

ORAL-VISUAL CONTRADICTION:  
SEEING AND HEARING IN SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORY  
PLAYS

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## ABSTRACT

### Oral-Visual Contradiction Seeing and Hearing in Shakespeare's History

#### Plays

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Scholarship in the latter half of the twentieth century did much to rehabilitate Shakespeare's early histories into the canon. Discarded on the grounds of collaborative authorship or lack of unity, the *Henry VI* trilogy has perhaps suffered the most. This dissertation brings together sensory and historiographical theories in order to demonstrate that the first tetralogy exposes the limitations of historical narrative. Historical 'truth' is easily distorted: initially through the individual's failure to interpret sensory information and then through the writer who records those events. These fundamental questions about the credibility of knowledge and truth remain a central concern throughout the second tetralogy, *King John* and *Henry VIII*.

The questionable truth-telling powers of sight and sound independent from one another are a recurring motif in Shakespeare's histories; skewed perception or selective hearing can have disastrous consequences. Motives are frequently ambiguous and the plays abound in trial scenes that are never satisfactorily resolved. Often the audience are invited to accept a 'truth' that contradicts the evidence of the play either in its text, its performance or in comparison to contemporary history plays.

*Henry VIII*, with its titular claim that 'All is True' alongside glaring historical omissions, is an example of the early modern obsession with paradox. Cranmer's highly selective presentation of a glorious untroubled future, though clearly not true, is a satisfying and restorative narrative. A similar contradiction reveals itself in my case study of preaching at St Mary Spital. At this event, preachers and City Fathers collude in a highly selective presentation of London as a charitable and exemplary city, though this may well have been contradicted by other visual evidence on the occasion. Both plays and sermons thus presented the paradox of a fictive narrative that could be openly contradicted, but that simultaneously provided consolation.

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An earlier version of chapter one was presented at the *Gossip, Gospel and Governance 1400-1700* conference at the British Academy in 2011 and is currently being prepared for a subsequent anthology. Dr Lesley Twomey and Professor Thomas Cohen have been thorough and constructive editors and I would also like to thank the anonymous peer reviewer for their advice and suggestions.

In 2012, I presented a paper on Henry V and prayer at the conference *Prayer and Performance: Acts of Belief as Symbolic Communication in the Late Medieval and Renaissance Period* at Aarhus University and I would like to thank the organiser, Dr Joseph Sterrett both for the opportunity to participate and for his feedback. That paper was developed into an article which was published earlier this year in the *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, and I thank Professor Sabine Schuelting for her suggestions during the preparatory stages. Much of that article appears in chapter six in an adapted form.

Finally I would like to thank my friends Amanda Arena and Nassau Hughes for listening, and my parents for their support and encouragement.

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## INTRODUCTION

*'Believe my words, For they are certain and unfallible.'*<sup>1</sup>

This dissertation seeks to re-assess the relationship of Shakespeare's first historical tetralogy (1591-3) to the second (1595-9), and argues that all of the histories traditionally attributed to Shakespeare explore ideas about the efficacy of the senses of hearing and seeing in discerning the truth. Generally historically overlooked, the *Henry VI* trilogy received increased critical interest in the second half of the twentieth century and perhaps in the present century these early plays will be more firmly rehabilitated into the canon. At the other end of Shakespeare's literary career, lies *Henry VIII*, a play often treated in isolation and distinguished generically from the other nine Shakespearean histories. Written some twenty years later, Shakespeare's final history play, I argue, echoes the first tetralogy in its thematic concerns. The *Henry VI* trilogy lays the foundation for the highly sophisticated treatment of sight, sound and performance in the following histories and its obsession with the body is an important prelude to the treatment of the most famous of Shakespeare's historical bodies: Richard III.

The ten Shakespearean histories discussed here are the ones listed under that generic title in the 1623 Folio, but I also refer to other playwrights

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<sup>1</sup> William Shakespeare, *King Henry VI, Part 1*, ed. by Edward Burns. The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Methuen, 2000), 1.2.58-9. All subsequent quotations from the play are taken from this edition.

dramatizing related subjects across the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The playwrights covered here are thus as diverse as John Bale and Thomas Heywood, and when referring to 'history plays' I am thinking of all works that take their matter from the recent English past. I refer to the playwright's source materials, including dramatic works by his contemporaries, chronicle history, prose and verse histories, particularly when there are notable differences. As such I hope to place Shakespeare's plays in the larger context of Elizabethan drama and its engagement with the writing and performance of history.

Analysis and dispute over Shakespeare's historiographical model and purpose - I take 'historiography' to refer to *written* history - to some extent dominated mid-twentieth-century criticism on the history plays. One side of that debate might be typified by Irving Ribner's statement that:

History for Shakespeare was never mere pageantry. He saw significant meaning in it, and he seized upon morality devices to make its meaning clear, clearer than the factual method of the chronicles themselves could make it.<sup>2</sup>

This meaning seems to me to have less to do with what Ribner goes on to call a 'scheme of salvation for England',<sup>3</sup> but suggests instead that

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<sup>2</sup> Irving Ribner, *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 101.

<sup>3</sup> Ribner, p. 101. Ribner of course follows in the trend of E. M. W. Tillyard's seminal theory of the histories. In this dissertation I am not especially concerned with disputing the Tudor Myth or providentialism in the histories and have generally avoided rehearsing Tillyardian epithets, as Alexander Leggatt has said: 'It is now customary for a critic dealing with the English histories ... to begin with a ritual attack on E. M. W. Tillyard's *Shakespeare's History Plays*. I think we have had enough of this. We have established that to see Shakespeare as a propagandist for the Tudor Myth, the Great Chain of Being, and the Elizabethan World Picture will not do'. Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Political Drama: The History Plays and the Roman Plays* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), p. ix-x. To list a few

Shakespeare interrogates ‘meaning’ itself. The focus on seeing and hearing in the plays exposes history as authorially constructed, subjective and malleable. When the playwright adds or alters material he exposes the many truths of history and the precarious process of historiography – all of which are intimately linked to ways of seeing (or hearing). Robert Burton reiterates an established Aristotelianism in his treatise *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) when he states ‘there is nothing in the understanding, which was not first in the sense.’<sup>4</sup> The early modern treatments of the senses discussed here largely reiterate Aristotle’s theory of the senses as put forward in *De Anima* and *De Sensu et Sensibilibus*. These theories must have been firmly rooted enough by the 1590s for Thomas Nashe to quip ‘hath none writ of the five senses but *Aristotle*?’<sup>5</sup>

In *Richard III* (1592-3) the boy Prince Edward articulates the problem of transmitting historical narrative when he asks if Caesar built the tower ‘Is it upon record, or else reported... Methinks the truth should live from age to

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examples of significant works that challenged Tillyard’s view, Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Divine Providence in the England of Shakespeare’s Histories* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970); David Riggs, *Shakespeare’s Heroical Histories: Henry VI and its Literary Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971); Moody E. Prior, *The Drama of Power: Studies in Shakespeare’s History Plays* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

<sup>4</sup> Robert Burton, ‘Of the Understanding’, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. by Thomas C. Faulkner, Nicholas K. Kiessling and Rhonda L. Blair (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), vol 1, 1.1.2.10, p. 158. Similarly ‘For there can grow no notice in the vnderstanding, which hath not first taken passage by some of the five sences’ Juan Huarte, *Examen de ingenious. = The examination of mens wits*, trans M. Camillo Camili and R. C. Esquire (London: Islip, 1594), p. 39. Burton and Huarte’s phrasing is perhaps catchier than the Aristotelian original. Aristotle makes statements to that effect in several places in ‘De Sensu et Sensibilibus’, for example ‘reason [does not] know external things without the aid of sensation.’ Aristotle, ‘De Sensu et Sensibilibus’, in *Parva Naturalia*, ed. by David Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 217.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Nashe, *The apologie of Pierce Pennilesse* (London: Danter, 1592). For the persistence and prominence of Aristotle’s theories of sensation see Matthew Milner, *The Senses and the English Reformation* (Ashgate: Surrey, 2011), especially pp. 169, 180, 184.

age'.<sup>6</sup> Cicero's 'endlessly quoted' description of history as 'the light of truth'<sup>7</sup> is repeatedly undermined in Shakespeare; in the example above Caesar did not of course build the tower despite Buckingham's affirmation. The Prince favours the reliability of the written record versus oral report. In *Henry VI, Part 2* (1591), however, the written document, literacy, and rehearsed or prepared speech are objects of distrust. The plays as a whole suggest the inaccuracy of all methods of recording history.

The playwright Anthony Munday, Shakespeare's contemporary, attacked historical drama as false:

And if they write of histories that are knowen, [...] they giue them a newe face, and turne them out like counterfeites to shewe themselues on the stage.[...] hauing their sheers in their hand, can alter the facion of anie thing into another forme [...] The shreds of whose curiositie our Historians haue mow stolen from them being by practise as cunning as the Tailor to set a new vpper bodie to an old coate; and a patch of their owne to a peece of anothers.<sup>8</sup>

But he also went on to write histories himself in prose and drama, and in

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<sup>6</sup> *Richard III*, ed. by James R. Siemon. The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Methuen, 2009), 3.1.72-3, 76. All subsequent quotations from the play are taken from this edition.

<sup>7</sup> Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History: Shakespeare's English Chronicles* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 2. She is quoting Cicero via Matthieu Coignet, *Politique Discourses upon trueth and Lying*, trans Sir Edward Hoby (London, 1586), p. 71. The phrase was often repeated without attribution to Cicero, for example 'histories (whyche are the light of truth)' Haly Heron, *A newe discourse of morall philosophie* (London: Newberie, 1579), p. 77. Raphael Holinshed does not attribute the definition to Cicero in his 1577 edition but does in 1586 'the wnesse of time, the light of truth, the life of memorie', 'To the Right Worthie and honorable gentleman sir Walter Raleigh knight', *The Second volume of Chronicles: Conteyning the description, conquest, inhabitation and troblesome estate of Ireland* ([London], 1586) sig. A. ij.

<sup>8</sup> Anthony Munday, Salvian of Marseilles, *A second and third blast of retrait from plaies and Theaters. [...] Set forth by Anglo-phile Eutheo* (London: Denham, 1580), pp. 105-6.



drama especially would fashion and re-shape ‘forme’ in *The First Part of the True & Honorable History of Sir John Oldcastle* (1600). Munday’s concerns about staging history and plurality (giving history new faces and new forms) is particularly relevant to understanding Shakespeare’s histories as Munday also voices a fear of the persuasiveness of sight.<sup>9</sup> Shakespeare brings together the problems associated with history-telling and those associated with the senses, especially seeing and hearing. History writing, in whatever form, inevitably involves some re-writing, as many writers, including Munday, seem to perceive but equally attempt to deny. Thomas Blundeville argued in his treatise *The True order and method of writing and reading hystories* (1574) that good historiographers

tell things as they were done with out either augmenting or  
diminishing them, or swaruing one iote from the truth.<sup>10</sup>

Blundeville seems a little naive in his belief that an accurate and objective portrayal of past events is possible. Holinshed’s multi-vocal *Chronicles* would be published a few years later.

The titles of Shakespeare’s histories make no claim to truth, either in the Folio or earlier publications, with two exceptions: the original title of *Henry VI, Part 3* was *The true tragedie of Richard Duke of York* (1595, 1600) and *Henry VIII* was known to its first audiences as *All is True* (1613). This last title is a marked departure from the historically immersed and cumbersome titles of the earlier histories. Two other Shakespearean titles make claims to truth: Shakespeare’s *true chronicle historie of the life and death of King Lear* (1608, 1619)

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<sup>9</sup> see pp. 15-16.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Blundeville, *The True order and method of writing and reading hystories according to the precepts of Francisco Patricio and Accontio Tridentino, two Italian writers, no lesse plainly than briefly, set forth in our vulgar speech, to the great profite and commoditie of all those that delight in hystories* (London: Seres, 1574), sig. [E4]r-v.

and *Pericles, Prince of Tyre With the true relation of the whole historie* (1609, 1611). Other playwrights or editors, however, made frequent claims of truth. To name a few: *The lamentable and true tragedie of M. Arden of Feversham* (1592); *The true chronicle historie of the whole life and death of Thomas Lord Cromwell* (1602); *A Yorkshire tragedy Not so new as lamentable and true* (1608); Anthony Munday's *The first part of the true & honorable history, of the life of Sir John Old-castle* (1619); *The true tragedie of Richard the third* (1594) and John Ford's *The chronicle historie of Perkin Warbeck A strange truth* (1634).

As we have seen though, Shakespeare's plays rarely claim truth in their titles. Perhaps authority was indicated by describing *Henry V* as *The cronicle history of Henry the fift* (1600, 1602, 1619), or perhaps claiming a stable truth was not the priority of Shakespeare or his publishers. The plays invite the audience to question what they see, perhaps illustrating the cautious method needed to read history. In Thomas Nashe's words:

Aristotle prescribes to them that read Histories, namely  
that they bee not *nimis credulos aut incredulos*, too rash or too  
slow of beleeve<sup>11</sup>

Aristotle's injunction might be applied just as appropriately to the viewing of history plays, indeed Nashe's choice to emphasise sceptical reading is particularly interesting given his involvement in *Henry VI, Part 1*. The Janus face of historiography is explicitly discussed in *Henry VI, Part 3* (1591) where the two opposing versions of history clash in the recollection of Richard II's abdication; according to Henry VI 'Richard, in the view of

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas Nashe, 'To all Christian Readers, to whom these Presents shall come' *Have with you to Saffron-walden* (London: Danter 1596), sig. D3r. *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. by Ronald B. McKerrow (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1904-0), 5 vols, vol. III, p.23.

many lords, Resigned the crown'; but his opponent York recalls that it was rather Bolingbroke who 'rose against him [...] / And made him to resign his crown perforce.'<sup>12</sup> The crucial phrase 'in the view of many lords' highlights historiography as a point of view; one that is removed from the actual fact of history, and which is nebulous, distant and unattainable. In the Epilogue to *Henry V* (1599), the playwright is presented as 'Our bending author', and as Peter Parolin has observed:

It's not clear what is being bent: whether the author is bending himself to the authority of the historical sources, or bending the historical sources in the service of his play, or bending his body in the physical act of writing. Whatever the case, the image suggests the transmission of narrative is not straightforward...<sup>13</sup>

I argue that the plays illustrate that 'transmission' begins not with the playwright, however, but in the historical moment when individuals see, hear, and interpret in order to create narrative. Seeing and hearing is bound up with physiology, psychology and theology, and the shaping influence of all three can be seen in the plays. In addition we might also consider a political dimension of seeing and hearing. The 'Rainbow Portrait' of Elizabeth I (1600) depicts her ornate gown enriched with eyes and ears in order to represent state surveillance. Paradoxically it also conveys her own status as a gaze-object, a monarch whose every action is under close

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<sup>12</sup> *Henry VI, Part 3*, ed. by John D. Cox and Eric Rasmussen. The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Cengage Learning, 2001), 1.1.138-9, 141-2. All subsequent quotations from the play are taken from this edition.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Parolin, 'Figuring the King in *Henry V*: Political Rhetoric and the Limits of Performance', *Journal of the Wooden O Symposium*, 9 (2009), p. 51.

scrutiny, a body, who in her own words is ‘set as it were up on stages in the sight and view of the world’.<sup>14</sup>

This thesis is particularly concerned with ways of seeing and hearing, or *perception*. While in modern usage ‘perception’ denotes *interpretation*, the word has not yet acquired this meaning in the sixteenth century. *Perception* or to *perceive* from the Latin *percipere* means ‘to apprehend with the mind or senses’.<sup>15</sup> *Perception* thus conflates both understanding or knowledge with the means through which that information is obtained. Writers who attempted to theorise the senses generally understand perception to refer to a sensory experience, that is to say the immediate physical sensation that precedes cognition (Burton’s Aristotelianism recognises ‘sense’ comes before ‘understanding’). The French protestant Phillippe de Mornay, who lived sporadically in England and who was a friend to Sidney, makes this definition clear in *The true knowledge of a mans own selfe* (trans. 1602):

Sight is the sence whereby wee beholde colours and the  
light, which things are proper objects to the sayd power:  
and this *perception* ... [italics mine]<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> For the quotation see Stephen Greenblatt, ‘Invisible bullets: Renaissance Authority and its Subversion, *Henry IV* and *Henry V*’, in *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, ed. by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 44. Daniel Fischlin makes a similar argument about the reciprocal gaze suggested by the Rainbow Portrait, in ‘Political allegory, absolutist ideology and the Rainbow Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 50.1 (1997), pp. 175-205 (181, 189). For some other discussions of the Rainbow portrait Lisa Dickson, ‘No Rainbow Without the Sun: Visibility and Embodiment in *1 Henry VI*’, *Modern Language Studies*, 30.1 (2000), pp. 137-156 (139-40). Dickson stresses the painting as depicting not Elizabeth but her office. Milner argues the portrait demonstrated Elizabeth as ‘able to rule because of her omniscience and sensory control’, p. 212.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Perceive, v.,’ *Oxford English Dictionary*, <www.oed.com>, [accessed 5 August 2013].

<sup>16</sup> Phillippe de Mornay, seigneur du Plessis-Marly, *The true knowledge of a mans owne selfe*, trans. A. M. (London: Leake, 1602), p. 72-3.

In the Renaissance *perception* can also be religious – it refers to the partaking of the elements of the Eucharist.<sup>17</sup> So perception is a sense-related activity, a spiritual activity, and a mental activity, but not yet an interpretive one. This idea would emerge with the philosophical works of the likes of John Locke and David Hume.<sup>18</sup> Their work would in turn inspire the Gestalt theory branch of perception psychology, (in sum the whole is greater than the sum of its individual parts), a theory that is suggested in the minor contradictions in the texts explored here and discussed in chapter two through the presentation of the bodies of Joan, Talbot and Cade in *Henry VI, Parts 1 and 2*.

While *perception* does not quite allow for the sense of ‘interpretation’, it is supplemented by the playwright’s exploration of *perspective*. The playwright shows that perception is problematic not only because of the fallibility of the senses but also, in the case of sight, because it is determined by the angle of vision. The contradictory presentation of Joan in *Henry VI, Part 1* discussed in chapter two, for example, is considered in terms of the differing perspectives of the English and the French on the events of the play. Images that only appeared ‘correctly’ from a certain angle were similarly called ‘perspectives’, of which perhaps the most well-known example is Hans Holbein’s *The Ambassadors* (1533).<sup>19</sup> Shakespeare almost certainly saw the anamorphic portrait of *Edward VI* (1546) hanging in

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<sup>17</sup> ‘Perception, n.,’ sense 7, *Oxford English Dictionary*, <[www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com)>, [accessed 5 August 2013].

<sup>18</sup> ‘Perception, n.,’ sense 5, *Oxford English Dictionary*, <[www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com)>, [accessed 5 August 2013].

<sup>19</sup> Hans Holbein, the Younger, *Jean de Dinteville and George de Selve, The Ambassadors*, oil on oak (1533), The National Gallery, <[www.nationalgallery.org.uk](http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk)> [accessed 15 September 2013].

Whitehall Palace.<sup>20</sup> Shakespeare's understanding of the anamorphic image is reflected in *Richard II* (1595) where Sorrow's tears distort her vision:

For Sorrow's eyes, glazed with blinding tears,  
Divides one thing entire to many objects,  
Like perspectives, which rightly gazed upon,  
Show nothing but confusion; eyed awry,  
Distinguish form.<sup>21</sup>

In this scene Bushy encourages the Queen to correct her vision – and in fact her perception (in both senses), her understanding, of her husband's departure in order to alleviate her sorrow.

Bushy highlights the fallibility of the senses; as Matthew Milner has shown, the senses provided a theological conundrum: were the senses defective or was it man's will to govern them that was flawed?<sup>22</sup> Juan Huarte, the Spanish physician, in his elaboration of Aristotle, blamed perception in the modern sense:

the sense is euer true, but the vnderstanding (for the most  
part) discourseth badly; [...]seeing the trueth is neuer more

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<sup>20</sup> William Scrots, *King Edward VI*, oil on panel (1546), The National Portrait Gallery, <[www.npg.org.uk](http://www.npg.org.uk)> [accessed 15 September 2013].

<sup>21</sup> *Richard II*, ed. by Charles R. Forker, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Thomson Learning, 2002), 2.2.16-20. All subsequent quotations from the play are taken from this edition. For the use of the word and reference to perspectives in *Richard II*, *Twelfth Night*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, Sonnet 24 and *King Lear* see John Greenwood, *Shifting Perspectives and the Stylish Style: Mannerism in Shakespeare and His Jacobean Contemporaries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 5-8. Greenwood also discusses the possibility of Shakespeare's acquaintance with artists, including Richard Burbage, p. 12. Curiously, studies on perspective in Shakespeare generally overlook the (especially early) histories.

<sup>22</sup> Matthew Milner, *The Senses and the English Reformation* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), p. 206.

than one [...]the senses hold so great a|certaintie in their  
obiects, and the vnderstanding is so easily beguiled<sup>23</sup>

The above quotation from Huarte's *The examination of mens wits* (trans. 1594) is an important illustration of the gap between sensory perception and cognition. Here the senses are perfect in their action, but man's ability to interpret sensory information is flawed. Francis Bacon in *Of the proficience and auancement of learning* (1605) advocated a similar position, rejecting sceptics who 'denyed any certaintie of Knowledge': 'The Sences; which in my Iudgement [...] are verie sufficient to certifie and report truth' contrasts 'the weaknes of the intellectual powers, & vpon the maner of collecting, & concluding vpon the reports of the sences.'<sup>24</sup>

Post-Reformation writers were especially concerned with sight, formerly the superior sense, but which now presented anxiety about idolatry.<sup>25</sup> In *The French academie* (trans. 1586), a possible source for Shakespeare, the protestant Pierre de la Primaudaye elevated sight above 'al the other senses' as the 'most beautifull, subtill, and pearcing'.<sup>26</sup> Sight had the greatest knowledge-giving capacity, but it was equally misleading and profoundly effective. Munday warned that seeing was more dangerous than hearing:

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<sup>23</sup> Juan Huarte, *Examen de Ingenios*. = *The examination of mens wits*, trans M. Camillo Camili and R. C. Esquire (London: Islip, 1594), p. 161.

<sup>24</sup> Francis Bacon, *The twoo bookes of Francis Bacon. Of the proficience and auancement of learning, diuine and humane* (London: Tomes, 1605), Bk 2. fols 51 r-v.

<sup>25</sup> The new and old religions as ear and eye-centric respectively is well established, see for example Carlos Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship From Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Stuart Clark, 'Images: The Reformation of the Eyes', in *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp.161-203.

<sup>26</sup> Pierre de La Primaudaye, *The French academie wherin is discoursed the institution of maners, and whatsoever els concerneth the good and happie life of all estates and callings*, trans T. B. (London: Bollifant, 1586), p. 105. Listed as a possible source in Stuart Gillespie, *Shakespeare's Books: A Dictionary of Shakespeare Sources* (London and New York: Athlone, 2001, repr. 2004), p. 277.

Nothing entereth in more effectualie into the memorie,  
than that which commeth by seeing, things heard do  
lightlie passe awaie, but the tokens of that which wee haue  
seene, saith Petrarch, sticke fast in vs whether we wil or  
no.<sup>27</sup>

Munday's religious beliefs were complicated, entailing both anti-Catholic and anti-Puritan views,<sup>28</sup> but his fear of the power of sight and the permanence of its impression reflects a reformed stance. Another reformer, John Calvin, described the fallibility of sight in terms relevant to some of the arguments I will make about the subversion of expectation in the histories:

If we look on the ground or if we contemplate the things  
around us, we are convinced that our sight is firm and  
clear; but, should we raise our eyes straight toward the sun,  
the power exercised by our sight on this earth is  
confounded and dazzled by so brilliant a light... that we  
must admit our good sight is too weak and feeble to look  
at the sun. Thus it is with our intellectual faculties... What  
pleased us before under the color of justice will seem to be  
soiled with great iniquity; what deceived us miraculously in  
wisdom's shadow will show itself to be extreme madness.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Munday, *A second and third blast*, p. 96.

<sup>28</sup> David M. Bergeron, 'Munday, Anthony (bap. 1560, d. 1633)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <www.odnb.com>, [accessed 5 August 2013].

<sup>29</sup> *Institution chretienne*, ed. J. Pannier (1936), I, 41 ff. quoted by Marc Bensimon 'Modes of Perception of Reality in the Renaissance' in *The Darker Vision of the Renaissance: Beyond the Fields of Reason*, ed. by Robert Kinsman (Berkeley, Los Angeles CA, and London: University of California Press, 1974), p. 247.



This changing of perspective is a typical occurrence in the history plays: expectations are subverted, miracles turn out to be shams, honest men are proved dishonest, and so on. The initial judgements of eyes and ears are always being overturned – the switching of perspective is like the turning of fortune and the changes in allegiance in *Henry VI, Part 1* (1592), as Joan herself says ‘turn and turn again’. Shakespeare holds up history as an object to be viewed from many angles (3.4.85).<sup>30</sup>

I have been referring to Shakespeare, but of course for some of the history plays it would be better to refer to the playwrights. *Henry VI, Part 1* in particular raises some difficult questions about authorship: there is evidence to suggest this play is the work of as many as three separate hands, including Nashe’s.<sup>31</sup> *Henry VIII* is similarly the product of a collaborative effort between Shakespeare and John Fletcher. Some of the texts I consider from these two plays might not have been written by Shakespeare himself, but my interest is rather the working out of a pattern of ideas that develops throughout the period in which these ten histories were composed – this might as much be the product of several minds as of one. The nexus of sight-sound-truth is nevertheless distinctly

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<sup>30</sup> Barbara Freedman looks at another kind of turning of perspective in the comedies ‘The use of identical twins in *The Comedy of Errors* and *Twelfth Night* and of visual disguise and illusion in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* foregrounds visual appearance as a site of errors.’ These plays are ‘concerned with dislocating perspective; they suggest that only a limited perspectival space defined by error constitutes identity.’ *Staging the Gaze: Postmodernism Psychoanalysis, and Shakespearean Comedy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 3. My argument is also related to Jean-Pierre Maquerlot’s in *Shakespeare and the Mannerist Tradition: A Reading of Five Problem Plays*. He dismisses Shakespeare before 1599 focusing on the later period of the problem plays but acknowledges earlier traces in *The Merchant of Venice*.

<sup>31</sup> Brian Vickers, ‘Incomplete Shakespeare: Or, Denying Coauthorship in *1 Henry VI*’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 58.3 (2007) 311-352. Gary Taylor, ‘Shakespeare and Others: The Authorship of *Henry Sixth, Part One*’, *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 7 (1995) 174-7.

‘Shakespearean’ in that it is particularly pertinent to this group of ten plays. Shakespeare is never working in isolation even where he is considered the sole author – all of the plays of this period are to some degree the result of synergetic productivity.

Perspective and visual evidence are explored throughout the histories – perhaps most emphatically in the first tetralogy. I would like to suggest that the first tetralogy exposes the falsity of *visual* evidence whereas the second tetralogy goes on to explore more thoroughly *oral* deception. Such an absolute division, however, would be reductive and oversimplified: both series overlap in their investigation of the senses, but there is a slight shift towards the more nebulous problems of oral trickery in the second tetralogy. Often the senses are depicted as interdependent and for this reason I have attempted to consider seeing and hearing together. This partly follows in the current anthropological trend that seeks to leave behind single-sense studies in favour of multi-sensory studies;<sup>32</sup> more importantly it is the two senses most often in competition for primacy in this period, and the two senses most clearly linked to knowledge. In Primaudaye’s words:

sight and hearing are placed in the head: so that the  
vnderstanding being ioined to these two goodly senses, and  
reduced into one, preserueth everything.<sup>33</sup>

The essence of Primaudaye’s argument was repeated by the French humanist Louis LeRoy: ‘amongst all their senses, their sight and hearing,

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<sup>32</sup> See for example David Howes, *Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003), p. xi-xxiii.

<sup>33</sup> Primaudaye, *The French academie*, p. 676.

which do helpe them to haue knowledge, but the sight most of all’;<sup>34</sup> and by Francis Bacon who refers to seeing and hearing as the ‘two principall senses of Inquisition’.<sup>35</sup> Seeing and hearing were considered to have the most ‘intellective potential’, to borrow Milner’s phrase, and were most closely linked to knowledge and ascertaining truth.<sup>36</sup> Which of these senses should be placed at the top of the hierarchy however was less clear. As we have seen in the examples above, sight tends to be ranked highest, this would seem to be in line with Milner’s assertion that Aristotle’s hierarchy ‘was commonplace: sight was first, followed by hearing, smell, taste and touch.’<sup>37</sup> While this is the order that they appear in *De Anima*, *De Sensu et Sensibilibus* makes this distinction less clear. In this later work, Aristotle suggests that while sight ‘is more valuable with a view to the necessities of life, [...] hearing is incidentally more conducive to knowledge.’<sup>38</sup> Shakespeare seems to preserve this more qualified attitude to the senses in *The Comedy of Errors* (1594). Adriana describes sensuous activity:

The time was once when thou unurgd wouldst vow  
 That never words were music to thine ear  
 That never object pleasing in thine eye,  
 That never touch well welcome to thy hand,  
 That never meat sweet-savoured in thy taste,

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<sup>34</sup> Louis Leroy, *Of the interchangeable course, or variety of things in the whole world*, trans R. A. (London: Yetsweirt, 1594), fol. 30r.

<sup>35</sup> Francis Bacon, *The twoo bookees*, Bk 1, fol. 4r.

<sup>36</sup> Milner, p. 25.

<sup>37</sup> Milner, p. 25.

<sup>38</sup> Aristotle, *De Sensu*, p. 184. Aristotle lists sight first in his methodical anaylsis of the senses in *De Anima* (*On the Soul*), trans. by Hugh Lawson-Tancred (London: Penguin, 1986, repr. 1988).

Unless I spake, or looked, or touched, or carved to thee.<sup>39</sup>

This systematic listing appears to be almost commensurate with a well established hierarchical order of the senses: ear-eye-touch-taste.<sup>40</sup> The hierarchy is repeated again in the final line as speech (linked to the ear) – sight – touch – and taste implicit in the food related image of carving. Shakespeare subordinates the eye in both examples, rejecting the hierarchy put forward by the sixteenth-century sensory theorists cited above. Perhaps this suggests the playwright's closer understanding of Aristotle. Shakespeare also elevates 'touch'; Milner has suggested this was considered the basest sense, but Aristotle points that touch is also the 'most necessary'.<sup>41</sup> Touch is the most important as it provides confirmation of our existence; 'without the sense of touch none of the other senses is present, but touch can be present without the others'.<sup>42</sup> Rather than promoting a new sense hierarchy, or a closer understanding of the complexities of an older one, Shakespeare seems to eschew a theory of primacy altogether. In the histories neither sight nor hearing proves the more valuable, rather the one requires the confirmation of the other. The senses, however, do not always concur, thus resulting in instances of oral-visual contradiction. In these cases two 'truths' are posited and neither verified.

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<sup>39</sup> 'The Comedy of Errors', in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor. The Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 2.2.116-21.

<sup>40</sup> The poetic blazon traditionally preserved a similar 'head-to-toe sequence in body description', Nancy J. Vickers, 'Members Only: Marot's Anatomical Blazons', in *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by David Hillman and Carla Mazzio (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 10. As well as acknowledging a hierarchy of the senses it also offered the obvious titillating possibility of moving downward from the intellectual senses to the base senses.

<sup>41</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima*, p. 161.

<sup>42</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima*, p. 163.

In the opening act of *Henry VI Part 1* The Bastard of Orleans insists that the Dauphin ‘Believe my words,/For they are certain and unfallible’ with palpable irony (1.2.58-9). Throughout the histories Shakespeare determinedly and resolutely destabilizes words and speech and their relation to ‘truth’. Words are most certainly not ‘unfallible’ and the conclusion of the play will prove so; the Bastard’s certainty that Joan Puzel will drive the English from France is undermined when she is eventually captured by the English. The *Henry VI* trilogy exposes the fallibility in speech and report by contrasting it directly with visual truths, either immediately or, as in the case of Joan, by the playing out of events. A linear hierarchy of the senses – particularly the prioritising of sight and sound – is dismissed as flawed: both senses are equally necessary for accurate judgement. The plays thus lean towards a theory of *sense integration*, to use the modern physiological term, or *common sense* to use an early modern formulation.<sup>43</sup> Primaudaye’s useful study of the senses again offers a clear definition of common sense:

the coniunction and subiection of the naturall sences vnto  
the bodie, I meane, of the sight, smelling, hearing, taste and  
touching, whereby (saith *Plato*) the common sence, which is  
as it were a generall receptacle, conceueth al outward  
things<sup>44</sup>

The plays thus look forward to a modern understanding of the sensorium as well as assimilating some current and inherited ideas, while rejecting

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<sup>43</sup> For Common sense as one of the three ‘inwits’ in Robert Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy*, see Robert S. Kinsman, ed., ‘Introduction’, *The Darker Vision of the Renaissance: Beyond the Fields of Reason* (Berkeley and Los Angeles CA; London: University of California Press, 1974), p. 7. The term *sensus communis* referred to the point in the brain where sensory nerves met, see Milner, p. 36.

<sup>44</sup> Primaudaye, *The French academie*, p. 22.

others. Shakespeare's examples also look back to an earlier, biblical precedent in the Old Testament in the story of Sheba's meeting with Solomon. Sheba confirms the oral report of Solomon's fame with visual evidence and so suggests a theory of sense integration. The story has a specific Tudor resonance because of Henry VIII's alignment with Solomon.<sup>45</sup> The Sheba analogy appears in *Henry VI, Part 1* and *All is True*.

I argue that Shakespeare's interest in the senses is intimately linked to the construction of narrative and truth; however, Lois Potter posits another reason for his interest in sight. She lists examples of double vision in Shakespeare's plays and argues

His fondness for miniaturization, though characteristic of the aesthetic of the 1590s, is compatible with vision that sees better at close range than at a distance.<sup>46</sup>

Cassius in *Julius Caesar*, and Ulysses in *Troilus and Cressida* recognise characters by voice and gait, Othello similarly frequently asks characters to identify themselves: these details, Potter suggests, might indicate all three are myopic.<sup>47</sup> While I am not persuaded that these instances suggest Shakespeare himself was short-sighted, this interest in the physical deterioration of sight in other plays would certainly support my arguments about the fallibility of sight in the first tetralogy.

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<sup>45</sup> Holbein's drawing of Henry VIII as Solomon, *Soloman and the Queen of Sheba*, see Anston Bosman, 'Seeing Tears: Truth and Sense in *All is True*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 50.4 (1999), pp. 459-76 (475-76).

<sup>46</sup> Lois Potter, *The Life of William Shakespeare: A Critical Biography* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p. 36.

<sup>47</sup> Potter, *Critical Biography*, p. 36. She also mentions, with some scepticism I think, Stanley Well's suggestion that both The Cobbe Portrait and the 1623 Frontispiece 'show that the poet had a cast in his left eye. It is not clear how much this feature – which no one else seems to have noticed – would have affected Shakespeare', pp. 35-6 (36).

Disjunction between sight, sound and truth is developed in the second tetralogy in increasingly subtle ways. Discord in the earlier tetralogy provides potential for comedy because actual truth is patently obvious to the audience (for example the hypocrisy of Richard III appearing between two bishops with a prayer book in hand). The second tetralogy is more troubling as truth is obvious neither to the characters in the play or the audience (for example what is really happening when Richard II descends from the tower at Flint Castle?). The early histories are therefore foundational and prepare the terrain for the second tetralogy by beginning a dialogue about the conflict between oral report and visual proof, a dialogue that is continued in more subtle and complex ways in the later histories. The plays from the second tetralogy onwards also begin an exploration of surface and deep deception, that is to say deceit that is discernible and deceit that remains invisible. The earlier plays preserve some kind of boundary between the two: the miracle in *Henry VI, Part 2*, for instance is revealed unequivocally to be a sham. The second tetralogy obfuscates deception until it ultimately becomes unrecognisable culminating in the masterly performance of Hal/Henry V. It is the Lancastrian line more than Richard III, as he says himself in *Henry VI, Part 3*, that takes the ‘Machiavel to school’ (3.2.209).

The conflict between oral report and visual proof becomes clearest when we remember to consider the plays not merely as literary texts but as performance texts – where meaning is created by what is *seen* as much as by what is *heard*. Combining and often contrasting these twin conduits of sensory information exposes the constructed-ness of narrative to all of the audience – not just the privileged literate. For Thomas Heywood the

educative force of drama was in the power of sight. In his *Apology for Actors* (1612) he praises edifying spectacle:

so bewitching a thing is lively and well spirited action, that  
it hath power to new mold the harts of the spectators and  
fashion them to the shape of any noble and notable  
attempt.<sup>48</sup>

Heywood echoes Philip Sidney's conception of poetry as 'a speaking picture: with this end, to teach and delight'.<sup>49</sup> Writing of *Henry VI, Part 1*, Thomas Nashe similarly suggests it is the vision of the revived Talbot that is enlightening to the plays' 'ten thousand spectators' who 'behold [Talbot] fresh bleeding'; 'to have *Henrie* the fifth represented on the Stage' is 'a glorious thing'.<sup>50</sup> What the histories look or looked like should shape the way we read them.

The first chapter begins with a case study that I will discuss at the end of this introduction. Chapters two and three look at some episodes in the *Henry VI* trilogy that draw attention to conflicts between oral and visual report. Chapter two explores this conflict through the presentation of bodies, specifically those of Talbot, Joan, Cade and Richard III, as well as kingly bodies. Chapter three examines oral-visual contradiction through a series of spectacles: the gulling of Eleanor of Gloucester, the sham miracle, and the master-apprentice combat scene in *Henry VI, Part 2*. *Henry VI, Part*

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<sup>48</sup> Heywood *Apology for Actors* (1612), Book 1, sig. B4r.

<sup>49</sup> Philip Sidney, *An Apologie for Poetry* (London: Olney, 1595), sig. C2v. 'A Defence of Poetry' in *Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan Van Dorsten (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 80.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas Nashe, *Piers Penniless his Supplication to the Devil* (London: Jeffes, 1592), F3r. McKerrow, Vol I, p. 212-3.



2 brings out the conflict with an interesting exploration of literacy and the distrustful visual act of reading and writing as opposed to speaking through the Gloucester-Winchester conflict and through Cade's rebellion.

In Chapter four I consider examples of seeing in *King John* (1596), and look back briefly to two earlier King John plays, John Bale's *King Johan* (1538?) and the anonymous play *The Troublesome Raigne of King John* (1591?). Shakespeare explores several examples of reciprocal gazes, between the Dauphin and Blanche, Arthur and Hubert, and Hubert and John. Each reflection modifies the image that the character sees.

The second half of this thesis traces the move from an emphasis on visibility to orality/aurality in the plays. Chapter five considers the sudden and apparently unjustified vilification of Bushy and Green in *Richard II*, as well as Bolingbroke's obscure motives. Chapter six looks at the special case of Falstaff's deafness in the two parts of *Henry IV*. Hal's sermon at the end of *Henry IV, Part 2* (1597-8) effects his own reformation not Falstaff's.<sup>51</sup> Hal's reformation is articulated in visual terms – he casts off his old self like a garment – and the visual distance between Falstaff and the new king contradicts the reality of a speech act that does not in fact *act*. In fact the idea of 'speech act' is inverted – it is not the oral act that effects change but the aural act – the responsibility is the listener's, not the speaker's. The aural act, or the art of listening, is a characteristically early modern concern given the primacy accorded to preaching in the Protestant faith – a subject I touch on in the first chapter. Aural responsibility is given some brief

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<sup>51</sup> The argument that Hal's rejection speech at the end of *Henry IV, Part 2* can be considered as a sermon, through which Hal effects his reformation and demonstrates he is the ideal Protestant prince is Michael Davies', in 'Falstaff's Lateness: Calvinism and the Protestant Hero in *Henry IV*', *The Review of English Studies*, n. s., 56 (2005), 351-78.

consideration in the comedy *Love's Labour's Lost* (1594-5), when Rosaline deals Berowne his penance:

A jest's prosperity lies in the ear  
Of him that hears it, never in the tongue  
Of him that makes it. Then, if sickly ears,  
Deafed with the clamours of their own dear groans,  
Will hear your idle scorns, continue then,  
And I will have you and that fault withal;  
But, if they will not, throw away that spirit,  
And I shall find you empty of that fault,  
Right joyful of your reformation.<sup>52</sup>

Berowne's egocentric wit is only tolerated because of the metaphorical deafness of others; if he would only attend to his own speech his reformation would be complete. The word 'reformation' has obvious resonances, though the stakes are not so high here as they will be in the case of Falstaff whose very salvation is in question.

Chapter six ends with an exploration of Henry V's prayer on the eve of the Battle of Agincourt. The image created of the solitary, humbly dressed, possibly disguised pray-er is a major departure from the collective acts of prayer in the source texts and has no counterpart in the anonymous play *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* (1598). This adjustment, combined with the troubling content of the prayer, seems to question the state's prescription of devotional practice in the *Homilies* (1571).

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<sup>52</sup>*Love's Labour's Lost*, ed. by H. R. Woudhuysen, The Arden Shakespeare. (London: A&C Black, 1998) 5.2.849-57.

Chapter seven looks at Shakespeare's final history play, a collaboration with John Fletcher, *Henry VIII*, known to early audiences by the alternative title *All is True*, (1613). This play foregrounds the relationship between history, drama, and truth, and returns to patterns found in the earlier histories, namely through unsatisfactorily resolved trials. The tone of this play is significantly different: now scepticism sits with nostalgia and paradox provides a restorative narrative.

Before turning to Shakespeare, as part of an effort to situate the drama within its wider context, Chapter one presents a case study of a sermon event and considers the conflicts between seeing and hearing in another early modern performance context. There are more extant printed sermons than there are plays, and if history plays were popular in the 1590s, sermons were even more so judging by the number in print. More than one critic has described preaching as a rival art form to the stage. Huston Diehl suggests both forms are integral to the shaping of the early modern mind:

both the religious ritual and the popular play function as “cultural performance,” those powerful cultural forms that symbolic anthropologists believe have the capacity to shape human consciousness. [...] [They are] related cultural activities that structure the way Londoners in the early modern period know and understand their world.<sup>53</sup>

Both of these cultural performances also dealt with mass audiences, and Munday's complaint of the 'disorder' of the theatre 'Auditorie' might

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<sup>53</sup> Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theater in Early Modern England* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 97, 98.

equally be applied to sermon audiences as this case study will show.<sup>54</sup> Oral-visual tension was rife in many aspects of early modern life and is at the centre of the Easter sermon series preached at St Mary's Hospital (hereafter 'Spital'). This exciting civic event took place a few minutes from The Theatre and The Curtain and from Bishopsgate where Shakespeare was living at the start of his career.<sup>55</sup> It seems likely that Shakespeare and his fellow playwrights would have attended the Spital sermons at some point during their London-based periods, especially given that plays and other entertainments were banned on Spital sermon days. Like the history play, sermons also have a particular interest in the seeing-hearing tension, beyond the facts of performance. 'Faith cometh by hearing' became a staple verse of Protestant preachers who believed that auditors could grow in grace simply through *hearing* the sermon.<sup>56</sup> That reformers tried to displace the eye, with the ear as the medium of education has been well established.<sup>57</sup> One troubling biblical instance of proverbial equation of seeing and believing is the case of doubting Thomas. Diehl explains:

the reformers saw Thomas's demand for visible evidence  
of the resurrection as a profound flaw. For them, Thomas's

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<sup>54</sup> Munday, *A second and third blast*, p. 53.

<sup>55</sup> Jonathan Bate, *Soul of the Age: The Life, Mind and World of William Shakespeare* (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 357.

<sup>56</sup> Romans 10:17. All subsequent quotations from the bible are from the Geneva text, unless otherwise stated, as this was the version that Shakespeare was most likely to be familiar with, see Steven Marx, *Shakespeare and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 1-18. For the aural experience of sermons as edifying see Mary Morrissey, 'Scripture, Style and Persuasion in Seventeenth-Century English Theories of Preaching', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 53 (2002), pp. 686-706, (p. 689).

<sup>57</sup> See Eire and Clark.

insistence on seeing before believing was a terrible failure of faith.<sup>58</sup>

Calvin saw 'Thomas' touching as an instance of hubris, as Milner has shown, and like other reformers, Calvin stressed the corruption of the senses.<sup>59</sup> Even Luther, who of the reformers perhaps objected the least to images,<sup>60</sup> instructed believers "Do not look for Christ with your eyes, but put your eyes in your ears".<sup>61</sup>

The dichotomy of Protestantism as a religion for the ear and Catholicism as one for the eye is the axis around which the Spital sermons revolve; the preachers at the Spital in 1588 (the only extant series of the three Spital sermons) had to negotiate the visual attraction of the event by extolling the oral/aural benefits of the sermon. All three preachers play on analogies with the theatre, each modifying the commonplace in meaningful ways. One of these preachers, Lancelot Andrewes, Peter McCullough aligns with Shakespeare's skill for his 'linguistic inventiveness'.<sup>62</sup> Nashe, (who probably contributed to *Henry VI, Part 1*) was a great admirer of Andrewes, and by John Lyly's encouragement was 'drawne on to bee an Auditor' finding in Andrewes 'incomp[ar]able gifts'.<sup>63</sup> This chapter demonstrates one of the many reasons why the sight-sound conflict may have been in the playwright's mind, though confessional dichotomy, along with linear

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<sup>58</sup> Diehl, *Staging Reform*, p. 137.

<sup>59</sup> Milner, p. 203.

<sup>60</sup> Eire, p. 71.

<sup>61</sup> For the quotation and Luther's emphasis on and preference for hearing, see James Joseph Kearney, *The Incarnate Text: Imagining the Book in Reformation England*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), p. 26.

<sup>62</sup> Peter McCullough, ed., *Lancelot Andrewes: Selected Sermons and Lectures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 305.

<sup>63</sup> Nashe, *Saffron-Walden*, [Q4v]-Rr; McKerrow, vol III, p. 107. McCullough, *Selected sermons*, p. xviii.

hierarchies of the senses, is not passively translated into the plays. Developing research in sermon studies will and should affect the way we read plays, just as the study of the playhouse context is influencing and offers a fresh way of understanding sermons in their original performance context.<sup>64</sup> Finally, ways of reading the Spital event are analogous to ways of reading *All is True*. Both negotiate the past and present and translate experience into digestible narrative. While the earlier plays, to quote Alexander Leggatt, might allow us to ‘feel the untidiness of history’, the final play obtains distance from that immediate messiness.<sup>65</sup> Spital sermons similarly impose or condense religious and civic experience into a more palatable narrative. *All is True* and the Spital sermons are concerned with nostalgia, remembrance, and charity.

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<sup>64</sup> The last decade or so has seen some new and influential work in the field of sermon studies, for example: Peter McCullough, Hugh Adlington and Emma Rhatigan, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Mary Morrissey, *Politics and the Paul’s Cross Sermons, 1558-1642* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); and Lori Anne Ferrell and Peter McCullough, eds, *The English Sermon Revised: Religion, Literature and History 1600-1950* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000).

<sup>65</sup> Leggatt, *Shakespeare’s Political Drama*, p. 7.

