Henry’s wind lasts longer than he expects, sighing,

God knows, my son,
By what by-paths and indirect crook’d ways
I met this crown, and I myself know well
How troublesome it sat upon my head.
To thee it shall descend with better quiet,
Better opinion, better confirmation,
For all the soil of the achievement goes
With me into the earth.

.....
All these bold fears
Thou seest with peril I have answered;
For all my reign hath been but as a scene
Acting that argument. And now my death
Changes the mood, *for what in me was purchas’d*
Falls upon thee in a more fairer sort;
So thou the garland wear’st successively.

⁴⁴ Though the scene is grave, we may recall Falstaff’s cutting remark in the previous act, perhaps exacerbated by impending expiration: “Lord, Lord, how subject we old men are to this vice of lying!” (3.2.296-298). But, we should ask, how wrong is lying when truth is so pliable?

How I came by the crown, O God forgive,
And grant it may with thee in true peace live!

(4.5.183-219)

Henry here acknowledges that Hal's struggle need not be the same as his own. Henry likens his reign unto a play in which the same conflict is acted out over and over. For the action to change, the actors must change. Playing the King will be difficult—but Henry has pacified their critics, and Hal can act more naturally. Still, Henry continues to refer to the past, focusing on what he has accomplished, to make smooth the path for Hal to follow. He fails to acknowledge, however, how his son helped him forge that future. Lanham notes, “Richard has the myth but not the skill to use it; Henry IV has the skill but not the myth. King Henry V has skill and myth too, new-minted though it be. He brings some kind of unity” (204). Henry’s and Hal’s struggles are two parts of the same argument—historical drama and rhetorical reality. Henry could not have revised the Lancastrian narrative, could not have legitimated his line, and could not have made his myth without Hal, the future King of England. In *Henry V*, the spotlight will shift, King Harry will outperform his father, and that “shadow of succession” will “imitate the sun.”

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