## CHAPTER ONE - 'A MOST NOTABLE SPECTACLE', EASTER SPITAL

### SERMONS

In the shadow of scholarship on Paul's Cross lies London's other great outdoor pulpit, St Mary Spital. Situated in North London, outside the city wall, this pulpit played host to the annual Easter sermon series, three sermons preached at the Spital, framed by two preached at Paul's Cross. The Spital series was a long-running event, stretching from the medieval period into the seventeenth century; indeed the tradition persisted even after the outdoor pulpit was dismantled, taking place instead at a variety of London churches. The Spital sermons were thus very much a part of early modern civic life and were engrained in the civic consciousness; they must therefore take their place alongside more famous preaching venues, as well as the pageants and processions that made London life so colourful on important occasions. One Spital preacher describes the event as a 'most notable spectacle' alluding to the highly visual aspect of the event – indeed at least two diarists remember the event as visually pleasing.<sup>66</sup> The event, however, was a sermon – a primarily oral event. This chapter explores the occasion and the space in which the sermons took place; the problems of audibility; the theatricality of the sermons and how the preachers reacted with stage-pulpit analogies. Ultimately I argue that despite the solemnity of

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<sup>66</sup> London, St Paul's Cathedral Library, MS 38F22.01, fol. 26.

the religious occasion, Spital events were ones to *see*, and that preachers responded by stressing the necessity of *bearing*.

### *Text*

The only extant complete series of three sermons preached at the Spital is preserved in a manuscript in St Paul's Cathedral discovered in 2004 by Mary Morrissey. This manuscript recording the sermons of 1588 is invaluable for what it reveals about the occasion and the serial nature of the sermons. Sermons and lectures were frequently delivered as a series by an individual preacher in a fixed location; the Spital is unusual in that it is a series delivered by different preachers. In 1588 the preachers were Dr Bisse, Dr Powell and Lancelot Andrewes. Little is known of the first preacher, the second may have been the clergyman and historian David Powell and the third would become one of the greatest preachers of his age. Lancelot Andrewes would later rise to become a favourite royal preacher to two monarchs, a lead translator on the King James Bible responsible for Genesis to the Second Book of Kings, and undoubtedly one of England's most learned men. The texts in the manuscript are probably derived from transcripts of the sermons prepared after delivery by their authors.<sup>67</sup> There are no printed versions of Bisse and Powell's sermons, but Andrewes's sermon was printed in *XCVI Sermons* in 1629, from Andrewes's thorough notes prepared before delivery.<sup>68</sup> The two

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<sup>67</sup> Peter McCullough, ed., *Lancelot Andrewes: Selected Sermons and Lectures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 462.

<sup>68</sup> Allegedly, 'thrice revised', Lancelot Andrewes, *XCVI Sermons by the Right Honourable and Reverend Father in God, Lancelot Andrewes, Late Lord Bishop of Winchester*, 2nd edn (London: Badger, 1632), Preface.



versions of his Spital sermon, therefore, offer a rare opportunity to get closer to the lost event of the sermon.<sup>69</sup>

### *Time, Place, Occasion*

Preachers schooled in the *ars praedicandi*, or theory of preaching, were taught to consider time, place and occasion systematically, often explicitly naming these in the sermon itself, and so the event of the sermon must be central to our understanding of this peculiar early modern genre.<sup>70</sup> The occasion shapes the sermon at every level from the very choice of a biblical text to the selection of examples and sources, and not least to the language and rhetorical style adopted for a particular auditory.<sup>71</sup> If preachers were attentive to the occasion so should we be. My focus here is how the occasion of the sermon, including time, place and space, shapes that sermon.<sup>72</sup> Arnold Hunt has suggested that Paul's Cross and Assize sermons might be considered genres, indeed the contemporary trend in English

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<sup>69</sup> See McCullough, *Selected Sermons*, for differences, p. lii, Appendix 2.

<sup>70</sup> Hugh Adlington lists the most influential authors of sermon manuals in 'Gospel, law, and *ars praedicandi* at the Inns of Court, c. 1570 –c.1640', in *The Intellectual and Cultural World of the Early Modern Inns of Court*, ed. by Jayne Elizabeth Archer, Elizabeth Goldring & Sarah Knight (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p. 56. These included the influential humanist Desiderius Erasmus, whose *Ecclesiastes* (1535) endorsed classical rhetoric as a suitable tool for preachers; Niels Hemmingsen, a Danish Lutheran, whose *The Preacher, or Methode of preaching* appeared in English in 1574; and Cambridge-educated theologian William Perkins, author of *The Arte of Prophesying* (1592; trans. 1607).

<sup>71</sup> I use 'auditory' rather than 'audience'; it is the term preferred by scholars working in the field of English early modern studies. The preachers discussed in this essay also use the term 'auditory' or 'assembly' when referring to the audience or congregation. For the term 'audience' as anachronistic see Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 108.

<sup>72</sup> A very recent statement of the importance of the physical space of preaching has also been made by Emma Rhatigan in 'Preaching Venues: Architecture and Auditories', *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*, eds Peter McCullough, Hugh Adlington, Emma Rhatigan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 87-119.

sermon studies is to group sermons determined by occasion; hence we might speak of ‘court sermons’ or ‘Inns of Court sermons’ as distinct groups. The forthcoming Oxford edition of John Donne’s sermons will also arrange texts by occasion rather than chronology. This method seems more helpful than using anachronistic labels like ‘metaphysical’ and ‘anglican’, terms that Lori Ann Ferrell and Peter McCullough have described as ‘historically inaccurate’ and ‘critically amorphous’.<sup>73</sup> Close attention to place, however, can bring us a little closer to the event of the sermon. It is helpful therefore to consider Spital sermons as a genre; as Hunt has recently observed of Paul’s Cross that particular biblical texts were considered appropriate for that venue, so it is for the Spital.<sup>74</sup> John White preaching in 1613 described his choice of text, 1 Timothy 6:17, as ‘often handled in this place’, indeed it is the same text that Andrewes preaches on in 1588.<sup>75</sup> It is the occasion that permeates the sermon, even shaping the theological stance a preacher might be required to uphold, either because of the demands of the occasion (in the case of the Spital a plea for charity) or because of the type of auditory.

In many ways the Spital sermons were ‘occasions’ of the most spectacular sort; the Spital was a platform for aspiring preachers, and pageantry and

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<sup>73</sup> The labels are Horton Davies’s, *Like Angels from a Cloud: The English Metaphysical Preachers 1588-1645* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1986). Lori Anne Ferrell and Peter McCullough, eds, *The English Sermon Revised: Religion, Literature and History 1600-1950* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 7.

<sup>74</sup> Arnold Hunt, *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and their Audiences, 1590-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 306, 323.

<sup>75</sup> John White, ‘A sermon preached at the Spittle in London, upon Easter Monday, 1613.’ in *Two sermons the former delivered at Pauls Crosse the foure and twentieth of March, 1615 being the anniversarie commemoration of the Kings most happie succession in the Crowne of England. The latter at the Spittle on Monday in Easter weeke, 1613* (London: Field, 1615), p. 44.

ceremony were central. Planning for this major annual event began as early as January, and unlike the Paul's Cross preachers who were appointed by the Bishop of London, Spital preachers were appointed by the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen. As well as being a religious occasion Spital sermons were therefore also a Corporate event. The series began on Good Friday at Paul's Cross where 'the mayor, with his brethren the aldermen, were accustomed to be present in their violets'.<sup>76</sup> The following Monday and Tuesday the City Fathers, with their wives, processed to the Spital dressed in scarlet robes where they were seated in a house purpose built for the occasion.<sup>77</sup> They were joined by the children of Christ Church Hospital, dressed in blue, who sat with their governors in a pavilion that was constructed yearly for the event, and after 1594, in another purpose built house.<sup>78</sup> On Wednesday this performance was repeated only with the rulers dressed in violet robes. On Low Sunday a final rehearsal or summary sermon of the preceding four sermons was preached at Paul's Cross in addition to that preacher's own, a fifth sermon. For this final occasion the Lord Mayor and Aldermen donned their scarlet robes once more. The Spital sermons were thus visually striking events. The relationship between dress and the oral event may be twofold. While the violet robes may have been typically Lenten colours they may have taken on an added significance. Violet was also the colour worn by the Lord Mayor at his inauguration, though scarlet was the colour worn on the day of the Lord

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<sup>76</sup> John Stow, *A Survey of London written in the year 1598*, with an introduction by Antonia Fraser, ed. by Henry Morley, LLD, (Stroud: Sutton, 1994), p. 182.

<sup>77</sup> Mary Morrissey, *Politics and the Paul's Cross Sermons, 1558-1642* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 22.

<sup>78</sup> This house lasted only a year and had to be repaired at 'great cost to the city.' Stow, *Survey*, p. 183.

Mayor's Procession, signifying his obedience to the royal court.<sup>79</sup> Violet robes on the final day at the Spital may thus have had a more Corporate feel, before returning to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of London at Paul's Cross. That the event was perhaps more civic than religious is also suggested by the Spital's location; it was no longer attached to a functioning church or hospital.

### *Audibility*

John Gipkyn's painting of a Sermon at Paul's Cross (1616), now in the Society of Antiquaries, as Millar Maclure has observed, 'represents an ideal rather than an actual occasion' (Appendix 1).<sup>80</sup> Estimations of the audience size at Paul's Cross ran as high as six thousand, though Maclure finds this unlikely.<sup>81</sup> There are no figures for a Spital auditory and no paintings. The best indicators for what the priory and preaching yard looked like come from maps of the area: the Copperplate map (c. 1559) (the earliest surviving map of London, Appendix 2), the Braun and Hogenberg map (1572), the Agas map (1633) and Ogilby and Morgan's map (1677).<sup>82</sup> An impressionistic sketch of St Mary Spital itself also survives in Anthonis van der Wyngaerde's panaroma (c. 1544). Ogilby and Morgan produced the first accurate map of London to scale and their depiction of the Spital area resembles the earlier maps in layout and proportion. From their map the

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<sup>79</sup> Robert I. Lublin, 'Costuming the Shakespearean Stage: Visual Codes of Representation in Early Modern Theatre and Culture', unpublished PhD (The Ohio State University, 2003), pp. 158-159, 162-163.

<sup>80</sup> Millar Maclure, *The Paul's Cross Sermons 1534-1642, Studies and Texts*, 6 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 3.

<sup>81</sup> Maclure, *Paul's Cross*, p. 7.

<sup>82</sup> Despite their dates of publication both Hogenberg and Agas depict London in the 1550s. Philippa Glanville states the scale of the Copperplate is 'three chains to the inch', *London in Maps* (London: The Connoisseur, 1972), p. 19.

rough area for the preaching yard was potentially 10,000 feet squared. The area at the Spital was about five times the total yard space at The Fortune theatre and four times the size of The Globe.<sup>83</sup> Preachers, as performers, thus faced a greater spatial challenge than actors in the amphitheatres. The Globe could house more than three thousand spectators.<sup>84</sup> It is unlikely that the Spital audience was four times the size of a Globe audience. The problem is not the size of the audience but voice projection in such a large open space. Theatres were contained spaces, and even Paul's Cross had the benefit of the high cathedral wall to contain sound.<sup>85</sup>

The space provided a challenge but Spital sermons were less contentious than the potentially explosive sermons delivered at Paul's Cross. Paul's Cross preachers, as we have seen, were appointed by the Bishop of London, not by the Corporation; thus it is possible to understand why Lawrence Manley states that 'the City Fathers often found themselves on the defensive', explaining that 'the sermons at Paul's Cross "are principally *for* the governors of this Honourable City"' (italics mine).<sup>86</sup> At Paul's Cross, the Mayor and aldermen were the objects of moral instruction; Spital sermons, in contrast, might be described as being in honour of the aldermen. These two major outdoor pulpits differed substantially and affected a preacher's agenda. As Hunt has suggested, Paul's Cross sermons

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<sup>83</sup> Gurr estimates the yard space of the Fortune at 1,842 square feet. *Playgoing*, p. 19.

<sup>84</sup> Gurr, *Playgoing*, p. 19-20.

<sup>85</sup> An exciting new project led by John Wall reconstructs the preaching yard at Paul's Cross both visually and aurally. This simulation allows the website user to listen to a Paul's Cross sermon from different points in the yard with ambient sound. Audibility, as expected, decreases or increases depending on proximity to the pulpit. John Wall, 'The Virtual Paul's Cross Project' (2012), <<http://vpcp.chass.ncsu.edu/hear/>> [accessed 14 February 2013].

<sup>86</sup> Lawrence Manley, *London in the Age of Shakespeare: An Anthology* (London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1986), p. 99.

threatened the authorities and slandered aldermen accusing them most often of usury.<sup>87</sup> One preacher even drew attention to the difference between the two sermon contexts stating:

it is well known these Spittle-Sermons differ from those at the Crosse, and others about this City, that these are without any fee or reward, other then that of Honour, and good Acceptance. They are the farre better to be liked for that.<sup>88</sup>

This preacher goes on to suggest that Spital sermons were more honest than those at Paul's Cross, since the sermon itself is preached out of charity. At the same time, however, Spital sermons promoted fiscal generosity and overtly flattered aldermen, either, generally, by alluding to the 'city' and the numerous good works taking place that have made it 'famous beyond the seas'; or collectively, by referring to, for example 'divers worthy Citizens of this City'.<sup>89</sup> The references to the 'city' and 'Citizens' anchor the oral sermon to its visual space and the bodies that filled it. In 1570 there was an example of more particular flattery: Thomas Drant obsequiously called attention to and presumably gestured to 'the example of thys good gentlemen Alderman Dabbes & his euer laudable goodnes to this litle poore people'.<sup>90</sup> Drant's compliment was presumably sincere rather than ironic, but it is impossible to know whether or not the auditory agreed and unlikely that they were unanimous in their feelings

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<sup>87</sup> Hunt, *Art of Hearing*, pp. 330, 336.

<sup>88</sup> John Jackson, *The Booke of Conscience Opened and Read in a Sermon Preached at the Spittle on Easter Tuesday* (London: F. K., 1642), p. 121.

<sup>89</sup> Bisse, St Paul's, fol. 26; Thomas Playfere, 'The Pathway to Perfection' in *The Meane in Mourning* (London: Okes, 1616), p. 199.

<sup>90</sup> Thomas Drant, *Two Sermons Preached the one at S. Maries Spittle on Tuesday in Easter Weeke. 1570* (London: Daye, 1570), sig. Hiv.

towards this particular alderman. Sermons were intimately related with governance and communication; political and theological change could be instigated via the pulpit, indeed Hunt has discussed Elizabeth I's 'tuning' of the pulpits in order to dictate interpretations of polemical events.<sup>91</sup> Sermons were thus an instrument of the body politic, whether that body was the monarchy or the Church of England. Spital sermons, as can be seen from Drant's fawning, were particularly concerned with City governance and in pandering to the alderman and Mayor as the head of this body politic. Drant imposed a narrative of charity and generosity that may or may not have been accepted.

Paul's Cross sermons were not always as orderly as Spital events; Bishop Bourne was nearly killed by a riotous crowd at Paul's Cross: a dagger was thrown, narrowly missing the preacher.<sup>92</sup> Regulating the crowd at Paul's Cross was clearly a challenge and it was 'a frequent scene of confrontation'.<sup>93</sup> This was apparently not the case at the Spital; preachers were not subject to attack although there were distracting groups in the audience. Praising the charity of Londoners and their good works may have seemed incongruous in the presence of a difficult audience; as such Spital events were full with the potential for oral-visual contradiction. In 1693 a dispute broke out between the children and governors of Christ Church and Bridewell. The quarrel had nothing to do with the content of the sermon or the preacher, but rather the more mundane (though clearly

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<sup>91</sup> Arnold Hunt, 'Tuning the Pulpits: the Religious Context of the Essex Revolt', in *The English Sermon Revised*, pp. 86-114.

<sup>92</sup> Angelo J. Louisa 'Bourne, Gilbert (c. 1510-1569), Bishop of Bath and Wells', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <[www.oxforddnb.com](http://www.oxforddnb.com)> [accessed 14 December 2011]. Maclure dates the riot as 1553, p. 8.

<sup>93</sup> Manley, *London*, p. 99.

sensitive) issue of seating arrangements. By this date the Easter sermon series was no longer preached at the Spital but at various local churches. While the event was no longer an outdoor one, the rest of the Spital tradition remained essentially intact. The conflict that emerged, however, had the hallmarks of typical institutional rivalry and therefore illustrates the kinds of problems and oral distractions that may well have occurred in the Spital yard. On this occasion the boys of Christ Church Hospital, unwilling to sit with the boys of Bridewell, resorted to physical violence: ‘Sam[uell] Sams an officer of [Christ Church] Hosp[ital] w[ith] a great staff struck Tho[mas] Peacock on the head, knock’d him downe & sett him bleeding.’<sup>94</sup> The violence recurred on every day of the series accompanied, naturally, by copious verbal abuse. According to the complaint, the Christ Church boys taunted their rivals calling them ‘Bridewell doggs’, ‘clowns numskulles loggerheads’, and clearly worse given the decorous allusion to the boys’ use of ‘other very ill & unbecoming language’ delivered in ‘a very tumultuous & indecent manner’.<sup>95</sup> Disputes or not, Spital sermons were undoubtedly noisy events that presented a significant challenge and distraction to the preacher. His was not the only voice to be heard.

In addition to the clamour of the crowd the preacher had to negotiate the two other sites of display, or stages, that must have distracted auditors from the pulpit: the City dignitaries on the one side and the charity boys on the other. John Jackson’s evocative image of ‘the rest of the Citizens of this

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<sup>94</sup> London Metropolitan Archive, The Case of the boys of Bridewell Hospital on the Complaint of Mr Treasurer Hawes, re a dispute with Christ’s Hospital over seating at the Easter (Spital) Sermons, CLA/066/01/001, Date of Creation: 18 May 1693.

<sup>95</sup> The Case of the boys of Bridewell.



famous City, from the Scarlet to the Blue'<sup>96</sup> highlights the visual contrast between these two other stages, but equally underlines the poverty gap. The orphan boys were paraded as an emblem of the City's charity, but there must have been auditors present for whom this display only demonstrated how much more needed to be done. The City Fathers probably took pride in their achievements, and the preachers took care to acknowledge them, Jackson even ends his sermon with a list of statistics.<sup>97</sup> This enormous outdoor event, in the busiest part of London, must have attracted people of all ranks.<sup>98</sup> To the vulnerable people who had not benefitted from City aid, the sermons' claims may well have rung hollow.<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, the priory and hospital buildings, now homes for the wealthy, must have served as a sign of all that the City had ceased to do post-dissolution; St Mary Spital had been one of 'the largest hospitals in the country.'<sup>100</sup>

Spital audiences, then, like Paul's Cross ones, numbered thousands and the auditory itself presented a significant challenge. The two-hour long sermons at the Spital to this huge auditory were to use Horton Davies's

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<sup>96</sup> Jackson, *Booke of Conscience*, p. 120.

<sup>97</sup> Jackson, *Booke of Conscience*, p. 142-3.

<sup>98</sup> The Spital was next to Bishopsgate – the main road out of London to the North. Christopher Thomas demonstrates the Spital's location as typical for medieval hospitals, and describes Bishopsgate as 'possibly the busiest and most important road which ran through the City and on across London Bridge to the south.' Christopher Thomas, Barney Sloane and Christopher Phillpotts, *Excavations at the Priory and Hospital of St Mary Spital, London* (London: Museum of London Archaeology Service, 1997), p. 125.

<sup>99</sup> J. A. Sharpe, states 'The problem of poverty was, by the late seventeenth century, a major theme of national social debate.' The problem of course began in the previous century with the increase in population. *Early Modern England: A Social History 1550-1760*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Arnold, 1997 repr. 2007), pp. 224, 225. Stow describes the streets north of the Spital as 'too much pestered with people' and that they were 'a great cause of infection', Stow, *Survey*, p. 180.

<sup>100</sup> Thomas, *Excavations*, p. 2.

phrase, ‘a trial of endurance [...] for both preachers and their auditors’.<sup>101</sup> John Donne, who preached at the Spital in 1622, ‘complained that his voice was enfeebled through sheer weariness’ and, as Davies has observed, ‘Even the usually indefatigable Playfere in 1595 had to admit to being “almost quite spent with speaking so long.”’<sup>102</sup> Thomas Anyan concluded his 1615 sermon by claiming he had ‘wearied’ both himself and his listeners.<sup>103</sup> While the Spital occasion was clearly a prestigious one, it appears that many preachers were not tempted to take up the challenge, perhaps for the very reasons which caused Donne and Playfere to complain. The Repertories of the Court of Aldermen, now in the London Metropolitan Archive, suggest that appointing preachers was not always easy. Every year, as early as January, the aldermen began selecting candidates for the Spital; the minutes of these meetings record this process in formulaic language. This formula, however, changes during the course of the sixteenth century, indicating the increasing reluctance of preachers to take on this responsibility. In the meetings in 1574, 1575, 1576 and 157[7] three Spital preachers were ‘nominayted and appoynted’ by the court.<sup>104</sup> In 1583, four preachers were entreated with the view that any three would preach; in 1584 it was agreed that five preachers would be requested to ‘take the paynes’ to preach the Spital sermons; in 1585 four preachers were to be entreated with a fifth to

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<sup>101</sup>Horton Davies, *Like Angels from a Cloud: The English Metaphysical Preachers 1588-1645* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1986), p. 418.

<sup>102</sup> Davies, *Like Angels*, p. 418.

<sup>103</sup> Thomas Anyan, *A sermon preached at Saint Marie Spittle April. 10. 1615. By Thomas Anyan Doctour of Divinity and president of Corpus Christi College in Oxon* (Oxford: Barnes, 1615), p. 42.

<sup>104</sup> Repertories of the Court of Aldermen, *The Making of Modern London, Series One, Repertories*. Reel 14, rep 19, fols 50, 57v, 59v, 175v, 423v. There are exceptions to this formula, in 1573 the phrasing is ‘whether it will please his lordshippe to preach’, Reel 13, rep 18, fol. 155v. Old dates have been used for repertories to enable the reader to trace entries more easily in the original.

be approached ‘if any of them resiste’.<sup>105</sup> 1594 was a particularly problematic year, with no less than three separate entries regarding invitations to preachers, when in every other year there is only one. In this year six preachers were approached, leaving the appointment of the third preacher as late as March. One of the preachers who apparently refused the invitation is one Dr Andrewes.<sup>106</sup> This could well refer to Lancelot Andrewes who preached at the Spital in 1588 as a Bachelor of Divinity but who in 1590 had proceeded to Doctor of Divinity. Perhaps his earlier experience had put him off. Recruiting was not always, therefore, a straightforward affair and preaching at the Spital was perhaps understood to be a daunting and exhausting task given the challenges of being heard and the unusual length of the sermon.

In the first sermon of the 1588 series Bisse refers to the congregation as ‘so great an assemblye of all estates and degrees of people’.<sup>107</sup> In addition to the sizeable audience was the added challenge of preaching to this ‘mingled people’ to use William Perkins’s term.<sup>108</sup> Powell, the second Spital preacher of 1588, is perhaps less tactful than Perkins; in listing the range of people guilty of religious hypocrisy he seems to be describing the groups present in the audience:

All men of all ages, states and conditions, the dootinge old  
man, the publike disputer, the tatlinge woman, the younge

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<sup>105</sup> Reel 15, rep 21, fols 27v, 144, 269.

<sup>106</sup> Reel 17, rep 23, fols 353v, 359, 366v.

<sup>107</sup> St Paul’s MS, fol. 19v.

<sup>108</sup> William Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng, or, A treatise concerning the sacred and onely true manner and method of preaching*, trans. Thomas Tuke (London: Kyngston, 1607), p. 121.

boye, the bablinge sophister, all of them will seeme  
religious.<sup>109</sup>

'Disputer' and 'sophister' describe academic and oral vocations, and seem to be disparaging here, Powell perhaps expresses irritation at disruptive students in the auditory. The derogatory adjectives 'tatlinge' and 'bablinge' similarly describe aural distractions. For Powell, the male members of the auditory provide various and distinctive oral distractions typical of their age, status or vocation. The female members are indistinct; they are universally 'tatlinge'. The misogynistic overtone, led by the injunction in 1 Timothy 2:11 'Let the woman learne in silence with all subiection', is that all female speech is undesirable. 'Bablinge', associated with the sounds of birds, babies or water, cuttingly emasculates the 'sophisters', a term for Cambridge students. Powell's accusation that these different groups will 'seeme religious' points to another oral-visual tension: all of these groups could be seen in the auditory, and their presence at a sermon might suggest religious feeling but Powell defines them by their outspoken, and so non-hearing, status. Powell's auditors are not auditors at all.

The accusation of false religion was perhaps meant to be a sharp reprimand to the more noisy members present. It is hard to believe, considering the size of the audience and its resultant noise, that much could even be heard of the sermon. Paul's Cross at least had the benefit of its close proximity to the Cathedral wall, presumably helping to contain the preacher's voice. As an open space the Spital offered no such advantage.

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<sup>109</sup> St Paul's MS fol. 37.

This further suggests that Spital sermons were events to ‘see’ rather than ‘hear’.

*Pulpit and Stage, Rhetoric and Spectacle*

Gipkyn’s painting, as Maclure has observed, resembles Johannes De Witt’s sketch of an Elizabethan theatre. Gipkyn depicts ‘groundlings and notables, pit and galleries, and, in the midst, the pulpit as stage’, and as Maclure remarks, this is unsurprising in that ‘Sermons, proclamations, processions, and penances were all theatrical’.<sup>110</sup> Nowhere is this more relevant than to the Spital. On Spital sermon days, plays were banned, as if sermons were the entertainment *du jour*. Located in the ward of Bishopsgate Without, the Spital pulpit was thus outside London wall, and in a popular place for theatres. In 1588, the year of the Spital sermons discussed below, the two major commercial theatres, The Curtain and Richard Burbage’s aptly named The Theatre, were just a few minutes northwest of the Spital. Playwrights also attended sermons and two at least lived close to the Spital. Shakespeare, now acknowledged to have reached London by 1588, was once resident in Bishopsgate.<sup>111</sup> Christopher Marlowe, who had arrived in London by 1589, lived a stone’s throw away in Shoreditch.<sup>112</sup> It seems likely that these playwrights attended the Spital at least once in their careers, if not in 1588. While cautioning against the temptation to argue for direct influence, Bryan Crockett, detects echoes of Playfere’s Spital sermon in

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<sup>110</sup> Maclure, *Paul’s Cross*, p. 4.

<sup>111</sup> Jonathan Bate, *Soul of the Age: The Life, Mind and World of William Shakespeare* (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 357.

<sup>112</sup> Charles Nicholl, ‘Marlowe [Marley], Christopher (*bap.* 1564, *d.* 1593), playwright and poet’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <[www.oxforddnb.com](http://www.oxforddnb.com)> [accessed 14 December 2011].

*Henry IV, Part 1*.<sup>113</sup> That they were influenced by religious discourse is undisputed, it was hardly possible not to be at the time. The reverse is also true; theatrical discourse made its way into sermons, and not always as anti-theatrical invective. All three Spital preachers in 1588 draw analogies between the pulpit and stage. They also point to the very different kinds of oral agency the preacher and player possess, and the different aural responsibilities demanded by these two types of performance. Before turning to the sermons themselves, a word about this performative aspect.

Renaissance preachers, like dramatists, insisted on the superiority of the performance over the printed version; the latter being a mere ‘second publication’ to use playwright Francis Beaumont’s words.<sup>114</sup> The reasons for their preference may well have been different; sermons were not meant to be a commercial enterprise. Indeed, a preacher’s objection to the printed text of a sermon may at first seem puzzling given the spiritual benefits that might come from private study. Furthermore, their belief in the primacy of the performance was not reflected in the growing market for printed sermons where demand outstripped supply. Preacher Thomas Playfere, coerced into printing his Spital sermon, ‘The Pathway to Perfection’ (1616) did so reluctantly, complaining ‘so much there is between that Sermon

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<sup>113</sup> Bryan Crockett, ‘From Pulpit to Stage: Thomas Playfere’s Influence on Shakespeare’, *Notes and Queries*, 49.2 (2002), pp. 243-5. I could be tempted to make a similar claim for Andrewes’s 1588 Spital sermon and Shakespeare’s *Richard II* – but it would be based on an impression. Direct influence seems unlikely without some other corroborating evidence.

<sup>114</sup> Francis Beaumont ‘To my friend Maister John Fletceher, vpon his faithfull Sheperdesse’ in *The Faithfull Sheperdesse* by John Fletcher (London: [Alde], [1610?]), sig A3v.

which was first once preached, and that which was after twice printed.<sup>115</sup>

Playfere's allusion to the pirate copies circulated without his permission further illustrates the deficiency of the printed text; his version is printed, allegedly, only as a corrective. The difference between print and performance for Playfere is as great as the difference between 'Ivorie and wood'. The relative worth of those materials again suggests print is a poor substitute for the more sensuous experience of the oral event. This difference between performance and print, Crockett argues, is due to the preacher's belief in himself as a 'divinely inspired prophet'.<sup>116</sup> Morrissey elaborates; preaching was more than merely informative or instructive:

the sermon was to make that particular part of Scripture operative for the hearers [...] if Christ was present in the Word and that presence made operative in preaching, it was not just because of the preacher's oratorical skills: the operative force in this encounter was the Holy Spirit.<sup>117</sup>

The printed sermon, then, was no match for the real thing; it could not compete with the oral agency of the spoken sermon. Ministering the gospel had thus never been so important to the Christian lives of the listeners, and many Protestants felt that hearing the sermon enabled them to grow in grace.<sup>118</sup> The conviction that God spoke through the preacher was

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<sup>115</sup> Thomas Playfere, 'The Epistle Dedicatory' to 'The Pathway to Perfection', in *The Meane in Mourning* (London: Okes, 1616). The Spital sermon was preached in 1595.

<sup>116</sup> Bryan Crockett, *The Play of Paradox: Stage and Sermon in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), p. 8.

<sup>117</sup> Mary Morrissey, 'Scripture, Style and Persuasion in Seventeenth-Century English Theories of Preaching', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 53 (2002), pp. 686-706, (p. 690).

<sup>118</sup> Morrissey, 'Scripture', p. 689.

widespread; the idea that the sermon itself could confer grace, however, is refuted in the Spital sermons of 1588.

Performance was a key element in plays and sermons, and the preachers of the 1588 series played on theatrical analogies. Dr. Bisse, in his 1588 sermon, makes the familiar ‘poor player,/That struts and frets his hour upon the stage’ comparison:<sup>119</sup>

our life here is justly compared to a stage, wheron ther are  
divers actors, among whome it falleth not out that he that  
playeth the kings part shold be a kinge, or that he that  
playeth the beggars pt, shold alwayse be a beggar, so in the  
tragedy of this life each one is not judged to be in the  
favour of God according to the benefitts which he shall  
receive in this life.<sup>120</sup>

The metaphor strikes a Shakespearean chord, but Bisse is speaking before any Shakespeare play had been performed on the Elizabethan stage and ten years before the immortal lines ‘All the world’s a stage...’ would be written. The analogy was, in fact, a commonplace in the period and it serves to remind us that the reformed religion and theatre were not wholly at odds.<sup>121</sup> Bisse argues that his comparison is *just*, possibly anticipating a mixed reception, but also emphasising its relevance to the occasion. The Spital itself was described in the language of the theatre. An entry in the

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<sup>119</sup> William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. by Kenneth Muir (London: Arden, 2004), V.v. 24-5.

<sup>120</sup> Bisse, St Paul’s, fols 32v, 33.

<sup>121</sup> For example, John Foxe wrote plays and Calvin allowed plays to be performed in Geneva. Calvin’s *Institutes* compares the world to a theatre with angels and demons looking on. Crockett, *Play of Paradox*, p.7-8.



Repertories of the Court of Aldermen in 1593 requests that three men entreat

Mr Vaughan for a further t[er]me to be granted to this  
cittye [the] waste [...] grounde when uppon the *stage* usually  
standeth at S<sup>t</sup> Mary Spittle for the children of [Christs]  
hospitall in the Easter weeke<sup>122</sup> [italics mine]

The priory buildings were part of the Vaughan estate, and here it is clear that this included the Spital yard. A collection of bills and orders relating to the Spital, also in the London Metropolitan Archive, documents payment received by a carpenter ‘For building plat[es]’ for the aldermen, the term ‘plates’ denoting a wooden platform was also used to describe the building of stages in theatres.<sup>123</sup> Just as Shakespeare’s language is so often meta-theatrical, so is Bisse’s. The language in which the Spital event was spoken about was couched in theatrical discourse. Bisse’s comparison is therefore more than a straightforward commonplace.

Bisse’s allusion to tragedy assumes audience familiarity with that genre and indeed illustrates his own. Doctors of divinity had as much, indeed more, classical and rhetorical training than the playwrights of the period who were not all university-educated. Most anti-theatrical feeling was directed at the popular stage, not at academic or didactic drama. The anti-Catholic pamphleteer Philip Stubbes exempts plays containing ‘good example and wholesome instruction’ from criticism in the preface to the

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<sup>122</sup> Repertories of the Court of Aldermen, *The Making of Modern London, Series One, Repertories*, reel 17, Repertory 23, Nov 1592-Oct 1596, microfilm X109/148.

<sup>123</sup> Bills and orders for payment for preparing the Spital for the Easter sermons, (1671-1723) CLA/080/03/027, London Metropolitan Archive. The term ‘plates’ was used in reference to the building of the Red Lion theatre. See Peter Thomson, *Shakespeare’s Professional Career* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 58.

first edition of *The Anatomie of Abuses* in 1583.<sup>124</sup> But Bisse is speaking at the very moment when Elizabethan popular tragedy was emerging; Thomas Kyd's pioneering *The Spanish Tragedy* may well have already been performed.<sup>125</sup> The phenomenon of tragedy freed from didactic purpose in the 1580s, Martha Tuck Rozett argues, sprang from Calvin's tragic 'view of human existence'.<sup>126</sup> Bisse's view of life as tragedy has a Calvinist colour but his analogy, while creating pathos for the human condition, is not meant to evoke despair (as it does for Macbeth). Rather it has the dual purpose of reassuring the temporally afflicted that playing the beggar's part in this life does not mean they are out of God's favour, while at the same time warning those that play the king's part, in other words the wealthy, not to be high-minded or presumptuous in their assurance of election.

Bisse's tragic metaphor comes near the end of the sermon. As Roger Pooley has argued, sermons, like plays, brought the auditor to a 'central crisis of recognition', a kind of anagnoresis that we witness in tragic protagonists.<sup>127</sup> The sermon hearer experiences catharsis in simultaneously being made to feel fear, guilt and finally consolation.

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<sup>124</sup> Philip Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses* (London: Kingston, 1583), Preface. This claim was retracted from later editions. For a discussion of the changing attitudes towards drama, from exempting instructive plays to the hysterical pitch of absolute anti-theatricalism reached by William Prynne in *Histriomastix* (1633) see Jonas Barish, *The Anti-theatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981), p. 82.

<sup>125</sup> Possible dates range from 1583-1592, J. R. Mulryne suggests 1587 may have been likely, in J. R. Mulryne, 'Kyd, Thomas (*bap.* 1558, *d.* 1594), playwright and translator', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <[www.oxforddnb.com](http://www.oxforddnb.com)> [accessed 14 December 2011].

<sup>126</sup> Martha Tuck Rozett, *The Doctrine of Election and the Emergence of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 46.

<sup>127</sup> Roger Pooley, *English Prose of the Seventeenth Century, 1590-1700* (London and New York: Longman, 1992), p. 105.

This is in keeping with the classical conventions for oratory, as set out by Cicero and Quintilian, that were core to the Renaissance curriculum and that Erasmus had deemed suitable for the sermon.<sup>128</sup> Preachers were thus trained to teach, *docere*, by moving the emotions, *movere*.<sup>129</sup> The multiple emotions the auditory are led through also resemble Aristotle's definition that tragedy arouses both 'pity and fear'.<sup>130</sup> That Bisse feels his comparison is 'just' may well be due to his own education and his consequent recognition of the similarity between the effects of epideictic oration and tragedy. Bisse's choice of biblical text regarding the separation of wheat and tares in the harvest, or in other words, the separation of the elect and the damned in the final judgement arouses precisely these emotions. Pity, according to Aristotle 'is aroused by unmerited misfortune, fear, by the misfortune of a man like ourselves'.<sup>131</sup> Bisse's repeated image of the tares being cast into 'unquenchable fire' mirrors the 'destructive and painful acts' of tragedy.<sup>132</sup>

This catharsis could be a very real and profound experience. John Manningham records a sermon in 1602 that 'left few eyes dry'; Andrewes's Christmas sermon of 1610 was met with 'great applause' and the accolade

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<sup>128</sup> Peter Mack, *A History of Renaissance Rhetoric 1380-1620* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 98. Erasmus' endorsed classical models in *Ecclesiastes* (Basel: Froben, 1535); there are no early modern English translations.

<sup>129</sup> Thomas Wilson, following Cicero, states the purpose of rhetoric is to teach and delight, *The Art of Rhetorique* (London: [Grafton], 1553), fol. 1v.

<sup>130</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. by George Whalley, ed. by John Baxter and Patrick Atherton (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), p. 69. Aristotle also indicates that a tragedy should be able to evoke these emotions without seeing the actors, hearing the play should be enough, p. 99.

<sup>131</sup> Rozett, *Doctrine of Election*, p. 33.

<sup>132</sup> Bisse, St Paul's MS, fol. 19; Aristotle, *Poetics*, p. 69.

of the king later laying a copy of the sermon under his pillow.<sup>133</sup> These cathartic experiences were very much a product of the moment, a result of listening to the sermon in a public context rather than reading a sermon privately. This again explains why preachers extolled the benefits of the sermon performed over the sermon as printed text. The printed sermon can only convey what was taught, but as Donne's statement 'we are not upon a Lecture, but a Sermon' shows, pulpit oratory 'included but also transcended teaching.'<sup>134</sup> For Playfere the 'affection' of the preacher 'involves a circulation of energy between preacher and audience, so that each enlivens the other'.<sup>135</sup> The sermon is therefore a collaborative act. This idea of collaboration, or even collusion between preacher and auditory also takes another form: as Hunt explains, the limited number of arrests for seditious preaching reflect the rhetorical safeguards that criticised the sin and not the sinner; the auditory, however, may well have interpreted the sermon to refer to a particular person.<sup>136</sup> This almost conspiratorial relationship between speaker and listener is one of the methods playwrights used to avoid censorship. Annabel Patterson's observation of 'strategies of indirection' in the Renaissance play, whereby 'a highly sophisticated system of oblique communication' enabled writers to 'communicate with readers

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<sup>133</sup> *Diary of John Manningham 1602-3*, ed. by John Bruce (Nichols: Westminster, 1868), p. 145; P. E. McCullough, 'Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626), Bishop of Winchester', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, quoting the letters of John Chamberlain.

<sup>134</sup> Bryan Crockett, 'Thomas Playfere's Poetics of Preaching' in *The English Sermon Revised*, p. 66.

<sup>135</sup> Crockett, 'Thomas Playfere', p. 60.

<sup>136</sup> Hunt, *Art of Hearing*, p. 252.

or audiences [...] without producing a direct confrontation', can also be applied to sermons.<sup>137</sup>

Bisse, in his stage-pulpit metaphor, selects a commonplace that he clearly saw as suited for the occasion. A commonplace, however, was not the straightforward repetition of a well known idea or image, 'recycling exempla' was 'an inherently active, discriminating and selective exercise.'<sup>138</sup>

The very day after Bisse's sermon, Powell preaching at the Spital on Tuesday makes his own theatrical analogy:

therefore come not you my beloved to the hearinge of the  
word, as a man wold come to a playe, account not the  
pulpitt to be as a stage, and the preacher to be a stage  
player, wherunto men resort only to heare and take those  
thinges that serve their corrupt h[umo]rs, lettinge the good  
things passe if ther be any good in them, [...].<sup>139</sup>

Where Bisse stated 'our life here is justly compared to a stage', Powell instructs the audience explicitly not to 'account [...] the pulpitt to be as a stage'. Where Bisse described life as playing a 'part', Powell condemns the comparison of preacher and 'stage player'. Where Bisse makes no criticism of playgoers, Powell refers to their 'corrupt h[umo]rs'. Powell refashions Bisse's conceit moving the focus from the playing of parts, or performing, to audition and aural responsibility. Powell was clearly irked by Bisse's

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<sup>137</sup> Crockett, *Play of Paradox*, p. 18. Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), p. 53.

<sup>138</sup> Hunt, *Art of Hearing*, p. 342, quoting Earle Havens, *Commonplace Books: A History of Manuscripts and Printed Books from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT, 2001), p. 8.

<sup>139</sup> St Paul's MS, fols 41-41v.

analogy, rejecting it overtly here but also more subtly throughout the entire sermon.

Powell's choice of text, 'If any man amonge you seemeth religious & refrayneth not his tongue, but deciveth his own hart, this mannes religion is vayne' (James 1: 26) provides the starting point for a sustained attack on religious hypocrisy through an elaborate clothing conceit. Sixteenth-century England, for the most part, subscribed to a rigid dress code, as we have seen in the colours of the robes worn at the Spital. Subverting this dress code was considered a deception as dress was meant to reflect rank and indeed gender.<sup>140</sup> Much criticism of the theatre focused on the protean nature of the players, dressed as something other than themselves, players set out to deceive.<sup>141</sup> Powell lays the same protean charge at religious hypocrites:

The Ape is a most deformed beast yet if she hade mans  
cloathes on her she seemeth to beare the shape of a man so  
man although he be a most deformed creature in the sight  
of God yet when he taketh on him the garm[ent] of religion  
he thinketh that he appeareth somethinge in the sight of  
God.<sup>142</sup>

The reprobate is cast in the terms of other, he is a 'deformed creature' purporting to be virtuous by wearing the robes of religion. Powell continues, arguing just as 'the wolfe will take upon him the sheepes skinne [...] so the wicked will offentymes take upon the skinne of godlinesse and

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<sup>140</sup> Sumptuary laws attempted to enforce dress codes, see for example, Lublin, *Costuming the Shakespearean Stage*, especially pp. 1-52.

<sup>141</sup> See Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, especially Chapter 4 'Puritans and Proteans', pp. 80-131.

<sup>142</sup> St Paul's MS, fols 35v-36.

the showe of religion'.<sup>143</sup> This clothing motif prepares for the stage analogy which appears roughly halfway through the sermon. In the second half of the sermon the motif develops. The reprobate's false faith is described thus: 'his religion is no body but a shadowe'.<sup>144</sup> If the outward signs of religion up until this point have been described as a 'cloak to cover [...] rebellion', it is now made clear that this garment has no substance and is transparent, it is a shadow.<sup>145</sup> 'Shadow' was, of course, a term used to denote players, the word choice here then may well be a deliberate pun. In keeping with his earlier disdain for the theatre, Powell compares the reprobate to an actor, a man whose profession depends on convincing vocal deception.

Powell's conceit and rhetorical inversion of Bisse's original theatrical allusion demonstrates the tensions that might emerge between preachers delivering a series together. It also suggests Spital preachers were present at all three sermons. Andrewes in his Wednesday sermon refers to the sermon 'you heard very notable yesterday' and that 'Heer have these two daies bene made very iust complaint of symony'; an equivalent phrase does not appear in the printed version of the sermon, it is an example of what was spoken in the moment.<sup>146</sup> In Powell's case, it is possible that after hearing Bisse's sermon, he modified his own.

That Andrewes picked up on the discord between the two sermons in their use of theatrical imagery is likely. Educated men attended to rhetorical devices and Andrewes was profoundly learned. Andrewes would come to

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<sup>143</sup> St Paul's MS, fol. 36v.

<sup>144</sup> St Paul's MS, fol. 42v.

<sup>145</sup> St Paul's MS fol. 35v.

<sup>146</sup> McCullough, *Selected Sermons*, pp. 261, 262.

be known both for his tight, controlled exegetical style and his diplomacy. If he did contribute to the stage analogy, he did so in a single word. The closing images of his Spital sermon mirror the fatalism of tragedy; Andrewes warns the audience ‘think not, that when my words shall be at an end, both they shall vanish in the aire, and you never heare of them againe.’<sup>147</sup> The single word that alludes to spectacle is ‘vanish’, and it appears in both the printed and manuscript version of the sermon. The sermon is not, to use Prospero’s phrase, an ‘insubstantial pageant’ that ‘melted into.. thin air [...] Leave[ing] not a rack behind.’<sup>148</sup> Andrewes’s synaesthetic image of spoken words that ‘vanish’ makes an emphatic distinction between *hearing* a sermon and seeing one. As a preacher he seems fully aware of the whole experience of the Spital tradition and the possible paucity of genuine religious feeling. In addition, given the size and space of the Spital yard and the masses attending the event, there must have been a great many casual spectators that could not hear anything of the sermon. Andrewes is insistent that the words of the sermon are not a spectacle that will ‘vanish’ once the preacher has left the pulpit. *Hearing*, for Andrewes, is not just a straightforward act of audition; rather it implies participation and action. True or effective hearing initiates reformation, it realises the ‘transformative potential’ of the preacher’s words.<sup>149</sup> Bisse drew on the parable of the sower in his Monday sermon, likening the stony and fertile ground to ‘two sorts of [...] hearers’; the words of the sermons will

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<sup>147</sup> McCullough, *Selected Sermons*, p. 80.

<sup>148</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan (London: Arden, 1999), 4.1.150, 155-6.

<sup>149</sup> Raymond Powell, “A persuasion of his truth...through the opening of his Word”: the place of the pulpits in the Restoration church of Mary I, a paper given at *Gossip, Gospel and Governance: Orality in Europe 1400-1700*, 14-16 July 2011, British Academy, London.



fall on passive and active ears.<sup>150</sup> He declares his biblical theme as ‘most convenient & fit [...] for this auditorye’.<sup>151</sup> Later John Donne would similarly call on the ‘hearers’ to consider the ‘art of hearing, as well as of speaking’.<sup>152</sup> Aural responsibility was clearly a persistent concern.

If the congregation treated the sermon as entertainment, expecting never to ‘hear’ the words again, Andrewes had a chilling answer for them: ‘Surely you shall; the day is coming [...] A fearefull day [...] when your life shall have an end [...] when the terror of death shall be upon you [...] then, it will be too late’.<sup>153</sup> This warning in the printed version appears to have been tempered in the actual moment: in the manuscript the day of death is described as ‘fearfull’ and ‘heavy’, but the ‘terror of death’ is absent.<sup>154</sup> In the moment, either Andrewes decided to soften his finale, or he simply ran out of time. The former may be the more likely. The auditory had already been thoroughly warned against belated repentance earlier in the week. Bisse warns that those who repent only in the ‘last gaspe of ther life’ will not be forgiven.<sup>155</sup> When he repeats the image it is more graphic: ‘we draw the last gaspe of our breath’.<sup>156</sup> The comfortable distance of the third person in the first instance is removed in the second with the more personal ‘we’, the abstract image of ‘life’ becomes the bodily ‘breath’. Andrewes may have felt there had been enough scaremongering that week.

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<sup>150</sup> St Paul’s MS, fol. 17v.

<sup>151</sup> St Paul’s MS, fol. 18.

<sup>152</sup> John Donne, ‘A Sermon Preached at the Spittle, Upon Easter-Munday, 1622’, in *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. by George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, 10 vols, (Berkeley, LA, London: University of California Press, 1959), IV, pp. 89-131, p. 118.

<sup>153</sup> McCullough, *Selected Sermons*, p. 80.

<sup>154</sup> McCullough, *Selected Sermons*, p. 264.

<sup>155</sup> St Paul’s MS fol. 33.

<sup>156</sup> St Paul’s MS fol. 33v.

The preachers thus delivered a grave message at the Spital. Rather than the ear-witness accounts that these preachers might have preferred, however, two diarists at least are better described as eye witnesses. Henry Machyn and Samuel Pepys were writing more than a century apart; Machyn attends the Spital sermons in 1553, 1557 and 1563, Pepys in 1662 and 1669. The endurance of this tradition demonstrates that the Spital sermon series was engrained in early modern civic consciousness despite radical religious and political shifts. That the Spital sermons were an occasion for spectacle rather than oral instruction is suggested by the first-hand accounts of Machyn and Pepys. Neither has much to say about the religiosity of the occasion or the sermon itself and we are thus reminded that the written sermon does not constitute the full record of the event. Machyn's Spital experience is defined not by the auality of the event, but instead by his admiration for the ceremony and order of the procession:

Alle the masters and rulars, and skollmasturs and mastores,  
and alle the chylceryn, boyth men and vomen chylceryn,  
alle in blue cotes, and wen[che]s in blue frokes and with  
skoychyons in-brodered on ther slevys with the armes of  
London, and red capes, and so ij an ij (to-)geder, and evere  
man in ys pla[c]e and off[ice]... [3 April 1553].<sup>157</sup>

Machyn comments closely on the clothing, noting the orphans' blue coats and frocks with the scutcheons embroidered on the sleeves. In 1557 and 1563 he also records the officials in attendance and their numbers. In all of

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<sup>157</sup> *The Diary of Henry Machyn, Citizen and Merchant-Taylor of London from A.D. 1550 to A. D. 1563*, ed. by John Gough Nichols (London: Camden Society, 1848), p. 33.

these entries Machyn is notably more interested in the visual display than in the preacher and his words. He attends a primarily aural event only to comment on its visual aspects. Though his appraisal of sermons in general tends to be limited to the single word ‘godly’, in the case of the Spital it does seem that Machyn is more impressed by the spectacle than the sermons, not least because he records attendance at the Spital in three separate years. He takes care to observe the numbers of children and aldermen, some of whom he names personally. His familiarity with the aldermen also suggests at least a portion of the congregation would have been able to name the various officials and perhaps their respective reputations. Machyn’s observations are then something like what we might now call ‘celebrity spotting’. Samuel Pepys is more explicitly interested in sight than sound in both the years he attends the Spital: in 1662 he remarks on the ‘fine sight of charity’ but complains that sermon is ‘so long’, leaving half way through the sermon; in 1669 he arrives part way through catching ‘a piece of a dull sermon’ but he stays to watch the City rulers leave on horses, their wives in coaches, and found ‘the sight was mighty pleasing.’<sup>158</sup> Machyn probably enjoyed the occasion all the more for its Catholic connotations, and for the Catholic look of the Spital area, given his own Catholic proclivities.<sup>159</sup> Christopher Thomas suggests that:

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<sup>158</sup> *The Diary of Samuel Pepys, A New and Complete Transcription*, ed. By Robert Latham and William Matthews, 11 vols (London: Bell, 1970), III, 2 April 1662, pp. 57-58; IX (1976), 13 April 1669, pp. 517-8.

<sup>159</sup> F. H. W. Sheppard notes a number of Catholic property owners in the area, and suggests ‘Its position within the Liberty of Norton Folgate probably made it attractive to adherents of the Roman Catholic faith.’ *Survey of London, Volume XXVII, Spitalfields and Mile End New Town* (London: Athlone, 1957), p. 50. Catholic property owners included Robert Hare, Sir Edmund Huddleston, and Jesuit Father Garnet. Ian Mortimer suggests ‘The earnestness of [Machyn’s] religious views, [...] tended towards Catholicism’, in Ian Mortimer, ‘Machyn

Little change can be noted in the buildings [...]

The physical process of the Dissolution can be traced by analogy with the experience of the other large religious houses in London. However, an unusually high proportion of the fabric and layout of the priory buildings survived to influence the appearance and the street pattern of the area of the former precincts for the next two centuries.<sup>160</sup>

Despite the change in use then, the priory seems to have retained much of its original shape. Playfere's initial commendation of the solitary religious life in monasteries in his sermon, quickly followed by the remark that 'as diuers have lived very badly in Monastries: so many haue liued very blessedly without them' is more pointed when one considers the setting.<sup>161</sup> Given the Protestant objections to, what they perceived to be, idolatry in the Catholic faith, the continued use of a pulpit loaded with Catholic connotation long after the Reformation began emphasizes what historians like Christopher Haigh have long been arguing – that the Reformation should not be viewed as a discrete event, but as an ongoing process that lasted throughout the sixteenth century. The Spital setting complicates the Protestant message of the sermons, and more generally the primacy accorded to hearing in the Protestant faith, given the visually Catholic context of performance.

It is highly tempting to link the Catholic associations of the Spital to my argument for the Spital as a spectacular event; Catholicism was, after all,

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[Machin], Henry (1496/1498–1563), chronicler', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <[www.oxforddnb.com](http://www.oxforddnb.com)>[accessed 14 December 2011].

<sup>160</sup> Thomas, *Excavations at the Priory*, pp.146, 149.

<sup>161</sup> Playfere, 'Pathway', p. 189.

criticized as being a ‘religion for the eye’, Protestantism a religion ‘for the ear.’<sup>162</sup> The lawyer John Manningham attends the Spital in 1602 but notes only the biblical text of the sermon, not the contents or the preacher. This seems unusual given the forty-seven sermons summarised in his diary, some of them up to two thousand words long.<sup>163</sup> Perhaps Manningham did not think the sermon was very good; perhaps he could not hear it; perhaps, like Machyn before him and Pepys after him, Manningham was more interested in the spectacle. The long history of this event and its popularity demonstrates that such ceremony as was played out at the Spital was clearly not objectionable to the majority and not attributed to its Catholic beginnings; it was simply a civic norm. Tremors of disapproval from the preachers, however, may be detected in the 1588 series. All three preachers are emphatic in their exhortations to act rather than simply attend sermons, to listen actively rather than passively, thus transforming the notion of the vocal agency of the preacher into the aural responsibility of the listener.

The perceived differences between print and performance point to the special agency of the spoken sermon in effecting salvation. While there were clearly other reasons for scepticism about print, the fear of misinterpretation and repercussion, for example, a prominent reason for the preference for the sermon performed was due to the force and immediacy of the word *spoken*. The ministering of the Gospel was meant to be an oral activity; Protestant preachers foregrounded the importance of

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<sup>162</sup> Ralph Brownrig, ‘The Sixth Sermon on S. Matth.’, *Sixty Five Sermons in Two Volumes by the Right Reverend Father in God, Ralph Brownrig, Late Bishop of Exeter*, 2 vols (London: Roycroft 1674), II, p. 83. For a number of examples see Hunt, p. 23-4.

<sup>163</sup> Gurr, *Playgoing*, p. 98.

the sermon with the support of Romans 10:17, which insisted that ‘faith cometh by hearing’.<sup>164</sup> Sermons provoked the same emotional responses as tragedy; they were meant to be cathartic. As Donne so eloquently put it in his Spital sermon ‘Preaching is the thunder, that clears the air’.<sup>165</sup> The aural responsibilities of those present at plays and sermons were considered markedly different. Aural distractions, however, were very similar in both; tattling women, babbling sophisters and roaring boys, as we have seen, were probably as noisy at a sermon as they were at the theatre. Spital sermons were steeped in their immediate context and were inherently theatrical, visually, rhetorically and physically.

At the same time preachers imposed an oral narrative on the auditory that may have contradicted the visual evidence before them. The preachers stressed that the City was a paragon of charity and good works but on at least one occasion these emblems of charity - the orphans - were a rowdy nuisance. Furthermore monies raised at these ‘set piece civic occasions’, Ian Archer argues, targeted ‘otherwise neglected charitable objects’.<sup>166</sup> John Hacket (1592-1670) who preached at the Spital reminded the City fathers that ‘the *Blew Coat* wherewith you cloath the fatherless is more precious in Gods sight than your own *Scarlet*’.<sup>167</sup> In 1588 collections may well have been limited given heavy taxation in preparation for the defence against the Spanish Armada.<sup>168</sup> Despite Protestant largely successful efforts to ‘forg[e] an association between protestantism and charity’, at the Spital, precisely

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<sup>164</sup> Crockett, *Play of Paradox*, p. 9; Hunt, p. 22.

<sup>165</sup> Donne, *Sermons*, IV, p. 105.

<sup>166</sup> Ian W. Archer, ‘The Charity of Early Modern Londoners’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6<sup>th</sup> ser., 12 (2002), p. 223-44, (p. 241).

<sup>167</sup> John Hacket, *A Century of sermons upon several remarkable subjects* (London: Clark, 1675), p. 718.

<sup>168</sup> McCullough, *Selected Sermons*, p. 304.

because of its charitable objective, nostalgia must have been rife. St Mary Spital had once been the largest hospital providing relief for the sick and the elderly, but it became a wealthy, private estate; its owner had to be entreated for permission to use the grounds. Advertising the City's charitable acts must have been a sting to the most vulnerable in the audience who could plainly see the gap between 'the Scarlet' and 'the Blue'.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Jackson, *Booke of Conscience*, p. 120.

## CHAPTER TWO - THE FIRST TETRALOGY: BODIES

The *Henry VI* trilogy has not always received as much critical attention as the other history plays.<sup>170</sup> Conversely *Richard III* is one of the most popular Shakespeare histories in terms of performance, adaptations, and inclusion in school and university curriculums. The discovery of the body of Richard III in 2013 will hopefully prompt not only attention to this play – but also a backward glance to the formative plays of the *Henry VI* trilogy. Isolated sections of these plays have received critical praise, for example from Ronald Knowles: ‘It has long been a critical commonplace that the low-life scenes of the two parts of *Henry VI* have a dramatic complexity which shows a distinct maturity in Shakespeare’s early dramatic art,’<sup>171</sup> and earlier, Moody Prior, who argued that ‘the three parts of *Henry VI* are the rich ore out of which the later plays are refined.’<sup>172</sup> Irving Ribner (among many others), however, criticised the plays for being ‘episodic in structure’, and argued that the ‘scenes are poorly related to one another’.<sup>173</sup> This in turn has been attributed to multiple authorship, but before addressing this we should keep in mind that the plays were extremely successful on the early modern stage, if we are to believe Nashe’s audience estimate of ‘ten

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<sup>170</sup> Howard and Rackin found *Henry VI, Part 1* receiving the least critical attention from 1975-88. They also found, however, that the reverse was true for feminist criticism, with this play being the second most popular, p. 21-2, 25, 217.

<sup>171</sup> Ronald Knowles, ‘The Farce of History: Miracle, Combat, and Rebellion in 2 *Henry VI*’, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 21 Politics, Patronage and Literature in England 1558-1658 Special Number (1991), p. 168.

<sup>172</sup> Moody E. Prior, *The Drama of Power: Studies in Shakespeare’s History Plays* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 9.

<sup>173</sup> Ribner, *The English History Play*, p. 99.



thousand spectators at least, (at severall times)<sup>174</sup> for *Henry VI, Part 1* and the three printed editions of *Parts 2* and *3* as *The first part of the contention* (1594, 1600), *The true tragedie of Richard Duke of York* (1595, 1600), *The whole contention* (1619). Furthermore the playwrights were experimenting with a relatively new genre and condensing an enormous and complex period of history. The authorship question is unlikely to ever be satisfactorily answered. Collaboration is characteristic of playwrights of the period, and we should be wary of perpetuating a trend that looks to create a monolith of Shakespeare. A persuasive stylometric study by Brian Vickers concludes that act one of *Henry VI, Part 1* was probably written by Thomas Nashe, the rest by Shakespeare and one other unidentified dramatist.<sup>175</sup> There is a developing trend to be traced across the histories and that trend does not have to depend on single authorship; the theatre of the 1580s and 90s was a creative hive, playwrights shared work and were influenced by each other. If the scenes discussed here are not Shakespeare's own, they still influenced his development of the same theme in the later histories that are more certainly his own. Earlier critics have also maintained that Shakespeare had a revising hand in the whole play.<sup>176</sup> This chapter will refer to the author as 'Shakespeare', on the understanding that the term refers to plays attributed or grouped together, but which most likely included many hands. Finally, I am thoroughly persuaded by Larry Champion's argument that the early history plays experiment with a broad perspective rather than focussing on

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<sup>174</sup> Nashe, *Piers Penniless*, sig. F3r. McKerrow, vol I, p. 212.

<sup>175</sup> Vickers, 'Incomplete Shakespeare'.

<sup>176</sup> For an overview of the arguments see Burns, pp. 73-84, and David Bevington, '1 Henry VI', in *A Companion to Shakespeares Works: The Histories*, vol. II, ed. by Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 2003) pp. 308-9.

the dramatic narrative of an individual.<sup>177</sup> Michael Hattaway uses a similar argument to eschew entirely theories of multiple authorship:

The variety of styles found throughout the sequence may not, contrary to much scholarly opinion, be evidence of multiple authorship or revision, but of perspectivism, a dramatic cross-examination from differing points of view...<sup>178</sup>

In this chapter I develop ideas about ‘perspectivism’ with reference to the bodies of Talbot and Joan in *Henry VI, Part 1*, Cade in *Henry VI, Part 2*, and Richard in *Henry VI, Part 3* and *Richard III*.<sup>179</sup> In the final section I consider bodies, speech and identity in relation to the two kings Henry VI and Richmond (Henry VII).

### *Talbot*

*Henry VI Part 1* (1592) is generally accepted to have been written last.<sup>180</sup> The internal evidence of the plays alone suggests that it is unlikely for *Part 1* to have been written first; if it had we would expect brave Talbot to be remembered in the second part of the trilogy, but as it is Talbot is not mentioned at all. This section is particularly concerned with Act 2 scene 3,

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<sup>177</sup> Larry S. Champion, *Perspectives in Shakespeare's Histories* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1980).

<sup>178</sup> Michael Hattaway, ed., ‘Introduction’, *The First Part of King Henry VI*. The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 1-2.

<sup>179</sup> A condensed version of the sections on Talbot, Joan and Cade was presented at the European Shakespeare Research Association conference, ‘Shakespeare and Myth’, in Montpellier, 26-29 June 2013.

<sup>180</sup> Burns, p. 4. Ton Hoenselaars ‘Shakespeare’s English History Plays’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. by Margreta De Grazia and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 137. The latest dating for the play is agreed as 1592, for an earliest date as 1591 see B. J. Sokol, ‘Manuscript Evidence for an Earliest Date of *Henry VI, Part One*’, *Notes and Queries*, 47.1 (2000), 58-63.

an inset episode not found in any source material which details the fictitious Countess of Auvergne's attempted capture of Talbot, the military hero of the play. My discussion here attempts to re-evaluate the position of 2.3 as an early instance of oral-visual contradiction that lays the foundation for more complex instances in the later histories. The scene also recalls the several instances in *Henry VI, Part 2* and *Part 3* (1591) which cause us to think about sight-sound conflict. In one of the few sustained critical treatments of this scene, Sigurd Burckhardt insists on its intentionally episodic nature, maintaining that

It grows out of no prior event, leads to no subsequent one; the Countess appears in no other scene and is never again heard of. No major theme seems to be illustrated, no moral pointed.<sup>181</sup>

Indeed this scene has been regularly overlooked or dismissed as 'irrelevant', in Tillyard's terms, rather than being considered as integral to a schema that exists across the tetralogies.<sup>182</sup> Hereward T. Price was a little more generous in granting this scene, and others discussed in this chapter, with the status of 'mirror-scenes' – that is a scene reflecting an important theme or aspect of the plot. Price, however, still saw the inset episodes in the history plays as less sophisticated than those in Shakespeare's later work; in the histories the result is sometimes 'a hodgepodge of incident' and only

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<sup>181</sup> Sigurd Burckhardt, 'Chapter III. "I am but shadow of myself": Ceremony and Design in *1 Henry VI* in *Shakespearean Meanings* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 49.

<sup>182</sup> E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (New York: Macmillan, 1946), p. 158.

the ‘parallel advancement of plot and idea.’<sup>183</sup> *Henry V* stands out for its self-referential Choruses – the Globe and its players insufficient to represent scenes of war in a foreign country – but performance and particularly performing history are concerns throughout all Shakespeare’s history plays.<sup>184</sup> The line given to the actor playing Talbot ‘I am but shadow of myself’ reminds the audience they are not watching a reincarnated Talbot but a ‘shadow’, an actor playing the role of Talbot (2.3.49). Not only is Talbot the actor not Talbot the man, Talbot the man is less than Talbot the name. Talbot becomes a myth, a heroic construction that is equal to more than the sum of its parts. As such he becomes an embodiment of the Gestaltian principle, a theory of perception whereby the ‘whole’ is perceived before the individual parts:

The characteristics of such wholes are not merely the sum totals of the characteristics of the parts making up the whole. Rather, conversely, the nature of the whole determines the nature of its parts - indeed determines the place, role and function of each part in the whole. The whole is not simply the sum of its parts, nor is the whole merely more than the sum of its parts; wholes are

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<sup>183</sup> Hereward T. Price, ‘Mirror-Scenes in Shakespeare’, in *Joseph Quincy Adams Memorial Studies*, ed. by James G. McManaway, Giles E. Dawson, Edwin E. Willoughby (Washington: The Folger Shakespeare Library, 1948), pp. 101 – 13, quote p. 103.

<sup>184</sup> Brian Walsh makes this argument for *Henry VI, Part 1* in “Unkind Division”: The Double Absence of Performing History in *1 Henry VI*, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 55.2 (2004) 119-147.

fundamentally entirely different from a bare sum total of  
their parts.<sup>185</sup>

When Talbot says ‘I am but shadow of myself’ he illustrates the gap between the Gestaltian whole ‘Talbot’, the Talbot of his reputation and his own individual body, a part, a shadow, an entirely different object from the one the Countess expects to see. The Gestalt Talbot is thus also more than an actor can represent. The sound of the name alone causes the French to flee in 2.1, even though Talbot himself is not present. In this comic scene a lone soldier triumphs by his wits:

I’ll be so bold to take what they have left.  
The cry of ‘Talbot’ serves me for a sword –  
For I have loaden me with many spoils,  
Using no other weapon but his name. (2.1.78-81)

The dramatist takes his precedent from Holinshed, who reported Talbot’s ‘onely name was & yet is dreadfull to the French nation’;<sup>186</sup> this fearful reputation persisted into the sixteenth century.<sup>187</sup> Such a statement is again upheld by the Countess of Auvergne in 2.3:

Great is the rumour of this dreadful knight,  
And his achievements of no less account:  
*Fain would mine eyes be witness with mine ears,*  
To give their censure of these rare reports.

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<sup>185</sup> Michael, Wertheimer, ‘A Gestalt Perspective on the Psychology of Thinking’, in *Towards a Theory of Thinking: Building Blocks for a Conceptual Framework*, ed. by Britt Glatzeder, Vinod Goel, Albrecht Müller (Heidelberg: Springer, 2010) pp. 49-58 (50). [www.springer.com](http://www.springer.com) [accessed 22 July 2013].

<sup>186</sup> Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland, 1577 and 1587*, <<http://www.english.ox.ac.uk/holinshed/>>, 1587 edition, vol. 6, p. 597. All subsequent quotations from Holinshed are from the 1587 edition.

<sup>187</sup> Matthew Woodcock, ‘John Talbot, Terror of the French: A Continuing Tradition’, *Notes & Queries*, 51.3 (2004) 249-51.

(2.3.7-10) [my emphasis]

The Countess initially appears to have greater command of herself than the French nobles who are ridiculed in 2.1, fleeing at the name of Talbot in only their undergarments. Indeed rather than accepting the mythic reputation of Talbot, the Countess sets out to test it by confirming oral report with the visual proof of her own eyes.

Naseeb Shaheen identifies a reference to the Old Testament here.<sup>188</sup> The Queen of Sheba sets out to test Solomon's reputation, refusing to believe report without proof of her eyes: 'I believed not their words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it'.<sup>189</sup> The biblical analogy, however, should warn us that the report will prove to be true, Sheba soon comes to realise

It was a true report which I heard in mine own land of  
thine acts [...] Howbeit I believed not their words, until I  
came, and mine eyes had seen it: And behold, the one half  
of the greatness of thy wisdom was not told me: for thou  
exceedest the fame that I heard. (2 Chron., 9. 5-6)

The Countess, by contrast, sets herself up for failure, while she appears the more rational for wanting to test report, she has also already decided that the sight of Talbot will not live up to his heroic reputation, thus she lays a trap for him assuming she can better him. Whereas Sheba's sensory experience marked her out as wise (she is described as such in *Dr*

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<sup>188</sup> Naseeb Shaheen, *Biblical References in Shakespeare's History Plays* (University of Delaware Press, 1989), p. 34.

<sup>189</sup> Geneva Bible, 2 Chron., 9:6. Lois Potter points to Shakespeare's early taste for 'detective logic', his first daughter Susanna's uncommon name recalled the biblical heroine of the apocrypha, wrongly accused and then vindicated by David's examination of the discrepancies in the accusers' stories. Shakespeare may have seen a dramatized version. Potter, *A Critical Biography*, p. 58.

*Faustus*),<sup>190</sup> the Countess demonstrates ignorance through sensory disorder. The playwright, however, may have been thinking of the Countess's motives for wilful seeing – a point to which I will return at the end of this section.

The Countess is determined to 'see' a contradiction, and in one respect she is right, no one can live up to such a reputation. As Alexander Leggatt has asked of the remembered Henry V: how can an actor look like the image?<sup>191</sup>

His brandished sword did blind men with his beams,

His arms spread wider than a dragon's wings:

His sparkling eyes, replete with wrathful fire, (1.1.10-12).

No actor can dramatize the description of Henry V above, and Talbot presents a similar problem. With this rational point of view, when the Countess does finally set eyes on Talbot she delivers a pre-rehearsed and spiteful attack: 'The plot is laid' indicates the planned nature of the event as well as excited anticipation (2.3.4). Later she admits that Talbot's portrait has been in her possession for a '[l]ong time' (2.3.35); this moment, then is one she has fantasized about and rehearsed in her mind:

Is this the scourge of France?

Is this the Talbot, so much feared abroad

That with his name the mothers still their babes?

*I see report is fabulous and false.*

*I thought I should have seen some Hercules,*

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<sup>190</sup> 'As wise as Saba', Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus, A- and B- texts (1604, 1616)* ed. by David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen. The Revels Plays (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 2.2.160.

<sup>191</sup> Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Political Drama*, p. 3.

A second Hector for his grim aspect  
 And large proportion of his strong-knit limbs.  
 Alas, this is a child, a silly dwarf:  
 It cannot be this weak and writhled shrimp  
 Should strike such terror to his enemies.

(2.3.14-23) [my emphasis]

The speech itself embodies contradiction. '[W]rithled shrimp' refers to both age and youth: 'writhled' describes his wrinkled and scarred skin, 'shrimp' as well as denoting small stature suggests something foetal (she also calls him 'child'). The Countess's derogatory and belittling image of Talbot's body contradicts both the rest of the play and sixteenth-century accounts of Talbot's person. The Countess's down-sizing of Talbot's body has apparently escaped sustained critical attention, though Talbot's magnanimity in its face has been recognised.<sup>192</sup> Even Leggatt's meaningful discussion of the visual difference between man and myth overlooks the problem (and the unlikelihood) of what he describes as 'the little man in front of her'.<sup>193</sup> Talbot is an experienced man of war who meets his son, a

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<sup>192</sup> James A. Riddell, 'Talbot and the Countess of Auvergne', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 28.1 (1977) 51-57. Waldo F. McNeir briefly brushes over the point I am going to make here, saying only 'Talbot can't be physically anything like the Countess's description of him', he suggests Talbot was probably played by Richard Burbage and that 'If the Countess is a boy on stilts, that could give her a Brobdingnagian perspective, and the humor of the encounter would take on another dimension.' McNeir lists this as one of many comic scenes in the Yorkist tetralogy but doesn't elaborate on the scene's significance. Waldo F. McNeir, 'Comedy in Shakespeare's Yorkist Tetralogy', *Pacific Coast Philology*, 9 (1974), p. 48.

<sup>193</sup> Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Political Drama*, p. 4. Similarly Howard and Rackin suggest the actor's body would be disappointing for an early modern audience as it is for the Countess wanting to see an heroic Talbot, hence the in-joke that the actor is Talbot's 'shadow'. p.60. Both miss the possibility that the actor did fulfil expectations. It is perhaps surprising that Rackin does not pick up on the point in *Stages of History*, – she almost says it in 'The countess's preference for physical evidence over historical report associates her with the French and female forces in the play as a threat to the project of writing English history.' (p. 152) The



grown man, in the field – he is unlikely to look like a child. The play encompasses Talbot's career post French imprisonment to his death: the historical Talbot was forty-six when he was released and sixty-six when he died.<sup>194</sup> In terms of age, 'writhled' makes more sense than 'child'; 'child', like 'shrimp' is perhaps meant simply to be emasculating but it also exposes the Countess as denying what she sees in front of her. Talbot's reputation as an experienced soldier was well known; in Samuel Daniel's epic poem published in 1595, and later expanded, *The Civile Wares betweene the Howses of Lancaster and Yorke* (1609) Talbot's 'fresh spirit' gets the 'meruailous aduantage of his yeeres', his age is 'unfelt', and he is a 'sturdie Oke'.<sup>195</sup> The scene is made to work in the 1983 BBC production, where a modestly proportioned, fifty-something Trevor Peacock is confronted by an impressively tall Countess. Without this visual difference the scene makes little sense, which begs the question, who played Talbot on stage in 1592?

Thomas Nashe's reference to a Talbot play in *Piers Penniless his Supplication to the Devil* (1592) is tantalisingly silent as to who the 'Tragedian' was that might have played this military hero.<sup>196</sup> Two pages later Nashe praises the

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Countess 'insists on physical fact, rejecting the masculine historical ideals and significance that Lucy's glorious names invoke.' p. 153. While I agree with the second half of this statement, I argue that the Countess' perception is equally skewed.

<sup>194</sup> A. J. Pollard, 'Talbot, John, first earl of Shrewsbury and first earl of Waterford (c. 1387-1453)', *ODNB* Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26932, accessed 14 June 2012]

<sup>195</sup> Samuel Daniel's *The First Foure Bookes of the ciuile wars between the two houses of Lancaster and Yorke* (London: Waterson, 1595) covers the reign of Richard II. He added a fifth book leading up to Cade's rebellion in the reign of Henry VI which appeared in 1599 in *The Poeticall Essayes of Sam. Danyel* (London: Waterson, 1599). This fifth book was expanded to include the deeds of Talbot and his death 'The Fifte Booke f the Ciuill Warres betweene the two Houses of Lancaster and York' in *The Works of Samvel Daniel Newly augmented* (London: Waterson, 1601), the quotations in the main text are from this edition, sig. Pr-v.

<sup>196</sup> Nashe, *Piers Penniless*, F3r. McKerrow, vol 1, p. 212.

incomparable skill of ‘*Ned Allen*’.<sup>197</sup> For this reason, Brian Walsh finds it unlikely that it was the famous Edward Alleyn that played Talbot; however, for exactly the same reason Edward Burns suggests Alleyn was the most likely candidate.<sup>198</sup> Alleyn was a member of the Lord Strange’s Men, the company playing ‘*barey the vj*’ at the Rose on 3 March 1592.<sup>199</sup> Nashe’s description of ‘the teares of ten thousand spectators at least (at severall times)’, testifies to the popularity of a play that could draw in large audiences with a ‘star actor’.<sup>200</sup> (We should perhaps be a little cautious about Nashe’s praise for the play given both his own propensity for hyperbole and his own involvement in the collaboration).<sup>201</sup> Furthermore, the vague ‘Tragedian’ is perhaps more fitting in a passage where Nashe attempts to defend plays as ‘a rare exercise of vertue’: an actor’s name here might detract from such an argument, while at the same time ‘the Tragedian’ might refer to an obvious tragedian of the day who played Tamburlaine and Faustus, as of course Alleyn had.<sup>202</sup> Michael Hattaway has suggested ‘it is safe to conjecture that such players were type-cast and that playwrights wrote with their particular skills in mind’.<sup>203</sup> It is thus easy to believe the part was written for Alleyn.

If Edward Alleyn did indeed play Talbot, and I am inclined to think he did, 2.3 presents us with a double oral-visual contradiction: Alleyn was

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<sup>197</sup> Nashe, *Piers Penniless*, F4v. McKerrow, vol 1, p. 215.

<sup>198</sup> Burns, p. 2.

<sup>199</sup> For Shakespeare’s association with Lord Strange’s Men and a summary of the arguments see Hattaway’s introduction pp. 36-40.

<sup>200</sup> Burns, p. 3.

<sup>201</sup> Perhaps the author of all of act one. Brian Vickers, ‘Incomplete Shakespeare’, p. 316.

<sup>202</sup> Nashe, *Piers Penniless*, F3r. McKerrow, vol I, p. 212.

<sup>203</sup> Michael Hattaway, *Elizabethan Popular Theatre* (London: Routledge, 1982), p. 90. In his annotated edition, Hattaway does suggest that ‘It is not necessary, however, to take the countess literally.’ Indeed I hope to show that she is not meant to be.

‘apparently a man of exceptional physical stature, with a strong voice to match his size,’<sup>204</sup> and could hardly be described as ‘a silly dwarf’; he was an imposing six foot four.<sup>205</sup> In addition to the legendary Talbot, the Countess also confronts a rising star player. A foil to Sheba, whose willingness to concede true report is redeeming, the Countess appears ignorant and ridiculous. The scene, rather than being what Mincoff has called a ‘pointless excrescence’,<sup>206</sup> is a key comic moment of oral-visual contradiction, especially if we take Ronda Arab’s point that the actor’s body influenced the creation of images and roles.<sup>207</sup> The Countess’s ‘censure of these rare reports’ is as ‘fabulous’ as the report itself: she actively attempts to re-mythify Talbot to diminish his threat to the French, by specifically attacking his masculinity (she is not only mocking his stature when she describes him as a ‘writhled shrimp’). If, as Walsh has argued, ‘to perform history is a process of inquiry rather than recovery’, the plays are entirely conscious of that process.<sup>208</sup> The Countess is engaged in her own attempt at history-making.<sup>209</sup> But of course, as the audience expects, her attempt fails. The

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<sup>204</sup> S. P. Cerasano, ‘Alleyn, Edward (1566-1626), actor, theatre, entrepreneur, and founder of Dulwich College’, *ODNB* [accessed 11 June 2012]

<sup>205</sup> Michael Harrawood, “Overreachers: Hyperbole, the “circle in the water,” and Force in *1 Henry 6*’ *English Literary Renaissance*, 33.3 (2003), p. 318.

<sup>206</sup> M. Mincoff, ‘The Composition of *Henry VI, Part I*’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 16.4 (1965), p. 279. He does modify this rather harsh view on p. 286 but only to allow it ‘a functional necessity by providing a point of rest and contrast between the battles of Orleans and Rouen.’

<sup>207</sup> Ronda Arab, ‘Ruthless Power and Ambivalent Glory: The Rebel Labourer in *2 Henry VI*’, *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 5.2 (2005), p. 25.

<sup>208</sup> Walsh, p. 145.

<sup>209</sup> Howard and Rackin point out that she is also interested in carving out her own place in history: ‘I shall as famous be by this exploit/As Sythian Tomyris by Cyrus’ death’ (2.3.5-6), ‘although extraordinary women can enter the historical record, female achievement is always isolated and exceptional, and it can never provide the basis for the construction of a national history.’ Jean E., Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation: A Feminist Account of Shakespeare’s English Histories* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 57. Hattaway compares the Countess to Joan ‘The similarity of the two roles may well have been underscored

Countess's attempt to re-mythify Talbot reveals a dramatist who is conscious about the fictive narratives that can be imposed on history. The idea of subduing these threatening voices in history perhaps culminates in *Henry V* (1598-9); Rackin suggests that in 'Showing us Henry's bilingual courtship of Katherine, Shakespeare assimilates the discourse of the other into his historical representation.'<sup>210</sup> A potentially threatening French narrative is contained here as Katherine, through necessity, learns to speak English. As we shall see, both the Countess and Joan similarly present foreign threats that are contained.

The Countess's diminishing of Talbot's image is inversely reflected in the English exaggeration of his heroism. There is of course some truth to the Countess' awareness of Talbot's vulnerability, though Talbot himself educates her as to the nature of this truth. It is only Talbot's reputation that in Holinshed's and the Countess' terms is 'dreadfull' to the French, but as Talbot is aware, his military feats were not achieved single-handedly; like all Captains he needs an army of soldiers and understands that: 'These are his substance, sinews, arms and strength,' (2.3.62). His humility makes him all the more appealing as a character, as Edward Burns argues: 'Individual heroism is a myth, if a strategically necessary one, and his awareness of this makes Talbot closer to the audience.'<sup>211</sup> At the same time Talbot's tactical triumph demonstrates he is as much as his reputation.<sup>212</sup> This scene,

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by doubling the two parts.' Michael Hattaway, 'Introduction' in *The First Part of King Henry VI*. The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 27.

<sup>210</sup> Rackin, *Stages of History*, p. 175.

<sup>211</sup> Burns, p. 45. Humility as Talbot's moral virtue is the crux of Riddell's argument.

<sup>212</sup> Riddell discusses the heroic emphasis on intellectual, as much as physical, superiority, p. 52-3.

therefore, is more than a mere comic interlude, as with the sham miracle and the combat scene in *Henry VI, Part 2* discussed in the next chapter, 2.3 provides an opportunity for oral-visual conflict and in doing so questions the history making process. In this instance, Holinshed's version of 'truth' triumphs and Talbot emerges as the hero the audience expects. The account of Talbot's death in Holinshed states that the French 'finallie killed him lieng on the ground, whome they durst neuer looke in the face, while he stood on his feet.'<sup>213</sup> The Countess in her initial encounter with Talbot, literally refuses to see what is before her: the 'disjunctive gap'<sup>214</sup> between the stage presence of the 'Tragedian' and her contradictory description of him as child and *senex*, is an example of oral-visual tension that provides comedy in the early plays, because of its very discernibility. The Countess demonstrates a lack of sensory governance and judgement (she misinterprets what is before her), but at the same time might be demonstrating sensory obedience to the state – her choice to *see* a weak Talbot is in the national interest.

### *Joan Puzel*

*Henry VI, Part 1* provides a match for Talbot in the form of the anti-heroine Joan Puzel.<sup>215</sup> The inset episode with the Countess of Auvergne is a

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<sup>213</sup> Holinshed, vol. 6, p. 640.

<sup>214</sup> Parolin's phrase. Though he is discussing rhetoric in *Henry V*, the phrase encapsulates the effects created by oral-visual contradiction.

<sup>215</sup> For Joan as diametrically opposed to Talbot, see Rackin, *Stages of History*: Shakespeare 'defin[es] the conflict between England and France as a conflict between masculine and feminine values, chivalric virtue versus pragmatic craft, historical fame versus physical reality, patriarchal age versus subversive youth, high social rank versus low, self versus other.' (p. 151) Joan's 'role as antihistorian' (p.

microcosmic exploration of historiography and myth-making that is more fully realised in the character of Joan Puzel. As Burns argues:

Joan Puzel exposes some of the fault-lines in the Tudor narrative of history. She disrupts the whole idea of historical representation at a very basic level, so that the issue is not that of the particular truth to history but the larger question of what historical truth is, and who has the power to determine it.<sup>216</sup>

Like Talbot, (and the opening description of Henry V), Joan also provides a problem for the actor's body: how does one represent a 'holy maid' (1.2.51), who is also a 'martial' (2.1.21) and 'warlike mate' (1.2.92), an 'Amazon' (1.2.104), both a 'beauty' (1.2.86) and an 'ugly witch' (5.2.55), and a 'sweet virgin' (3.3.16)? 'Puzel' is an English term for whore, but 'pucelle' in French means virgin in a transitional sense, it looks forward to change.<sup>217</sup> Joan is thus chaste, adulterous and pregnant; she is first shepherd-born, then noble-born. The contradictory nature of Shakespeare's character is well established and is illustrated aptly in the instability of her very name: there are eleven different variations on the name and its abbreviations in the 1623 Folio edition.<sup>218</sup> The possible pun on 'pizzle', a term for penis, further compounds her contradictory nature: her possible sexual transgression becomes conflated with gender transgression, since arguably she is neither male nor female. She is indeed a 'puzzle' as Burns states:

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157) She 'reject[s] the masculine historical ideals' (p. 153) that Renaissance historiography favours.

<sup>216</sup> Burns, p. 36.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., p. 25-26. 'pucelle, n.,' means both 'maid' and harlot', *Oxford English Dictionary*.

<sup>218</sup> Burns, p. 291.

‘She/he cannot be read as a substantive realist character, a unified subject with a coherent single identity.’<sup>219</sup> I argue that Joan unwittingly exposes the many problems with her own mythification. She has apparently undergone a physical transformation through the agency of Christ’s mother, making her attractive. In Fronton Du Duc’s earlier French play on the same subject, *The Tragic History of La Pucelle of Domrémy* (1580), Joan’s spiritual transformation is foregrounded; Shakespeare, however, stresses a physical transformation:

Lo, whilst I waited on my tender lambs [...]  
 In complete glory she revealed herself.  
 And, whereas I was black and swart before,  
 With those clear rays which she infused on me,  
 That beauty am I blest with, which you may see. (1.2.76-86)

The transformation cannot be as extensively physical as she suggests; at the end of the play a Shepherd claiming to be Joan’s father recognises her. It seems he must be genuine as he has little to gain by claiming kinship. He remembers her in the field ‘when thou didst keep my lambs a –field’ (5.3.30), a scene that Joan herself recalls as her situation at the moment of transformation. The father omits to mention the miraculous transformation, perhaps suggesting, along with the fact that he recognises her, that the transformation never happened. Joan’s equivocal comment on her beauty ‘which you may see’ (1.2.86) also alludes to a question of perspective and perception. She *invites* the Dolphin to perceive her beauty. The word ‘may’ includes the sense of allowing but the modal verb also

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<sup>219</sup> Burns, p. 26.

indicates doubt; they may or may not see beauty before them. There is also a clearly differing perception of her between the English and the French: to the French she may be beautiful as their saviour, whereas to the English she is a threat and is therefore seen as monstrous: an 'ugly witch' (5.2.55), a 'Foul fiend of France and hag of all despite' (3.2.51).<sup>220</sup> If Shakespeare had come into contact with Du Duc's play, the argument for the distorting influence of the nationalist lens can be made even more forcefully.<sup>221</sup> The perspective of the English places Joan as Other: she is foreign, supernatural and transgresses gender boundaries; she therefore fits into a cognitive paradigm of Otherness that marks her as monstrous regardless of her actual physical appearance. Sight here is clearly manipulated by an enforced, nationalist perspective.

Matthew Milner has argued that the controlling of the senses was inscribed in the language surrounding the Tudor monarchy, religious policy and the Royal Supremacy.<sup>222</sup> Seeing ugliness in Joan is therefore also an act of English obedience. Sensory obedience as a controlling tool had very recently been demonstrated on stage in the early comedy *The Taming of the Shrew* (1590-1). Katerina demonstrates obedience to her husband when she sees and hears what she is told to see and hear – even though she knows this is not the fact of what she sees or hears herself.

*Petruchio.* I say it is the moon.

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<sup>220</sup> See Lisa Dickson, 'No Rainbow Without the Sun: Visibility and Embodiment in *1 Henry VI*', *Modern Language Studies*, 30.1 (2000) 137-156. Dickson compares Joan's mastery of vision/the gaze to the rainbow portrait and suggests in terms of visibility she takes the place of Henry V's heir in the play.

<sup>221</sup> Fronton Du Duc, *The Tragic History of La Pucelle of Domrémy*, trans. Richard Hillman (Ottawa: Dovehouse, 2005). On the possibility of Shakespeare's access to the play see pp. 43-51.

<sup>222</sup> Milner, *The Senses*, p. 207.



*Katherine.* I know it is the moon.

*Petruchio.* Nay then you lie, it is the blessed sun.

*Katherine.* Then God be blessed, it is the blessed sun,

But sun it is not when you say it is not,

And the moon changes even as your mind.

What you will have it named, even that it is,

And so it shall be still for Katherine.<sup>223</sup>

Barbara Freedman suggests that the comedy ‘encourages us to question how we derive and define knowledge’,<sup>224</sup> a theory that is even more sharply relevant to the histories. Thus to perceive Joan as monstrous has little to do with the physical fact of her appearance as it has to do with participation in obedience to the English state. It also ties in with the standard plea of the theatre – the audience demonstrate obedience in extending and taking responsibility for their own sensory experience.<sup>225</sup>

Joan, like Talbot, is thus represented in the play from the vantage points of English and French characters. Both figures are shown from different perspectives. Barbara Freedman has suggested that ‘From *The Comedy of Errors* to *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare was developing perspectival plays’,<sup>226</sup> however she devotes little attention to the history plays, though her phrase is usefully applied to these plays too. She likens the plays to Jan Vredeman de Vries’s *Perspectiva* (Leiden, 1604-5), which

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<sup>223</sup> *The Taming of the Shrew*, The Oxford Shakespeare, 4.5.16-23.

<sup>224</sup> Freedman, *Staging the Gaze*, p. 22.

<sup>225</sup> cf. Chorus *Henry V*.

<sup>226</sup> Freedman, *Staging the Gaze*, p. 24.

calls to mind a dramatic narrative based on the precise intersection of multiple viewpoints. To enter the room is to become entangled in a complex set of intersecting gazes.

The Elizabethan theater in the round offered an unusually provocative site for the performance of plays fascinated with subverting the truth of any private, individual, or fixed vantage point.<sup>227</sup>

The contradictory statements about the bodies of Joan and Talbot might be explained by analogy with the image *Perspectiva*. The characters on stage and the audience view the protagonists from physically different angles as well as metaphorical ones. The angle of vision from which one views Talbot or Joan is determined by a nationalist lens, as such the senses are subjected into seeing an image that serves a national purpose.

Joan controls her own image but she is also able to manipulate her speech in a way that again renders her threatening (and prefigures Hal's rhetorical skill in the second tetralogy, he will be able to 'drink with any tinker in his own language').<sup>228</sup> In the stratagem to retake Rouen, Joan and her men are disguised as peasants and she instructs them to 'Talk like the vulgar sort' (3.2.4). As well as subverting codes of dress she also matches her speech to complete her disguise (a theme which Thomas Middleton expands in *The Roaring Girl* (1611), where the threat of Moll Frith lies not in her gender transgression alone but in her ability to talk in a way that allows her access

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<sup>227</sup> Freedman, *Staging the Gaze*, p. 24-5.

<sup>228</sup> William Shakespeare, *King Henry IV, Part 1*, ed. by David Scott Kastan. The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Thomson Learning, 2002), 2.4.18. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition.

to all ranks).<sup>229</sup> Joan persuades Burgundy with ‘sugared’ words to switch allegiance to France: as he observes, ‘Either she hath bewitched me with her words,/Or nature makes me suddenly relent.’ (3.3.58-9). This is perhaps one of the few examples of (potential) witchcraft that we see, though she is frequently accused of it, especially by the English.

Though she is able to manipulate her speech, she is not always in control of it. She denies witchcraft but does call on spirits in 5.2. Joan’s contradictory statements might be seen as an example of Joan’s inability to govern her senses. Her prolific lying at the end of the play seems particularly to suggest a lack of control and is most disturbing given her impending death (though it is rendered in comic terms). Even the cruel Spanish Elinor confesses truth at the end of George Peele’s *The Famous Chronicle of King Edward the First* (1593), and her husband King Edward remarks that death is ‘A time not fitte to fashion monstrous lies’.<sup>230</sup> Joan’s final words in the play contrast with Daniel’s Talbot, who even in battle has total sensory mastery with ‘His hand, his eye, his wits all present’ (p. 166). Joan’s excesses in speech so close to her death are marks of her damnation.

### *Cade*

Whereas the discussion above links the perception of the body to a national agenda, here the image of the body is linked to a social one. Ribner argued ‘Shakespeare censures rebellion against the *de facto* ruler, and an important

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<sup>229</sup> I made this argument in my MA thesis, *Dangerous Words: Legal and Oral Culture in the Plays of Thomas Middleton*.

<sup>230</sup> George Peele, *The Famous Chronicle of King Edward the First* (London: Jeffes, 1593; The Malone Society Reprints, 1911), xxv.2827-29, Lv.

purpose of the play is to teach the sinfulness of such rebellion.<sup>231</sup> A closer look at the oral-visual contradiction present in Cade's demise however prevents such a didactic reading. Richard Wilson gives one of the harshest assessments of Cade's contribution to the play:

metamorphosed into a cruel, barbaric lout, whose slogan is  
'kill and knock down,' and whose story, as 'the architect of  
disorder,' is one long orgy of scatological clowning, arson  
and homicide, fuelled by an infantile hatred of literacy and  
law.<sup>232</sup>

According to Richard Helgerson, 'it does seem likely that the part was enacted by the company's clown and certain that Cade and his rebellion were seen in terms of carnival and carnivalesque misrule.'<sup>233</sup> I read the treatment of Cade as an extension of the ideas about perspective and sensory obedience developed in *Part 1* through Talbot and Joan. This section of my chapter is not especially concerned with arriving at a conclusive statement of Shakespeare's attitude to popular rebellion, but I do take Ronda Arab's point that Cade is not defeated if at the end the actor gets up to perform the customary jig, possibly still in his Cade costume.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Ribner, *The English History Play*, p. 112.

<sup>232</sup> Richard Wilson, *Will Power: Essays on Shakespearean Authority* (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 27. For a summary of critical views of Cade see Chris Fitter, "Your captain is brave and vows reformation": Jack Cade, the Hacket Rising, and Shakespeare's Vision of Popular Rebellion, *Shakespeare Studies*, 32 (2004), p. 175-7. More recently Dermot Cavanagh has shown how the Cade scenes expose commonwealth thought 'as a set of propositions to be tested and explored.' 'Sovereignty and Commonwealth in Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part 2*, in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama* ed. by Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 632.

<sup>233</sup> Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1992), p. 216. He is perhaps more tentative about suggesting the role as written for Kemp than Arab is.

<sup>234</sup> Arab, p. 25-6.

Such an event complicates any anti-Cade position as in her view ‘the message that Cade hadn’t yet been beaten would be tidily made.’<sup>235</sup> I am more concerned with how Cade’s rebellion is linked to his lack of sensory governance, with his scepticism of the word written (an element of visual, print culture) and, in his death scene, with the representation of the actor’s body. Cade seems to be an earlier version of Falstaff: both are figures of the body, associated with base, physical senses (eating and drinking), but there is also perhaps a shift between these two figures of each tetralogy from ways of seeing (Cade as anti-literate) to ways of hearing (Falstaff’s deafness).

In 4.10 the starved body of Cade crawls into Iden’s garden out of desperation and need. Cade draws him into combat though Iden is initially reluctant:

Nay, it shall ne’er be said, while England stands,  
That Alexander Iden, a squire of Kent,  
Took odds to combat a poor famished man.  
Oppose thy steadfast-gazing eyes to mine,  
See if thou canst outface me with thy looks.  
Set limb to limb, and thou art far the lesser;  
Thy hand is but a finger to my fist,  
Thy leg a stick compared with this truncheon.<sup>236</sup>

The scene presents a similar problem to the one I have already discussed concerning the body of the actor Talbot. Iden’s description of Cade’s body

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<sup>235</sup> Arab, p. 25.

<sup>236</sup> William Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part 2*, ed. by Ronald Knowles. The Arden Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 1999), 4.10.41-48. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition.

cannot be a genuine reflection of the actor's body. Cade's circumstances here are rather different to Talbot's as with Cade a transformation is implied. This in turn requires the audience to use their imagination, though of course an actor can convey Cade's new weakness in other ways than through simply the smallness of the body. Nevertheless there is the potential for oral-visual contradiction here. Arab links the reference in the play to morris dancing and Kemp's reputation for the same: 'Kemp was a physically powerful man, as testified to by his nine-day-long morris dance in 1600'.<sup>237</sup> Arab suggests Iden's description could mean the actor playing Iden needs to be bigger than the one playing Cade, but does not have to be.<sup>238</sup> Sixteenth-century accounts also stressed Cade's physical attributes: in *A Mirror for Magistrates* (1559) Cade boasts of his 'strength of lims, large stature, cumly face' that aided in persuading others he was of noble birth.<sup>239</sup> In John Stow's *A Summarie of Englyshe chronicles* (1565) Iden overcomes Cade 'in hys defence', implying that Cade is physically threatening.<sup>240</sup> Iden, rather than reluctant to fight as he is in the play, is prompted by greed, 'hope of money', in the poem.<sup>241</sup> In the play, the fight is over in the space of a few lines (of course it can't be known how long it actually lasted on stage, but Iden's emphasis on the unfairness of the fight suggests it should be swift). In *Mirror* it is a lengthy affair: 'Two howres and more our cumbate was not colde,/Til at the last he lent me such a stroke,/That downe I fell, and nevr

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<sup>237</sup> Arab, p. 24.

<sup>238</sup> Arab, p. 25.

<sup>239</sup> *The Mirror for Magistrates*, ed. By Lily B. Campbell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), p. 173.

<sup>240</sup> John Stow, *A Summarie of Englyshe chronicles* (London: Marsh, 1565), f. 149v.

<sup>241</sup> *Mirror*, p. 176.

after spoke.<sup>242</sup> Cade's probably swift defeat in the play is thus not a reference to Iden's masculine heroism. Rather the audience is invited to collaborate in an act of imagination, to imagine the body of Cade as starved and skeletal, but also, as Thomas Cartelli has argued, to perceive the common man's rebellion as puny and easily quelled.<sup>243</sup> Iden's presentation of Cade as small invites the audience to subjugate their senses to a ruling power; the potential for oral-visual contradiction highlights to the audience that they are being asked to subordinate their senses to a truth that does not match the reality of what they see.

Shakespeare identifies Cade's rebellion not with its historical counterpart of 1450 but instead, as Fitter has discussed, with the Peasant's Revolt of 1381 led by Jack Straw and Wat Tyler and its more 'radical spirit'.<sup>244</sup> The civic disorder demonstrated in this fourteenth-century event was still a source of anxiety in the sixteenth century, and it was one that resurfaced in Andrewes's Spital sermon discussed in chapter one. Andrewes alludes specifically to the Peasants Revolt, describing

the *madnesse of the people* [who] would beare no government,  
but runne headlong, and overthrow all chaires of estate,  
and breake in peeces all the *swords* and *scepters* in the world

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<sup>242</sup> *Mirror*, p. 176.

<sup>243</sup> Cade is defeated as Iden's 'social superiority also makes him ...superior in strength and skill.' Thomas Cartelli, 'Jack Cade in the Garden: Class Consciousness and Class Conflict in 2 *Henry VI*', in *Sexuality, Property, and Culture in Early Modern England*, ed. By Richard Burt and John Michael Archer (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), p.51, 51-52.

<sup>244</sup> Fitter, "Your Captain is Brave", p. 178. Also according to Fitter 'Shakespeare may be smuggling surreptitious echoes of Kett's rebellion into his play, activating subversive memories of that reforming, class-based rebellion of 1549 that haunted the later sixteenth century', p. 179.

and suggests the suppression of that rebellion is commemorated in the ‘*Citie scotchion*’ (though this last detail may not be strictly true).<sup>245</sup> Rebellion was a theme close to home; in the sermon it is not presented as carnival, but as disturbing and frightening disorder – as ‘madnesse’, a disease. The unruly wildness imagined by Andrewes can be compared to Samuel Daniel’s image of Cade in ‘thys wilde vntrained multitude’.<sup>246</sup> Like Andrewes’s image, Daniel’s image portrays the rebels as lacking in governance, they are ‘Led with an vnfore-seeing greedy minde’ and are ‘in theyr desires made blind’.<sup>247</sup> This contrasts with Talbot, who even in his dying battle retains ‘His hand, his eye, his wits all present’.<sup>248</sup> Cade’s rebellion is presented in the sermon and the verse history as caused by poor regulation of the senses, and in Daniel, especially of sight.

### *Richard III*

The bodies discussed so far present instances of oral-visual contradiction. What a character says might not match what the audience sees, and the characters on stage view each other with different perspectives. It is significant that Shakespeare was thinking about the presentation of the body – and the potential for contradiction – before he came to write *Richard III*. These early demonstrations of distorting perspective – whether for social or national ends – should affect the way we read the most famous

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<sup>245</sup> McCullough, *Selected Sermons* p. 51. See also his note explaining Stow’s rejection that the seal commemorated the suppression of the rebellion, p. 314.

<sup>246</sup> Samuel Daniel, ‘The fift Booke of the Ciuill warres betweene the two Houses of Lancaster and Yorke’ in *The Poeticall Essayes of Sam. Danyel* (London: Waterson, 1599), sig Aa2r.

<sup>247</sup> Daniel, *Poeticall Essayes*, sig Aa2r

<sup>248</sup> Daniel, *Works*, Pr.



body of the histories, that of Richard Crookback. The final play of the first tetralogy does not offer the multiple perspectives that the Henry VI plays do.<sup>249</sup> It would be a mistake to attribute this solely to the slavish promotion of a Tudor regime, where everywhere else the playwright is so sceptical about objective ‘truth’ in history. There is one moment in *Richard III*, however, which is analogous with the examples discussed above: the announcement of the withered arm. Silent on this particular disability until this moment, Richard is describing a sudden and recent affliction caused by the witchcraft of Elizabeth and Mistress Shore. Richard insists that the other nobles and the audience witness his injury:

Then be your *eyes* the *witness* of this ill:

*See* how I am bewitch’d; *behold* mine arm

Is, like a blasted sapling, wither’d up:

(3.4.67-9) [emphasis mine]

In two lines of text there are four references to seeing. Hastings’s conditional response – ‘If they have done this thing’ – expresses doubt not only over the accusation of witchcraft but the ‘thing’ itself; the lords are not sure what they are seeing. Richard’s emphasis on sight demands sensory obedience; he instructs the lords what they should see. The disability of the arm is unprecedented in the play: it is not mentioned by any character in *Richard III*. It perhaps relies on audience memory of *Henry VI, Part 3* where Richard blames ‘Love’ for corrupting ‘Nature with some bribe/’To shrink mine arm up like a withered shrub’ (3.2.153, 155-6). In this same play,

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<sup>249</sup> Partly a question of genre. Larry Champion has shown the earlier histories experiment with a broader perspective. Richard III explores the domineering single figure of the overreacher.

however, he boasts he can ‘Change shapes’ (3.2.192) but that he is also ‘Like to a chaos’ (3.2.161). Shakespeare’s usage of ‘chaos’ is also the example cited in the *OED* meaning ‘an undigested or amorphous mass or lump’ but its primary sense of referring to the ‘formless void’ out of which the universe is created is also relevant here.<sup>250</sup> Richard’s line draws attention to the formlessness of character before the playwright elaborates or creates a shape for him. The playwright effectively draws as he goes giving the actor the lines ‘To shrink mine arm up like a withered shrub;/To make an envious mountain on my back’ (3.2.156-7). None of these deformities are apparent in *Part 2*. The Greyfriars excavation also confirms that there is no evidence that the historical Richard III had a ‘wither’d arm’.<sup>251</sup> Richard is ‘lame armed’ in *The true tragedie of Richard the third* (1594).<sup>252</sup> In this play Shore, treated as a moral example, predicts her fate at the hands of Richard ‘then comes my ruine and decaie/ For he could neuer abide me to the death’.<sup>253</sup> The line implies Richard’s guilt, motivated by hatred to accuse her. In fact it is Richard that practises witchcraft in *Part 3* when he promises to ‘witch sweet ladies with my words and looks’ (3.2.150), a possibility he finds pitifully ‘unlikely’ (3.2.151), but which of course will prove successful in the wooing of Lady Anne in 1.2 of *Richard III*. Thomas More’s prose history *The history of king Richard the thirde* (published in English in 1557) includes a

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<sup>250</sup> ‘chaos, n.,’, sense 4, *The Oxford English Dictionary* <www.oed.com>, [accessed 7 August 2013].

<sup>251</sup> Richard Buckley, Mathew Morris, Jo Appleby, Turi King, Deirdre O’ Sullivan and Lin Foxhall, ‘The King in the Car Park’: New Light on the Death and Burial of Richard III in the Grey Friars Church, Leicester, in 1485, *Antiquity*, 87.336 (2013), pp. 519-38, (536). Also Sarah Knight and Mary Ann Lund, ‘Richard Crookback’, *Times Literary Supplement* (6 February 2013), <www.the-tls.co.uk>, [accessed 23 July 2013].

<sup>252</sup> *The true tragedie of Richard the third* (London: Creede, 1594), sig. A3v.

<sup>253</sup> *The true tragedie*, sig. B2v.

description of Richard's body early on in the text. This would seem an appropriate place to mention something as significant as a 'wither'd arm' but there is no mention of the arm in this initial passage, only that Richard's 'left shoulder [was] much higher then his right'.<sup>254</sup> The arm is only mentioned specifically much later when More covers the scene in the council chamber:

Ye shall all see in what wise that sorceresse, and that other  
witch of hir counsell Shores wife, with their affinitie, haue  
by their sorcerie and witchcraft wasted my bodie. And  
therwith he plucked vp his dublet sléeue to his elbow vpon  
his left arme, where he shewed a weerish withered arme,  
and small; as it was neuer other.

Herevpon euerie mans mind sore misgaue them, well  
perceiuing that this matter was but a quarell. [...]

And also, no man was there present, but well knew that his  
arme was euer such since his birth.<sup>255</sup>

Suddenly the condition becomes congenital, and everyone recognises it as so. Yet it is also 'but a quarell', or as Kinney translates More's Latin a

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<sup>254</sup> The history of king Richard the thirde' in *The works of Sir Thomas More Knyght, sometyme Lorde Chauncellour of England* (London: Tottell, 1557) p. 35-71 (p. 37)) More's history was also reprinted in Holinshed Vol 6, p. 712, 1587. Subsequent quotations in the main body are from More's history as reprinted in Holinshed as Shakespeare was certainly using the chronicle. Daniel Kinney's modern translation retains the ambiguity of the Latin 'alteroque humero erectior' as 'one shoulder higher than the other', *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, ed. by Daniel Kinney (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), vol 15, pp. 322-323. On the shoulder see also Knight and Lund.

<sup>255</sup> Holinshed, Vol 6. p. 722, 1587. Kinney, pp. 410-411. Kinney translates More's description of the arm '*miserum*' as 'puny'.

‘pretext’ for creating conflict.<sup>256</sup> It is interesting that the peculiar status of the arm is central in a scene including false accusations (in *More* and the play) given that the ‘wither’d arm’ can now be officially ruled out as mythical. Richard’s body is as problematic as Joan’s, and is perhaps even less stable. In the play Richard’s body should be a clear sign of his evil nature, and yet he successfully and repeatedly deceives others. The unstable nature of his body might be just as clear in performance. The monologues of *Part 3* and *Richard III* where he ‘descants on [his] own deformity’ tempt and invite actors to overplay deformity in these isolated moments – they invite audiences to witness the creation of character, of a dramatic persona. The sudden introduction and isolated nature of the arm scenes mean an actor could choose not to portray the ‘wither’d arm’ before this scene; the playwright leaves plenty of space for the actor to play this as a cunning invention of the moment. Or indeed a changing invention – initially the dual fault of Love and Nature in *Part 3*, later a sudden act of witchcraft – it seems to be an affliction that comes and goes. In the process we are reminded once more of the ‘bending author’ who recreates and reinvents history as he writes, but who even more radically invites the audience to witness that process.

Protean qualities in *Richard III* should be disturbing, as he tells the audience:

I can add colours to the chameleon,  
Change shapes with Proteus for advantages,  
And set the murderous Machiavel to school. (3.2.191-93)

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<sup>256</sup> Kinney, p. 411.

These same Protean qualities, however, were also a measure of admiration in descriptions of actors, especially the famous Richard Burbage. The poet and playwright Richard Flecknoe praised Burbage's quality as 'a delightful *Proteus*, so wholly transforming himself into his Part and putting off himself with his Cloathes, as he never (not so much as in the 'Tyring-house) assum'd himself again until the Play was done'.<sup>257</sup> Burbage played Richard III, a character with his own name, and with whom his identity was further conflated in the wonderful Manningham anecdote.<sup>258</sup> While the Richard personated is condemned for his Protean quality, the Richard personating is praised for it, thus further destabilising the character's identity. Richard personated embodies oral-visual contradiction; he is described by himself and others as a deformed monster, but he was also visibly the appealing and skilled Richard Burbage.

Richard III's body not only fails to convey his malignant motives in the play, but is actually used as a sign of his legitimacy. As Sarah Knight and Mary Ann Lund have shown, Shakespeare seems to follow Polydore Vergil when Buckingham's public speech in 3.7 asserts Richard's 'lineaments' are 'the right idea of [his] father,/Both in your form and nobleness of mind' (3.7.12-4).<sup>259</sup> The body becomes a marker of his right to the throne.

### *Speaking, Hearing and Identity*

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<sup>257</sup> Richard Flecknoe, 'A Short Discourse of the English Stage' in *Love's Kingdom, A Pastoral Trage-Comedy With a short Treatise of the English Stage* (London: Wood, 1664), [H2v-H3r].

<sup>258</sup> Manningham, March 1602.

<sup>259</sup> Knight and Lund, 'Richard Crookback'.

*Henry VI, Part 3* explores how sensory experience, a way of hearing for example, defines the nature of the individual. The Lord of Northumberland, for example, possesses ‘warlike ears’ that ‘could never brook retreat’ (1.1.5): he is not simply ‘warlike’, rather his ears prefer bellicose language, and his person is defined by his mode of listening or what he chooses to hear. In act 3, Lady Bona, before she finds out that Edward has married Elizabeth Grey, looks forward to the match; hearing of his reputation she says ‘Mine ear hath tempted judgement to desire.’ (3.3.133). Lady Bona’s vulnerability to temptation is here via the ear. Selective listening will be explored more fully in the figure of Falstaff in the *Henriad*. Ears are also vulnerable when Henry VI is taken prisoner: Edward instructs ‘Let him not speak’, presumably as the pious king may be able to sway the soldiers, and Richard will issue the same warning about Clarence in *Richard III*. Just as types of listening can define a person so can its paired sense, speech. Prince Edward, who believes as his mother does in his own right to succession, is identified as his mother’s son: Richard states ‘Whoever got thee, there thy mother stands,/For well I wot thou hast thy mother’s tongue.’ (2.2.133-5). Conversely Margaret’s tongue is not matched to her status before marriage (she has no dowry), as Richard taunts her ‘Sham’st thou not, knowing whence thou art extraught,/ To let thy tongue detect thy baseborn heart?’ (2.2.142-3). Later Prince Edward will try to assume kingly authority, he commands York to ‘speak like a subject .../Suppose that I am now my father’s mouth:’ (5.5.17-8); again it is the voice that is the key feature of the individual, he needs not assume the body of his father only his father’s *mouth*.

Death is also conceived of as the loss of speech or silence. Whereas *Henry VI, Part 1* adopts a tragic mode, Talbot, for example, begs for Salisbury to speak to prove he is not dead (1.4.72), *Henry VI, Part 3* turns the ‘death as silence’ trope into something macabre. The Yorkists taunt the dead by speaking to them: in the opening scene York teases the head of Somerset ‘But is your grace dead[...]?’; Warwick addresses the dead Clifford ‘I think his understanding is bereft./Speak, Clifford, dost thou know who speaks to thee?’ (2.6.60-1); Richard quips ‘Tis but his policy to counterfeit,/Because he would avoid such bitter taunts/ Which in the time of death he gave our father.’ (2.6.64-7). This cruel teasing highlights that it is the senses that animate the body and give character. Richard recalls not just Clifford’s deeds but the way he spoke.

Deeds become equated with speech. In *Henry VI, Part 2* the King instinctively senses Suffolk’s involvement in the murder of Gloucester. Suffolk himself delivers the message of Gloucester’s death causing the King to faint – once revived he attacks Suffolk in an uncharacteristic show of passion, echoed only by his later prophecy regarding the future Richard III:

Hide not thy poison with such sugared words; [...]  
 Upon thy eyeballs murderous tyranny  
 Sits in grim majesty to fright the world  
 Look not upon me, for thine eyes are wounding.  
 Yet do not go away; come, basilisk,  
 And kill the innocent gazer with thy sight. (3.2.45; 49-53)

Initially it is speech, ‘sugared words’, that hides dangerous acts. But the plays, as well as exploring ideas about speech acts, also suggest visual acts. Here Henry shows that Suffolk’s oral acts (‘sugared words’) contradict the

‘murderous’ action of his eyes. Suffolk’s deceitful words become harmful looks. The emphasis on ‘eyeballs’ (rather than just eyes) suggests canonballs, they are weapons of war that murder and ‘fright the world’. Suffolk’s eyes are physically ‘wounding’, perhaps suggesting Plato’s extramissive conception of sight, a theory that persisted, as Marcus Nordlund has suggested, for about two thousand years.<sup>260</sup> Like the mythical basilisk, Henry imagines Suffolk’s eyes as inflicting physical pain. Henry suggests his belief in the extramissive power of the eye or the visual act earlier in *Part 3*, when he expresses disdain for physical violence, instead ‘frowns, words and threats/ Shall be the war that Henry means to use.’ (1.1.72-3). Henry aims to pacify the peers with speech and visual acts. In matters of state, however, these attempted acts remain wholly ineffective. The playwright does not seem to be rejecting an extramissive theory or the power of speech, as we have seen, Henry himself is affected by others. Clifford’s loyalty for example causes Henry to exclaim ‘O Clifford, how thy words revive my heart!’ (1.1.163). Later the French king’s supportive words to Margaret are ‘gracious words’ that ‘revive [her] drooping thoughts’ (3.3.21). Henry’s flaw seems to be his dependence on the written word, his love of study and his ‘bookish rule’ (*Part 2*, 1.1.256) render him weak, he even tries to reconcile the lords Northumberland, Clifford and Westmorland via letters (*Part 3*, 1.1.270-1). This more passive approach perhaps suggests his own vision is intromissive – unable to touch others, but painfully affected by them. Henry is someone who does not impress but is impressed upon; in fact both his wife and the lords ‘Have wrought

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<sup>260</sup> Marcus Nordlund, *The Dark Lantern*, p. 46.



the easy-melting King like wax.’ (2.1.170). Aristotle had compared the effect of sensory information and perception to the impressions received in wax.<sup>261</sup> The simile comparing the King to wax thus not only conveys that he is soft and malleable, but that he is so because his senses are particularly vulnerable. His own speech is frequently ineffective. Though he prefers reasoning to martial conflict he is unable to see the superficial resolution of his spoken orders (for example his attempted reconciliation of Somerset and York in *Part 1*). His political abilities are thus sharply limited, yet his prophetic ones will prove more persuasive.

The effect of words and looks are frequently portrayed as more painful than those inflicted by the sword: the child Rutland begs Clifford to ‘kill me with thy sword/And not with such a cruel threat’ning look.’ (1.3.16-17). Even Richard of Gloucester feels the pain of the account of his father’s death:

Great lord of Warwick, if we should recount  
Our baleful news, and at each word’s deliverance  
Stab poniards in our flesh till all were told,  
The words would add more anguish than the wounds.  
(2.1.96-99)

This is an uncharacteristically sensitive moment for the future Richard III – news of his father’s death is received as more painful than stab wounds. The sight of York’s head on a spike affects Henry ‘To see this sight it irks my very soul.’ (2.2.6). And in the final act Henry begs Richard:

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<sup>261</sup> ‘the sense is the recipient of the perceived forms without their matter, as the wax takes the sign from the ring without the iron and gold’, Aristotle, *De Anima*, II.12, p. 187.

Ah, kill me with thy weapon, no with words!

My breast can better brook thy dagger's point

Than can my ears that tragic history. (5.6.26-28)

Henry's scathing and prophetic words concerning both Richard's form and his future affect Richard 'I'll hear no more! Die, prophet, in thy speech' (5.6.57). But Richard's own acknowledgement of Henry VI as 'prophet' shows that on this rare occasion, Henry's words are in some ways effective.

### *Signs of Kingship*

Before discussing Henry's second instance of effective speech (the Richmond prophecy) I will first consider the construction of kingly identity and look briefly at the presentation of kingship in a contemporary play which is particularly relevant to my discussion of the first tetralogy.

In George Peele's *Edward I* (1593), the King's Spanish Queen, Elinor of Castile, defers coronation in order to have more time to prepare costly garments fit for the occasion; she is fixated on the necessity for royalty to dazzle:

Under our royall Canopie of state,

Glistering with pendants of the purest gold,

Like as our seate were spangled all with stars,

The world shall wonder at our majestie,

[...]

And all the lookers on shall stande amazed,

To see King Edward and his lovely Queen,

Sit lovely in Englands stately throne.<sup>262</sup>

The garments she orders come from her home, Spain, and her love of display is associated directly with her nationality, King Edward I: ‘This Spanish pride grees not with Englands prince’.<sup>263</sup> Her veneration of the image is also shaded by allusions to her Catholicism; she asks for French friars in scene xxv for confession – and implies their prayers will help the passage of her soul.<sup>264</sup> Similarly her emphasis on the ‘sacred secrecie’ of confession marks her as Catholic; private or secret confession was deemed unnecessary in the Protestant faith.<sup>265</sup> Elinor is repeatedly associated with vanity: she is linked to Cleopatra in the method of death she chooses for the Mayoress – nursing a serpent; she also compares herself to Narcissus in her admiration of Edward in the ‘*sute of Glasse*’.<sup>266</sup> In this play the image of dazzling majesty is thus intertwined with condemnation of the Spanish, Catholic Elinor. The appropriate appearance for a monarch was openly discussed in *The booke named the Gouvernour* (1531), here Thomas Elyot argues for clothing to preserve distinction: ‘Apparaile may wel be a parte of maiestie’ and ‘So is there apparaile comely to euery astate and degree’.<sup>267</sup> At the same time Elyot condemns ‘that which exceedeth’ and that changes with ‘strau[n]ge and newe fa[sh]ions’ in fact for Elyot, excess and ‘newe

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<sup>262</sup> George Peele, *The Famous Chronicle of King Edward the First* (London: Jeffes, 1593; The Malone Society Reprints, 1911), i.263-66, sig. Bv, i.290-92, sig. B2r.

<sup>263</sup> Peele, x.1793, sig. G3r.

<sup>264</sup> ‘Friers consecrate mine ineternall grieffe,  
My soule, ah wretched soule within this brest,  
Faint for to mount the Heavens with wings of grace,  
A hundred by flocking troupes of sinne,  
That stop my passage to my wished howres.’ (xv. 2720-24, [k4]r)  
This is clearly not compatible with the rejection of purgatory in the reformed faith.

<sup>265</sup> Peele, xv. 2733, sig. [k4]v.

<sup>266</sup> Peele, sig. C3v.

<sup>267</sup> Thomas Elyot, *The booke named the Governour* (Londini: Bertheleti, 1531), Bk 2 f.1010r. Reprinted nine times between 1531 and 1580.

fa[n]glenesse' 'diminishhe[s] [...] maiestie'.<sup>268</sup> Edward's imported clothes might thus be suspect in Elyot's view.

Erasmus in *The Education of a Christian Prince* (1516) took an altogether stricter view. He prized intelligence above visual majesty, ridiculing 'jewels, gold, the royal purple and all the rest of his privileged pomp' that are not matched with the 'real riches of the spirit'.<sup>269</sup> In a prince 'frugality' is 'clear evidence of moderation, since he uses sparingly the unlimited resources which he possesses'.<sup>270</sup> Bolingbroke/Henry IV will also be a dazzling monarch – but he is also in the 'Tudor Myth' schema a sinful usurper. Henry V will markedly not be a visually impressive king – instead it is his reformation that will glitter.<sup>271</sup> While this may seem critical of the opulence of the Tudor royal image, Henry V's mode of kingship is equally exposed as performance. as chapter six will show.<sup>272</sup>

Shakespeare's histories show that the image of majesty alone does not denote kingly authority. Henry VI is far from a dazzling monarch, presented more often at study or prayer. *Henry VI, Part 3* begins to think about the signs of kingship, a theme that will be key to *Richard II* and its investigation of sacral/sacramental kingship, and later to *Henry V* in his idol ceremony speech (4.1.237-281). The Yorkist Edward belittles Henry VI saying to Margaret 'You that are king, though he do wear the crown,'

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<sup>268</sup> Elyot, f. 1010 r-v.

<sup>269</sup> Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, ed. by Lisa Jardine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, repr. 2002, 2003), p. 16, 15.

<sup>270</sup> Erasmus, p. 16.

<sup>271</sup> For Shakespeare as closer to Erasmus's view on the appearance of kings in Henry V see Sally Robertson Romotsky, 'Henry of Monmouth and the Gown-of-Needles', *Intertexts*, 8.2 (2004), pp. 155-72 (167-8).

<sup>272</sup> Though state attempts to control images of the Queen were largely ineffective, see Louis A. Montrose, 'Idols of the Queen: Policy, Gender, and the Picturing of Elizabeth I', *Representations*, 68 (1999), pp. 108-161.

(2.2.90), in doing so the playwright begins to highlight the problems of metonymy. This moment also briefly touches on the meaninglessness of the symbol of the crown; the lawyer Edward Coke had de-emphasised the importance of the coronation as it was “but an royal ornament”.<sup>273</sup>

The symbol of the crown is not needed, initially, to identify the disguised Henry VI. In 3.1 of *Part 3* Henry VI appears disguised in the Scottish border town of Berwick,<sup>274</sup> but he is immediately identified by the two keepers as the ‘quondam king’ (3.1.23) by his speech. This seems incredible considering that during Henry’s reign they lived only in that part of the country and so would never have heard or seen him before. The implication suggests that Henry VI is inherently kingly, an idea that will be completely undone in *Richard II*. The groundwork begins here, though; the keepers’ simplistic view of kingship reveals a more sophisticated inquiry into the power of signs. They ask Henry ‘But if thou be a king where is thy crown?’ (3.1.61). For the keepers the fallen Henry embodies a paradox, he sounds like a king but he does not look like one; he cannot be a king without a crown. This straightforward conflation of metonym and signified implies the stability of signs, a notion that will be resolutely destabilised in the next tetralogy. Henry has indeed lost his crown, and his response is characteristically humble and in the *contemptus mundi* vein:

My crown is in my heart, not on my head:  
Not decked with diamonds and Indian stones,  
Nor to be seen. My crown is called content,

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<sup>273</sup> Jonathan Hart, *Theater & World: The Problematics of Shakespeare’s History* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), pp. 75-76, 84.

<sup>274</sup> A town on the border – now English, but in the reign of H6 was still part of Scotland.

A crown it is that seldom kings enjoy. (3.1.62-5)

Henry's rejection of material wealth is echoed in Warwick's death scene, where the 'brave king-maker' at last realises the futility of his efforts.<sup>275</sup> In death Warwick loses 'My parks, my walks, my manors....' and is left questioning 'Why, what is pomp, rule, reign but earth and dust?' (5.2.24-27). Warwick directly prefigures Henry V's speech 'And what art thou, thou idol ceremony?' (*Henry V*, 4.1.237). Henry VI may not be the ideal Protestant king as Henry V is so frequently dubbed,<sup>276</sup> but his interiority in the speech above, without the anguish of Warwick or Henry V, seems rather admirable given the scheming hypocrisy that dominates the trilogy. In *Mirror*, he admits his faults as a weak ruler, but he is truly pious 'In heaven wer my rytches heapt', a sentiment echoed by Shakespeare here.<sup>277</sup> Henry VI in the play and in *Mirror* leans toward the Erasmian ideal of inward riches rather than visible ones.

The most pregnant comment on kingship and identity is articulated in Henry VI's prophecy on the future of the boy Richmond. Richmond, like Henry VI to the keepers, but more persuasively so, is inherently kingly without signs. Richmond is immediately identified as 'England's hope':

If secret powers  
Suggest but truth to my divining thoughts,  
This pretty lad will prove our country's bliss.  
His looks are full of peaceful majesty.  
His head by nature framed to wear a crown,

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<sup>275</sup> Daniel, *Works*, p. 146.

<sup>276</sup> for example Michael Davies, 'Falstaff's Lateness: Calvinism and the Protestant Hero in *Henry IV*', *The Review of English Studies*, n. s. 56 (2005) 351-

<sup>277</sup> *Mirror*, p. 215.

His hand to wield a sceptre, and himself

Likely in time to bless a regal throne. (4.6.68-74)

This moment at first sight seems a more straightforward view than the one that will be represented in *Richard II*. One critic sees this as merely Shakespeare's 'gracious gesture towards the 'Tudor Myth' and nothing more.<sup>278</sup> Reformers 'gave pride of place to royal perception',<sup>279</sup> but elsewhere Henry's senses are vulnerable and he is exposed as naive and entirely blind to corruption (for example in the miracle scene discussed in the next chapter). One explanation of this moment might be explained by returning to the problem of doubting Thomas mentioned in my Introduction. Matthew Milner explains:

Cranmer's praise of Thomas's touching affirmed what appears to be a consistent mid-century English position – that faced with a verifiably authentic object (meaning it is beyond any doubt exactly what it purports to be) the senses were trustworthy.<sup>280</sup>

In this configuration Richmond becomes like the body of Christ, the virtuous prince who will be England's saviour. On this one occasion Henry VI senses prove credible – not because of their own function, but because of the object they perceive, the boy Richmond. Faced with a false object (the fake miracle for example), Henry's senses are not so accurately perceptive. Henry VI's accurate power of prophecy and his blindness in the real world of politics is thus not a comment on his weak rulership, nor

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<sup>278</sup> Riggs, p. 139. Leggatt similarly argues that while 'the Tudor Myth [does not] pervad[e] the cycle as a whole', it does permit 'a tantalizing glimpse of it' and then withdraws it. *Shakespeare's Political Drama*, p. 27.

<sup>279</sup> Milner, *The Senses*, p. 207.

<sup>280</sup> Milner, *The Senses*, p. 206.

indeed is it random, or the movement between different models of historiography.<sup>281</sup> Henry's prophecy does not even prove Richmond's right to the throne, merely the truth and fact of his eventual triumph. He does not have to be a credible object because he is a Christ like figure, rather the playwright, amidst the religious imagery has Henry predict that Richmond is 'Likely in time' to succeed. The playwright puts in Henry VI's mouth a known fact of history. The Richmond prophecy is bound up with an early modern discourse of the senses that questions not only the credibility of the spectator but the credibility of the object.

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<sup>281</sup> John Wilders argues for the random success of prayer and prophecy in the histories in *The Lost Garden: A View of Shakespeare's English and Roman History Plays* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1978), especially pp. 63-71.



### CHAPTER THREE - THE FIRST TETRALOGY: SPECTACLES AND SPECULATION

The first tetralogy, and *Henry VI* trilogy especially, are particularly visually striking. They offer up visually arresting scenes and this chapter considers some of those scenes, namely, in *Part 1* the Temple garden scene (2.4), in *Part 2* the gulling of Eleanor of Gloucester (1.4), the sham miracle at St Albans (2.1), and the trial by combat (2.3). All of these episodes are ‘spectacles’; their interest lies not only in the dialogue but in what is *seen*. As with the previous chapters, these episodes also create meaning in the relationship between what is seen and what is heard. The conflict of oral and visual evidence thus also calls for speculation. Speculation in its primary sense refers to the act of seeing but it also connotes ‘intelligent or comprehending vision’.<sup>282</sup> Speculation thus conflates seeing and thinking.<sup>283</sup>

The three episodes in *Part 2* are intercut with one another across the first half of the play, bringing them together meaningfully as variants on oral-visual contradiction. In the sham miracle scene the nexus of speech, vision and deception is brought together and neatly resolved. The case of the trial by combat between master and apprentice is perhaps more complex, presenting an uneasy resolution. The gulling of Eleanor of Gloucester explores the distrust of the visual act of reading and writing against a more

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<sup>282</sup> ‘speculation, n.’ senses 4-6, *Oxford English Dictionary*.

<sup>283</sup> Nordlund makes a similar observation about the words ‘speculation’ and ‘reflection’, *Dark Lantern*, p. 55.

honest and trustworthy speech; this is highly pertinent to the mixed oral-visual culture of early modern England, where even ‘written material was subsidiary to hearing’.<sup>284</sup> This distrust is manifest within all ranks of society, at court and among Cade and his rebels. The written document also becomes the thing that condemns Eleanor of Gloucester, and marks her shame. In contrast to the written document or quilllets of law necessary in a trial, a genuine legal charge is eschewed entirely in the conspiracy against Gloucester’s life. The play highlights the complex and contradictory attitudes to literacy in the period: it was both a disadvantage, a trap, and the mark of justice and honesty. It is prophetic that the Cardinal degrades Gloucester’s written charge – he will be complicit in the denial of a true charge in the murder of Gloucester.

The episodes discussed here again bring together the senses and their role in discerning truth. Truth itself is made a subject of debate in 2.4, *Part 1* in the emerging dispute between the Yorkist Richard and the Lancastrian Somerset. A disagreement over an unknown legal question prompts the creation of the Yorkist and Lancastrian parties as the nobles choose sides by picking a white or red rose.<sup>285</sup> As Burns has shown, this scene ‘dramatizes the dangerous gap between signs and the realities to which they point, specifically the realities of power.’<sup>286</sup> The king’s supposedly arbitrary

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<sup>284</sup> Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York: Routledge, 1982), p. 119.

<sup>285</sup> For Faye L. Kelly the tension created in this scene is one ‘out of which most of the remaining action of the *Henry VI* trilogy flows’, ‘Oaths in Shakespeare’s *Henry VI* Plays’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 24.4 (1973), p. 360. The unknown origin of the dispute and its impact is discussed by Maurice Hunt, who stresses the legal problem is so difficult because it ‘cannot be concretely seen or heard.’ ‘The Politics of Vision in Shakespeare’s *1 Henry VI*’, *South Central Review*, 19.1 (2002), p. 84. See also Burns, p. 63.

<sup>286</sup> Burns, p. 60-1.

choice of a red rose, marks him out (appropriately) as a Lancastrian and angers York, he thus ‘disastrously demonstrates his naïvety, his ignorance of the power of signs’.<sup>287</sup> The problem is perhaps more specifically the ‘dumb’ nature of these ‘significants’ (2.4.26), unable to say what they mean because they mean nothing in and of themselves. Their significance is an act of social collaboration from which the king at this moment is excluded (unlike the actual monarch Elizabeth I ‘whose Tudor Rose badge symbolised the union of red rose and white.’)<sup>288</sup>

### *The Saint Alban’s Miracle*

In 2.1 of *Part 2* a townsman reports:

Forsooth, a blind man at Saint Alban’s shrine  
Within this half-hour hath received his sight –  
A man that ne’er saw in his life before. (2.1.62-4)

Miracles are a fertile site for suggestion, carrying Catholic connotations (In *Henry V* ‘miracles are ceased’ 1.1.67). This turns out to be another example of an oral report that is proved to be false by the visual evidence when the blind man arrives on stage. The king, however, immediately takes the report to be true:

Now God be praised, that to believing souls  
Gives light in darkness, comfort in despair! (2.1.65-6)

He demonstrates either his naïvety or his truly devout and hopeful nature which leads him to be unsuspecting. Maya Mathur suggests that ‘At first glance, Simpcox [...] appear[s] to be offering religious and political therapy

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>288</sup> Hattaway, *The First Part of King Henry VI*, p. 32.

for a fractured nation,<sup>289</sup> and certainly this seems to be Henry VI's hope. In this comic scene the king might appear to be naive or blind to corruption, but beneath this is the yearning for the simple and straightforward affirmation of divinity. In the previous chapter, I compared Henry VI to doubting Thomas and Richmond to the trustworthy object. Henry VI embodies the polemical case of doubting Thomas in another way too: in the view of some Reformers, Thomas's need for visual evidence of the risen Christ is his great weakness. The sham miracle scene points to prolific hypocrisy and the fear of it, as well as the unreliability of all things to be what they truly purport to be. The possible miracle of restored sight is complicated again as sight itself then becomes an object of discussion, should the miracle prove true:

Great is his comfort in this earthly vale,

Although by sight his sin be multiplied. (2.1.69)

Witnessing a miracle has such power to give 'light in darkness' but at the same time sight will make Simpcox more vulnerable to sin. As well as having intellectual potential, the eye like the ear is a portal through which noxious sights or sounds can affect the soul within. In *Henry VI, Part 3*, the future Richard III's downfall, his ambition, is equated to seeing. His desire for the crown he compares to seeing a far off shore 'where he would tread,/ Wishing his foot were equal with his eye'; his downfall is that his 'eye's too quick' (*Henry VI, Part 3*, 3.2.136-7, 144). The eye seems to have

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<sup>289</sup> Maya Mathur, 'An Attack of the Clowns: Comedy, Vagrancy, and the Elizabethan History Play', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 7.1 (2007), p. 40. The episode is further complicated as Mathur points out that it ends not with the whipping but the wife's plea: 'the wife's complaint posits a link between early modern vagrancy and financial necessity'. Mathur argues 'its inclusion can be seen as emphasizing the commoner's ability to critique contemporary social conditions.' p. 42.

been often equated with ambition and desire: in Francis Bacon's essay 'On Ambition' (1612), ambition checked causes men to 'looke vpon men, and matters with an euill eie'.<sup>290</sup> In Thomas Heywood's play[s] *The First and Second Parts of King Edward the Fourth* (1600?), King Edward on seeing Jane Shore (the alleged sorceress who withers Richard's arm in Shakespeare's play) chastises his

proud, saucy, rouing eye,

What whisperst in my braine that she is faire?

I know it, I see it:<sup>291</sup>

The eye whispers its illicit desires to the brain, Edward thus blames the individual organ the 'proud, saucy, rouing eye'. The eye was widely recognised as a gateway for temptation: sight was a portal to sin as well as being best for truth because of its association with light. Bacon states that 'Truth, is a Naked, and Open day light'<sup>292</sup> and Daniel that 'Knowledge make the thiefe/To open all the doores, to let in light; That all may all things see, but what is right.'<sup>293</sup> The Saint Alban's miracle scene thus exposes this dual nature of the eye.

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<sup>290</sup> Francis Bacon, *The Essaies of Sr Francis Bacon Knight, the Kings Solliciter Genereall* (London: Beale, 1612), p. 131-135 (p. 132); Francis Bacon, 'Of Ambition' in *The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. By John M. Robertson (London: Routledge, 1905), p. 781.

<sup>291</sup> *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Heywood Now First Collected with Illustrative Notes and A Memoir of the Author in Six Volumes*, vol. 1 (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), p. 60.

<sup>292</sup> Francis Bacon, *The Essayes or Counsels Civill and Morall of Francis Lo. Verulam, Viscount St. Alban* (London: Haviland, 1625), pp. 1-6 (2); Bacon, 'Of Truth' (1905) p. 736.

<sup>293</sup> Daniel, *Poeticall Essayes*, f. 95v.

Gloucester, the only trustworthy and stable character in the play, (and whose commitment to justice and due legal process will prove his downfall)<sup>294</sup> reveals the miracle as a sham:

....If thou hadst been born blind  
Thou mightst as well have known all our names as thus  
To name the several colours we do wear.  
Sight may distinguish of colours, but suddenly  
To nominate them all, it is impossible. (2.1.122-6)

Simpcox's keen sight betrays him through his mouth (specifically the naming of colours). Gloucester then calls for the beadle to whip Simon Simpcox, who has also claimed to be lame; this too is revealed to be a lie as at the first stroke he runs away. Deception is thus foregrounded as a theme in this play, but is specifically grounded in questions of seeing. Gloucester's perceptiveness is also set against the King's naivety, yet even Gloucester will miss the real driving thrust of the play: York's ambition. If comedy is indeed, as Philip Sidney famously argued, 'an imitation of the common errors of life',<sup>295</sup> the error that this inset episode draws attention to is the trust we put in our senses. Despite Gloucester's perception in the miracle sham, he fails to see the truth of his wife Eleanor's words that the peers 'Have all limed bushes to betray thy wings' (2.4.54). He dismisses it wholeheartedly: 'Thou aimest all awry' (2.4.58), despite the ongoing conflict with the Cardinal and the way he is addressed in the preceding scene when

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<sup>294</sup> 'His effectiveness, however, is always limited by his reliance on purely juridical procedures [...], and he is finally sacrificed to his own faith in legal rectitude.' David Riggs, *Shakespeare's Heroical Histories: Henry VI and its Literary Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 121.

<sup>295</sup> Sidney, *Apologie*, sig. F3r. Duncan-Jones and Dorsten, p. 95.

his staff is removed. Gloucester's criticism of Eleanor's sight looks forward to the description of perspective paintings in *Richard II*:

Like perspectives, which rightly gazed upon,  
Show nothing but confusion; eyed awry,  
Distinguish form. (2.2.16-20).

Gloucester criticises Eleanor for viewing the situation incorrectly, but actually it is Gloucester who looks straight on, rather than 'awry' as Eleanor does, her angle of vision 'distinguish[es] form' and reveals the true picture of the peers' conspiracy.

Political deception is almost always obvious to the audience in the first tetralogy; real Machiavellianism emerges in the second tetralogy that tasks the audience in a fresh way. For example in *Part 2* the Cardinal maligns Gloucester, but his attempt to present Gloucester as 'dangerous' (1.1.161) is clearly unfounded. Richard of York's ambition is made plain to the audience, he states directly 'And when I spy advantage, claim the crown,/For that's the golden mark I seek to hit.' (1.1.239-40) and his ambition is even spoken about openly through the trial of Horner. Suffolk's condemnation of Gloucester's allegedly false appearance: 'Smooth runs the water where the brook is deep,/And in his simple show he harbours treason.' (3.1.53-4) would better serve as a description of Bolingbroke in *Richard II*, whose performance effectively conceals the moment when his ambition changes from the reclamation of his own right (if indeed it was ever only this) to usurpation. Suffolk's suggestion that 'Gloucester is a man/Unsounded yet and full of deep deceit.' (3.1.57) is paradoxical – there is no deep deception in these plays.

The accusation of deep deceit is most frequently aimed at Gloucester. The Queen accuses him using the conventional images of the crocodile and the serpent to denote duplicity:

and Gloucester's show  
Beguiles him, as the mournful crocodile  
With sorrow snares relenting passengers,  
Or as the snake, rolled in a flowering bank,  
With shining checkered sloth doth sting a child  
That for the beauty thinks it excellent. (3.1.225-30)

The belief in the possibility of 'deep' and thorough deception was a source of anxiety, but in these plays these fears are invented. The plays demonstrate rather the ease with which the innocent could be accused and that accusations alone were enough to damage the reputation of victims of slander.<sup>296</sup>

Even Gloucester's keen sight is therefore not enough to reveal all kinds of deception: the comic miracle scene is discernible as hypocrisy; the darker motives of the Yorkists are better hidden. This is remarkable considering the Yorkist intention is openly articulated via the apprentice's petition against his master Thomas Horner. The distrust placed on sight in the miracle scene perhaps helps to shed light on the trial by combat episode, where all is perhaps not as it seems.

### *Trial by Combat*

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<sup>296</sup> See, for example Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) and Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).



In *Part 2* 1.3 a petitioner raises a charge against Thomas Horner for claiming Richard of York's right to the throne. Horner argues that he has been set up by his disgruntled apprentice:

My accuser is my prentice, and when I did correct him  
for his fault the other day, he did vow upon his knees he  
would be even with me. I have good witness of this,  
therefore I beseech your majesty, do not cast away an  
honest man for a villain's accusation. (1.3.199-203)

His defence seems plausible and even likely; it is given without ceremony and Horner is confident he can provide a witness. The very situation of a spiteful apprentice seems commonplace enough.<sup>297</sup> It thus perhaps comes as a surprise when in 2.3, the scene of combat, it is Peter, the apprentice, who overcomes Horner who then grovels 'I confess, I confess treason' (2.3.96). The King's response is simply an affirmation of Horner's guilt: 'For by his death we do perceive his guilt' (2.3.103) – because 'God in justice hath revealed to us' (2.1.103) by letting Peter win. This kind of attribution to divine providence will resurface on a larger scale in *Henry V*, where the outcome of war is seen as God's judgement and favour. In endless battles though this is of course less clear. Henry seems happy to overlook the unfair circumstances of the fight and Horner's state of significant inebriation. York's clearer statement to thank the wine in his master's belly leaves the outcome of the trial by combat unsatisfactory. Horner has initially appeared the more innocent, and Peter's fear before

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<sup>297</sup> Betrayal by a servant was 'Tudor England's prevailing social nightmare', Craig A. Bernthal, 'Treason in the Family: The Trial of Thumpe v. Horner', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 42.1 (1991), p. 44.

combat is arguably effeminate, thus undermining his credibility even further. There is also reason to doubt Horner's words as they are spoken under physical duress, a situation in which men might say anything to relieve themselves if only temporarily. York says of Cade

Say he be taken, racked and tortured,

I know no pain they can inflict upon him

Will make him say I moved him to those arms. (3.1.375-7)

The play highlights that only a man of Cade's exceptional constitution could not be swayed under such circumstances, Horner is not held up to such a standard as an ordinary man. The playwright has significantly departed from his source texts: the combat is imposed on the defendant by Gloucester in the play, whereas in Hall, Horner appears to request it. Hall writes that 'his master [...] whiche offered to bee tried by battaill'; the pronoun is a little unclear but it does seem to apply to the master, perhaps further suggesting his innocence.<sup>298</sup> In Hall, the servant is also 'a cowarde and a wretche'.<sup>299</sup> Holinshed emphasises the master's drunkenness which causes him to be 'slaine without guilt'; 'the false seruant,' was eventually 'hanged [...]at Tiburne'.<sup>300</sup> Stow repeats much the same story

the master being welbeloved, was so cherished by his  
friends and plied so with wine, that being therwith  
overcome was also unluckely slaine by his servant:

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<sup>298</sup> Edward Hall, *The Union of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancastre and Yorke* (London: Grafton, 1548), Bb.ii.r.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid., Bb.ii.r.

<sup>300</sup> Holinshed, vol 6, p. 626.

Again the servant is ‘false’ and eventually ‘hanged at Tyborne for felony.’<sup>301</sup> The outcome in the play therefore does not coincide neatly with the chronicle sources. Henry’s providentialist view differs from the interpretation in the chronicle histories which suggest that the much later punishment of the servant in fact identifies his guilt rather than his master’s. This episode foreshadows the ‘disjunctive gaps’<sup>302</sup> we see in the later plays – the outcome does not seem to agree with what we expect or what else we know.<sup>303</sup> *Richard II* presents a similar dissonance in Bolingbroke’s uneasy condemnation of Bushy and Green, discussed in chapter five. In the trial of Horner and Thump the peers still miss what this episode should warn them against, even when it is literally spelled out in the written petition – York’s own ambition.

#### *Eleanor of Gloucester*

The quarto text of *Henry VI, Part 2*, as Lawrence Manley indicates, allows the actors playing Horner and Thump to be doubled with the conjurors Hume and Roger Bolingbroke.<sup>304</sup> This is particularly interesting given the role the written word has to play in both cases. In the trial of Horner it is

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<sup>301</sup> John Stow, *The Annales of England* (London: Adams, 1615), p. 385.

<sup>302</sup> Parolin’s phrase.

<sup>303</sup> H. M. Richmond describes this scene, among others, as representing the ‘counterpoint of fact and interpretation’ and connects it with the breakdown of political and moral order, pp. 39-45, (p. 45). *Shakespeare’s Political Plays* (Gloucester, Mass.: Smith, 1977 [first pub. Random House, 1967]). I do not see the examples of contradiction I have discussed as a breakdown in order but as a reflecting the discordant elements of reality, a discordance that could be found in many aspects of life as chapter one suggests.

<sup>304</sup> The difference may have been due to casting requirements but Manley argues that the meanings of the play could change as it passed from playing company to playing company, Lawrence Manley, ‘From Strange’s Men to Pembroke’s Men: “*Henry VI* and *The First Part of the Contention*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 54.3 (2003), p. 259.

the written petition that prompts the combat, just as it will be the written document that condemns Eleanor in the act of witchcraft and will later also be a mark of her shame in the act of public penance. In 1.4 reading and writing are bound up in the forbidden practice of summoning spirits, when Bolingbroke instructs:

Mother Jourdain, be you prostrate and grovel on the  
earth; John Southwell, read you; and let us to our work.

(1.4.11-12)

Why does Bolingbroke need to ‘read’ the questions he asks the spirit? Why not simply recite or improvise? Similarly, why does Southwell need to write the answer? They ought to be memorable enough. The ritualised reading and writing add to the illegitimacy of the scene and lend the conjuration ceremony and process, and of course then provide the papers that are used to condemn Eleanor: the episode is after all a trick to condemn her. In 2.4 Eleanor’s public penance is distinguished by an additional detail not found in the source texts – she is ‘Mailed up in shame, with papers on [her] back,’ (2.4.31).<sup>305</sup>

The visual sign of shame will leave a permanent impression. As Munday had warned ‘Nothing entereth in more effectualie into the memorie, than that which commeth by seeing [...] the tokens of that which wee haue seene [...]sticke fast in vs’.<sup>306</sup> Thus Eleanor is fully aware of the power of signs when she says ‘My shame will not be shifted with my sheet:’ (3.1.107). The

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<sup>305</sup> ‘This seems to be an innovation for performance since the detail is not found in the chronicles or *Mirror*. More common was a mock paper crown as worn by Roger Bolingbroke’, p. 226.

<sup>306</sup> Munday, *A second and third blast*, p. 96.

visual impression of her acts of penance are now bound up with her identity.

The distrust for the written word can be seen elsewhere in the play. Henry VI is criticised for his devotion to religious study and prayer over rulership: York suggests his ‘bookish rule hath pulled fair England down.’ (1.1.256). The future Richard III will also mock Henry for being at his book again in prison, ‘What, at your book so hard?’ (5.6.1)), moments before his murder in *Part 3*. Gloucester’s prepared charge against the Bishop of Winchester is met with disdain, who favours the spoken word (*Part 2*, 3.1). Scepticism about writing goes back to antiquity, as Ong has argued, Plato had reservations about writing, seeing it as ‘a mechanical, inhuman way of processing knowledge, unresponsive to questions and destructive of memory’.<sup>307</sup> What Derrida famously called the ‘privileging of the spoken word over the written word’ stems from the lack of ‘temporal or spatial distance between speaker, speech and listener’ which in turn guarantees ‘perfect understanding’.<sup>308</sup> For Winchester the spoken word is more honest; there is significant irony, then, that the absence of the written document in the form of a just legal charge is deliberately omitted in his conspiracy against Gloucester – in this case the written charge and a following trial would have protected Gloucester.

The most significant attack on literacy is of course through the carnival figure of Cade. Perhaps one of the most memorable and entertaining lines of the play is the Butcher’s first action in Cade’s imagined glorious future:

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<sup>307</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p. 24. In the source text Plato’s objection comes from the text’s absence of context, see Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 69-70 (especially p. 70).

<sup>308</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. By Barbara Johnson (London: Athlone, 1981), p. viii-ix.

‘The first thing we do, let’s kill all the lawyers.’ (4.2.71). Cade commends and justifies the Butcher’s position:

Nay, that I mean to do. Is not this a lamentable thing,  
that of the skin of an innocent lamb should be made  
parchment; that parchment, being scribbled o’er, should  
undo a man? Some say the bee stings, but I say ‘tis the  
bee’s wax; for I did but seal once to a thing and I was  
never mine own man since. (4.2.72-77).<sup>309</sup>

The idea of killing lawyers would have been a particularly enjoyable joke given the large proportion of Inns of Court students in the audience.<sup>310</sup> It is also a joke that can be enjoyed by the illiterate and the literate alike. Dramatic representations of lawyers in the period were frequently characterised by hostility, not least because the law was seen as obfuscating and exclusive, in Wilfred Prest’s words ‘a mystique, a professional trade secret’.<sup>311</sup> The scene plays on the two opposing views of lawyers in the period – hostility on one side and admiration for the protectors of truth on

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<sup>309</sup> The wax seal is a recurring image in the drama of the period, and is ‘the guarantor of a contract’, see Alan Stewart, *Shakespeare’s Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 55. Middleton repeats the image of the lamb’s skin in *Michaelmas Term* (1604) with sacrificial undertones 1.1.47-8 *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*.

<sup>310</sup> Gurr, *Playgoing*, p. 5,

<sup>311</sup> Wilfred R. Prest, *The Inns of Court under Elizabeth I and the Early Stuarts, 1590-1640* (London: Longman, 1972), p. 143. In this increasingly litigious period, legal discourse found its way into the theatres. Lorna Hutson has argued that judicial and forensic rhetoric brought ‘a new liveliness and power’ to dramatic fiction, *The Invention of Suspicion: Law and Mimesis in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 2. Sarah Knight also describes ‘a two-way traffic of authorship and influence [that] ran between the Inns and the public theatres’, ‘Literature and Drama at the early modern Inns of Court’, *The Intellectual and Cultural World of the Early Modern Inns of Court*, ed. by Jayne Elisabeth Archer, Elizabeth Goldring and Sarah Knight (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p. 218.

the other.<sup>312</sup> Cade sees the legal documents and contracts as instruments of entrapment wherein he is liable to lose out financially and perhaps bodily through imprisonment 'I was never mine own man since'. His argument is demonstrated when Suffolk refuses to invent a legal charge against Gloucester, preferring a swifter method to remove him: murder. Suffolk orders the peers not to 'stand on quillets how to slay him;' (3.1.261). When Gloucester is confronted the details of his arrest for treason are withheld, the initial charges Gloucester answers but Suffolk responds

My lord, these faults are easy, quickly answered,

But mightier crimes are laid unto your charge

Whereof you cannot easily purge yourself. (3.1.133-35)

These details are frustratingly absent: the charge against Gloucester is vague, unquantifiable and unspecified, a situation that will be echoed under different circumstances in *Richard II* in Bolingbroke's charges against Bushy and Green. Both cases include oral accusations unsupported by the visual and dramatic evidence of the rest of the play. These contradictions in turn serve to highlight the injustice of the accuser. Gloucester's defence and true argument that the peers plot his tragic end is met by the Cardinal with a commentary on the dangers of speech; the Cardinal urges him not to be 'granted scope of speech' (3.1.176), knowing his speech will be influential. When Gloucester puns on winning and losing, Buckingham instead turns it into an attack: 'He'll wrest the sense and hold us here all day' (3.1.186).

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<sup>312</sup> Craig A. Bernthal, 'Jack Cade's Legal Carnival', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 42.2 (2002), p.263.

Both commoner and noble are thus aware of the convoluted and potentially internecine nature of the legal process and thus avoid it, though for different reasons.

*Part 2* is perhaps unusual, in that it is the absence of proper legal process that leads to Gloucester's demise. Elsewhere legal documents aid deception. In Thomas Heywood's *The First and Second Parts of King Edward the Fourth* (1600). Hobs fears legal petitions:

By the mass and matins, I like not those patents. Sirrah,  
they that haue them do, as the priests did in old time, buy  
and sell the sinnes of the people. So they make the King  
believe they mend whats amisse, and for money they make  
the thing worse than it is.<sup>313</sup>

Hobs seems to echo our own present culture of compensation. Heywood also offers more favourable views of the law in his antithesis of Cade. In Heywood's play *Falconbridge*, a rebel defying the newly crowned Edward IV and supporting the imprisoned Henry VI, differentiates himself from the rebels of Shakespeare's plays:

We do not rise like, *Tyler*, *Cade*, and *Straw*,  
*Bluebeard*, and other of that rascal rout,  
Basely like tinkers or such muddy slaues,  
For mending measures or the price of corne,  
Or for some common in the wield of Kent  
Thats by some greedy cormorant enclos'd,  
But in the true and antient lawfull right

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<sup>313</sup> Heywood, *Dramatic Works*, p. 46.



Of the redoubted house of *Lancaster*.  
 Our blood is noble, by our birth a *Neuille*,  
 [...]  
 Our quarrell, like ourself, is honourable,  
 The law our warrant.<sup>314</sup>

The rebel Falconbridge is contrasted with Shakespeare's firstly through his claims of a noble birth; Shakespeare's Cade claims high birth but is not believed by the Butcher, 4.2.35-42. Secondly, Falconbridge claims lawful action where Cade rejects it entirely. Falconbridge's vision of the future, however, is not so unlike Cade's in its fantasy of abundance. Despite Cade's questionable credibility, his political aims of equality and easy access to food, drink and clothing give voice to the genuine concerns and needs of the poorest classes. Heywood's Falconbridge may belittle Cade, but his desire to be 'Masters of the Mint ourselves' is not so different to Cade's agenda.<sup>315</sup> Mathur argues *Henry VI, Part 2* demonstrates that 'national interests served an increasingly wealthy citizen class rather than the illiterate peasantry.'<sup>316</sup>

In *Part 2*, the clerk is described as 'monstrous' (4.2.80) for his ability to read and write, perhaps reflecting social anxiety about a changing culture from oral to literate: literacy increased considerably in the latter half of the sixteenth century.<sup>317</sup> The playwright shows this progression as one from

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<sup>314</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>315</sup> Heywood, *Dramatic Works*, p. 10.

<sup>316</sup> Mathur, p. 49. Michael Harrawood also suggests the 'the plays are on Cade's side without knowing it.' 'High-Stomached Lords: Imagination, Force, and the Body in Shakespeare's *Henry VI* Plays', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 7.1 (2007), p. 94.

<sup>317</sup> J. W. Binns, *Intellectual Culture in Elizabethan and Jacobean England: The Latin Writings of the Age* (Leeds: Cairns, 1990), p. 3. Academics were easy targets of

which from which the base-born Cade and his supporter the Butcher were excluded. The clerk is compared to a ‘conjurer’ (84) reminding us of the earlier scene with the actual conjurers Mother Jourdain, Hume and Bolingbroke. Thomas Middleton similarly associates the written, especially legal, document and the supernatural in *Michaelmas Term* (1604); here legal trickery is achieved through the agency of Quomodo’s ‘spirits’.<sup>318</sup> Paul condemned the written word as dead compared to the spoken word in the Bible: ‘The letter killeth, but the spirit giueth life’.<sup>319</sup> In addition to anxiety about writing, was anxiety about the printing press. Daniel, even as a writer, was deeply fearful of the speed of dissemination that the printing press allowed. His argument to book five of his epic poem [that covers Cade’s rebellion] signals that he will cover ‘Th’effect of Printing and Artillerie’.<sup>320</sup> Both items are for Daniel ‘two fatall Instruments, The one to publish, th’other to defend’.<sup>321</sup> The power of the press is described as overwhelming: ‘that instamped Characters may send/Abroad to thousands, thousand mens intents, /And in a moment, may dispatch much more,/Then could a world of pennes performe before’.<sup>322</sup> After which ‘th’other Engin’ can be called in to annihilate men.<sup>323</sup> Daniel does not make

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ridicule on the stage as Sarah Knight has shown in ‘The Niniversity at the Bankside: Robert Greene’s *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, pp. 359-60. Criticism of clerks goes back at least to Geoffrey Chaucer’s ‘The Clerk’s Tale’ and anxiety about writing itself goes back to Plato, see fn. 306.

<sup>318</sup> Thomas Middleton, ‘Michaelmas Term’, in *The Collected Works*, 1.2.79. I discuss this in my MA dissertation, *Dangerous Words: Legal and Oral Culture in the Plays of Thomas Middleton*, p. 12-13.

<sup>319</sup> Geneva Bible, 2 Corinthians 3:6. Ong glosses spirit, as the ‘breath, on which rides the spoken word’, *Orality and Literacy*, p. 75.

<sup>320</sup> Daniel, *Poeticall Essayes*, sig. A2r.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid., sig Bb3v/fol. 95v.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid., Sig Bb3v/fol. 95v.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., [Sig Bb4r]/fol. 96r.

the connection specifically with Cade, whose rebellion historically was not associated with an anti-literacy movement, but it is in this general context that Shakespeare's Cade denounces the growth of literacy:

'Thou hast most traitorously corrupted the youth of the realm in erecting a grammar school; and whereas before our forefathers had no other books but the score and the tally, thou hast caused printing to be used (4.7.29-32)

The plays demonstrate a complex attitude to written documents. Usually instruments of entrapment, in Gloucester's case, the absence of the official legal charge leads to a false conviction. In his wife's case, papers become the permanent marker of her shame. But while Cade derides writing, a more common method of mass communication was of course through public speaking or the sermon. The final spectacle I will look at before turning to *King John* is from *Richard III*.

### *Richard III*

In More's history the bumbling Mayor of Shakespeare's play is equally as guilty as Buckingham in helping Richard to ascend the throne: 'vpon trust of his owne aduancement' he helped to 'frame the citie to their appetite'.<sup>324</sup> The condensed prayer book scene in Shakespeare has a counterpart in More, where Two 'doctors of diuinitie' preach sermons on Richard's rightful claim. 'Of these two the one had a sermon in praise of the protector before the coronation, the other after, both so full of tedious

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<sup>324</sup> Holinshed, vol. 6. p. 725. Kinney's translation 'he was wooed with the hope of great profits[...] if he managed the citizens to their liking.' p. 433.

flatterie, that no mans eares could abide them.<sup>325</sup> More's history in Holinshed acknowledges that the first sermon may have been preached after the coronation at the Spital the following Easter; the choice of location demonstrates the importance of the pulpit discussed in chapter one.<sup>326</sup> Friar 'Penker in his sermon so lost his voice, that he was faine to leaue off, and come down in the midst.<sup>327</sup> Perhaps the Spital crowd had been particularly discontented with this sermon. Doctor Shaw's sermon at Paul's Cross, proclaiming the princes bastards and Richard of Gloucester as rightful heir was not well received. His claims left

the people [...] so farre fro crieng; K. Richard, that they stood as they had beene turned into stones, for woonder of this shamefull sermon. After which once ended, the preacher gat him home and neuer after durst looke out for shame, but kept him out of sight like an owle.<sup>328</sup>

So humiliated was he 'that within few daies after he withered and consumed awaie.'<sup>329</sup> The crowd is similarly shocked after Buckingham's speech and they remained 'husht and mute'.<sup>330</sup> Shakespeare retains the crowd's reaction, reported by Buckingham as 'dumb statues or breathing stones' (3.7.25). This immediately precedes Richard's feigned reluctance to accept the crown before the citizens and the mayor. He appears with a prayer book between two bishops. The hypocrisy is made plain, and the citizens' incredulous response has already been made clear. Not only does

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<sup>325</sup> Holinshed, vol. 6. p. 725. Kinney, p. 433-35.

<sup>326</sup> Holinshed, vol. 6. p. 725. The reference to the Spital seems to be Holinshed's interpolation – it is not mentioned in Kinney's translation of the same passage.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid, vol. 6. p. 725. Kinney, p. 435.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid., vol. 6. p. 728. Kinney, pp. 435, 455

<sup>329</sup> Ibid., vol. 6. p. 728. Kinney, p. 435.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid., vol. 6. p. 730. Kinney, pp. 469.-471.

Richard appear as the religious hypocrite but his appearance also recalls and invites a direct comparison with Henry VI who appears several times with a prayer book in the earlier plays and whose devotion is genuine. The historical king himself however, like many kings was also devout and even copied a prayer for himself into his own Book of Hours.<sup>331</sup>

Visual deception in the first tetralogy is generally evident, the audience realises that Richard's appearance between two bishops symbolises religious hypocrisy. The hoax miracle is exposed. The demise of both Gloucester's illustrates the power of spoken and written words to deceive, entrap and leave permanent impressions. The only exception to these transparent examples is the Horner-Thump trial and its uneasy resolution, a pattern repeated in *All is True*.

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<sup>331</sup> Rosemary Horrox, 'Richard III (1452-1485), king of England and lord of Ireland', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <[www.odnb.com](http://www.odnb.com)>, [accessed 13 August 2013].

#### CHAPTER FOUR – SEEING IN KING JOHN

Shakespeare's *King John* (1596) marks a departure from the consecutive royal histories of the first and second tetralogies. Often described as a 'transitional' or 'interstitial' play, it is also, as Phyllis Rackin argues, 'set farthest back in the past, and yet of all of them it depicts a world that is least medieval and most insistently present.'<sup>332</sup> It is 'his most unhistorical play'<sup>333</sup>; the most Machiavellian<sup>334</sup> and apparently the 'least popular'<sup>335</sup>. It also stands at a most complex juncture of historical fact, interpretation and agenda. Over the course of the sixteenth century, the figure of King John was being understood retrospectively, and anachronistically, as a proto-protestant martyr. While this chapter focuses primarily on Shakespeare's *King John*, it also considers two other plays that take the same royal subject for their theme: John Bale's *King Johan* (1538-40?),<sup>336</sup> and the anonymous *The Troublesome Raigne of King John* (1591?). According to Ivo Kamps, Bale's

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<sup>332</sup> Virginia Mason Vaughan, 'Between 'Tetralogies: *King John* as Transition', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 35 (1984), 407-20; Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History: Shakespeare's English Chronicles* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 66.

<sup>333</sup> E. A. J. Honigmann, ed., *King John*. The Arden Shakespeare, Second Series (London: Cengage Learning 2007, first pub. Methuen, 1954), p. xxxi.

<sup>334</sup> John Roe, *Shakespeare and Machiavelli* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2002), p. 94.

<sup>335</sup> Páraic Finnerty, 'Both are alike, and both alike we like': Sovereignty and Amity in Shakespeare's *King John*', *Literature and History*, 20.1 (2011) 38-58. Warren Chernaik, *The Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare's History Plays*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 70.

<sup>336</sup> This date bracket really extends to 1563. This play exists in two texts, an A and B text written in different hands and in different years. See Introduction in John Bale, *King Johan*, ed. John Henry Pyle Pafford and [W. W. Greg?] (The Malone Society Reprints, 1931).

play marks ‘the slow and extraordinary birth of historiography in literature’.<sup>337</sup> Furthermore, Dermot Cavanagh has argued: ‘John Bale’s work demonstrates [that] the reputation of King John was central to the formation of protestant historiography in England during the sixteenth century.’<sup>338</sup> Shakespeare was thus not the first to demonstrate through drama the interpretative act of history writing. At the same time this Reformation view of King John was not necessarily the consensus, as Cavanagh explains:

this sustained attempt to promote a godly and patriotic King John was never wholly successful. Reservations had crept into Reformation thought by the mid-century concerning the integrity of John’s motivations[.]<sup>339</sup>

The figure of John, then, encapsulates the problem of truth, history and perspective; he demonstrates most clearly the distance between history as it happened and history as it is retold, invariably with a political or religious agenda. In later centuries, ambiguous or neutral presentations of John (if there can be) were not well received: L. A. Beaurline has suggested later audiences wanted to see strong political interpretations; Colley Cibber’s eighteenth-century re-writing, for example, ‘testifies that Shakespeare’s script was for some people not sufficiently inflammatory.’<sup>340</sup>

If Shakespeare was thinking about Bale’s morality play, he may have picked up on its references to perception as well as its exposition of the

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<sup>337</sup> Kamps, *Historiography and Ideology*, p. 54.

<sup>338</sup> Dermot Cavanagh, *Language and Politics in the Sixteenth-Century History Play* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 80.

<sup>339</sup> Cavanagh, *Language and Politics*, p. 83.

<sup>340</sup> L. A. Beaurline, ed., *King John*. The New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 6.

difference between history and historiography.<sup>341</sup> Philip Schwyzer has drawn attention to the play's relationship with the chronicles, recalling for example the allegorical Widow England's praise for the dying King John in defiance of historiographers who will 'report what they will' and the moment near the end of the play when Veritas blames 'Polydorus' Vergil (prompted by the clergy) for unjustly maligning John.<sup>342</sup> This attention to the different perspectives upon John may be related to the instances of perception, or characters describing what they see, during the course of the play. Bale, according to Robert Weimann, was one of the dramatists to develop stage practice by 'distributing more than one role to each actor'.<sup>343</sup> As such the introduction of individual characters was perhaps increasingly important. In *King Johan* characters are signalled by the phrase 'I perseyve'; the phrase acts as a signpost for the audience, however it is a phrase that proliferates (it occurs at least six times in part one alone). While the identification of characters is to some extent formulaic,<sup>344</sup> this rhetorical marker is perhaps especially significant given its context in a play that seeks to construct a new perspective on the historical king; that demands the audience reconsider the ways in which they understand and interpret history; and that includes an allegorical character called Dissimulation. All of the above is not to mention the I/eye pun. Moreover, to see a character in Bale's play is a complex act given that, as Schwyzer states, 'a number of

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<sup>341</sup> See Philip Schwyzer, 'Paranoid History: John Bale's *King Johan*' in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, ed. By Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 499 -513.

<sup>342</sup> Bale, 2143 hand b fol 28b page 50/ p. 108, Schwyzer, p. 503, 507.

<sup>343</sup> Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function*, ed. by Robert Schwartz (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 104.

<sup>344</sup> For Sedition's self introduction as traditional/formulaic see Weimann, p. 144.



its characters have two distinct persons, one historical, the other allegorical.<sup>345</sup> The plurality of perception suggested in Bale is developed more explicitly in *King John*, where perspective and perception is not only multiple but mutable.

*The Troublesome Raigne of King John*, in terms of chronological proximity (and genre), is much closer to Shakespeare's play and is generally accepted as a source play, with some occasional exceptions, and will be treated as such in this chapter.<sup>346</sup>

Close critical attention to speech acts and orality in *King John* has perhaps led to diminished attention to the visual imagery in the play, surprising given the climactic blinding scene of the play. Honigmann observes that the word 'eye' is mentioned forty-seven times in *King John*, that is to say more times than in any of Shakespeare's history plays, and indeed across his whole corpus bar *Love's Labour's Lost* (1594) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595).<sup>347</sup> It is no coincidence that these two plays immediately precede *King John*. Whereas a close look at language in the opening of *Richard II* signals a key change in its focus on orality (as the next chapter will illustrate), *King John* is also replete with eye imagery. Shakespeare's play not only focuses on the gaze, mirror and reflection, and perspectival distortion (physical or metaphorical), but in its climactic scene on the fleshly eye as well. The

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<sup>345</sup> Schwyzer, 'Paranoid History', p. 508.

<sup>346</sup> Warren Chernaik describes 'its dependence, virtually scene by scene,' on *The Troublesome Raigne* and that 'selecting and shaping material from Hall and Holinshed' was left to the earlier playwright, *Shakespeare's History Plays*, p. 72. John Roe and Virginia Mason Vaughan similarly consider Shakespeare's to be the later play, though both E. A. J. Honigmann, and L. A. Beaurline have advocated an earlier dating for *King John*. Honigmann and Beaurline are in the minority. For a fuller list of critics and editors on either side of the debate see Roe, *Shakespeare and Machiavelli*, p. 94.

<sup>347</sup> Honigmann, p. lx.

attempted blinding of Arthur moves Shakespeare's investigation from the powers and limitations of sight in an abstract sense to the troubling, material vulnerability of the eye as bodily organ, a fascination to which he would return a decade later in *King Lear* (1605-6).<sup>348</sup>

### *Shakespeare's Bastard*

Royal identity is inherent and identifiable in the *Henry VI* trilogy, as discussed in the previous chapter, and is a trope that is repeated in *King John* though in a significantly less conventional way. In *Henry VI, Part 3* the disguised Henry is identified as the king, and of course is the (contested) king of the play; in *King John* majesty makes itself evident in the illegitimate figure of the Bastard, an outsider, an unacknowledged but potentially dangerous threat to the unsympathetic crown. King John himself possesses no such distinguishing quality as the citizens of Angiers make clear: unable to recognise either John or Philip of France as a rightful king. John's self-confident 'Doth not the crown of England prove the king?' is met with uncertainty and thus continues the debate that began in the *Henry VI* trilogy about signs that will be so crucial in *Richard II*.<sup>349</sup> John attempts to rely on 'the eye' of Angiers to recognise the true king; allegiance, he believes, will be prompted by 'the sight of us your lawful king' (2.1.208, 222). He attempts to draw on the evidence of sight to prove his point,

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<sup>348</sup> Cf. 'the traditional conflict between the eye's material nature and its status as metaphor' more greatly exposed by developments in ocular anatomy. Sergei Lobanov-Rostovsky, 'Taming the Basilisk' in *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, ed. David Hillman and Carla Mazzio (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 196-217, p. 197.

<sup>349</sup> William Shakespeare, *King John*, ed. by E. A. J. Honigmann (London: Methuen, 1957; repr. Cengage Learning, 2007), 2.1.273. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition.

accusing the French of oral abuse in the attempt to prove theirs: ‘They shoot but calm words folded up in smoke,/To make a faithless error in your eyes’ (2.1.229-30).<sup>350</sup> This is a difficult synaesthetic image – spoken words cause visual errors in the eye, words distort the image. ‘Smoke’ might suggest an intoxicating vapour that is inhaled and so produces distorted mental images; it is more likely to refer to smoke clouding vision, or even smoke stinging the eyes and so producing tears which in turn distort vision.<sup>351</sup> The question of right will not be resolved by sight or persuasion – precisely because of this sensory conflict. The recognition of the Bastard’s royal lineage entailed an act of both senses, of sensory integration; Eleanor recognises Richard Lionheart visually in the Bastard’s face and stature but also aurally via his speech, by ‘The accent of his tongue’ (1.1.86). The Bastard, then, has a clear claim to the throne, prevented only by his illegitimacy, an issue all too familiar to Elizabethan England, as Vaughan suggests: ‘As the declared “bastard” daughter of Henry VIII, Elizabeth knew that bastardy and legitimacy were constructed categories.’<sup>352</sup> By the law of primogeniture the Bastard’s right takes precedent over Arthur’s: Richard Lionheart was the older brother of Geoffrey and John, thus John’s claim was most tenuous genealogically speaking.<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> Honigmann’s note: cf *The Contre-Guyse* (London: Woolfe, 1589): “A pitifull case, that they should take the shadow for the substance, smoke for fire, the visage and lies, for truth” sig. Ev.

<sup>351</sup> Cf. tears distorting vision and perspectives in *Richard II*, 2.2.16-20.

<sup>352</sup> Virginia Mason Vaughan, ‘King John’, in *A Companion to Shakespeare’s Works: Volume II, The Histories*, ed. by Richard Dutton, and Jean E. Howard (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), p. 381.

<sup>353</sup> Vaughan, ‘King John’, p. 381. Paola Pugliatti notes that in fact ‘the historical John seems to have had an almost undisputed right’, *Shakespeare the Historian* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1996), p. 84.

Royal identity as identified through family resemblance, as we have seen in the previous chapter in the case of *Richard III*, is a recurring theme. Arthur, John's nephew, though there is no question of his legitimacy, is, like the Bastard, marked by the similarity of his appearance to his father's. King Philip of France comments on the similarity of Arthur's face to his father Geoffrey's face:

These eyes, these brows, were moulded out of his:

This little abstract doth contain that large

Which died in Geoffrey: and the hand of time

Shall draw this brief into as huge a volume. (2.1.100-4)

This impromptu meditation on the hereditary facial features is extraneous to Philip's argument – Arthur's legitimacy as the son of Geoffrey is not at this moment in question. Philip also draws on another method of perception: whereas the Bastard's lineage is legitimised by a process of sensory integration, Arthur's only merits a kind of Gestaltian principle, he is the 'little abstract' or 'brief' of his father. Arthur, in Shakespeare's play, is a child prince, the potentially disastrous ramifications of which had been shown in the *Henry VI* trilogy. Worse still, as Vaughan points out, he has been 'raised as a Frenchman, and precedent precluded foreign princes from inheriting the English throne'.<sup>354</sup> Within twenty lines, Arthur is suddenly accused of bastardy, by his own grandmother no less; as the outburst spirals next it is Geoffrey that is accused of illegitimacy – by his own widow. These accusations cannot be meant seriously; however, their presence in the scene immediately following the identification of the

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<sup>354</sup> Vaughan, '*King John*', p. 381.

Bastard must be significant. Arthur's entire lineage is now called into question by, to borrow Rackin's expression, the very keepers of patriarchal lineal succession.<sup>355</sup> In the previous scene it is the Bastard's mother, Lady Faulconbridge, an invented character, who reveals the truth about her son's paternity. As Howard and Rackin have observed, this is a departure from Shakespeare's source texts: in Holinshed Cordelion recognizes his own son, but in the *Troublesome Raigne*, the bastard comes to the realization himself.<sup>356</sup> The parallel scenes thus serve to only further legitimise the Bastard as a genuine competitor for the crown, though it is a mantle he never takes up.

As a character, the Bastard's identity is mutable. Within the first scene of the play he has slipped from Faulconbridge to Plantagenet, from disinheritance to royal lineage, and yet at the same time he is perhaps the most stable character as the 'satiric commentator' of the play.<sup>357</sup> As Peter Womack argues, he embodies 'a provocative mixture of centrality and alienation'.<sup>358</sup> When King John renames the Bastard after his newly identified biological father, Richard Plantagenet, the Bastard replies simply: 'I am I, howe'er I was begot.' (1.1.175). The Bastard instantaneously undercuts the political squabbling of the opening scene with a blunt

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<sup>355</sup> Howard and Rackin describe this scene as an expression of anxiety about legitimacy, women as keepers of patriarchal lineal succession, *Engendering a Nation*, p. 133.

<sup>356</sup> 'The Bastard's ironic coupling of his adulterous mother with heaven as the only sources of the elusive truth of paternity suggests an affinity between them as keepers of a knowledge never directly accessible to men. In *King John* Shakespeare goes as far as he will ever go in making women, women's sceptical voices, and women's truth central to the history he staged, leaving his sources behind and venturing into the realm of the unwritten and the conjectural, and into the inaccessible domain (the no man's land) where the secrets of paternity are kept.' Howard and Rackin, *Engendering a Nation* p. 133.

<sup>357</sup> Chernaik, *Shakespeare's History Plays*, p. 73.

<sup>358</sup> Peter Womack, 'Imagining Communities: Theatres and the English Nation in the Sixteenth Century', in *Culture and History, 1350-1600*, ed. by D. Aers (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), p. 115.

affirmation of the stability of his identity: the body is still the same though name and lineage might be arbitrarily given, retracted or accorded in a moment.<sup>359</sup> This is an extension of the ideas discussed in chapter two, the physical body of the Bastard remains the same whatever narratives are constructed around it. The Bastard sweeps away the genealogical concerns of the history plays with a wink in the phrase ‘howe’er I was begot’ – because of course his only true begetter is the playwright. At the same time he ‘possesses the sovereign qualities of his father’ and is legitimised by an ‘English [...] pattern of behaviour’.<sup>360</sup> Often dubbed as the show stealer of the play, the Bastard brings the audience out of the historical perspective, out of the *theatrum mundi* trope and into the immediacy of the theatre proper.

*‘A wondrous miracle’ – the Union of Louis and Blanche*

The English-French dilemma at Angiers is resolved (if only temporarily) by the French Citizen who proposes marriage between Louis the Dauphin and Blanche, John’s niece. Eleanor encourages her son John to agree to the match:

I see a yielding in the looks of France;

Mark, how they whisper: urge them while their souls

Are capable of this ambition,

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<sup>359</sup> Lin makes a similar argument about the play: ‘bodies themselves are subject to change, and, indeed, the very act of seeing is called into question’, ‘Lord of thy presence’, p. 127. My argument differs in that I am arguing for Shakespeare’s exposition of the constructedness of all narrative.

<sup>360</sup> Finnerty, ‘Both are alike’, p. 51, Helen Vella Bonavita, ‘Staying True to England: Representing Patriotism in Sixteenth-Century Drama’ in *Negotiating Identities: Constructed Selves and Others*, ed by Helen Vella Bonavita (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2011), p. 61.

Lest zeal, now melted by the windy breath  
Of soft petitions, pity and remorse,  
Cool and congeal again to what it was (2.1.474-79).

Eleanor's image of cooling and congealing recalls the conventional analogy in the period between sensory impressions on the brain and the impressions left in warm wax.<sup>361</sup> She acknowledges the power of words to manipulate the French into a solution, but only while they are 'melted', made malleable and impressionable by 'pity'. Their consent must be sought before they 'Cool and congeal', or set and harden and so preserve an idea that would be disagreeable to the English. 'Zeal' plays on the similar sounding word 'seal', again evoking the idea of wax, but with the added sense of a sealed contract once the wax cools. Francis Mere's *sententia* in *Palladis Tamia* (1598) records such a comparison between wax and the impressions made by speech: 'As the same sunne doth melt waxe, and harde[n] clay: so the same speech doth make some better, and some worse, according to the diuersity of dispositions.'<sup>362</sup> The metaphor seems apt in a play that denies the spectator or reader any such fixed impression; Roe states 'an audience finds itself responding differently to characters at different moments. It is virtually impossible to make things add up to a consistent whole.'<sup>363</sup> The playwright's 'windy breath' of pity (for Arthur, Hubert and John in turn) keeps the spectator in flux; their impressions are similarly never allowed to set.

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<sup>361</sup> See fn. 260.

<sup>362</sup> Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia: Wits Treasury being the Second Part of Wits Commonwealthe* (London: Short, 1598), 253r.

<sup>363</sup> Roe, *Shakespeare and Machiavelli*, p. 120.

Eleanor proves to be right, a little more persuasion from John regarding Blanche's dowry is all that is needed to seal the contract. Louis the Dauphin agrees to the marriage and his short encomium might at first seem that of the conventional lover. After being told to look at her face (in yet another example of 'face reading'),<sup>364</sup> he says of Blanche:

in her eye I find  
A wonder, or a wondrous miracle,  
The shadow of myself form'd in her eye;  
Which, being but the shadow of your son,  
Becomes a sun and makes your son a shadow:  
I do protest I never lov'd myself  
Till now infixed I beheld myself  
Drawn in the flattering table of her eye (2.1.494-503)

Louis's response is a marked development from the charmingly simple response of Lewes in *Troublesome Raigne*: 'I like your choyce/A lovely Damsell is Ladie Blanche'.<sup>365</sup> Shakespeare may have been composing his sonnets around this time and the Dauphin's posturing as the courtly lover perhaps recalls (or looks forward to) sonnet 24 where the poet states: 'Mine eye hath played the painter and hath stelled/Thy beauty's form in table of my heart'.<sup>366</sup> The difference is of course that the eye of the lover in the sonnet fixates on the object's beauty, the Dauphin on his own. Self-love was also a conventional aspect of the courtly lover: Honigmann quotes

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<sup>364</sup> Vaughan makes the comparison between this scene and the reading of the marks of paternity in Arthur and the Bastard's face, '*King John*' p. 385.

<sup>365</sup> *The Troublesome Raigne of John, King of England, Part 1, A Facsimile by Charles Praetorius* (London: Praetorius, 1888), 4.107-8.

<sup>366</sup> 'Sonnet 24', *The Sonnets and A Lover's Complaint*, ed. By John Kerrigan (London: Penguin, 1986), p. 88. For possible dates of composition see, p. 10, p. 441. Also, Potter, pp. 125-131.



*Ovid's Banquet of Sense* (1595): 'Enamourd (like good selfe-love) with her own,/Seene in another, then tis heaven alone'<sup>367</sup>; self love was also advocated and ridiculed by Folly in Erasmus's ever popular *The Praise of Folly* (1509):

this arrogance of Self loue dooeth delite all men, in all places. [...] For Self loue is naught else, but whan a man fauneth on hym selfe. Which if thou dooest to another, than is it Adulacion, or flaterie.<sup>368</sup>

The Bastard equally invites the audience to mock the Dauphin, exasperated that 'there should be/In such a love so vile a lout as he!' (2.1.508-9). The Dauphin alludes to a theory of vision that has its origins in Plato. In *Timaeus* Plato describes vision as a process by which the eye emits a kind of fire which touches the object it perceives and so 'like meets with like and coalesces with it'.<sup>369</sup> Aristotle would question this theory on the grounds that like perceiving like does not quite make sense, the soul for example is not made of stone, but can perceive it.<sup>370</sup> At the same time he also advocates that 'cognition is of like by like'<sup>371</sup> Martin Jay describes this theory of likeness in perception as a 'participational dimension in the visual process, a potential intertwining of viewer and viewed'.<sup>372</sup> But the Dauphin's vision is altogether more egocentric. He literally sees himself

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<sup>367</sup> Honigmann's note in his edition of *King John*.

<sup>368</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *The Praise of Folie*, trans Thomas Chaloner (London: Berthelet, 1549), sig. J2v.

<sup>369</sup> Plato, 'Timaeus', in *Timaeus and Critias*, trans Robin Waterfield (Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 36, 45c.

<sup>370</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima*, p. 149-50. 409b-410a.

<sup>371</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima*, p. 137, 405b.

<sup>372</sup> Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), p. 30, see also Marcus Nordlund, *The Dark Lantern: A Historical Study of Sight in Shakespeare, Webster and Middleton* (Göteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1999), pp. 50-3.

reflected in her eyeball ('the shadow of myself'), and is glorified in the image ('Becomes a sun'). At the same time he, the observer, is destroyed, the glorified reflection makes the present and bodily Dauphin a shadow ('makes your son a shadow'). In the reflection the Dauphin sees in Blanche's eye, he is reconceived as a more desirable subject ('I never lov'd myself/'Till now'). Her eye becomes the vessel in which he constructs a new identity, a glorious 'sun', a fantasy of himself as sovereign enriched by her generous dowry. The various puns on 'son' perhaps also allude to a continuing line, another image that will be created in her. Her eye, however, is also 'flattering', thus betraying the spiritually or romantically superficial union: it is the financial and territorial gain that will be flattering, as well as reminding us, as Folly does, that there is a fine line between self-love as a virtue and the vice of flattery. To paraphrase Folly, without self-love one's face must be 'ugly'.<sup>373</sup>

The emptiness of the Dauphin's praise is reflected back in Blanche's parallel experience of seeing:

My uncle's will in this respect is mine:  
 If he see aught in you that makes him like,  
 That any thing he sees, which moves his liking,  
 I can with ease translate it to my will;  
 Or if you will, to speak more properly,  
 I will enforce it eas'ly to my love.  
 Further I will not flatter you, my lord,  
 That all I see in you is worthy love,

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<sup>373</sup> Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, sig. Diii.r.

Than this: that nothing I do see in you,  
Though churlish thoughts themselves should be your judge,  
That I can find should merit any hate (2.1.510-20)

Blanche initially appears entirely submissive; her experience of viewing a suitor is a variation on a formula that audiences heard Juliet deliver (perhaps only the year before) in *Romeo and Juliet* (1595). Juliet tells her mother that she will consider the merits of her potential suitor Paris: 'I'll look to like, if looking liking move'.<sup>374</sup> Juliet, though still obedient in her promise to look no further than her mother's 'consent',<sup>375</sup> also indicates that she will be an active agent in choosing her own suitor, she will keep an open mind only 'if looking liking move'. In *King John* the looks are exchanged between men: if John's liking is moved by looking at the Dauphin, Blanche will translate it to her own will. Her mode of vision appears entirely passive. Blanche, however, is not quite the blank sheet that her name might suggest.<sup>376</sup> Her passive 'translate' becomes 'enforce'; by line 517 Blanche does indeed 'look' for herself. The complicated syntax that follows takes us from Louis's tautological 'wondrous miracle' on a downward spiral of negative images punctuated by the odd hopeful one: 'flatter', 'worthy love', 'nothing', 'churlish', 'merit' and finally, significantly 'hate'. What is Blanche actually saying here? It might be 'I won't flatter you by pretending I see worthy love, but at the same time I don't see anything that deserves hatred'. But then what are we to make of the inset phrase 'even though 'churlish thoughts' alone 'should be your judge'? Here she is

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<sup>374</sup> *Romeo and Juliet*, The Oxford Shakespeare, 1.4.99.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid., 1.4.101.

<sup>376</sup> 'Shakespeare depicts his Blanche as a blank page awaiting the inscription of masculine texts.' Howard and Rackin, *Engendering a Nation*, p. 122.

clearly hinting at the financial advantage Louis will gain from the match. In response to Louis's narcissistic vision, Blanche's opposing vision moves from passive sight to fiery penetrating sight. Her scathing conclusion is more akin to 'the stubborn persistence' of Plato's theory of extramission – sight as active and masculine.<sup>377</sup> She is not 'peculiarly tentative, even docile', as Vaughan has suggested, by the end of her speech.<sup>378</sup> Such quiet passivity is a more accurate description of Blanche in *Troublesome Raigne* whose refusal to say more is to prevent 'blemish to [her] modestie' (4.137). In *King John*, her sight and simultaneous refusal to 'judge' becomes a piercing comment on her own status as a pawn in the power relations between men. Once the truce between England and France is broken and she discovers that her uncle and her husband are now at war with each other, she is boldly outspoken and despairs that 'They whirl asunder and dismember me' (3.1.256). The violent image again highlights the superficiality of the courtship scene.

In Act 2.2, Constance initially refuses to believe that a truce has been made through marriage and that her son, Arthur, gets nothing. She refuses to believe the report alone, requiring the confirmation of sight. The bad news, in turn, alters her perception of the bearer: 'Fellow, be gone: I cannot brook thy sight./This news hath made thee a most ugly man.' (2.2.36-7). Just as the self-interested viewer, Louis, alters his perception of himself in the face of advantage, disadvantage brings with it skewed perception in the

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<sup>377</sup> Rostovsky, 'Taming the Basilisk', p. 199. Cf also early modern texts on extramission: 'And we knowe that all other scences worke by receauing outwarde thinges in warde. Onely the sight worketh outwardly,' Richarde Coortesse, [Hugh, of Saint-Victor, 1096?-1141], *An exposition of certayne words of S. Paule, to the Romaynes* ([London]: [Jackson], 1577), sig. Dii(v).

<sup>378</sup> Vaughan, 'King John', p. 385.

other direction. (As a viewer Constance is equally self-interested). Louis became more attractive to himself; Salisbury, the messenger, becomes 'ugly' to Constance. Constance's distorted perception is then aimed at her own son; when Arthur tries to console her she states that if he were ugly she would not care for his loss because she would not love him, but he is fair and therefore ought to be great. The passage recalls a stage villain recent to contemporary memory:

If thou [...] wert grim,  
Ugly, and sland'rous to thy mother's womb,  
Full of unpleasing blots and sightless stains,  
Lame, foolish, crooked, swart, prodigious,  
Patch'd with foul moles and eye-offending marks,  
I would not care ...

For then I should not love thee (2.2.43-9)

The description unmistakably recalls *Richard III*. Constance imagines another son for whom she could have no pity (Richard III finds himself in just such a position). The alternative reality that she conjures up continues the theme of ugliness and beauty and emphasises that any view is merely a matter of perspective. Shakespeare rehearses a commonplace that Meres includes in *Palladis Tamia*:

As diuerse glasses make one thing to appeare diuersly,  
according to the diuersitie of the glasses: so diuerse men  
doe interprete one deed diuerselie, according to the  
diuersitie of mindes; that which seemeth great to one,

seemeth small to an other, one man esteemes it beautifull,  
an other deformed.<sup>379</sup>

Shakespeare takes this diversity of perception one step further. Where Meres suggests each man perceives an event or person differently to another, Shakespeare shows that an individual is also subject to diverse and mutable perceptions. To celebrate the peace, King Philip declares the day a festival day: the sun, playing the 'alchemist' (3.1.4) transforms the day: 'Turning with splendour of his precious eye/'The meagre cloddy earth to glittering gold:' (3.1.5-6). Visual transformation and alchemy are relevant to Constance's changing perception discussed above; here Constance disagrees with Philip, calling the day shameful and wishing it could be struck from the week. The alchemical transformation happens only in the eye, not in reality. Constance accuses Philip of hypocrisy: 'You have beguil'd me with a counterfeit/Resembling majesty' (3.1.25-6). Constance's apprehension proves well founded, the peace is short lived and 'the outward eye of fickle France' (2.1.583) will change direction again. Sight might be the 'precious sense' (4.1.93), but the play shows that it is constantly subject to distortion.

Sight is also explored in the play not just as a conduit of information but also as a form of communication. Ambiguous communication becomes central to the climactic events of the play. Insecure in his kingship, King John wishes to dispose of his rival claimant, the boy Arthur. Understanding his desires to be criminal, he searches for, what Cavanagh has called, 'an

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<sup>379</sup> Meres, *Palladis Tamia*, fol. 39v.

untraceable, inaudible discourse'.<sup>380</sup> It is not only an aural witness that John fears; he wishes to communicate without the knowledge of any of the sense organs:

Or if that thou couldst see me without eyes,  
Hear me without thine ears, and make reply  
Without a tongue, using conceit alone,  
Without eyes, ears, and harmful sound of words:  
Then, in despite of brooded watchful day,  
I would into thy bosom pour my thoughts:  
But, ah, I will not (3.2.58-64)

John fears a visual witness as much as an aural one; he is weary of the 'watchful day'. In the previous scene the playwright employs the sun-as-eye convention, and as the sun was also regarded as the 'eye of heaven',<sup>381</sup> John's fear is not only of a human witness but a divine one. In Shakespeare's retelling, the thought of removing Arthur originates with John; in Holinshed it is 'through persuasion of his counsellors'.<sup>382</sup> The (almost entirely) monosyllabic exchange that follows, in a near perfect line of iambic pentameter, illustrates that John's unspoken projection has been successful:

*King John.* Death

*Hubert.* My lord?

*King John.* A grave.

*Hubert.* He shall not live.

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<sup>380</sup> Cavanagh, *Language and Politics*, p. 99.

<sup>381</sup> a convention, but Cf. *Richard II*, 3.2.37.

<sup>382</sup> Holinshed, vol. 6, p. 165.

John Roe points out that Beaurline keeps the Folio's 'my lord' 'as an indicative statement', whereas Rowe amends 'My lord' to a question; Roe argues that 'Hubert's reply shows his complete understanding of John's remark without the need to question further'.<sup>383</sup> But the initially compliant tool-villain experiences some anxiety and fears his pity will be aroused: 'If I talk to him, with his innocent prate/He will awake my mercy' (4.1.25-6).<sup>384</sup> This is indeed what happens: Arthur's 'words do take possession of my bosom.' (4.1.32). At the moment when Hubert's intention is made clear Arthur pleads for his most 'precious sense' (4.1.93):

Hubert, the utterance of a brace of tongues  
Must needs want pleading for a pair of eyes.  
Let me not hold my tongue, let me not, Hubert;  
Or, Hubert, if you will, cut out my tongue,  
So I may keep mine eyes. O, spare mine eyes,  
Though to no use but still to look on you (4.1.97-102)

The impression created by words has been a theme in the wooing scene and is Hubert's fear. But actually it is not words alone that persuade Hubert from his horrifying task. Arthur's insistence on looking on Hubert is, to use Sergei Lobanov-Rostovsky's phrase, the 'shaming gaze' (made all the more powerful by Shakespeare's decision to keep Arthur a child) that reflects Hubert back to himself.<sup>385</sup> Arthur says the iron will not be heated because 'the fire is dead with grief [...] The breath of heaven hath blown his spirit

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<sup>383</sup> Roe, *Shakespeare and Machiavelli*, p. 113-4.

<sup>384</sup> Cf. Richard III's warning to the murderers not to 'hear' Clarence 'plead/For Clarence is well-spoken and perhaps/May move your hearts to pity' (1.3.347).

<sup>385</sup> Rostovsky, 'Taming the Basilisk', p. 196. In *Troublesome Raigne* Arthur is older, see also Vaughan, 'King John', p. 391.



out,' (4.1.105-109). Arthur's image recalls the divine witness that John had feared, Arthur's shaming gaze is assisted by another observer in 'heaven'.

Arthur is more willing to lose his speech than his sight; sight is thus conceived of as a superior sense. Despite Lutheran attempts to displace sight with the superiority of hearing, it was an oft repeated commonplace that sight outranked the other senses, not least because eyes are placed physically highest in the face.<sup>386</sup> Synesius described sight as 'the quickest, the lieliest', and 'the most necessarie' of the senses in Abraham Fleming's translation of 1579; Robert Albott wrote 'of all the five Sences,' sight was the 'most piercing and subtile' in 1599.<sup>387</sup> In the blinding scene it would seem that Arthur has more faith in the power of his eyes to persuade than his tongue: for Honigmann, '[t]he sub-surface significances that gradually attach to repeating images convert eyes into symbols of right, and hands into might.'<sup>388</sup> Honigmann's view is better understood through Rostovsky's argument for the 'ideological power' of the eye and its capacity to impose shame'.<sup>389</sup> When Hubert decides not to burn his eyes out, the gaze remains as powerful as it was before, now affirming Hubert's virtue. The relieved Arthur re-identifies his tormentor: 'O, now you look like Hubert. All this while/You were disguised' (4.1.125-6). Hubert reverts to his previous good image in Arthur's eyes as a consequence of the shaming reflection Hubert has seen in Arthur's. This perspectival reversal will be repeated in the same

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<sup>386</sup> For the eyes as the physically highest sense organs, acting as a 'watchman' over the other senses see Richarde Coortesse, [Hugh, of Saint-Victor, 1096?-1141], *An exposition of certayne words of S. Paule, to the Romaynes* ([London]: [Jackson], 1577), sig. Dii. V.

<sup>387</sup> Synesius, *A paradoxe, proving by reason and example, that baldness is much better than bushie haire*, trans. Abraham Fleming ([London] : Denham, 1579), sig. B.v.r. Robert Albott, *Wits Theater of the Little World* ([London]: R[oberts], 1599), fol. 42r.

<sup>388</sup> Honigmann, p. lxi.

<sup>389</sup> Rostovsky, 'Taming the Basilisk', pp. 199, 196.

order in the following scene. In Holinshed, rather than being moved by persuasion, Hubert's disobedience is conducted in the interests of the king:

not doubting but rather to haue thanks than displeasure at  
the kings hands, for deliuering him of such infamie as  
would haue redounded vnto his hignesse, if the yoong  
gentleman had beene so cruellie dealt withall.<sup>390</sup>

By contrast, as Paola Pugliatti has shown, *The Troublesome Raigne* shows Hubert as motivated by the understanding of 'the conflict between John's will and the superior will of God'.<sup>391</sup> Shakespeare's version, rather than following the chronicle or the anonymous play straightforwardly, opens a space in which to explore the power of the sight. Hubert's actions are not part of a rational thought process, but the consequence of a series of looks and his participation in this moralizing, visual exchange.

Hubert allows Arthur to escape and circulates a rumour that Arthur is dead and once John realises the disastrous consequences of being associated with boy's death, he turns on Hubert in a brilliant act of deflection. John now blames Hubert for Arthur's death, saying the thought would not even have occurred to him had it not been for the sight of a villain:

Hadst not thou been by,  
A fellow by the hand of nature mark'd,  
Quoted and sign'd to do a deed of shame,  
This murther had not come into my mind (4.2.220-3)

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<sup>390</sup> Holinshed, vol. 6, p. 165.

<sup>391</sup> Pugliatti, *Shakespeare the Historian*, p. 91.

The passage reminds us once more of Richard III who corrupts others through the very visibility of his body.<sup>392</sup> At least two writers, Marie Ange Simard and Thomas Bilson, compared the sense organs to gateways through which sin could enter.<sup>393</sup> Sight of a villainous face thus makes ill deeds actually happen according to John: 'How oft the sight of a means to do ill deeds/Make deeds ill done!' (4.2.219-20). This scene increases antipathy towards John: he has proved fickle and shirks responsibility.<sup>394</sup> In attributing the cause to Hubert's supposedly foul looks he recalls the previous scene in which Hubert's good image was restored in Arthur's eyes. This emphasises the weakness of John's eyes on two levels. Firstly this weakness suggests improper regulation of the senses, a route to disorder as we have seen in the presentation of Cade. John's temptation through looking at Hubert, to quote J. N.'s *A Pathway to Penitence* (1591), is an example of 'unchast seeing'.<sup>395</sup> Secondly through his inaccurate perception

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<sup>392</sup> For example in the wooing scene, Anne exclaims 'Thou doest infect mine eyes' (1.2.151).

<sup>393</sup> For the five senses as five gates see, Marie Ange Simard, *An Introduction to the love of God. Accompted among the workes of S. Augustine* (London: Purfoote, 1574), p. 51-2 [page numbers have been added by hand]. For the senses as windows see Bilson, 'By the fiue senses of the bodie (*saieth* Ierome) as it were by certaine windowes, vices (*or sinnes*) haue their entrance into the soule.' Thomas Bilson, *The effect of certaine Sermons* (London: Short, 1599), p. 255.

<sup>394</sup> Bonavita suggests another way in which John is compromised 'John's shifting moral ground, his willingness to form or break any alliance means that within the play, there is nothing to distinguish him as being 'England', any more than the King of France has any defining characteristic, and therefore nothing to prevent the domestic, the familiar, from becoming the alien and foreign.' in 'Staying True to England', p. 55. This point is made tersely again in *Henry V* as I discuss in a later chapter, the English and French appeals to the 'God of Battles' minimizes difference. Another argument for the similarity of the two kings in *King John* is made by Finnerty, who suggests their friendship is based on the Ciceronian model, in 'Both are alike', p. 42.

<sup>395</sup> J. N., *A Pathway to Penitence with sundry devout prayers* (London: Wolfe, 1591), p. 49.

(Hubert has in fact proved a better man).<sup>396</sup> A more generous view is offered by Roe who suggests John might be justified; John does not command murder outright and he uses the conditional ‘I *would*’ [Roe’s emphasis]. He could have been wishing merely to be rid of evil thoughts:

He speaks as a man tempted, and aware of his temptation,  
so that it is possible to infer that what he *truly* hopes for is  
deliverance from evil thoughts. Such an interpretation may  
not strike us as convincing, but neither can it be ruled out  
entirely.<sup>397</sup>

Roe’s tentative argument could be ruled out: in recalling the earlier scene John himself does not seem to distinguish between his desires as thoughts and express commands, but the blame is instead on Hubert as an accurate reader of faces: ‘thou didst understand me by my signs’ (4.2.237). John accuses Hubert of denying him the shaming gaze, that Hubert himself was corrected by in the blinding scene:

Hadst thou but shook thy head or made a pause  
When I spake darkly what I purposed,  
Or turn’d an *eye of doubt* upon my face, [...]  
Deep *shame* had struck me dumb (4. 2. 231-5, emphasis added)

To prevent further damage, John banishes Hubert from his sight at the very moment when ‘foreign powers’ threaten ‘Even at my gates’

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<sup>396</sup> ‘The opening sequence of the play thus trains audiences to regard verbal descriptions of characters’ physical features as meaningful theatrical signifiers. Playgoers are taught to disattend the real bodies of actors...’, Erika T. Lin, “‘Lord of Thy Presence’: Bodies, Performance, and Audience Interpretation in Shakespeare’s King John”, in *Imagining the Audience in Early Modern Drama, 1558-1642* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 116.

<sup>397</sup> Roe, *Shakespeare and Machiavelli*, p. 119.

(4.2.244).<sup>398</sup> The association is pertinent; the real threat and the cause of his current danger are actually because his *sensory* gates were not guarded. The proposed banishment of Hubert – ‘Out of my sight’ (4.2.242) – is a too little too late attempt at defending a sensory gate. The expulsion itself is rather telling; John commands ‘Out of my sight, and never see *me* more!’ (4.2.242, my emphasis). Hubert’s punishment is to be deprived of the presence of the king, to not be able to look on him: this in itself is conventional, but in the context of reflected and corrupting gazes, John perhaps incriminates himself as the originator of murderous intent. (Shakespeare has already emphasised John’s guilt by omitting the input of the counsellors mentioned in Holinshed).<sup>399</sup>

The paradox is that Hubert has in fact not been the cruel villain that John defames him as; Arthur has of course been spared. Hubert’s ‘abhorred aspect’ ‘fit for bloody villainy’ (4.2.224-5) disappears once John learns the truth. John acknowledges that it was ‘rage’ that made him ‘blind’, ‘And foul imaginary eyes of blood/ Presented thee more hideous than thou art.’ (4.2.264-6).<sup>400</sup> John’s retraction is qualified to say the least: while he describes his own eyes as ‘foul imaginary eyes’, his use of ‘more hideous’

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<sup>398</sup> Bonavita observes that this is the only Shakespeare history play ‘which represents the actual invasion of the country by a foreign-led force’, ‘Staying True to England’, p. 60.

<sup>399</sup> Finnerty argues ‘Not only are Hubert and the Bastard in different ways wise counsellors, at various points in the play, they become John’s other, second or better self. In so doing they exceed Montaigne’s idea of mutuality’, in ‘Both are alike’, p. 46. Shakespeare turns to the issue of counsellors (and the misrepresentation of) again in *Richard II*.

<sup>400</sup> Lin links this section to physiognomy treatises where the art of reading a face correctly was only possible by God, ‘Proper interpretation of the body rests on a shaky foundation because visual signifiers are themselves unreliable’, ‘Lord of thy presence’, p. 126. Also ‘It undermines the discourse of how beauty signifies moral righteousness’ p. 125. She continues ‘bodies themselves are subject to change, and indeed, the very act of seeing is called into question.’ p. 127.

seems to imply that Hubert is *a bit* hideous. Actually the appearance of the historical John, like that of Richard III, was contested. Holinshed dismisses an account of John that suggested ‘of looke and countenance’ he was ‘displeasant and angrie; somewhat cruell of nature’ as an ‘enuious report’.<sup>401</sup> John’s description of Hubert might thus suggest an element of projection as well as reciprocal gazes. Lin suggests *King John* expresses ‘ambivalence about perception[...] through references to the malleability of sight and the changeability of the body, a dynamic that parallels the play’s emphasis on identity as something that can be altered.’<sup>402</sup> I would suggest that the play is not just about the malleability of sight but about how looking and being looked at changes the way a person sees and *thinks*, and that this exchange can sometimes have a moralising effect.

Sight continues to be a subject of debate in the assessment of Arthur’s body. Arthur, spared from torture, attempts to escape but in leaping from a wall falls and dies accidentally. Three nobles, horrified at discovering the body of the prince, assess the empirical evidence before them:

*Salisbury.* Sir Richard, what think you? You have beheld.  
 Or have you read, or heard? Or could you think,  
 Or do you almost think, although you see,  
 That you do see? Could thought, without this object,  
 Form such another? (4.3.41-4)

Baffled and shocked by the sight before him, Salisbury attempts to separate the sensory process from thinking. Seeing, reading and hearing are precursors to thinking. ‘Reading’ here refers to the interpreting of signs;

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<sup>401</sup> Holinshed, vol. 6, p. 196.

<sup>402</sup> Lin, ‘Lord of thy presence’, pp. 126-7.

face reading has been an important recurring feature in the play. The passage might be suggestive of ‘legal interrogatories’;<sup>403</sup> indeed Salisbury’s methodical approach, focusing on exact observation and the physical information available to the senses seems to be in order to avoid a misleading cognitive leap. The leap is made nonetheless, and the lords suspect murder. Plato’s ideas about the nature of vision suggest the difficulty in ‘distinguish[ing] the perceiver’s mental apprehension of the object from the object itself.’<sup>404</sup> Huarte explained a similar concept in his study of the senses

neither the eies make the colour, nor the tast the sauours,  
nor the feeling the palpable qualities; but the whole is made  
and compounded by nature before anie of them be  
acquainted with his obiect. Men because they carrie not  
regard to this bad operation of the vnderstanding, take  
hardinesse to deliuer confidently their owne opinion,  
without knowing (in certaintie) of what sort their wit is,  
and whither it can a fashion a truth well or ill.<sup>405</sup>

The object here becomes the same as the perceived object, in other words, unaware of the process of interpretation, man mistakes his perception for the true object. Thus thought cannot be extricated from sensory experience.<sup>406</sup> The modern sense of ‘speculation’ as thinking or reflecting encapsulates the inseparability of seeing and thinking.<sup>407</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> Honigmann’s note, p. 111.

<sup>404</sup> Nordlund, *Dark Lantern*, p. 52., also Cf. my fn. 374.

<sup>405</sup> Huarte, *Examination of men’s wits*, p. 162.

<sup>406</sup> In the introduction I quote the Aristotelianism in Burton that there is nothing in thought that is not first in the sense. It was often repeated, for example ‘*Aristotle* [...] affirming [...] there can grow no notice in the vnderstanding, which hath not

John's earlier attempt at 'inaudible discourse' does not support Roe's suggestion that John does not command murder outright; it can be discounted as Salisbury argues that 'thought, without [...] object,' cannot 'Form such another?' Salisbury's meditation on empirical evidence is integral to the other instances of observation (and face reading) in the play. His reasoning leads us back to the Aristotelian origins of the Gestaltian principle of vision – that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts – because where physical evidence ought to suggest that Arthur fell, the lords conclude he has been murdered.<sup>408</sup> They are, in fact, wrong and right: Arthur dies by an accident that is part of a chain of events that originated with harmful intent. Huarte's investigation of the senses translated in 1594 tackles the contradiction in Aristotle's theory of knowledge, that not all knowledge was sense-derived, some knowledge came from the soul.<sup>409</sup> Huarte alludes to this as 'foregoing knowledge' that is aided by the previous experience of the senses, but also knowledge that comes from the 'reasonable' soul<sup>410</sup> This latter mode of perception is perhaps what the nobles are demonstrating. Salisbury thus captures the conflict in Aristotle's theory of knowledge. The Bastard's response is perhaps the most apt: 'I am amazed, methinks, and lose my way/Among the thorns and dangers of this

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first taken passage by some of the five senses', Huarte, *Examination of mens wits*, p. 39.

<sup>407</sup> Nordlund, *Dark Lantern*, p. 55. 'a term that collapses the act of seeing with the act of interpreting', Lin, 'Lord of thy presence', p. 126.

<sup>408</sup> Lin also observes that Arthur's body is incorrectly read, 'Lord of thy presence', p. 121-2.

<sup>409</sup> The 'part of the soul then that is called intellect', Aristotle suggests, is 'capable through itself of thinking', this is separate from the activity of sense perception. *De Anima*, p. 202.

<sup>410</sup> Huarte, *Examination of mens wits*, p. 39.



world (4.3.140-1).<sup>411</sup> For Chernaik '*King John* is a play in which the audience as well as the characters can easily lose their way, with their expectations confounded.'<sup>412</sup> But the Bastard perhaps refers as much to the problems of empiricism.

In the final act of the play John imagines himself as 'a scribbled form, drawn with a pen/Upon a parchment, and against this fire/Do I shrink up.' (5.7.32-4). At his most sympathetic, John finally engages in the act of introspection. In the outcome of Arthur's death he has been exposed to and become the object of the shaming gaze, even though he is technically not responsible for Arthur's death. Haunted by his own conscience and echoing *Dr Faustus* in his line 'Within me is a hell' (4.7.46), John is perhaps at his most engaging.<sup>413</sup> Here and in his earlier treatment of Hubert an analogy can be drawn with Elizabeth I's alleged remorse after Mary's execution;<sup>414</sup> the play was potentially more inflammatory than Beaurline allowed for. Despite any sympathy the audience might feel for the king in his dying moments, his rulership has been undermined at every turn. His demand for a second coronation only emphasises his illegitimacy and his status as usurper in the play: as Howard and Rackin argue, '[h]aving himself crowned a second time, he denies the permanence and efficacy of the ritual

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<sup>411</sup> The word 'amaze' is linked to senses in *Hamlet* 'and amaze indeed/The very faculties of eyes and ears.' (2.2.521-2). In *Henry VI, Part 1*, Lucy speaking about Talbot says 'Were but his picture left amongst you here,/It would amaze the proudest of you all', 4.7.84. The word is not especially connected with sight in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

<sup>412</sup> Chernaik, p. 72.

<sup>413</sup> In *Dr Faustus* Mephistopheles laments that 'where we are is hell,/And where hell is must we ever be.' 2.1.125-6.

<sup>414</sup> For a summary see Honigmann, p. xxvii-xxix. Both Arthur and Mary had their rights to the throne barred, both were to all intents and purposes murdered, and both cases employed a scapegoat (Davison /Hubert). 'Shakespeare's manipulation of the historical facts brings out the similarities of the reigns of John and Elizabeth excitingly, almost dangerously.' p. xxix.

that made him king'.<sup>415</sup> The image of himself as a written document about to be consumed by fire seems to allude to the loss of a real or true historical record, or as Howard and Rackin again put it John associates himself with fragile mutable historical text.<sup>416</sup> The very 'authority of history is compromised' earlier in the play, when, as Howard and Rackin argue, 'it is not John but the King of France who values history and wants to write it.'<sup>417</sup> The 'scribbled form drawn with a pen' of course also reminds the audience of the playwright's role in creating forms.

The play develops a series of reflections between characters, between the stage and the audience, between the present and the past. Shakespeare's method enacts the image of two facing mirrors whose corridor of repeated images in infinite regress ensures that the original image is lost. Like the scribbled form that shrinks and disappears even as it is written in the example discussed in the previous paragraph, this series of reflections serves as a metaphor for historiography as repeated story telling that renders the objective truth of the original irrecoverable. In his chapter on Bale, Schwyzer argues that *King Johan* 'suggests that chronicle history is not only inaccurate but a kind of mirror world or negative inversion of the truth.'<sup>418</sup> But as he goes on to show, Bale is not exactly relying on other historical sources but on 'alternative hermeneutics' and 'historical typology'.<sup>419</sup> It would not be a revelation to say that Bale's version is a distorted version of history. Shakespeare's play develops the genre by questioning the very trope of the mirror, so prevalent in early modern

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<sup>415</sup> Howard and Rackin, *Engendering a Nation*, p. 132.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>418</sup> Schwyzer, 'Paranoid History', p. 506.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid., p. 507, 508.

literature, as an educational or useful tool; he illustrates instead that it is a manipulative and unreliable one. His inquiry into the value of empirical knowledge destabilises any trust we might put in perception; Hamel argues that 'Shakespeare undermines rational explanation to such a degree as to call into question our ordinary faith in narrative exposition and our trust that events are knowable'.<sup>420</sup> Therefore Shakespeare gives no prescription for understanding, and instead provides a testimony to the distorting power of perception. The plays have no political message, religious or confessional stance, and perhaps this is why contemporary political analogies never really got him into trouble. *King John* takes us on a circuitous route through the possibilities of John as arch-villain, proto-protestant, misguided victim and so on, rendering the text a Rorschach test from which the spectator or reader constructs yet another subjective image.

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<sup>420</sup> Hamel in *King John: New Perspectives*, ed. D. T. Curren-Aquino (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1989), p. 53. quoted in Vaughan.

## CHAPTER FIVE – SWEET SOUNDS AND ‘VENOM SOUNDS’: ORALITY IN

### *RICHARD II*

Shakespeare’s early histories demonstrate the playwright’s marked interest in ways of seeing. This chapter turns away from the visual emphasis in the first five history plays and argues that Shakespeare turns his attention more fully to ways of speaking and hearing. *Richard II* (1595) is distinctive in its lack of action on stage; the history plays up until now have been highly theatrical including battle scenes, the conjuration of spirits and potential acts of horrific torture. *Richard II* contains no fighting to speak of; the tournament of 1.3 is prevented from taking place. The play is demonstrably more concerned with oral performance. Charles Forker has noted ‘the matrix of references to language itself’ in *Richard II*,<sup>421</sup> and the emphasis is indeed on spoken language. A close study of the first act reveals exactly how foregrounded orality is; there are literally hundreds of references that may be considered oral or aural (See Appendix 3). This chapter will look at the specifically oral performances of Henry Bolingbroke and the three characters he fixates his hatred on: Bushy, Bagot and Green. In Tillyard’s formula Bolingbroke’s sinful usurpation is the crime for which England will pay for through the Wars of the Roses. Michael Davies’ more nuanced

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<sup>421</sup> William Shakespeare, *King Richard II*, ed. by Charles R. Forker, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Thomson Learning, 2002), p. 65. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition.

reading identifies the language of Calvinist conversion in the *Henry IV* plays and in the final play, *Henry V*, the ideal Protestant king, repents the sins of his father.<sup>422</sup> This trajectory is definitively oral: it begins with slander and ‘treason by words’ and ends with the act of prayer. This chapter will look at the first stage in this Lancastrian arc: the original political sin that begins the Wars of the Roses, Bolingbroke’s usurpation of Richard II. *Richard II* does not dramatise the contest of physical acts for a physical kingdom; rather it is a battle of speech acts for signs.

The real problem of the play is Gloucester’s murder, an event that takes place before the play begins and one that is also the subject of the anonymous play *Woodstock* (1591-1609).<sup>423</sup> In *Woodstock* Richard is shown plotting the murder with his favourites. In Shakespeare’s play Richard is only implicated in his uncle’s murder and the issue is never resolved; Shakespeare deliberately keeps things ambiguous. The question is never answered but it is not to be dismissed, in Dover Wilson’s words, as ‘a minor strand in the texture of the play’.<sup>424</sup> the entire play centres on this past event. Gloucester/Woodstock’s murder is the reason for the first tournament in which Mowbray stands accused, for Bolingbroke’s banishment, and for the second tournament in which Aumerle stands accused. It thus shapes the main action of the play.

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<sup>422</sup> Michael Davies, ‘Falstaff’s Lateness: Calvinism and the Protestant Hero in *Henry IV*’, *The Review of English Studies*, n. s., 56.225 (2005), 351-78.

<sup>423</sup> Macdonald P. Jackson argues against the tradition for treating *Woodstock* as anterior to *Richard II*. Instead he argues for a later dating of the play, finding more linguistic analogies with early seventeenth-century plays than with late sixteenth-century ones. ‘Shakespeare’s *Richard II* and the Anonymous *Thomas of Woodstock*’, *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 14 (2001), pp. 17-65.

<sup>424</sup> *Richard II*, ed. by Dover Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. lxviii.

Whereas in the past critics have argued that Shakespeare endorses neither Richard's nor Bolingbroke's actions (Dover Wilson), Irving Ribner sees Shakespeare as on the side of Bolingbroke, and that Shakespeare's argument is similar to William Tyndale's in *The Obedience of a Christian Man* (1528): 'better a strong and efficient king with illegal title than [...] a weak and effeminate king'.<sup>425</sup> Most critics, however, including Ribner, ultimately come to agree with Tillyard; though Shakespeare may seem to favour Bolingbroke there is no doubt of his culpability. Bolingbroke himself is hardly triumphant at the end of the play, concluding 'I'll make a voyage to the Holy Land/To wash this blood off from my guilt hand' (5.6.49-50).

Post-banishment, Bolingbroke gives three major speeches. In 2.3 he defends his illegitimate return, 'I come for Lancaster'; in 3.1 he denounces Bushy and Green, and orders their execution; at Flint Castle in 3.3, he commands 'Through brazen trumpet send the breath of parley/Into his ruined ears' and prepares to meet Richard. From Bolingbroke's return onwards, the scenes are alternately dominated by the two opponents (or their representatives) until 3.3 where Richard and Bolingbroke, or 'fire' and 'water', to use Bolingbroke's own image, meet (3.3.56). All three speeches purport to claim his right of inheritance, and yet Bolingbroke does not bear up well to close scrutiny. Irving Ribner argues:

that at our first view of the two men, Richard is treated very unsympathetically by Shakespeare, whereas Bolingbroke wins the sympathies of the audience. But as

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<sup>425</sup> Cubeta, *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Richard*, p. 35, 33.

the play progresses, audience sympathy for Bolingbroke steadily declines, while that for Richard steadily increases.<sup>426</sup>

This chapter follows in that tradition and suggests the reason audience sympathy might decrease for Bolingbroke is due to the oral-visual contradiction in his performance. We ought to feel sympathy for him: it is not at all clear why he is banished, and indeed the punishment might seem unjust in the absence of an explicit crime. Richard has been complicit in murder (though this is obfuscated in the play) – so why do we tend to have limited sympathy for Bolingbroke? I argue that he commits many of the same errors as Richard; his oral performances betray weaknesses, especially in demonstrating he acts out of personal grievance. His accusations of treason directed at Mowbray are later switched without reason to Aumerle. While this may demonstrate his knowledge of the king's guilt and that unable to accuse the king directly, he accuses the king's followers, it also suggests impulsiveness. This is supported by his execution of Bushy and Green without trial, and the lists of nobles reported executed in 5.6. Bolingbroke's silences are also highly telling – he provides no defence or even response to Carlisle's horror at his usurpation. Bolingbroke's early silent disobedience to his father is demonstrated by his reluctance to throw down Mowbray's gage; Gaunt has to urge him: 'When, Harry, when?' (1.1.162). This early example of disobedience ought to prepare us for his later actions. Disobeying one's father was akin to a sort of treason itself in disrupting the patriarchal body politic. James VI had described the king as a

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<sup>426</sup> Ribner, *The English History Play*, p. 162.

‘naturall father’ to his people in *Basilikon Doron* (1599).<sup>427</sup> Bolingbroke’s real oral triumph, as Brents Stirling has observed, is in managing to make Richard suggest returning to London for the deposition, without saying it himself.<sup>428</sup> There is as much to be read about Bolingbroke’s character in his silences as in his speech.

In speech he is not without skill. Bolingbroke bases the legitimacy of his return to England in a rhetorical quip: ‘As I was banished, I was banished Hereford;/But as I come, I come for Lancaster.’ (2.3.113-4). It is a crafty trick: he openly confesses ‘Attorneys are denied me,’ (2.3.134) – and therefore implicitly vocalises the illegality of his actions. Jack Benoit Gohn’s important article investigates the legal questions of the play; Bolingbroke’s return may be illegitimate, but so was the crown’s usurpation of his inheritance. And yet, as Gohn suggests,

Even though Bolingbroke has been denied what we should today call due process, it is not altogether satisfactory for the aggrieved party to seek recourse outside the proper channels.<sup>429</sup>

There are, it seems, a great many reasons to feel antipathy for Bolingbroke; his political and moral course is questionable. His motives are unclear, and Stirling is right to say ‘there are obvious lacunae between his early disclaimers of ambition and his sudden coronation in Act IV.’<sup>430</sup>

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<sup>427</sup> James VI, *Basilikon Doron* (Edinburgh: Walde-graue, 1599), Bk. 2, p. 29.

<sup>428</sup> Brents Stirling, “‘Up, Cousin, Up; Your Heart is Up, I know’”, in Cubeta, p. 93.

<sup>429</sup> Jack Benoit Gohn, ‘Richard II: Shakespeare’s Legal Brief on the Royal Prerogative and the Succession to the Throne’, *Georgetown Law Journal*, 70 (1982), p. 965.

<sup>430</sup> Stirling, p. 92.



Of all his speeches in the play, Bolingbroke's speech in 3.1 is the oddest and most frustrating. It is also a signal moment in the turn of Fortune's wheel; it is a demonstration of Bolingbroke's power, his weeding of the commonwealth and so his ascension to the throne. His demonstration of power constitutes the removal of Richard's favourites. This chapter explores Bolingbroke's accusation and condemnation of Bushy and Green, an episode that concentrates several oral modes: Bolingbroke's rhetorical speech, and the political problem of flattery versus good counsel. This section will move between Bolingbroke's speech, cited below, and the presentation of the flatterers in the rest of the play. Paul Gaudet has convincingly shown that Bolingbroke's villification of Bushy and Green is not justified by the rest of the play, and that Shakespeare's presentation of these characters does not follow the parasitical image of them presented in the chronicles, *A Mirror* and *Woodstock*.<sup>431</sup> My chapter develops this argument with closer reference to *Woodstock* and suggests that Shakespeare expands on the scepticism found in Daniel.<sup>432</sup> The unjustified execution of Bushy and Green fits into the larger pattern of oral-visual contradiction to be found across the histories. Hal will say in *Henry IV, Part 1*, 'We will not trust our eyes without our ears' (5.4.136) and the sentiment seems appropriate to this play. Bolingbroke's oral accusation is not supported by any visual evidence. This disjunction in turn reveals more about Bolingbroke than it does about the flatterers or Richard.

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<sup>431</sup> Paul Gaudet, 'The "Parasitical" Counselors in Shakespeare's *Richard II*: A Problem in Dramatic Interpretation', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 33.2 (1982), 142-154.

<sup>432</sup> Gaudet briefly mentions Daniel's ambivalence, p. 143.

Bolingbroke's first act of power is the execution of Bushy and Green. This episode stands out singly from the numerous trials of the *Henry VI* trilogy, and *All is True* where individuals are accused and evidence is tested or weighed in order to lead to a conviction. Bolingbroke bypasses legal process entirely and plays judge, jury and executioner in one long speech. As Gaudet has shown, the speech is also highly presumptuous in assuming Richard's kingly authority.<sup>433</sup> Bolingbroke's sentencing speech is cited in full below:

Bring forth these men. [*Bushy and Green stand forth.*]  
Bushy and Green, I will not vex your souls –  
Since presently your souls must part your bodies –  
With too much urging your pernicious loves,  
For 'twere no charity; yet to wash your blood  
From off my hands, here in the view of men  
I will unfold some causes of your deaths:  
You have misled a prince, a royal king,  
A happy gentleman in blood and lineaments,  
By you unhappied and disfigured clean.  
You have in manner with your sinful hours  
Made a divorce betwixt his queen and him,  
Broke the possession of a royal bed  
And stained the beauty of a fair queen's cheeks  
With tears drawn from her eyes by your foul wrongs.  
Myself, a prince by fortune of my birth,

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<sup>433</sup> 'Bolingbroke assumes Richard's function of justice, prefiguring his usurpation of Richard's kingship [...] Functioning as both accuser and judge', Gaudet, p. 150.

Near to the King in blood, and near in love  
Till you did make him misinterpret me,  
Have stooped my neck under you injuries  
And sighed my English breath in foreign clouds,  
Eating the bitter bread of banishment,  
Whilst you have fed upon my signories,  
Disparked my parks and felled my forest woods,  
From my own windows torn my household coat,  
Rased out my imprese, leaving me no sign  
Save men's opinions and my living blood  
To show the world I am a gentleman.  
This and much more, much more than twice all this,  
Condemns you to the death. See them delivered over  
To execution and the hand of death.

Considering the centrality of this speech to Bolingbroke's ascension, (it is the second major speech of three), that its subjects are Bushy and Green is unexpected and unprecedented – they are two characters who really have very little bearing on the plot. There is also no direct dramatic evidence to support any of Bolingbroke's accusations. Other than the two trial scenes, he is never seen to speak to them, nor they about him. This unqualified vilification of the king's favourites is repeated elsewhere in the play by other characters, though as Derek Cohen points out, the trio do little to earn such a reputation.<sup>434</sup> Bolingbroke's highly embittered speech and its long list of accusations of a public and private nature ends in an almost

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<sup>434</sup> Derek Cohen, 'The Containment of Monarchy: *Richard II*' in *Shakespeare's Culture of Violence* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1993), p. 19.

hysterical ‘This and much more, much more than twice all this’. The charge is vague – it seems to allude to something sinister – and yet as this is not dramatised in Shakespeare’s play the sudden amplification of their crimes to double in quantity should act as an alarm. Bolingbroke’s oral performance is rendered weak as it lacks the corroborating visual evidence. The sudden expansion to ‘much more than twice’ reflects a major problem of the play: its reliance on hearsay. The key source of ambiguity in the play is due to reported speech. Bushy, Bagot and Green are demonized by what others say, not their own actions. In fact reported speech becomes a recurring contention in the play. Bolingbroke’s deliberate ingratiation with the people, in defiance of the social order is mocked by Richard. Richard derides Bolingbroke’s cap-doffing to ‘an oyster-wench’ (1.4.31) and even mimics Bolingbroke’s speech:

With ‘Thanks, my countrymen, my loving friends’,

As were our England in reversion his, (1.4.34-5)

Aumerle’s complicity in Gloucester’s death is echoed in a string of ‘I heard you say’ accusations in 4.1. A particularly loaded example of reported speech is Exton’s recollection of the newly crowned Bolingbroke’s plea:

Didst thou not mark the King, what words he spake:

‘Have I no friend will rid me of this living fear?’ (5.4.2-3)

The moment recalls King John’s desire for the removal of Arthur. Exton is prompted to murder by overhearing Bolingbroke’s implicit instructions, though Bolingbroke of course never admits to them. Reported speech and hearsay are thus important throughout the play and the condemnation of Bushy and Green must be seen in this context. As such we might consider that they are defamed by rumour and slander. The power of rumour to

alter, exaggerate or slander is a significant concern in the oral culture of early modern England.<sup>435</sup> The power of words to make or destroy a reputation is clearly in Shakespeare's mind – Falstaff tells us that 'honour' is but 'a word' in *Henry IV, Part 1* (5.1.133-4), and it is Rumour that opens *Henry IV Part 2*.<sup>436</sup>

Tillyard's opinion that 'Bushy, Bagot and Green are morality figures, and were probably marked in some way by their dress as abstract vices' is not satisfactory.<sup>437</sup> Audience members familiar with *A Mirror for Magistrates* (1571) may have recalled that Richard II put 'always flatterers false in trust';<sup>438</sup> literate members may have known of the flatterers' reputation from Holinshed and Hall, as Gaudet has shown, and others may have seen the anonymous play *Woodstock*.<sup>439</sup> The villainy of the favourites in this play is unmistakable – indeed, it is the central thrust of the play. In *Woodstock*, Bushy, Bagot and Greene are grouped anachronistically with two additional favourites Tresilian and Scroop. The group are universally hated, and are referred to as 'flatterers' at least nine times during the course of the play.<sup>440</sup> In addition to these nine straightforward descriptions they are also

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<sup>435</sup> The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw increasing numbers of slander cases and slander alone was enough to permanently tarnish a reputation. See for example, Ina Haberman, *Staging Slander and Gender in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003) and Lorna Hutson, *The Invention of Suspicion: Law and Mimesis in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) pp. 3-6.

<sup>436</sup> Cavanagh has shown that *King John* is unusual in its 'unprejudiced view of rumour', *Language and Politics*, p. 82.

<sup>437</sup> Tillyard, p. 267-8.

<sup>438</sup> *A Mirror for Magistrates, newly corrected and augmented* (London: Marsh, 1571), fol 17.

<sup>439</sup> Gaudet, pp. 142-3. Though Macdonald argues for *Woodstock* as the later play. See my note at 421.

<sup>440</sup> *Woodstock: A Moral History* ed. by A. P. Rossiter (London: Chatto and Windus, 1946), 1.1.170, 1.1.181, 1.3.140, 1.3.222, 2.2.145, 2.3.40, 3.3.186, 4.2.143, 5.1.138.

called ‘flattering sycophants’ (twice);<sup>441</sup> ‘hateful flatterers’ (2.2.17); ‘false’ (1.1.150); ‘hinderers of his health,’ (1.1.187-89); ‘Upstarts’ (1.3.118, 2.2.45); ‘Cankers’ (1.3.155, 1.3.158); ‘caterpillars!’ (1.3.158); ‘fawning knaves’ (1.3.209); ‘polling flatterers’ (2.3.25); ‘flattering minions’ (2.3.87, 4.2.201); harmful flatterers’ (4.2.32); ‘cursed flatterers’ (5.1.189); ‘vipers’ (5.3.30); ‘minions’ (5.3.38); ‘traitors’ (5.3.40) and ‘pernicious flatterers’ (5.3.116). Greene, as the king’s particular favourite, is also singled out as an ‘ulcer’ (5.4.11) and ‘false traitor’ (5.4.12). What’s more is that the flatterers also turn on each other, Bushy refers to ‘smooth-faced flattering Greene’ (4.1.47) and ‘that flattering hound Greene’ (4.1.64). But they are also all self-confessed flatterers and ‘mean to live by it’ (4.1.66-7). While there are some echoes of *Woodstock* in *Richard II*, (or vice versa), they are for example ‘The caterpillars of the commonwealth’ in Shakespeare’s play (2.3.166), there is nothing like *Woodstock*’s brimming antagonism towards the group. The later playwright distances himself quite substantially from the perspective of the earlier play. In the anonymous play, the favourites are always visibly close to the king’s body, and on Richard’s wedding day he invites Bagot and Greene to sit beside the queen and ‘Take [their] high places, by King Richard’s side’ (1.3.2). Bagot even goes as far to taunt the lords ‘We keep the Seal: our strength you all shall know’ (1.3.206). The political favourites are much more like Marlowe’s Gaveston in *Edward II* in provoking the peers, excessive indulgence and the wearing of extravagant fashions (in *Woodstock*, even more ridiculously, of their own design, 3.1.52-57).

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<sup>441</sup> *Woodstock*, 1.1.145, 1.3.211.

Shakespeare offers a rather different view of political favouritism. Where in *Woodstock*, the favourites are the central characters and driving force of the plot, in *Richard II* they are an ancillary group that have little effect on the action of the play which revolves on the Richard-Bolingbroke axis. Thus, for Shakespeare, the favourites are another tool with which to explore the two leaders.

Bolingbroke's most baffling statement is his unprecedented accusation:

You have in manner with your sinful hours  
Made a divorce betwixt his queen and him,  
Broke the possession of a royal bed

Madhavi Menon reads Bolingbroke's accusation as a charge of homosexuality. Menon explores the sexual register of the gardener's language in 3.4 convincingly enough: Richard's flatterers are the 'noisome weeds' that 'suck/The soil's fertility' and stand accused of 'eating him'.<sup>442</sup> She also uses the depiction of the king as lascivious in Shakespeare's precursors, *A Mirror for Magistrates*, where the ghost of Richard II states his inclination 'to Venus sporte'<sup>443</sup> and Holinshed's *Chronicle*, to support her reading.<sup>444</sup> While *A Mirror* was an extremely popular and well-known text,<sup>445</sup> and her analysis of sexual imagery is convincing, it is still not completely satisfying when balanced against the rest of the play. Richard's parting with Isabel may be read as heartfelt. If anything, Bolingbroke's accusation might

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<sup>442</sup> Madhavi Menon, 'Richard II and the Taint of Metonymy', *English Literary History*, 70.3 (2003), p. 662.

<sup>443</sup> *Mirror*, fol. 17.

<sup>444</sup> Menon, 'Taint of Metonymy', p. 660-1, 668.

<sup>445</sup> 'By the turn of the century, the *Mirror* was one of the most popular printed works in England.' Jessica Winston, 'A Mirror for Magistrates and Public Political Discourse in Elizabethan England', *Studies in Philology*, 101 (2004), p. 399.

indicate an affair between Bushy and Isabel – they do at least have a scene alone together, only Bagot is present, and he might easily be complicit in their crime. Their conversation is sincere, and in performance their relationship could be portrayed as intimate. Taking Bolingbroke at his word is a mistake: the text simply does not support it. The play as a whole does however lead us, as we shall see, to distrust Bolingbroke's speech. Bolingbroke's usurpation is effected not by force but by rhetoric.

Let us take the charge Bolingbroke begins with, that '[y]ou have misled a prince': the crime here is of giving bad counsel, of bad speech, reiterated over half way through 'Till you did make him misinterpret me'. Bushy, Bagot and Green have both implicitly and explicitly been accused of the crime of bad speech, or sycophancy, before. At Gaunt's deathbed, York says Richard's ear

is stopped with... *flatt'ring sounds*,

As praises, of whose taste the wise are fond;

Lascivious metres, to whose *venom sound*

The open ear of youth doth always listen;

Report of fashions in proud Italy (2.1.17-21, my emphasis).

But this is never dramatised in the play – though the accusation of inappropriate dress may have been visually evident in performance, 'fashions' may equally refer to customs or behaviour. In the same scene Gaunt bluntly tells Richard that 'A thousand flatterers sit within thy crown,' (2.1.100), Bushy, Bagot and Green are present at this point and would probably have been close to the king's body – though this is never as shocking as it clearly is in *Woodstock* or *Edward II* where the favourites are



invited to sit beside the king. C. H. Hobday identified sixteen references to flattery in *Richard II*,<sup>446</sup> this figure pales in comparison to the number of references in *Woodstock* which contains around twice as many as I have shown above. And yet despite these references to flattery in *Richard II*, actual instances of flattery are quite difficult to find in the play. John W. Draper, however, was quite wrong to assert that ‘Shakespeare does not show actual flattery upon the stage’;<sup>447</sup> the play’s alleged flatterers are not seen to flatter, but there is at least one instance of flattery being dramatized. Northumberland’s condescending remark ‘The King is not himself, but basely led/By flatterers;’ (2.1.241-2), is ironic as he himself is a base flatterer who seeks favour with Bolingbroke. Northumberland’s flattery is notably dramatized; on Bolingbroke’s return he sycophantically praises Bolingbroke’s conversation:

And yet your fair discourse hath been as sugar,  
Making the hard way sweet and delectable. (2.3.6-7)

He emphasises ‘what a weary way’ Ross and Willoughby will have had ‘wanting your company,’ (2.3.8-10), he persists that Bolingbroke’s company ‘hath very much beguiled/The tediousness and process of my travel.’ (2.3.11-12). By now Northumberland is labouring the point:

But theirs is sweetened with the hope to have  
The present benefit which I possess;  
And hope to joy is little less in joy  
Than hope enjoyed. By this the weary lords

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<sup>446</sup> C. H. Hobday, ‘Why the Sweets Melted: A Study in Shakespeare’s Imagery’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 16.1 (1965), p. 8.

<sup>447</sup> John W. Draper, ‘Flattery, A Shakespearean Tragic Theme’ *Philological Quarterly*, 17 (1938), p. 243.

Shall make their way seem short as mine hath done

By sight of what I have, your noble company. (2.3.13-18)

The repetition is unimaginative; it is a deliberate rhetorical vice, an example of tautologia that ends clumsily where it started, with Bolingbroke's sweet and noble 'company'. Northumberland's address may be conventional, however, his emphatic praise is significant next to the absence of such 'venom sound', to borrow York's words (2.1.19), from Bushy, Bagot and Green. We should be alert to the repetition and playing on 'hope', as 'Hope' himself has been named 'a flatterer,/A parasite' (2.2.69-70) by Queen Isabel in the immediately preceding scene.

Bolingbroke's own receptivity to these flattering sounds is also evident in his response to Northumberland 'Of much less value is my company/Than your good words.' (2.3.19-20). By contrast, Richard opens the play by openly identifying and implicitly denouncing the flatterer. In the first scene Mowbray and Bolingbroke's greetings to the king prompt Richard's retort 'one but flatters us' (1.1.25). In the scene before Bolingbroke and Richard meet, Richard rejects Aumerle's request for a 'word' with 'He does me double wrong/That wounds me with the flatteries of his tongue.' (3.3.215-6). Richard perhaps makes an error here, mistaking true loyalty for flattery, and perhaps this scene points up Richard's deafness to counsel.

John Draper succinctly describes the flatterer as one who pleases a prince or patron.<sup>448</sup> Thus Northumberland's fawning might certainly be classed as flattery. It is also conducted in the very terms frequently associated with early modern flattery. James L. Jackson has observed that sweet speech is

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<sup>448</sup> Draper, p. 241.

commonly associated with the flatterer in the sixteenth century, quoting Thomas Proctor's *A Gorgious Gallery of Gallant Inventions* (1578):

Ah fie of fawning friends...

Would God I had not knowne, their sweet and sugered speech..

[...]

Try ere thou trust, unto a fawning friend

Give no regard, unto his sugared wordes...<sup>449</sup>

It seems clear then that we are meant to consider Northumberland's speech as flattery. This fawning lap-dog in his eagerness is at times an embarrassment; Bolingbroke has to instruct 'Urge it no more' when Northumberland continues to wave the deposition papers under Richard's nose. Northumberland is also the first to drop the title of 'King' – 'Richard not far from hence hath hid his head' (3.3.6) – a step beyond impertinence and an open acknowledgement of Bolingbroke's power. Bolingbroke is surrounded by 'caterpillars' as much as Richard is. By *Henry IV Part 1*, it is Bolingbroke that has become the 'canker' (1.3.175) and flatterer. Hotspur recalls meeting him at Berkeley Castle:

Why what a candy deal of courtesy

This fawning greyhound then did proffer me! (1.3.248-9)

The sugar imagery is coupled with dog imagery, a familiar association in Shakespeare's plays denoting flattery.<sup>450</sup> Bolingbroke is thus both a flatterer and susceptible to flattery.

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<sup>449</sup> Thomas Proctor, *A Gorgious Gallery of Gallant Inventions* (London: Jones, 1578), L.iii. v, N. ii. v. Discussion of sweet speech as commonly associated with flattery James L. Jackson, 'Shakespeare's Dog-and-Sugar Imagery and the Friendship Tradition', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 1.4 (1950), p. 262.

<sup>450</sup> See Jackson, 'Dog-and Sugar Imagery'.

There is a fine line between flattery and friendship, and it is this second aspect to which I will now turn. Both flatterers and friends are characterised by the type of speech they offer. Jackson states that ‘*Amicitia* and *adulatio*, true and false friendship, are the two poles of the Renaissance friendship tradition’.<sup>451</sup> It is the image of false friendship that is found in Northumberland, not in Bushy, Bagot and Green as we might expect. Shakespeare would have been familiar with Cicero’s conventions of true friendship. Cicero, a staple of the Latin school curriculum, considers perfect friendship in *De Amicitia*.<sup>452</sup> By this ideal of friendship Bushy, Bagot and Green might at first be considered false friends. They do not rebuke, as Cicero suggests a true friend should, (‘for friends frequently must be not only advised, but also rebuked’)<sup>453</sup> and they desert Richard in his hour of need, disbanding rather than rallying men to fight Bolingbroke. Close reading of the play however reveals a rather different view. They might not rebuke Richard but at the same time they do not actively encourage unkingly behaviour. Bushy, Bagot and Green’s silence, in the place of counsel, might be considered a form of flattery; York, however, has alerted us to looking for specific ‘venom sounds’, no examples of which can be found in the play. If anything, Green seems to provide good counsel, delivered in an appropriate way. Green achieves the balance of free speech and counsel as advised by Cicero, in his definition of the true friend:

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<sup>451</sup> Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>452</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero, ‘Laelius De Amicitia’ in *De Senectute, De Amicitia, De Divinatione*, trans. by William Armistead Falconer, ed. by T. E. Page, Loeb (London: Heinemann; Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1946),

<sup>453</sup> Cicero, *De Amicitia*, p. 197.

Therefore, in this entire matter reason and care must be used, first, that advice be free from harshness, and second, that reproof be free from insult.<sup>454</sup>

Here is Green's counsel:

*Green:* Well, he is gone, and with him go these thoughts.

Now for the rebels which stand out in Ireland,

Expedient manage must be made, my liege,

Ere further leisure yield them further means

For their advantage and your highness' loss.' (1.4.37-41)

Green does not indulge Richard in his petty (if prophetic) grievance with Bolingbroke: instead he counsels him to *action* against the rebellions in Ireland. Green has a wider understanding of the duties of kingship than Richard himself. Green plays the counselor here, and his method is a far more effective one than Gaunt's blunt criticism of Richard in 2.1. Gaunt provokes only anger in Richard: 'A lunatic lean witted fool,/Presuming on ague's privilege!' (2.1.115-6), whereas Green's instruction is met with immediate agreement 'We will ourself in person to this war' (1.4.42). If history plays are as much about bad kings as bad counsellors, they are also about the way counsellors speak and their effectiveness. Gaunt's advice may be sound, but his method is not – it angers Richard and produces no results. Gaunt would have done well to take Cicero's advice. Green, by contrast, also follows the second tenet and reproves without insult. His subtle reference to 'further leisure' is an implicit criticism of Richard's lack of action to date, but his approach is decidedly softer.

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<sup>454</sup> Cicero, *De Amicitia*, p. 197.

This idea of balancing critical speech with deference may have had origins in Cicero but it was also very much at the forefront of early modern politics. Elizabeth I attempted to control discussion on matters of state and in 1593 the lord keeper reported to the Commons that

Her Majesty granteth you liberal but not licentious speech,  
liberty therefore but with due limitation....It shall be meet  
therefore that each man of you contain his speech within  
the bounds of loyalty and good discretion.<sup>455</sup>

The problem of free speech in *Richard II*, is exactly the problem faced by early modern counsellors: as Jacqueline Rose stated in a recent paper, the achievement of plain speaking without causing offence was an ongoing problem.<sup>456</sup> Bolingbroke's accusation of misleading a prince is thus nullified and ironic; it is Richard's absence in Ireland that allows Bolingbroke to return and muster support.

Bolingbroke accuses Bushy and Green of 'foul wrongs', but again there is no internal dramatic evidence. Two instances do come close. Richard's cruel wish for Gaunt's speedy death so he can seize 'The lining of his coffers' prompts no response from the alleged flatterers. The general response 'Amen' implies agreement, but it might equally be sad rather than wishful. It should be noted that the 1597 quarto text ascribes 'Amen' to

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<sup>455</sup> Quoted in G. R. Elton, ed., *The Tudor Constitution: Documents and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), p. 255. Also quoted in Paula Blank 'Speaking freely about Richard II', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 96.3 (1997), p. 7 of 20.

<sup>456</sup> Jacqueline Rose, 'Friendship and flattery in the Politics of History and Counsel', a paper given at *Friendship, Politics and the Uses of History* (University of Reading). 12 May 2011.

Richard only and the 1623 folio omits it altogether.<sup>457</sup> On such shaky evidence I am tempted to excuse the trio from an accusation of heartlessness. The second is their failure to raise men to fight Bolingbroke in 2.1. This instance is generally read as abandonment of the King and the key example of their villainy, but as Gaudet states this ‘is not a cowardly desertion but a prudent response to impending catastrophe’.<sup>458</sup> 2.1 also shows, more accurately, the tragic parting of three friends that are all too aware of their impending defeat:

*Bagot.* We three here part that ne’er shall meet again.

*Bushy.* That’s as York thrives to beat back Bolingbroke.

*Green.* Alas, poor Duke! The task he undertakes

Is numbering sands and drinking oceans dry.

Where one on his side fights, thousands will fly.

*Bagot.* Farewell at once – for once, for all and ever.

*Bushy.* Well, we may meet again.

*Bagot.* I fear me, never.

(2.2.142-48)

The scene in which they separate is marked by sadness and hopelessness rather than opportunistic escape or desertion. Thus the dramatic evidence of the play, both visual and oral in this case, seems to contradict Bolingbroke’s list of accusations. In this scene the favourites are quite aware that the King has used the commons for money and is thus ‘generally condemned.’ (2.2.131). Bagot recognises they will also be condemned for

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<sup>457</sup> See Forker’s note on the text for 1.4.65. *The tragedie of King Richard the second* (London: Simmes, 1597), sig. C3r, *Mr William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories & Tragedies* (London: Jaggard, 1623), p. 28.

<sup>458</sup> Paul Gaudet, ‘The “Parasitical” Counselors in Shakespeare’s *Richard II*: A Problem in Dramatic Interpretation’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 33.2 (1982), p. 149.

their nearness to the king, they are, as Gaudet puts it, guilty by association, not for their own acts. Though they choose not to fight, they remain loyal in the abstract sense of 'love' as can be seen from their final words in the play. Furthermore, the scene recalls a similar parting scene in *Woodstock*, not of this trio but of another, the king's uncles:

*Woodstock*. Adieu, good York and Gaunt, farewell for ever.

I have a sad presage comes suddenly

That I shall never see these brothers more:

On earth, I fear, we never more shall meet. (3.2.102-105)

Not only does Shakespeare seem to distance himself from the demonization of the flatterers in the (perhaps) earlier play, he goes as far as to have them mirror the more sympathetic Woodstock, also presented as a wise counselor in that play. Finally, Bushy and Green's last words in the play perhaps recall a Christian model of friendship.

A friend loveth at all times (Prov. 17.17)

Greater love than this hath no man, when any man  
bestoweth his life for his friends. (John 15. 13)

In this light, Bushy and Green prove themselves the very best of friends to Richard II. Their final words are:

*Bushy*. More welcome is the stroke of death to me  
Than Bolingbroke to England. Lords, farewell.

*Green*. My comfort is that heaven will take our souls

And plague injustice with the pains of hell. (3.1.31-34)

They do not display the chameleon traits of the flatterer, but rather Bushy and Green remain loyal to Richard in the face of death. Shakespeare does not have them switching sides as, for example, he has York do. Bushy and



Green embody the key masculine virtue of constancy. Richard, in return, is not so constant and is quick to suspect treachery. He accuses them of being 'Three Judases' (3.2. 132) and so fails Cicero's ideal of constancy:

let him not only reject charges preferred by another, but  
also let him avoid even being suspicious and ever believing  
that his friend has done something wrong.<sup>459</sup>

On hearing of their death, he is as equally distraught as he was angry with them 'Of comfort no man speak!' (3.2.144). It is Richard that is thus effeminized in his changeability and is culpable in a way the trio are not. Bolingbroke's accusations thus do not sit well in the context of the whole play; the evidence of the earlier scenes that the audience witnesses contradict Bolingbroke's extreme portrayal of villainy.

Bolingbroke is wrong again when he mentions Bushy and Green as the cause of Isabel's tears. Thus far in the play there is only one scene in which the actor playing Isabel might cry, 2.2, when news of Bolingbroke's faction prompts her to say:

So, Green, thou art the midwife to my woe,  
And Bolingbroke my sorrow's dismal heir.  
Now hath my soul brought forth her prodigy,  
And I, a gasping new-delivered mother,  
Have woe to woe, sorrow to sorrow joined. (2.2.62-66)

The cause of tears is Bolingbroke himself. Accusation versus textual and perhaps dramatic evidence is another illustration of the perspectival element of Shakespeare's histories. The playwright presents history as

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<sup>459</sup> Cicero, *De Amicitia*, p. 177.

multi-vocal and subjective. It is pertinent that this distortion of the image of the parasites is counteracted by Bushy's consolation of the Queen, during which he makes an analogy with anamorphic images. As discussed in the Introduction, Bushy likens to Sorrow 'perspectives', anamorphic images 'which, rightly gazed upon, Show nothing but confusion' (2.2.18-19). The queen's tear 'Divides one thing entire to many objects' (2.2.17). This image of refraction aptly illustrates the playwright's method in his presentation of the flatterers. The scene is paralleled in the dramatic symmetry of the play in 4.1 when Richard asks for a mirror only to shatter it, creating 'an hundred shivers' (4.1.289). Bolingbroke's accusation speech is thus framed by the couple's, Isabel and Richard's, allusions to refracted images and so his speech is placed in the context of distorted images.

Structurally speaking, it is also Bolingbroke who occupies the space between Isabel's scene in 2.2 and Richard's next appearance in 3.2, Bolingbroke thus also represents the 'divorce' between the couple, not Bushy and Green. The text prompts Isabel's actual tear after Bolingbroke's speech at 3.1 when the Gardener remarks on the queen's fallen tear – again the news that prompts it is of Bolingbroke's triumph. The final scene in which she appears that might prompt tears is the parting scene. Here Bolingbroke's most bizarre charge is repeated, this time by Richard:

Doubly divorced! Bad men, you violate

A twofold marriage, 'twixt my crown and me

And then betwixt me and my married wife. (5.1. 71-3)

His words are significantly close to Bolingbroke's: 'violate' echoes Bolingbroke's charge of disfigurement and the divorce image echoes his accusation that Bushy and Green 'Made a divorce betwixt his queen and

him' (3.1.12). Richard's use of the divorce image makes sense – he is being parted from his crown and his wife; Bolingbroke's use of the image does not. This can hardly be accidental and so this should point to the hollowness of Bolingbroke's words. Who is the prime target of Richard's charge? None other than Northumberland, the only perpetrator of flattery in the play.

Gaudet convincingly shows that the behaviour of Bushy, Bagot and Green does not match the reputation they have, or the charges levied by Bolingbroke in 3.1. As Falstaff will later say, 'honour' is but 'a word'. To his argument I add that they are in fact not only good counsellors, but good friends. They make sweet sounds rather than 'venom sounds'. The prolixity of Bolingbroke's speech is therefore even more puzzling at this central moment – as I have already suggested, rather than bearing any weight, this scene is meant as a display of his new found power. The accusations against Bushy, Bagot and Green are fabricated and they should be treated as slander. Shakespeare perhaps took this cue from Daniel, who exhibits a brief moment of scepticism over Bolingbroke's motives. Bolingbroke:

sacrifiz'd vnto the peoples loue,  
The death of those that chiefe in enuy stood  
As th'Officers, who first these dangers proue:  
The treasurer and those that they thought good,  
Bushy and Greene by death he must remoue,  
These were the men the people thought did cause  
Those great exactions and abusd the lawes.<sup>460</sup>

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<sup>460</sup> Daniel, *The first foure booke*s, misprinted Sig. [E]2r (should be 'F').

In Daniel, the execution of Bushy and Green is ordered to appease the people who ‘thought’ Bushy and Green were the cause of extortion (subject of *Woodstock*), they are ‘sacrifiz’d vnto the people’s love’. Daniel only briefly describes the favourites as ‘greedie minions’ in the argument to the first book. *Richard II* and *Woodstock* thus react to each other in a similar way to that in which *All is True* reacts to Rowley’s *When You See Me*.

Bolingbroke’s act of slander is complex: in accusing Bushy and Green of having ‘disfigured’ the King’s body, Bolingbroke slanders the king as much as the favourites. The significance of what should be the climax of his auxesis is clouded by his swift transition to his own personal injuries. Here the auxesis begins afresh and so Bolingbroke shrouds the implication of sexual transgression. Bolingbroke’s words about the king’s body might also by extension be seen as treasonous. While, in Rebecca Lemon’s words, ‘early modern England saw no cases of successful treason between the wars of the Roses and 1649’,<sup>461</sup> it did see many cases of slander. Slander and treason are intimately associated in *Richard II*, as can be seen from Mowbray’s defence discussed below. Bolingbroke and Mowbray treat treason as a violation of honour;<sup>462</sup> here it is Richard’s honour that is attacked. Bolingbroke’s speech, therefore, is treasonous before he even reaches the subtle assumption of power in the description of himself as ‘a prince by fortune of my birth,/Near to the King in blood’. This type of treason might be nebulous, but defining treason, Cavanagh suggests, is precisely the problem of the play.<sup>463</sup>

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<sup>461</sup> Lemon, *Treason by Words*, p. 2.

<sup>462</sup> Cavanagh, *Language and Politics*, p. 111.

<sup>463</sup> Cavanagh, *Language and Politics*, p. 104.

Rebecca Lemon observes how under the Tudor regime the violent action of treason becomes a verbal phenomenon. The 1534 Tudor statute on “treason by words” extended the definition of treason:

If any person [...] do maliciously wish, will or desire by words or writing, or by craft    imagine, invent, practice or attempt any bodily harm to be done or committed to the King’s most royal person, the Queen’s or their heirs apparent, or to deprive them or any    of them    of the dignity, title or name of their royal estates, or slanderously and maliciously publish and pronounce, by express writing or words, that the King [...] be heretic, schismatic, tyrant, infidel or usurper of the crown [...] shall be adjudged traitors...<sup>464</sup>

This definition of treason includes anything that compromises the monarch’s ‘dignity’ and Bolingbroke’s sexual slander surely does this. In accusing Bushy and Green of creating ‘a divorce betwixt his queen and him’ and breaking ‘the possession of a royal bed’, Bolingbroke accuses the favourites of sexual transgression with either Richard or Isabel. Richard is also described as ‘disfigured clean’, a forceful image that again compromises the dignity of the royal image. If the accusation is read, as I suggested earlier, of an affair with Bushy and Isabel, this might again be treasonous; as Lemon has shown, ‘Violating the “king’s consort”’ also constituted treason.<sup>465</sup> Bolingbroke, through words, harms the body of the Queen and so casts doubt on the legitimacy of a possible future heir. While

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<sup>464</sup> 1534 Treason Act, quoted in Lemon, *Treason by Words*, p. 8.

<sup>465</sup> Lemon, *Treason by Words*, p. 6.

there may have been no cases of successful treason, it was clearly still a major concern for Elizabeth I, who in 1571 expands the type of words to be considered treason to 'preaching, speech, express words or sayings'.<sup>466</sup> The power of spoken defamation was something to be feared. As slander damages the honor of the accused, Bolingbroke is shown to truly possess the forked tongue of Slander: on one side he accuses the favourites of treason and on the other he diminishes Richard's reputation and so commits treason himself.

The play shows the favourites to be defined by rumour and slander. Bolingbroke's key speech also demonstrates his own capacity for slander and creating rumour. What other characters say about Bushy, Bagot and Green has been pervasive and permanent in an enduring critical view of their villainy, while Bolingbroke's accusation is often dismissed as unexplained. In addition to creating a contradiction between what Bolingbroke says and what is seen and heard in the rest of the play, Shakespeare also associates Bolingbroke with harmful sounds. In the first lines of the play Richard asks if Bolingbroke has been 'sounded' as to whether he accuses Mowbray 'on ancient malice' or 'on some known ground of treachery' (1.1.8-11). Richard's question implies immediate distrust; the reference to 'ancient malice' implies Bolingbroke has reason to bear a personal grudge and if his accusation is based on this it is tantamount to slander. The questionable motive of the accuser recalls the Horner-Thump trial in *Henry VI, Part 2* and looks forward to the trial of Buckingham in *All is True*. Both Mowbray and Bolingbroke greet Richard

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<sup>466</sup> Quoted in Lemon, p. 9.

in an appropriate deferential manner but Richard is all too aware that ‘one but flatters us’ (1.1.25). The one that flatters is guilty of treason, and the audience may be aware that it will be Bolingbroke by the end of the play. Mowbray accuses Bolingbroke of being ‘a slanderous coward and a villain’ (1.1.61) and later says to Richard to turn away ‘Till I have told this slander of his blood/How God and good men hate so foul a liar!’ (1.1.113-4). Slander is being used as a noun to describe Bolingbroke. Mowbray later says:

I am disgraced, impeached, and baffled here,  
Pierced to the soul with Slander’s venom’d spear,  
The which no balm can cure but his heart-blood  
Which breathed this poison. (1.1.170-73).

It is very clearly Bolingbroke that is associated with venomous sounds here; later York will describe Richard’s favourites in the same aural terms of ‘venom sound[s]’ (2.1.19). The Irish rebels are also described as ‘venom’ (2.1.157), thus the word is also linked to political rebellion. The playwright thus associates ‘venom’ with the defiance of royal authority, as well as harmful speech such as slander and flattery.

Historically, Mowbray’s guilt in Gloucester’s murder is likely, however the evidence of the play renders him sympathetic. The patriotic speech about the love of the English tongue is Mowbray’s not Bolingbroke’s. Bolingbroke rather picks up Gaunt’s material image of ‘precious jewel’ (1.3.267), saying ‘I wander from the jewels that I love’ (1.3.270). The value he places on England is put in monetary terms. Finally on parting, Mowbray is still confident of his innocence knowing that

If ever I were a traitor,

My name be blotted from the book of life,

...

But what thou art, God, thou and I do know;

And all too soon, I fear, the King shall rue. (1.3.202)

Whatever Mowbray's role in Gloucester's death, his words here seem too bold to be spoken flippantly and his prophecy is all too true. It is Bolingbroke, then, that Shakespeare emphatically associates with slander from the opening scenes. Later, York describes the 'venom sound' of flatterers (2.1.17-20), but the nexus of images – venom and flatterer have already been associated with Bolingbroke. His very mouth is unholy; York states: 'I am no traitor's uncle, and that word 'grace'/ In an ungracious mouth is but profane.' (2.3.88-9).

York's belief in the 'venom sounds' that infiltrate the court are thus more aptly ascribed to Bolingbroke than to the general flatterers that York accuses. It is this venom sound that Bolingbroke's son, Hal, later Henry V, has to purge with the virtuous sounds of prayer.



CHAPTER SIX - THE KING'S SPEECH, *HENRY IV PARTS 1 AND 2*, AND

*HENRY V*

The previous chapter explored how rhetoric might betray the (un)trustworthiness of a character. 'Trust' and its cognate 'truth' are determined by the senses: what is seen and what is heard.<sup>467</sup> In *Richard II* Bolingbroke is rendered suspect by the dissonance of his accusations against Bushy and Green and the rest of the play-text. In performance Bushy could be visually incriminated by his intimacy with the queen, but without active directorial intervention to criminalise them, a text-based interpretation could equally make them appear innocent. That sight and sound might produce different 'truths' is a theme continued in the rest of the tetralogy.

The plays continue to reject the idea of a hierarchy of the senses, and continue to promote mixed sense experience as the most truthful kind. In *Henry IV, Part 1*, when Falstaff awakes from his counterfeit death, Hal questions:

Art thou alive, or is it fantasy

That plays upon our eyesight? I prithee speak;

*We will not trust our eyes without our ears.*

Thou art not what thou seem'st. (5.4.134-7, my emphasis)

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<sup>467</sup> The meanings of truth and trust overlap, *Oxford English Dictionary*.

While what Hal sees is indeed truth – Falstaff is alive – he points to a sceptical view of the truth-telling powers of sight. Being and seeming is a theme that recurs throughout Shakespeare: later Iago will famously claim ‘I am not what I am’ and that ‘I must show out a flag and sign of love,/Which is indeed but sign’.<sup>468</sup> Iago’s visual image of the flag similarly points to the possibility of visual deception. Leontes in *A Winter’s Tale* (1609) incriminates his sight in believing Hermione was dead: ‘I saw her, /As I thought, dead’.<sup>469</sup> Henry is conscious of discerning truth through more than one means – sight alone is not enough.

Similarly, an oral promise alone does not guarantee truthfulness. Worcester exposes Bolingbroke’s rhetorical quip in *Richard II*:

You swore to us –  
 And you did swear that oath at Doncaster –  
 That you did nothing purpose ‘gainst the state,  
 Nor claim no further than your new-fall’n right,  
 The seat of Gaunt, dukedom of Lancaster.  
 [...]
 And violation of all faith and *troth*

Sworn to us in your younger enterprise. (*1HIV* 5.1. 41-5, 70-1)

A central question of the tetralogy is how truth is understood and how trust is achieved. Here Bolingbroke’s oral oath is rendered untrustworthy. Even the impetuous Hotspur suggests truth is difficult to identify: ‘If speaking truth/In this fine age were not thought flattery’ (4.1.1-2).

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<sup>468</sup> ‘Othello’, in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor. The Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 1.1.65, 158-9.

<sup>469</sup> ‘A Winter’s Tale’, in *The Oxford Shakespeare*. 5.3.140-1.

In *Part 2* Rumour's induction is immediately followed by an example of false information. Bardolph brings news that Hal and the King are dead and that Hotspur has been victorious, but Northumberland's immediate concern is the authenticity of the report, he asks:

How is this deriv'd?

Saw you the field? (1.1.23-4)

Northumberland distrusts hearsay and asks for verification by sight – the opposite situation to Hal in the example given earlier. Northumberland is right to ask for confirmation: Bardolph's report is the result of rumour, derived from 'A gentleman well bred, and of good name,/That freely render'd me these news for true.' (1.1.26-7). Bardolph takes the apparent reputation of the man as proof of authenticity, but as R. MacDonald has shown, 'the word "gentleman" is no longer the powerful guarantee that it once was' in an age of social mobility.<sup>470</sup> But what is equally interesting is the way Northumberland receives the news – here immediately demanding proof. Such proof is not needed when Morton arrives with quite different news; Morton looks like the title page of a tragedy Northumberland says:

...this man's brow, like to a title-leaf,

Foretells the nature of a tragic volume. (1.1.60-1)

[...]

Thou tremblest, and the whiteness in thy cheek

Is apter than thy tongue to tell thy errand. (1.1.68-9)

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<sup>470</sup> Ronald R. MacDonald, 'Uneasy Lies: Language and History in Shakespeare's Lancastrian tetralogy', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 35.1 (1984), p. 37. Derek Cohen makes the contextual point about social mobility in 'History and Nation in *Richard II* and *Henry IV*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 42.2 (2002), p. 296.

The episode recalls the many face-reading examples in *King John*; communication is achieved through seeing the face, and as we shall see below knowledge is achieved specifically through the eye. It is *seeing* Morton rather than *bearing* the news that confirms to Northumberland that his son is dead: he reads Morton's face like a title page of a tragedy rather than hearing the words from his mouth. Northumberland predicts that Morton will try to tell him of Hotspur's brave deeds as a preface to the bad news:

Stopping my greedy ear with their bold deeds:  
 But in the end, to stop my ear indeed,  
 Thou hast a sigh to blow away this praise,  
 Ending with 'Brother, son, and all are dead'. (1.1.78-81)

Derek Cohen has suggested that Northumberland attempts to control the narrative, to control the process of history making by drawing on epic narrative and the ritual of rhetoric by pre-empting a tale of Hotspur's heroic deeds.<sup>471</sup> Northumberland continues to emphasise the sight-sound distinction:

Why, he is dead.  
 See what a ready tongue suspicion hath!  
 He that but fears the thing he would not know  
 Hath by instinct *knowledge from others' eyes*  
 That what he fear'd is chanced. Yet speak, Morton;  
 (1.1.83-7, my emphasis)

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<sup>471</sup> Derek Cohen, 'History and Nation in *Richard II* and *Henry IV*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 42.2 (2002), pp. 293-315.

There is some kind of competition between the reliability and truth-telling powers of sound and sight here. Northumberland seems to suggest that sight is more trustworthy than sound, but ultimately concludes both are needed for proof of truth. He knows his son and brother are dead from Morton's looks, specifically his eyes, but still insists 'Yet speak, Morton'. Northumberland needs the aural confirmation just as Hal did. The senses seem to compete – Northumberland tries to delay or even prevent the oral report, but the visual evidence is too persistent:

*North.* Yet, for all this, say not that Percy's dead.

I see a strange confession in thine eye:

Thou shak'st thy head, and hold'st it fear or sin

To speak a truth. If he be slain, say so: (1.1.93-6)

*Bard.* I cannot think, my lord, your son is dead.

*Morton.* I am sorry I should force you to believe

That which I would to God I had not seen;

But these mine eyes saw him in bloody state, (1.1.104-7)

Morton's report is validated by more visual evidence, his own eye-witness account of the death. Visual proof is so important in corroborating and confirming oral report in these cases, but elsewhere in the play visual signs are undermined.

In the 'Henriad', to use Alvin B. Kernan's phrase describing the two parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V*,<sup>472</sup> Shakespeare significantly complicates ideas about visual signs found in the earlier *Henry VI* trilogy. In *Henry VI, Part 3*,

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<sup>472</sup> Alvin B. Kernan, 'The Henriad: Shakespeare's Major History Plays', in *Modern Shakespearean Criticism* (New York, 1970), pp. 245-75.

Richmond, future Henry VII, appears kingly long before he acquires the accoutrements of kingship. Henry VI prophecies:

His looks are full of peaceful majesty,  
His head by nature framed to wear a crown,  
His hand to wield a sceptre, and himself  
Likely in time to bless a regal throne. (4.6.71-74)

The visual signs and symbols of monarchy, or *regalia* (the meaning of which aptly entails both the rights and powers of the monarch as well as royal insignia)<sup>473</sup> are entirely absent and yet Richmond is recognisable as a ‘natural’ king. This does not prove to be the case in the *Henriad*. While the inherent sovereignty of Richmond has been read as a tribute to Richmond’s granddaughter, Elizabeth I, and the Tudor dynasty, the compliment is obfuscated by the deconstruction of kingship in the later history plays.<sup>474</sup> In the second tetralogy, Shakespeare destabilizes signs and their meanings, especially visual signs, clothing, and the signs of kingship. The gap between sign and signifier, between word and meaning is exposed in the plays and has been described by Jonathan Hart as the fall of language.<sup>475</sup> Bolingbroke’s rhetorical performance is not to be trusted; the same has been said of his son Hal, later Henry V. This is rather fitting given Hal’s preoccupation with the sins of his father, the usurpation of Richard II.

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<sup>473</sup> ‘Regalia, n.,’ senses 1a and 2a, *Oxford English Dictionary*.

<sup>474</sup> Tudor Myth concept as propounded by E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare’s History Plays* (London: Penguin, 1991, first published by Chatto & Windus 1944); Janis Lull points out that depictions of Richard III as evil preceded Tudor history-making in her Introduction to *Richard III* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 1-2.

<sup>475</sup> Jonathan Hart, *Theater and World: The Problematics of Shakespeare’s History* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), See Chapters 1-2. Because of the fall of language characters disagree over the meanings of kingship.

Peter Parolin has suggested ‘the King’s godly self-presentation is untrustworthy’; a view which this chapter follows.<sup>476</sup>

Throughout the *Henry IV* plays Bolingbroke, now king, is haunted by his own sin, hence suggesting his own culpability in *Richard II*. As Hart has aptly argued, when Henry IV claims that God knows he had no intention of seizing the throne when he returned from banishment in the previous play, the

disavowal is ironic because, if “necessity” alone made Henry assume the throne, then it is incongruous that he is so haunted by Richard’s prophecy that he later claims to have come to power by “crook’d ways” and that he asks God’s forgiveness for his assumption of the throne and for his reign.<sup>477</sup>

Shakespeare repeatedly reminds us through Henry’s awareness of his own guilt that his word is still meaningless. The abandoned holy pilgrimage is mentioned no less than three times, emphatically calling attention to what now appears a hollow promise at the end of *Richard II*. His death in the Jerusalem chamber in Westminster is an appropriate counterfeit holy land for a counterfeit prince.

The ‘counterfeit’ prince is a leitmotif throughout the play and emerges literally in 2.4 as Hal and Falstaff take turns playing the king, thus turning the performance of kingship to ridicule by using a cushion for a crown. Counterfeit princes constitute the only battle stratagem at Shrewsbury,

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<sup>476</sup> Peter Parolin, ‘Figuring the King in *Henry V*: Political Rhetoric and the Limits of Performance’, *Journal of the Wooden O Symposium*, 9 (2009), p. 49-50

<sup>477</sup> Hart, *Theater and World*, p. 66.

where Henry has his soldiers dress as his own person. Douglas, after killing several substitute kings exclaims:

Another king! They grow like Hydra's heads.

I am the Douglas, fatal to all those

That wears those colours on them. What art thou

That counterfeit'st the person of a king? (5.4.24-7)

Douglas suspects the king himself of counterfeiting his own person – as a usurper indeed he does. Leggatt's analysis of the king's tactics concludes that 'he is debasing the coinage by overproduction.'<sup>478</sup> Ultimately Leggatt argues 'it may no longer be possible to *be* a king; the best you can do is look like one'; later Hal will only 'imitate', or in other words, give 'a good performance in the role of king.'<sup>479</sup> Furthermore '[C]ounterfeit[ing] the person of a king' leads to an oral-visual contradiction where the singularity of the king's person is compromised. Henry IV asserts that he is 'The King himself' (5.4.28), but of course he is an actor playing a part, and in this scene one of many actors all playing the same part. Douglas's horror at the prolific counterfeiting, doubling like Hydra's head,<sup>480</sup> echoes the anti-theatricalists of the period. Stephen Gosson was particularly concerned by the duplicity produced by acting, and argued that

for a meane person to take upon him the title of a Prince  
with counterfeit porte, and traine, is by outwarde signes to

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<sup>478</sup> Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Political Drama*, p. 77.

<sup>479</sup> Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Political Drama*, p. 78, 89.

<sup>480</sup> The image of doubling in the reference to Hydra is interesting in light of Eileen Jorge Allman's argument in *Player-King and Adversary: Two Faces of Play in Shakespeare* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1980). She argues for Bolingbroke's duality, shown also in his language, in chapter two.



shewe them selves otherwise then they are, and so within  
the compasse of a lye...<sup>481</sup>

There is a double bind in the play; it is not just the soldiers that disguise themselves as princes, but the actors too. Gosson's real fear is that these 'outwarde signs' might be taken as truth. His anxiety misses the depth of what the Lancastrian tetralogy shows, that there are only signs, and that these signs are changeable in their meanings. Henry IV's choice of military tactics is in keeping with the whole of his regime: both are founded on deceit. Jonas Barish has described the central fear of anti-theatricalism as the fear of Proteus, a quality diametrically opposed to the Christian ideal of stasis.<sup>482</sup> But we should remind ourselves that strident anti-theatricalists were in the minority and the actor's Protean ability could be as much admired as it was despised. The stellar actor Richard Burbage was remembered by Richard Flecknoe, as I mentioned in chapter two, as 'a delightful Proteus' capable of 'wholly transforming himself'.<sup>483</sup> It is ironic that it is Protean deception that renders Bolingbroke's reign an 'uneasy' one, just as mastery of complete metamorphosis has led to praise of Henry V. The playwright suggests that all kingship relies on performance, but it is successful and persuasive performance; in other words, performance that disguises itself that creates good kings.

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<sup>481</sup> Stephen Gosson, *Plays Confuted in Five Actions* (London: Gosson, 1582), C5r, also quoted in Louis Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 36.

<sup>482</sup> Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 80-131, especially pp. 103-5.

<sup>483</sup> Flecknoe, 'A Short Discourse of the English Stage' see my footnote 256.

Hal's transformation from prodigal son to Christian prince is a more sophisticated performance than that of his predecessors, Richard and Bolingbroke, who ultimately fell into the same pattern.<sup>484</sup> Consequently Henry V has been figured as the hero king, as 'the mirror of all Christian kings',<sup>485</sup> but Shakespeare's play does not present us with the strict Christian prince of the Chorus and indeed many critics feel it is no longer tenable to consider him in this way.<sup>486</sup> The three kings of the Lancastrian tetralogy use specifically oral and visual performance to convey majesty and authority. Richard and Bolingbroke are 'glittering' kings, magnificent to behold, but it is Henry V's *reformation* that is 'glittering'.<sup>487</sup> Richard II is a master of spectacle, as illustrated in the example of the aborted tournament. As Leggatt has argued, Richard is 'replacing ceremony with theatre', waiting for this moment is 'self-indulgent', and it is done for

maximum theatrical effect [...] It is good theatre but bad politics, and it is a direct violation of the principles of ritual.<sup>488</sup>

Richard kept a notoriously lavish court;<sup>489</sup> conversely Henry IV believed that for his humble performance and for 'being seldom seen' he was all the

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<sup>484</sup> Allman argues that from the start of his reign Bolingbroke mirrors Richard II, as can be seen in the structure of the play, p. 42.

<sup>485</sup> *Henry V*, Chorus to Act 2, line 6.

<sup>486</sup> For example John S. Mebane, "'Impious War': Religion and the Ideology of Warfare in *Henry V*", *Studies in Philology*, 104.2 (2007) 250-66. Henry V as Machiavel discussed in the conclusion to this chapter.

<sup>487</sup> Glittering/gilt images proliferate in *Richard II*, Bolingbroke is prepared to give up 'His glittering arms' if his lands are returned (3.3.116), Richard descends like 'glist'ring Phaëton,' (3.3.178), Aumerle refers to the 'glittering helmet of my foe!' (4.1.52). In *Henry IV, Part 1* Hal looks forward to his transformation when he states 'My reformation, glittering o'er my fault' (1.3.203).

<sup>488</sup> Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Political Drama*, p. 64.

<sup>489</sup> In Shakespeare's play he is shown as squandering the nation's finances, also emphasised in *A Mirror for Magistrates*.

more interesting to see and 'like a comet [...] was wondered at' (3.2.46-7).<sup>490</sup> This is interesting given the grandeur of Elizabeth's court, and her own carefully constructed appearance.<sup>491</sup> Louis Montrose has suggested that the Elizabethan regime favoured secular ceremony and the choice to commemorate her civic progress before the coronation itself 'heralded the new importance her reign would give to the performativity of sovereignty'.<sup>492</sup> Elizabeth was fully aware that the monarch was forever, so to speak, in the limelight:

we princes...are set on stages, in the sight and view of all  
the world dulle observed; the eyes of manie behold our  
actions; a spot is soone spied in our garments; a blemish  
quicklie noted in our dooings<sup>493</sup>

In the words of Stephen Greenblatt, 'Elizabethan power... depends upon its privileged visibility'.<sup>494</sup> If Elizabeth is Richard II,<sup>495</sup> she is also Bolingbroke – his performance of kingship is as much concerned with visual impact. The direction to princes to dress majestically would have been familiar to Shakespeare from Elyot's *The Boke Named the Governor*

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<sup>490</sup> *Part 1*, 3.2.47.

<sup>491</sup> For a discussion of the portraits of Elizabeth I as sustaining old illusions on the young queen see Richard C. McCoy, "Thou Idol Ceremony": Elizabeth I, 'The Henriad', and the Rites of the English Monarchy', in *Urban Life in the Renaissance*, ed. by Susan Zimmerman and Ronald F. E. Weissman (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1989), pp. 240-66. See also, Montrose, 'Idols of the Queen'.

<sup>492</sup> Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing*, p. 27. And also the subordination of the church, McCoy, in Zimmerman and Weissman, p. 243.

<sup>493</sup> Quoted in Montrose, *Purpose of Playing*, p. 76.

<sup>494</sup> Greenblatt, 'Invisible Bullets', p. 44

<sup>495</sup> 'I am Richard II. Know ye not that?' remark to William Lambarde in 1601. 'As Elizabeth I aged, it became increasingly common to identify her with Richard II'. quoted in Forker, ed., 'Introduction', *King Richard II*, p. 5 The comparison irritated her, p. 14.

(1531),<sup>496</sup> mentioned in chapter two, and it is interesting that he pits this mode of kingship against Henry V's who has also been described as a type for Elizabeth I.<sup>497</sup> Henry IV's 'presence' is 'like a robe pontifical' (3.2.56); his dependence on dress to create presence is situated in a specifically Catholic context (Protestant ministers wore the black academic gown).<sup>498</sup> Though describing a medieval and therefore Catholic king from a sixteenth-century perspective, Shakespeare is writing in a Reformation context and Henry IV's son has been variously hailed as a Protestant king.<sup>499</sup> Henry IV's dependence on dress is demonstrated literally, as I mentioned above, at Shrewsbury, when his chief military tactic is to have many soldiers dressed as himself. Douglas summarises exactly how to depose Henry and his form of kingship succinctly when he promises 'I will kill all his coats./ I'll murder all his wardrobe, piece by piece' (*1HIV*, 5.3.26-7). It is his wardrobe alone that constitutes his kingship. Douglas understands that a king can be undone by the removal of the signs of kingship. In *Richard II*, Bolingbroke understood as much in his efforts and patience in waiting for the symbolic crown even after assuming power. Like Richard before him, 'Bolingbroke is also a politician of appearances'.<sup>500</sup> Richard and Henry IV, in this respect follow Elyot's mode of kingship, Henry V's clothing on the other hand, as Sally Romotsky has argued,

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<sup>496</sup> Sally Robertson Romotsky, 'Henry of Monmouth and the Gown-of-Needles', *Intertexts*, 8.2 (2004), p. 168.

<sup>497</sup> Stapleton's view in chapter six, Dennis Taylor and David N. Beauregard, eds, *Shakespeare and the Culture of Christianity in Early Modern England* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003)

<sup>498</sup> 'Pontifex' also denoted a high priest of ancient Rome, or indeed the emperor. *Oxford English Dictionary*. Bolingbroke's description is thus highly presumptuous given that at the point he is recalling Richard is still king.

<sup>499</sup> For example Michael Davies and Camille Wells Slight; Sally Robertson Romotsky sees him as humanist king.

<sup>500</sup> Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Political Drama*, p. 71.

operates as a consistent device that Shakespeare develops in order to present Henry not as the historical medieval king but as a humanist king representing the Erasmian model.<sup>501</sup>

Erasmus, as Romotsky points out and as I discussed in chapter two, advised princes to dress modestly. The play draws the audience's attention to Hal's clothing by its lack of adornment. Furthermore, Romotsky argues that 'Shakespeare shows Henry at his most spare in outward apparel and appearance at the points when he is most accomplished militarily and spiritually.'<sup>502</sup> Sans regalia he potentially demonstrates the emptiness of the visual signs of kingship, the clothes do not make the man as it were. Romotsky concludes:

the poetically appareled figure [...] in his moment of greatness will disavow the very substance and significance of the clothing Elizabethans held so dear.

[...]

By transmuting the ritualistic attire into a language-driven image rather than a visual one, Shakespeare raises the physical to a conceptual level that transcends fabrics, needles and eyelet holes.<sup>503</sup>

Romotsky shows that Shakespeare undoes entirely the power and the meaning of signs by having Henry V appear without royal garments at crucial moments, ones that she sees as his most accomplished. By the end

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<sup>501</sup> Romotsky, 'Henry of Monmouth and the Gown of Needles', p. 156.

<sup>502</sup> Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>503</sup> Ibid., p. 164, 166.

of this chapter, however, I argue that the absence of insignia is equally problematic and that the sequence of plays concludes in suggesting the necessity of collaboration between individuals to invest signs with power and meaning. The instances explored here suggest Henry V's performance fails regardless of his clothing.

Hal may not be dependent on costume in the same way as his father was but his reformation is still described in sartorial terms: his 'loose behaviour' will be 'throw[n] off' like a robe (1.2.198). Hal's greatest performance, however, is conducted orally rather than visually. His oratorical acts are also shown to be successful in a way that Richard's were not; Richard's faith that he 'hath in heavenly pay/A glorious angel' and that 'heaven still guards the right' (*Richard II*, 3.2.60-2) imagines an angelic army that never materialises. Henry V, conversely, waits for victory to materialise and then uses it as evidence of heaven's favour. As such, the text resists reading as a celebration of the hero-king. Whether in the majestic mode of Elyot or following the Erasmian model, both forms of kingship still require conscious performance. There is a striking and disturbing truth that anticipates post-modern theory at the heart of this tetralogy; there is no fixed self or stable identity, all action is performance and performative.

The *Henriad*, as we have seen so far, advocates knowledge as derived from the concordance of oral and visual proof. At the same time it undoes the power accorded to the visual signs of kingship. In addition, the plays present another contradiction: the king's speech does not always ring true. While Henry V's speech is usually wholly effective in political matters, it often fails entirely in religious ones. The remainder of this chapter will

explore the oral-visual contradictions created by the king's speech and those who hear it.

*Falstaff's bearing*

The plays suggest an early modern belief that different types of speech were or could be heard differently. The play opens with Rumour, an allegorical character who would have been immediately identifiable by costume, perhaps one covered with tongues, and may have been gendered female.<sup>504</sup>

*Henry IV* contains no description of the costume that might have been worn, but Robert Lublin writes '[t]o guarantee that a character's identity would not be mistaken, the costumes associated with particular characters became highly determined'.<sup>505</sup> Rumour itself declares 'what need I thus/My well-known body to anatomize'.<sup>506</sup> Rumour warns us that it has been 'Stuffing the ears of men with false reports.' (8). His opening lines are confrontational and accusatory: 'Open your ears; for which of you will stop/The vent of hearing when loud Rumour speaks?' (1-2). The play begins by stressing everyman's susceptibility to rumour and the vulnerability of the ear. 'Stuffing', like 'stopping' used later on, connotes a kind of blocking. As Gina Bloom has comprehensively shown, sound was

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<sup>504</sup> Rumour's 'classical prototype' is Virgil's Fama, Alison Thorne, 'There is a history in all men's lives: reinventing History in *2 Henry IV*', in *Shakespeare's Histories and Counter-Histories*, eds Dermot Cavanagh, Stuart Hampton-Reeves and Stephen Longstaffe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 50. Humphreys lists several instances of references to costumes painted with tongues, p. 4.

<sup>505</sup> Lublin, *Costuming the Shakespearean Stage*, p. 96.

<sup>506</sup> William Shakespeare, *King Henry IV, Part 2*, ed. by A. R. Humphreys. The Arden Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 1981; repr. Thomson Learning, 2007), 20-1. All subsequent quotations taken from this edition.

understood to consist of particulate matter,<sup>507</sup> and this perhaps sheds light on Rumour's image of '[s]tuffing the ears of men' (8). Rumour's sound, by definition containing many voices, literally blocks men's ears both by its volume and its corrosiveness. A different kind of speech was demonstrated in *Richard II*. Gaunt believes his dying words will be more effective than a healthy counsellor's:

O, but they say the tongues of dying men  
 Enforce attention like deep harmony [...]  
 For they breathe truth that breathe their words in pain.  
 He that no more must say is listened more  
 Than they whom youth and ease have taught to glose [...]  
 Though Richard my life's counsel would not hear,  
 My death's sad tale may yet undeaf his ear. (2.1.5-16)

Gaunt feels his dying words will be more effective, more penetrative, more *heard* – 'like deep harmony' – than his living words. As in the sermons, true or real hearing implies action on the part of the listener. Donald Friedman suggests words spoken in physical pain embody the most altruistic counsel.<sup>508</sup> The tetralogy as a whole shows the different kinds of oral and aural agency attributed to types of speech. Dying counsel should be more penetrative, while Rumour is all consuming and so creates a kind of deafness.

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<sup>507</sup> Gina Bloom, *Voice in Motion: Staging Gender, Shaping Sound in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007) Especially Chapter 2, 'Words Made of Breath: Shakespeare, Bacon, and Particulate Matter', pp. 66-110.

<sup>508</sup> Donald M. Friedman, 'John of Gaunt and the Rhetoric of Frustration', *English Literary History*, 43.3 (1976), p. 284.



The plays also demonstrate poor listening as an undesirable characteristic, for example in the stubborn character of Hotspur. In *Henry IV Part 1*, 1.3, he is completely, even comically, unable to listen to his father, whom he repeatedly interrupts, talks over and ignores. Eventually angered, Northumberland chides his son:

Why, what a wasp-stung and impatient fool

Art thou to break into this woman's mood,

Tying thine ear to no tongue but thine own! (1.3.234-6)

The feminine mood could be anger or self-absorption, or could it also be linked to talking over listening. Female speech was condemned in the sermons discussed in chapter one; at the Spital, Powell had complained of 'tatlinge wom[en]'.<sup>509</sup> In Northumberland's criticism, female speech and hearing is treated as self-centered, to listen only to oneself is a 'woman's mood'. This feminine way of hearing is also attributed to Falstaff. Falstaff discusses his selective hearing in 1.2 in his encounter with the Chief Justice. Wishing to avoid him Falstaff instructs his page:

*Fal.* Boy, tell him I am deaf.

*Page.* You must speak louder, my master is deaf.

*Ch. Just.* I am sure he is, to the hearing of anything good.

(1.2.66-8)

While the Chief Justice is a character who is ridiculed, his words capture a disturbing truth. Falstaff's selective hearing will ultimately lead to his downfall, he is unable to hear 'anything good'. Thus Henry V's instructions to the jolly knight to improve himself will fall on deaf ears. In 1.2 Falstaff

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<sup>509</sup> St Paul's MS fol. 37.

keeps changing the subject away from Shrewsbury, when Falstaff did not attend when he was sent for. The Chief Justice has to entreat 'I pray you let me speak with you.' (1.2.108-9). But Falstaff keeps turning the subject to Hal, and does not allow the Justice to speak, rather like Hotspur's inability to listen in part one. Especially entertaining is Falstaff's projection of his own inability onto Hal:

*Fal.* It hath its original from much grief, from study, and perturbation of the brain; I have read the cause of his effects in Galen, it is a kind of deafness. (1.2.114-6)

*Ch. Just.* I think you are fallen into the disease, for you hear not what I say to you.

*Fal.* Very well, my lord, very well. Rather, and't please you, it is the disease of not listening, the malady of not marking, that I am troubled withal.

*Ch. Just.* To punish you by the heels would amend the attention of your ears, and I care not if I do become your physician.

*Fal.* I am as poor as Job, my lord, but not so patient. Your lordship may minister the potion of imprisonment to me in respect of poverty; but how I should be your patient to follow your prescriptions, the wise may make some dram of a scruple, or indeed a scruple itself.

(1.2.117-30)

A. R. Humphreys's gloss on Falstaff's reference to Job explains 'Slandered by Satan, [...] reduced to absolute poverty, [...] urged to curse God and die, [...] in all his sufferings [Job] did not sin with his lips [and] his patience

became a proverb'.<sup>510</sup> Falstaff's reference may be to Job's patience but it follows on from and is in response to the Lord Chief Justice's criticism of the inattention of his ears. Shakespeare may have had in mind Job 42: 5-6: 'I haue heard of thee by the hearing of the eare, but now mine eye seeth thee. Therefore I abhorre my selfe, and repent in dust and ashes.'<sup>511</sup> Steven Marx describes this moment for Job as the moment when 'God designates him as a more accurate interpreter of the truth'.<sup>512</sup> Falstaff commits Job's sin without Job's conversion, just as Job had heard of God but not seen him, implying true understanding, Falstaff's hearing also falls short. Falstaff will not reach Job's stage of repentance. Like Hotspur, Falstaff's ear is tied to his own tongue:

*Fal.* I have a whole school of tongues in this belly of mine,  
and not a tongue of them all speaks any other word  
but my name. (4.3.18-20)

The image might recall the costume of Rumour in the opening scene of the play. Falstaff's school of tongues is worldly as opposed to 'speaking in tongues'; he is not receptive to God. Falstaff's self-interest is the antithesis of Hal who 'can drink with any tinker in his own language' (*1HIV*, 2.4 17-18). Hal does not achieve the idealistic notion of an 'uncontaminated kingly language';<sup>513</sup> instead his policy is communicative, inclusive, and endears him to the audience.<sup>514</sup>

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<sup>510</sup> quotes Noble, p. 271.

<sup>511</sup> Geneva Bible, *The Bible in English* [accessed 25 August 2013].

<sup>512</sup> Marx, *Shakespeare and the Bible*, p. 65.

<sup>513</sup> Peter Parolin, 'Figuring the King in *Henry V*: Political Rhetoric and the Limits of Performance', *Journal of the Wooden O Symposium*, 9 (2009), p. 47.

<sup>514</sup> Jeffrey Knapp hinges the theatre and church on good fellowship, inclusiveness, and communion; he suggests this inclusivist goal is best described as Erasmian, in *Shakespeare's Tribe: Church, Nation, and Theater in Renaissance England* (Chicago and

Falstaff is exclusive in his preference for his own voice. Harold Bloom's praise for Falstaff went as far as renaming the Henriad 'The Falstaffiad'. Bloom aligns Falstaff with Hamlet as those 'men made out of words', but in doing so inadvertently describes exactly Falstaff's error.<sup>515</sup> Henry V's rejection of Falstaff at the end of the play in the 'Fall to thy prayers' speech (5.5.47) has been seen as cold and hypocritical. Michael Davies, however, reads Hal as the ideal Protestant hero and his rejection of Falstaff speech as a Calvinist sermon; the sermon is essential in demonstrating Hal's complete conversion.<sup>516</sup> But while it is necessary for Hal's reformation, the sermon will not have an effect on his roguish companion. Falstaff's deafness has already been resolutely shown through his own confession: he is troubled with 'the disease of not listening, the malady of not marking' (1.2.120-1). He hears the words but will not act on them; he is incapable of the type of *hearing* Andrewes exhorts his auditory to in the Spital sermon. Falstaff's deafness is shown immediately in his disbelief in the sincerity of Hal's words, believing instead 'I shall be sent for in private' and that Hal 'must seem thus to the world' (5.5.77-8). Falstaff recognises in Hal the performance of his miraculous conversion, but he mistakes performance for deceit; Hal means every word.

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London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 28. This concurs with Romotsky's view of Henry V as an Erasmian prince in respect of dress.

<sup>515</sup> And of course, Hamlet's. Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (London: Fourth Estate, 1999), p. 280.

<sup>516</sup> Michael Davies, 'Falstaff's Lateness: Calvinism and the Protestant Hero in *Henry IV*', *The Review of English Studies*, n. s. 56.225 (2005) 351-78

This type of deafness features throughout *Henry V*; characters hear what they want to. Poins says to Hal that weeping at his father's illness would be hypocritical, and so the conversation continues:

*Poins.* Why, because you have been so lewd, and so much engrafted to Falstaff.

*Prince.* And to thee.

*Poins.* By this light, I am well spoke on; I can hear it with mine own ears. (2.2.58-62).

Hal means this as a criticism of Poins as another guilty of 'lewd' behaviour, but Poins reads it as the compliment of friendship, and that he has Hal's approval. Poins demonstrates a kind of wilful hearing that is not the honest and active hearing required for a Christian life.

Falstaff and Hal's former companions are all banished, and not to come within ten miles from the King's person until the King hears they have reformed: 'Be it your charge, my lord,/To see perform'd the tenor of my word' (5.5.70-1). Hal is intent on seeing his word become action. He is completely aware that his instruction is meaningless without their compliance. He asks 'to see' that his word is performed, in other words Falstaff must provide the visual evidence of his own reformation, and thus implicitly the power of the king's speech. Of course this is never seen in *The Henriad*, and so Hal's first instruction as the new king fails. Lancaster/Prince John closes the play with the statement 'But all are banish'd till their conversations/Appear more wise and modest to the world.' (5.5.100-1). 'Conversation' here means 'way of life, behaviour, manners, conduct' according to David and Ben Crystal, but it also means

‘spiritual being’.<sup>517</sup> The subsidiary sense of ‘conversation’, to exchange words, shows the idea of a speech act manifest in the term itself.

*Henry V*

The fact that the new king’s reformation speech fails is made even more pointedly by the opening of *Henry V*. The Archbishop of Canterbury marvels at the prodigious reformation of the prince, prompted, in part, by his father’s death: ‘Never was such a sudden scholar made’ he tells the Bishop of Ely.<sup>518</sup> Canterbury goes on to detail Henry’s scholarly attributes:

Hear him but reason in divinity  
And, all-admiring, with an inward wish  
You would desire the King were made a prelate.  
Hear him debate of commonwealth affairs,  
You would say it hath been all in all his study.  
List his discourse of war, and you shall hear  
A fearful battle rendered you in music.  
Turn him to any cause of policy,  
The Gordian knot of it he will unloose,  
Familiar as his garter, that when he speaks,  
The air, a chartered libertine, is still,  
And the mute wonder lurketh in men’s ears  
To steal his sweet and honeyed sentences.

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<sup>517</sup> David Crystal and Ben Crystal, *Shakespeare’s Words: A Glossary and Language Companion* (London: Penguin, 2002), p. 99. <[www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com)> [accessed 7 September 2011].

<sup>518</sup> William Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, ed. by T. W. Craik. The Arden Shakespeare. Third series (London: Routledge, 1995), 1.1.32. All subsequent quotations taken from this edition.

(1.1.38–50)

While Henry's knowledge encompasses a whole range of disciplines, divinity, politics, law and warfare, the skill that underpins all of these is specifically oratorical. Henry can 'reason', 'debate', 'discourse' and talk his way out of any problem with 'sweet and honeyed sentences'. Canterbury's own short epideictic oration takes for its subject no less than the effective and transformative power of the 'breath of kings', and it is this which is put on trial in the play that follows.<sup>519</sup> *Henry V* includes, within its larger historical narrative, an episodic examination of the efficacy of the king's rhetoric. Canterbury's opening speech becomes the yardstick by which the effectiveness of Henry's rhetoric in the play is measured. By *effective* I mean bringing about a desired state or event; as a successful orator, Henry gains mastery over and can manipulate his listeners. When Canterbury wishes the king were a 'prelate', he alludes to the transformative power of the priest's words; thus Canterbury's comparison suggests that when the subject is divine, Henry's speech is more than effective, it is wholly transformative, in other words it can educate, reform and so save souls as could the preacher in widespread Protestant belief. In some instances in *Henry V*, the king's speech may be judged as thoroughly effective, for example the play begins with the stage managing of the parliamentary debate on Salic Law and the sentencing of the conspirators Cambridge and Scroop. In both cases the end result is a foregone conclusion: the decisions to wage war against France and to execute the traitors have been predetermined by Henry, and so the scenes constitute rhetorical performances in which Henry

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<sup>519</sup> *Richard II*, 1.3.215.

manipulates others into believing they have reached a consensus that suits him. Both examples are also political.

In matters divine, however, the play demonstrates that the transformative potential of Henry's speech is never realised; Canterbury's claim is flatly refuted by the evidence of the play. Henry's reformation sermon at the end of *Henry IV, Part 2* – the effects of which are witnessed in *Henry V* – his catechism of Williams and his own prayer on the eve of the Battle of Agincourt are positioned carefully between faith and doubt. The play systematically examines the effectiveness of the king's speech acts and thus it also invites a judgement on the efficacy of the prayer. Prayer, however, is a markedly different kind of speech and cannot be considered as effective in quite the same way. The addressee of prayer, after all, is not a fallible listener to be swayed by a skilled speaker. It is all too easy to read the victory at Agincourt as the result of divine intervention; Henry's prayer appears to be heard and answered. The play as a whole, however, supports not so much a cosmic view of God's guiding hand but rather a theory of mutability; the epilogue reminds us of Henry's short lived success and that it is not long before England is made to 'bleed' again. Fluellen also describes the figure Fortune 'painted [...] with a wheel, to signify [...] that she is turning, and inconstant, and mutability, and variation' (3.6.31–34). This context helps illuminate the peculiar qualities of the speech act prayer; a subject Shakespeare will return to in *Hamlet* (1602).<sup>520</sup> Both examples are concerned with the sincerity of devotional practice and its direct impact on

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<sup>520</sup> *Hamlet* was entered in the Stationers' Register in 1602. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor suggest the play was written around 1600 (William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, ed. by Stanley Wells / Gary Taylor. The Oxford Shakespeare [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988], 653).



efficacy. This section shall consider Henry's prayer alongside Claudius's and the advice in the Elizabethan *Homilies* (1571) and ultimately conclude that *Henry V* does not demonstrate a divine hand via an answered prayer, but instead points up the paradox that prayer is both necessary and futile.

Canterbury's praise for Henry's oratory extends to the point that he admits 'an inward wish' desiring that 'the King were made a prelate' (1.1.39, 40), thus indicating the very real possibility that Henry can effect religious reformation. Henry Peacham's highly popular handbook on rhetoric, *The Garden of Eloquence* (1577), expounded the great advantages of expertise in this area, that a skilled orator 'may leade his hearers which way he list'.<sup>521</sup> Through Canterbury's comparison, Shakespeare implies that Henry's power includes that of Peacham's orator, but also of the preacher. The importance accorded to preaching in widespread Protestant belief was precisely due to its transformative power (discussed in chapter one); as Mary Morrissey has asserted, grace could be received through simply hearing the sermon: 'if Christ was present in the Word and that presence made operative in preaching, it was not just because of the preacher's oratorical skills: the operative force in this encounter was the Holy Spirit'.<sup>522</sup> Henry not only 'reason[s] in divinity', but *with* divinity (1.1.38). Canterbury's accolade thus recalls *Henry IV, Part 2*, when the king does in fact deliver a sermon, exhorting Falstaff to 'Fall to [his] prayers' and 'reform' himself (5.5.47, 68).<sup>523</sup> According to Canterbury, Henry's Orphic words reform and force the very 'air' into stillness, persuading it against its wild 'libertine' nature

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<sup>521</sup> Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (London: H. Jackson, 1577), A3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>522</sup> Morrissey, "Scripture, Style and Persuasion", pp. 689, 690.

<sup>523</sup> William Shakespeare, *King Henry IV, Part 2* ed. by A. R. Humphreys. The Arden Shakespeare. Second Series (London: Methuen, 1981).

(*H5* 1.1.48); the reformation of Falstaff in comparison ought to be an easier task. Canterbury's claim is, however, quickly undercut when it becomes apparent that Henry's words have markedly not had a salvific effect on Falstaff, but, instead, we are told that 'The King has killed his heart' (2.1.88). Whether this failure to transform should be attributed to the reprobate's metaphorical deafness, or in fact to Henry's oratorical power, seems to change between the plays. It is Falstaff's dissolute character that is emphasised in the earlier play, but Henry's oratorical power is the focus of *Henry V*. Indeed Falstaff, though absent in the play, elicits audience sympathy: Pistol mourns Falstaff's 'heart', left 'fracted and corroborate' by the king (2.1.124). No doubt audience memory of Falstaff as a highly entertaining character in the earlier plays of the Henriad would also have made him more sympathetic. Later, Fluellen's poor rhetoric will prove that the King is like Alexander the Great, an ill-chosen comparison. In response to Gower's objection that unlike Alexander the king 'never killed any of his friends' (4.7.39–40), Fluellen remembers Falstaff and furthers Henry's guilt. The comic scene presents Henry both as a tyrant and a hypocrite. The comparison also recalls Canterbury's opening speech, though read in this light it seems less complimentary, like Alexander the Great, Henry can unloose the 'Gordian knot' (1.1.46), but only through violence. Hal's sermon does effect his own reformation, as Davies has shown,<sup>524</sup> but it does not effect Falstaff's; Hal's sermon is profoundly non-transformative. Canterbury's praise in the opening scene is thus left wanting according to the internal evidence of the play.

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<sup>524</sup> Michael Davies, "Falstaff's Lateness: Calvinism and the Protestant Hero in *Henry IV*", *The Review of English Studies* (New Series) 56:225 (2005), 351–378.

A second example of the dubious success of Henry's rhetoric is demonstrated in Act 4, scene 1. Williams, a common soldier, feels pessimistic about the forthcoming battle and sceptical about the king's cause; few, he feels, die well in battle and 'if these men do not die well it will be a black matter for the King, that led them to it' (4.1.143–145). He speaks, unknowingly, to the king himself who has disguised himself in another Captain's robes. Henry, irked by the comment, responds: 'So if a son that is by his father sent about merchandise do sinfully miscarry upon the sea, the imputation of his wickedness, by your rule, should be imposed upon his father that sent him [...]. But this is not so' (4.1.147–150, 154–155). Henry's comparison seems hardly fair and shows little understanding of his audience. Williams only half-understands his own characterisation of dying well and so his approach is not quite as philosophical as Henry's, not least because he is an ordinary soldier, not a man of letters; his concerns about death are physical and earthly, not spiritual. We are presented again with another complex instance of oral-visual contradiction. We have been told that the king's speech is profoundly effective and admirable and yet this is not what we witness in this scene. Henry presumes to possess the power of consolation but as we see in this scene he does not. The horrifying image of "all those legs and arms and heads chopped off" rejoining on Judgement Day appears to be lost on Henry.<sup>525</sup> Henry's concern is self-interested, as we see later in the prayer scene; Henry is preoccupied with the sins of his own father and the repercussions of

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<sup>525</sup> Cf. Ezekiel 37.7–8: "There was a noyse, and behold, there was a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I behelde, loe, the sinewes, and the flesh grewe vpon them, and aboue, the skin couered them." (Naseeb Shaheen, *Biblical References in Shakespeare's Plays* [Newark: University of Delaware Press; London / Associated University Presses, 1999], 465).

Bolingbroke's usurpation on his own head. Henry's theological argument is really self-vindication; like the blameless father who sends his son to sea who then dies, Henry feels the king is not to blame for the deaths of the soldiers that he sends to war. There is a significant flaw in the analogy – sea-faring, while entailing risk, is hardly comparable to the very high risk of fatality in battle. It is this reality that Williams is most concerned with – the immediacy of the present and the horror of dying in battle:

some swearing, some crying for a surgeon, some upon  
their wives left poor behind them, some upon the debts  
they owe, some upon their children rawly left. I am afraid  
there are few die well that die in a battle, for how can they  
charitably dispose of anything when blood is their  
argument? (4.1.138–143).

Williams's reasoning is practical, not theological. He counters Henry's rhetorical performance with startling visual images of death in war. Williams's understanding of dying well is tantamount to dying comfortably, not painfully crying for a surgeon; it is dying with financial matters resolved, not leaving an impoverished family behind. Henry understands 'dying well' in purely theological terms; the *ars moriendi*, to him, is a question of 'wash[ing] every mote out of his conscience' (4.1.178–179). In this aspect Williams agrees, but his initial point stands: the purpose of war is not always clear to those who suffer most in battle, and the justice in forced obedience to a king when the price is so high is difficult to see.<sup>526</sup> Henry's

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<sup>526</sup> Camille Wells Slighter disputes those critics that have seen Henry V as evading responsibility, "The Conscience of the King: *Henry V* and the Reformed Conscience", *Philological Quarterly* 80:1 [2001], 37–55, n19). Eileen Jorge Allman

failure to recognise this, and the lacuna in place of a reasoned justification of war, is another contradiction of Canterbury's claim: it is another Gordian knot that Henry 'unloose[s]' by sidestepping the real problem (1.1.46).

*Prayer scenes: Henry V and Hamlet*

The most complex instance of religious rhetoric in the play is Henry V's prayer on the eve of battle. The examples discussed above suggest that the king's 'breath' was not transformative and not effective; the prayer, however, could be read as having real agency, it is after all followed by the historical fact of the English victory at Agincourt. Why does Shakespeare apparently accord the prayer efficacy when elsewhere Henry's attempts at religious persuasion are not effective? In the cases of Falstaff and Williams discussed above, Henry has hardly lived up to the Chorus's image of 'the mirror of all Christian kings' (2.0.6); indeed many critics have found this description ill-fitting given the violence in the play.<sup>527</sup> Thus to read the English victory as divine intervention, the answer to a king's prayer – though convenient – sits uneasily in the context of the whole play. John Wilders has asserted that the efficacy of prayer in the history plays is

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reads this episode as Henry "again manifest[ing] his gift for simultaneously teaching and learning through play" (Eileen Jorge Allman, *Player-King and Adversary: Two Faces of Play in Shakespeare* [Baton Rouge / London: Louisiana State University Press, 1980], 116). The *Homily on Obedience* insisted on obedience to the monarch, even when the monarch was a tyrant.

<sup>527</sup> Jonathan Hart has explored the disturbing violence in Henry's language in *Theater and World: The Problematics of Shakespeare's History* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), 44–55. For the disruptive effect of violence see also Jonathan Dollimore / Alan Sinfield, "History and Ideology: the instance of *Henry V*", in John Drakakis (ed.), *Alternative Shakespeares*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London / New York: Routledge, 2002), 230–231.

random,<sup>528</sup> more specific perhaps is the idea that it is impossible to determine God's hand. Sixteenth-century beliefs about prayer add another dimension to the scene; true prayer was guaranteed an answer in the Elizabethan *Homilies* (1571) and in treatises such as the reformer Thomas Becon's *The Sicke Mans Salve* (1560).<sup>529</sup> Any question of efficacy must therefore first consider the truthfulness of the prayer and its method.

Henry's prayer is often compared to Claudius's prayer in *Hamlet*, and a brief look at the parallel scene in the tragedy may help us to understand how the scene works in the history play. The crucial difference in the two prayers is that Henry's prayer derives from contrition, Claudius's from attrition.<sup>530</sup> Hamlet, however, is deceived into believing Claudius's prayer to be true – Claudius is kneeling and therefore adopts the necessary outward action for prayer to be effective.<sup>531</sup> Ramie Targoff has identified the Aristotelian strain in *Hamlet* that asserts moral virtue comes from habit; she recalls Hamlet's advice to Gertrude to 'assume a virtue if you have it not' (3.4.158).<sup>532</sup> Kneeling is therefore not simply ceremonious but an integral process in preparing the mind for true prayer. If the actor playing Henry *kneels*, it is not an empty ritual move, as it is with Claudius, but an indication

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<sup>528</sup> John Wilders, *The Lost Garden: A View of Shakespeare's English and Roman History Plays* (London / Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1978), 53–78, especially 63.

<sup>529</sup> Becon wrote several tracts on prayer including *A Newe Pathway unto Praier* (1542), however *The Sycke Mans Salve* was reprinted throughout the sixteenth century and into the seventeenth century. Becon is confident that "the prayer of faith shall saue the sick" (*The Sycke Mans Salve* [1560; London: Day, 1561], 116).

<sup>530</sup> Joel B. Altman, "'Vile Participation': The Amplification of Violence in the Theater of *Henry V*", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42:1 (1991), 28, n68.

<sup>531</sup> Ramie Targoff, "Introduction: The Performance of Prayer", in *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England* (Chicago / London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), especially 1–6.

<sup>532</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. by Ann Thompson / Neil Taylor. The Arden Shakespeare. Third series (London: Thomson Learning, 2006); Targoff (2001), p. 4.

that outward performance and inward thought are matched. It is a private, spontaneous moment of original prayer and it is preceded immediately by Henry's monologue on the rejection of ceremony, and before that by his (attempted) justification of battle and the preparation of men's souls for death. In this sequence Shakespeare has taken pains to show that Henry's mind has been appropriately elevated to the subject, and that the audience too have been prepared. The theological concerns of the preceding dialogue lead organically to the scene of private devotion.

As with all religious practice, the right method of prayer was hotly contested throughout the latter half of the sixteenth century, spurred on by the first publication of the *Book of Common Prayer* in 1549. This text prompted theologians of all confessions to question the efficacy of prescribed versus individual prayer, public versus private devotion. One attack on the *Book of Common Prayer* differentiates reading from praying; the former lacks the devotional efficacy of the latter, in fact it is 'as evil as playing upon a stage, and worse too. For players yet learn their parts without book, and these, many of them can scarcely read within book.'<sup>533</sup> The concern is anachronistic for the historical Henry V, but not for the audience of Shakespeare's play. It is interesting then that the originality of Henry's prayer seems to be emphasised. The whole passage has a quality that distinguishes it in tone and style from the rest of the text; it is quoted in full below:

O God of battles, steel my soldiers' hearts;

Possess them not with fear. Take from them now

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<sup>533</sup> Targoff (2001), 38, quoting John Field / Thomas Wilcox, *An Admonition to the Parliament* (1572).

The sense of reckoning, if th'opposed numbers  
 Pluck their hearts from them. Not today, O Lord,  
 O not today, think not upon the fault  
 My father made in compassing the crown.  
 I Richard's body have interred new,  
 And on it have bestowed more contrite tears  
 Than from it issued forced drops of blood.  
 Five hundred poor I have in yearly pay,  
 Who twice a day their withered hands hold up  
 Toward heaven to pardon blood; and I have built  
 Two chantries, where the sad and solemn priests  
 Sing still for Richard's soul. More will I do,  
 Though all that I can do is nothing worth,  
 Since that my penitence comes after all,  
 Imploring pardon. (4.1.286–302)

The repetition of 'I', the fluidity with which Henry moves between subjects (his soldiers, the enemy, his father, Richard II, the chantries back in London), and the almost parenthetical 'Though all that I can do is nothing worth' create the impression of a spontaneous, natural train of thought. The language is comparatively plain, or at least plainly Christian, in sharp contrast to his stylised speech on ceremony which is littered with classical allusions. The frustration and self-pitying tone of the preceding speeches ('Upon the king! [...] O hard condition') (4.1.227–230) is replaced with the contrite, sober, and almost melancholy tone of the prayer. At the same time as suggesting spontaneity, the prayer also gestures towards the psalm that Henry will order to be sung after the victory at Agincourt in Act 4 scene 8.



‘Not today, O Lord, / O not today’ rhythmically mimics *Non nobis*, which begins ‘Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us’.<sup>534</sup> The prayer thus straddles both sides of the debate: it achieves the sincerity of spontaneous prayer within a biblically recognisable frame. The psalm also reflects a rhetorical design; it mirrors and recalls the prayer in order to suggest its efficacy.

The chronological proximity of *Henry V* and *Hamlet*, in terms of composition and first performance, is relatively close – at most three years. Both plays give sustained attention to prayer at a critical dramatic juncture, the later play turning more explicitly to ineffective prayer. It is therefore worth taking a moment to compare the prayers of Claudius and Henry V. Where Claudius feared the futility in the devotional act (‘what’s in prayer’ [3.3.48]), Henry concentrates on ‘Imploring pardon’ (4.1.302). The Elizabethan homilies concerning prayer stress the absolute necessity for prayer in leading a Christian life: it is ‘a thyng most necessarie’; they take for granted that prayer will be heard and answered: it ‘auayleth muche, if it be feruent’; and they dictate that as subjects for prayer, spiritual matters take precedent over earthly ones: ‘first to pray for heauenly things, and afterwarde for earthly thinges’.<sup>535</sup> Henry is markedly in line with the *Homilies* just as clearly as Claudius is not. Where Claudius prayed in his private chapel in kingly raiments, asking if one ‘May [...] be pardoned and retain th’offence’ (3.3.56), thus betraying his personal vanity in his attachment to kingship (he wonders if he can be forgiven and keep the role he has usurped), Henry kneels in the cold open air of the battlefield in a more

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<sup>534</sup> Shaheen (1999), 467.

<sup>535</sup> John Jewel, *The second tome of homilees, of such matters as were promised, and intituled in the former part of homilees. Set out by the authoritie of the Queenes Maiestie: and to be read in every parishe church agreeably* (London: Richard Iugge / Iohn Cawood, 1571), 230, 231, 249.

convincing act of humility. Claudius's selfish desire for kingly power contrasts with Henry's altruistic concern. Henry prays not for victory but for the mental and emotional strength for his soldiers, and in fact this is the first thing he asks for: 'steel my soldiers' hearts' he says in a reversal of the promotion in the *Homilies* of the benefits of praying for those in authority: 'howe greatlye it concerneth the profite of the common wealth, to praye diligentlye for the higher powers'.<sup>536</sup> The *Homilies* may suggest that a good Christian will pray for all, but 'kinges and rulers'<sup>537</sup> are named first in the list of appropriate persons for whom to pray. Shakespeare's decision to have Henry pray for his soldiers is part of a calculated effort to create an impression of an ideal king, one whose love for his people is fatherly, an established model set forth by Erasmus in *The Education of a Christian Prince* (1516):

The good prince must have the same attitude towards his subjects as a good paterfamilias has towards his household; for what else is a kingdom but a large family, and what is a king but the father of very many people?<sup>538</sup>

*Henry V* was performed the same year that James VI of Scotland published *Basilicon Doron*, as Camille Wells Slight's has pointed out; like this text, Shakespeare's play emphasises the 'monarch's dual responsibilities as Christian and King'.<sup>539</sup> Henry V embodies both the good ruler and a good Christian, and so the power of his prayer ought to be doubled. Where

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<sup>536</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>537</sup> Ibid., 256.

<sup>538</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, "The Education of a Christian Prince", in A. H. T. Levi (ed.), *Collected Works of Erasmus*. Vol. 27: *Literary and Educational Writings* 5 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 229.

<sup>539</sup> Slight's (2001), 40.

Claudius struggled to find fitting words for prayer ('what form of prayer / Can serve my turn?' [3.3.51–52]), Henry is fluent and unhesitating; he conforms to the model and method of prayer as prescribed in the *Homilies*, as well as to established and well known ideals concerning kingship, Christianity and fatherliness. In following the homiletic model by praying only for spiritual safety (he asks God to forgive his father's crime of usurpation) rather than military victory, the playwright has skilfully and ambiguously positioned the prayer. Luke's consolation that 'every one [that] asketh, receaveth' is framed by a pair of pointing fingers in the Great Bible, a symbol that was used to designate phrases that could only be interpreted by the Church.<sup>540</sup> The view in the *Homilies* that all true prayer is categorically guaranteed an answer is offset by the reality that such answers cannot be known on earth or in this life, thus the agency of prayer can never truly be determined, though its sincerity remains requisite for a true Christian life. This fits in with the larger theme of oral-visual contradiction, the audience witnesses a prayer scene and then Henry V implicitly declares its efficacy, though as I have shown, the insistence on divine intervention in the play is not entirely convincing.

#### *Henry V and the Paradox of Prayer*

Henry's prayer is problematised by its unusual form of address, rather than the more conventional *O Lord*, or *Father* and so on, Henry calls instead to the 'God of battles' (4.1.286). It seems an unusual invocation, and even the

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<sup>540</sup> *The Byble in Englyshe* (London: Grafton and Whitchurch, 1539), Luke 11.

litany in *The Book of Common Prayer* (1559) for use 'In the Time of War' uses the address 'O Almighty God, king of all kings' rather than Henry's more bellicose formulation.<sup>541</sup> The referent could be mythical, particularly given the prologue's indication that Henry will 'Assume the port of Mars' (6). According to the *Homilies*, and indeed in fundamental Christian belief to pray to anything other than the trinity is 'horrible blasphemie'.<sup>542</sup> Henry is not praying to Mars, of course, as he later clarifies 'O Lord' (4.1.289), and the prayer as a whole is otherwise clearly Christian. The equivocation is there nonetheless. The 'God of battles' as Steven Marx and Naseeb Shaheen have identified, is *Yahweh Sabaoth*, or the Lord of Hosts, as described in the Torah and which 'occurs over sixty times in the book of Isaiah alone'.<sup>543</sup> This specifically Old Testament address poses the risk of inefficacy; it highlights the problems surrounding the notion of 'just war', untenable according to the pacifism endorsed by the New Testament, a central problem of the play for John S. Mebane.<sup>544</sup> He argues that *Henry V* 'undercut[s] the ideology of 'just war' by emphasising the fear that all war is damnable'; in his view 'it is no longer plausible to view' Henry V as a 'mirror of all Christian kings'.<sup>545</sup> Mebane's argument can be seen to crystallize in the opening address of Henry's prayer: read in the light of his argument, Henry's prayer cannot be effective. Knowing this, Henry therefore does not ask explicitly for victory, in fact he cannot. Furthermore

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<sup>541</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer, 1559*, ed. by John E. Booty (Washington: The Folger Shakespeare Library / London / Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1976), 76.

<sup>542</sup> Jewel (1571), 237.

<sup>543</sup> Shaheen (1999), 467; Steven Marx, *Shakespeare and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 44.

<sup>544</sup> John S. Mebane, "'Impious War': Religion and the Ideology of Warfare in *Henry V*", *Studies in Philology* 104:2 (2007), 250–266.

<sup>545</sup> *Ibid.*, 252, 255.

the Constable of France exclaims ‘*Dieu de batailles*’ (3.5.15) in his horror at the strength of the English, the French translation of Henry’s own address is surely no coincidence. The parallel indicates the paradox that both sides call on the same God and that favour is granted independently of the prayer itself.

The play’s historically late medieval context accounts for Henry’s Catholic acts of penitence: singing Masses for the dead was one of the casualties of the Reformation.<sup>546</sup> Similarly the building of the ‘[t]wo chantries’ and the poor in “yearly pay” asking for pardon does not speak strictly of a Protestant mentality. Shakespeare’s source here is Robert Fabyan’s *Chronicle* (1516), which alludes to ‘religious houses’; Shakespeare changes this to ‘chantries’.<sup>547</sup> A chantry is specifically associated with the singing of Masses, so even within the prayer, Shakespeare refers to allegedly ineffective and non-transformative sacred speech acts in his post-reformation context.<sup>548</sup> Henry’s acts of faith thus initially seem to endorse pamphleteer Philip Stubbes’s objection that the theatre taught only falsehood, not true religion: ‘ALL Stage-playes, Enterluds and Commedies, are either of diuyn, or prophane matter: If they be of diuine matter, than are they most intollerable, or rather Sacrilegious’.<sup>549</sup> For Stubbes, drama is especially corruptive when it meddles in matters of religion. Shakespeare seems to showcase Catholic devotional practice in what was by this time a

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<sup>546</sup> For the persistence of purgatory and the trauma of its denial see Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton / Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>547</sup> T. W. Craik notes Shakespeare’s alteration from the source text; the weekly services were held at Westminster ([1995], 7).

<sup>548</sup> “Two chantries were an extravagance, even for a monarch” (Greenblatt [2001], 21).

<sup>549</sup> Phillip Stubbes, “Of Stage-playes and Enterluds, with their wickednes”, in *The Anatomie of Abuses* (London: Kingston, 1583), L5r.

dominantly Protestant society.<sup>550</sup> The playwright, however, pulls back from controversial Catholic doctrine at the end of the prayer with Henry's acknowledgement that though he plans to do more to repent 'all that I can do is nothing worth'. Henry, though historically embedded in the Old Faith speaks in Shakespeare's own post-Reformation context, where good works were denied to have any efficacy. The 'Homily of Good Workes' instructed that men should not 'put any confidence in our workes, as by the merite and deseruing of them to purchase to our selues and others remission of sinne', instead forgiveness is due only to 'the free grace & mercy of God'.<sup>551</sup> The passage illustrates what may have been a fairly common early modern problem for the older generation, the compulsion to continue with familiar acts of devotion, force of habit would have remained a powerful means of consolation. The prayer that Shakespeare writes for Henry plays with pre- and post-Reformation doctrine, just as the opening balances itself between pre-Christianity and Christianity. While the performance appears sincere, this jostling of conflicting ideas bears on how we read the prayer, as a devout, transformative moment, or another act of manipulative rhetoric.

Significantly, the prayer does not conclude with the customary *Amen*. Why does Shakespeare go to the trouble of producing an emotional, apparently sincere prayer and then not allow Henry this final word? *Amen* is the wax seal on the letter that flies up to heaven and is received, it also demonstrates the speaker's total commitment and consent to what has

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<sup>550</sup> Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Basingstoke / London: Macmillan, 1988), ix.

<sup>551</sup> "An Homilee of good workes", in Jewel (1571), 171.

been spoken.<sup>552</sup> Later Macbeth will be unable to say *Amen* because he is not truly repentant. The absence of *Amen* combined with the absoluteness of ‘All’ means the prayer ends on a note of despair, not consolation. Alexander Leggatt’s reading of this scene describes the ‘terrible spiritual loneliness of a man convinced that his prayers are not being heard,’<sup>553</sup> and indeed the prayer is not heard, neither by a congregation nor by a priest, there is no one to provide consolation or assent to his prayer.<sup>554</sup> *Henry V* raises troubling questions about devotional practice; the king’s repentance and prayer appear to be sincere and yet he does not feel the consolation that the *Homilies* promise, ‘foorth with thou shalt feele the eares of the Lorde wide open vnto thy prayers’.<sup>555</sup> There is no assurance that Henry feels the receptiveness of God’s ears until after the fact of the victory. The implication of such a position is that the prayer has no practical agency; it is an empty ritual. Henry’s prayer lives in the simultaneous hope of efficacy and the knowledge of its impossibility.<sup>556</sup>

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<sup>552</sup> See Targoff’s discussion of the importance of *Amen* ([2001], 38–47). She uses a similar image in describing ‘the apparent irreversibility of saying “amen,” as if the minister’s prayers will automatically be sealed and sent to heaven’. 47.

<sup>553</sup> Leggatt, *Shakespeare’s Political Drama*, p. 135.

<sup>554</sup> Again, see Targoff (2001) on the benefits of public prayer – the listeners assent to prayer, and approve it as suitable (47–56). Joseph Sterrett also raises pertinent questions about the ‘unheardness’ of Claudius prayer in *Hamlet* (“Confessing Claudius: Sovereignty, Fraternity and Isolation at the Heart of *Hamlet*”, *Textual Practice* 23:5 [2009], 739–761).

<sup>555</sup> Jewel (1571), 511.

<sup>556</sup> This perhaps reflects some post-Reformation responses to the Mass – the denial of the doctrine of transubstantiation removes the transformative process, but the hope in its signification remains; see Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theater in Early Modern England* (Ithaca / London: Cornell University Press, 1997), especially 94–124.

Prayer as ritual performance is intimately linked with ceremony – Henry has probably already observed the necessary physical preparation by kneeling. It is interesting therefore that in this scene Henry V does not necessarily appear as a king; he may in fact still be dressed in Erpingham's cloak. If ceremonial garb can be seen to have an operative function in *Henry V*, this function may be crucial in tipping the balance between reading the prayer as effective or not. The two examples of successful rhetorical machination mentioned at the start of this chapter, the parliamentary debate and the condemnation of the conspirators are conducted strictly at court where Henry would be in full regal dress. The text does not indicate a moment of removal though Henry could throw the cloak off in the preceding soliloquy or hand it back to Erpingham in the brief exchange preceding the prayer. This would make dramatic sense, but as Erpingham is not seen again in the scene, it would not matter if the cloak was not returned, Henry could just as easily throw it off when he speaks to Gloucester at the end of the scene. Gloucester was present when the king asked for Erpingham's cloak, so even if he was still wearing it, Gloucester would not need to be surprised. Either way, the spoken text does not demand the cloak be removed. It seems more in keeping with the scene for him to remain cloaked – it is after all a bitterly cold night.<sup>557</sup> The disguise is highly significant; nowhere else in Shakespeare's history plays does the king

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<sup>557</sup> Bates: "as cold a night as 'tis, he could wish himself in Thames up to the neck" (4.1.114–115). Shakespeare had perhaps very recently had a taste of a night spent outdoors in the cold in a year when the Thames was nearly frozen over if he was present on the night The Theatre was dismantled (James Shapiro, *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* [London: Faber and Faber, 2005], 1–7).



dress in the robes of another and remain successfully disguised.<sup>558</sup> The image created of Henry praying as a soldier, in another's cloak, is rather different from the one created if he were dressed in kingly garments. In potentially appearing less majestic at the moment of prayer, Henry V does appear to embody the ideal Protestant – he prays as an individual and concentrates on self-examination rather than ceremony, he is like the Protestant ministers who no longer wore 'the apparel that contributed to the ceremonial function' needed to enable transubstantiation in the Mass.<sup>559</sup> At the same time, the play stresses the importance of signs; the example of ineffective rhetoric on the *ars moriendi* is delivered by Henry V in Erpingham's cloak – not as the king. Oratory alone does not persuade Williams, he is brought around once he knows the opponent he has made is in fact the king. Yet rather than retracting his position, Williams blames the king: 'Your majesty came not like yourself' (4.8.51). Had Henry been in kingly apparel, and thus identifiable as a king, Williams would not have dared to dispute the king's politics and indeed blame the king for any who do not die well in battle. Williams is misled by the visual signs. Shakespeare acknowledges the social collaboration needed for signs (visual and verbal) to have any meaning; in *Richard II* Richard's crown is meaningless once Bolingbroke and his supporters collaborate to depose him. Signs only have meaning or power when the individuals in a given society collaborate, or agree, on what those signs mean. As Donald M. Friedman writes, it takes Bolingbroke longer to acquire the sign of the crown than it does the actual

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<sup>558</sup> As the boy prince, Hal, of course, does adopt disguises. Henry VI is quickly identified through his attempt at disguise.

<sup>559</sup> Lublin, *Costuming the Shakespearean Stage*, p. 49.

kingdom.<sup>560</sup> The jurist Sir Edward Coke tried to de-emphasise the role of symbols, for example, in promoting the idea that a coronation was not needed to confirm kingship.<sup>561</sup> Shakespeare takes part in the early modern debate about signs and their meaning. In *Henry V*, it is William's collaboration that invests the sign of the crown with power; without these outward signs a king is unrecognisable and the status and power of his words are completely undone. The signs in themselves are shown to have no mystical meaning – meaning is created through the collaborative act.<sup>562</sup> It is in this light that the possible absence of regal dress in the prayer scene again points to the inefficacy of prayer itself.

### *Military and Rhetorical Strategy*

The prayer scene does not have a counterpart in Shakespeare's principal sources; Holinshed instead provides a pre-battle oration, in turn taken almost word for word from Edward Hall. Shakespeare does use the oration provided by Holinshed, quoting it almost verbatim. The famous St Crispin's Day speech might be seen as alluding to England as the elect nation 'We few, we happy few' (4.3.60),<sup>563</sup> but its efficacy as an exercise in rhetoric reaches a point of absurdity, Henry's battle speech is so persuasive that Westmorland wishes 'would you and I alone, / Without more help,

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<sup>560</sup> Donald M. Friedman, "John of Gaunt and the Rhetoric of Frustration", *English Literary History* 43:3 (1976), 295.

<sup>561</sup> Hart (1992), 84.

<sup>562</sup> The 'messiness of collaboration' exists in other forms too, Peter Parolin argues that audience and players 'assent to various acts of misrepresentation', Peter Parolin, "Figuring the King", pp. 43, 54.

<sup>563</sup> For a reading of the Protestant strain in the St Crispin's Day speech see Maurice Hunt, "The Hybrid Reformations of Shakespeare's Second Henriad", *Comparative Drama* 32:1 (1998), 176–206.

could fight this royal battle!’ (4.3.74–75). The rousing speech provides a sharp contrast with the prayer scene – there is a clear disjunction in Henry’s confidence between the two. The prayer is entirely Shakespeare’s invention, the effects of which are twofold. Firstly, Shakespeare creates the semblance of a miracle and of divine intervention. Secondly, in departing from his historical sources, Shakespeare allows himself space to explore the sincerity and agency of prayer within an orthodox framework – there is room to perceive the English as God’s favoured nation at Agincourt. Shakespeare also omits entirely the strategical reasons for the victory: the technology of the English longbow.<sup>564</sup> The role played by the archers and the sharp stakes set before them is emphasised in the chronicle histories of Holinshed, Hall, the earlier play *The Famous Victories of Henry the fifth* (1598) and an anonymous poem on the subject that Shakespeare may or may not have read.<sup>565</sup> Incredibly, Henry even suggests the battle is won entirely ‘without stratagem’ (4.8.109); surely any early modern spectator with some historical knowledge of the Battle of Agincourt would have found this surprising. Similar military details are stressed in the earlier play *Henry VI, Part 1*, so Shakespeare’s omission in *Henry V* is a conscious decision.<sup>566</sup> Shakespeare’s Henry gives the audience a highly selective presentation of events post-

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<sup>564</sup> Parolin, (2009), p. 49.

<sup>565</sup> Edward Hall, *The vnion of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancastre [and] Yorke* (London: Grafton, 1548), fol. 48v; *Holinshed’s Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, ed. by Sir Henry Ellis. 6 vols (London: Johnson 1807–1808), vol. 6, 553. The anonymous poem is entitled *Here after foloweth ye batayll of Egingecourte [and] the great sege of Rone by kyng Henry of Monmouthe the fyfthe* (London: Skot, [1536?]). It went through two editions in 1536 and another in 1616 (A. W. Pollard / G. R. Redgrave, *A Short-Title Catalogue of English Books 1475–1640*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn [London: The Bibliographical Society, 1986], vol. 1, 9).

<sup>566</sup> Cf. *Henry VI, Part 1*, 1.1.116–118.

victory. The attribution to God's arm is thus underscored by the deliberate avoidance of other causes for the victory.

Post-victory the king expresses his gratitude to God: 'Praised be God, and not our strength, for it!' (4.7.86); 'God fought for us' (4.8.121). The unlikelihood of such high numbers of French casualties compared to the English is also depicted as divine intervention:

O God, thy arm was here;  
And not to us but to thy arm alone  
Ascribe we all. When, without stratagem,  
But in plain shock and even play of battle,  
Was ever known so great and little loss  
On one part and on th'other? Take it, God,  
For it is none but thine. (4.8.107–113)

The emphatic attribution of victory to God is part of Henry's continued political strategy and his confident assertion contrasts the troubled prayer scene. Any impression of divine agency, however, is quickly undercut by the reminder of Henry's short-lived glory, his '[s]mall time' in the epilogue (5); the longer term view that the play's final words offer suggests that Henry's prayer has not had any meaningful agency. The victory at Agincourt represents a very brief triumph in a conflict that will continue for another generation as shown in the *Henry VI* trilogy.

There is a poetic circularity to the play: Canterbury promises a fearful battle rendered in music and the end of Act 4 delivers this when Henry orders psalms to be sung in thanks. It is yet another example of Henry's rhetorical presentation of events to suggest he is in God's favour; Williams's startling image of the chopping off of body parts has no place in

Henry's rhetorical and political strategy. Henry's prayer is sincere and heartfelt, but the possible absence of ceremonial dress in the scene negates a reading of mystical, divine intervention. In the final wooing scene, Henry disclaims possession of any rhetorical skill. To his French war trophy he says: 'T'faith, Kate, my wooing is fit for thy understanding. I am glad thou canst speak no better English, for if thou couldst thou wouldst find me such a plain king' (5.2.122–125).

The play thus comes full circle; it began by the bishops praising his oratorical skill and it ends by Henry denying it. The numerous examples of failed and successful rhetoric, compounded by the possible necessity for visual signs in the form of ceremonial garb for Henry's speech to be transformative, call into question the agency of the prayer spoken on the eve of battle. Henry, and indeed Hal in both parts of *Henry IV*, is a master of rhetoric in many areas of life, it is in matters of religion that he is less convincing. The suggestion that the prayer is both sincere and ineffective is highly troubling and suggests the emptiness in the devotional practice advocated by the Elizabethan state.

The inclusion of the Jacobean play, *Henry VIII* (1613) in a thesis on the Elizabethan history play perhaps needs some justification. Written and performed over a decade after the play discussed in the last chapter, *Henry V*, and two decades after Shakespeare first penned the *Henry VI* trilogy, *Henry VIII* might better be classed, at least chronologically, amongst late plays such as *The Winter's Tale* (1609) and *The Tempest* (1611). A number of critical volumes make this choice: the *Cambridge Companion* series dedicates a chapter to *Henry VIII* in its guide to the late plays but not in the guide to history plays;<sup>567</sup> Dutton and Howard's *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works* (2005) similarly excludes the play from its volume on histories, but includes it in the volume on the late plays; single volumes on the histories have tended to exclude it altogether.<sup>568</sup> Paul Dean argues that the genre of 'history play' has become synonymous with chronicle-based history, and thus ignores the tradition of romance history (romance histories 'incorporate characters from history within a completely imaginary, usually comic, plot').<sup>569</sup> Romance history, Dean suggests, is another forgotten genre, 'romance' now being equated with Shakespeare's late plays.<sup>570</sup> Anston Bosman suggests that Edward's Dowden's generic classification

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<sup>567</sup> *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's History Plays*, ed. by Michael Hattaway (2003); *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's Last Plays*, ed. by Catherine M. S. Alexander (2009)

<sup>568</sup> Foakes does briefly discuss *Henry VIII* in the final chapter, 'Shakespeare's Other Historical Plays', of *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's Histories*. Monographs excluding *Henry VIII* include among many others, Tillyard, Ribner, Holderness and a Ph.D. thesis by Paul Beehler.

<sup>569</sup> Paul Dean, 'Chronicle and Romance Modes in *Henry V*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 32.1 (1981), pp. 18-27 (18).

<sup>570</sup> Paul Dean, 'Dramatic Mode and Historical Vision in *Henry VIII*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 37.2 (1986), pp. 175-189 (175).

‘romance’ and the subsequent association of *Henry VIII* with this later genre has resulted in an unhelpful ‘bifurcation of “truth” along the lines of genre [and] the conviction that history had one form of truth and romance another’.<sup>571</sup> Bosman’s view that ‘the play’s skepticism towards truth’ stems from ‘the indeterminacy of perception in general and of vision in particular’ is clearly relevant to the argument I have been making about the earlier history plays.<sup>572</sup> So far we have seen how the senses of seeing and hearing are used to construct narrative; this final play includes a more ruthless process of selection in the historical facts it chooses to portray or not portray.

John Cox has considered the play’s experimentation with and adaptation of elements of the Jacobean masque to explain its obsession with spectacle.<sup>573</sup> An added complication to straightforward generic classification is that in terms of historical context, *Henry VIII* is really a Stuart history play, and of course the play ends by anticipating and praising the new Stuart king, ‘another heir/As great in admiration as herself’.<sup>574</sup> There is no question, however, that this is an ‘Elizabethan’ play in the sense that it is very much about Elizabeth – even though she only appears as a newborn at the very end of the play. In the trial of Katherine of Aragon, the courting of Anne Boleyn and her subsequent coronation, the absent figures that cannot escape audience memory are the daughters Mary and Elizabeth and the

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<sup>571</sup> Anston Bosman, ‘Seeing Tears: Truth and Sense in *All is True*’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 50.4 (1999), p. 460.

<sup>572</sup> Bosman, ‘Seeing Tears’, p. 462.

<sup>573</sup> John D. Cox, ‘*Henry VIII* and the Masque’, *ELH*, 45.3 (1978), pp. 390-409.

<sup>574</sup> William Shakespeare, *King Henry VIII*, ed. by Gordon McMullan. The Arden Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 2000), 5.4.41-2. All subsequent quotations taken from this edition.

troubles of succession that the play's action precedes. Thus memory of the recent Elizabethan era and nostalgia is very much at the heart of this play.

*Henry VIII* represents the collaborative efforts of Shakespeare and John Fletcher; as such early twentieth-century criticism rejected the play for not being 'authentic' Shakespeare.<sup>575</sup> In more recent studies of early modern drama, thankfully, single authorship is no longer the main status marker of high literary art, an outmoded view that Gordan McMullan describes as 'originating in romantic aesthetic obsessions with unity and individuality in the field of artistic/literary production.'<sup>576</sup> Work that does thoroughly consider collaboration, however, as Linda Micheli has suggested, is 'too often' reduced to 'a case study in problematic authorship.'<sup>577</sup> Barbara Kreps openly sidesteps the question of authorship and refers to the 'play' rather than the authors.<sup>578</sup> Some recent criticism persists in treating the play as solely the work of Shakespeare.<sup>579</sup> Collaborative authorship in this play serves to advance my thesis. The echoes of *Henry VI, Parts 1 and 2* in this play suggests Fletcher's familiarity with Shakespeare's early histories, and that those early forays into representing 'historiographical pluralism' (to borrow Ivo Kamps' phrase) had stayed in the mind of more than one

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<sup>575</sup> See Gordan McMullan, ed., *King Henry VIII*. The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: A&C Black, 2000), pp. 4-5.

<sup>576</sup> McMullan, p. 181. Lois Potter makes a similar point, *Critical Biography* p. 424.

<sup>577</sup> Micheli. She then goes on to treat Shakespeare as the sole author. p. 453.

<sup>578</sup> Barbara Kreps, 'When All is True: Law, History and Problems of Knowledge in *Henry VIII*', *Shakespeare Survey*, 52 (1999), p. 166, fn.1.

<sup>579</sup> Amy Appleford's recent article suggests critics 'since the 1960s have mostly accepted' R. A. Foake's evidence for sole authorship in his Arden edition of the play, but given Gordan McMullan's more recent Arden edition I would suggest critics are increasingly more open to and accepting of co-authorship. Amy Appleford, 'Shakespeare's Katherine of Aragon: Last Medieval Queen, First Recusant Martyr', *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 40.1 (2010), fn. 3, p. 168. For McMullan on collaboration, see pp. 180-199, 448-9.



playwright, and were as relevant as ever in 1613, if not more so.<sup>580</sup> The dynastic shift from Tudor to Stuart necessitated yet another perspective from which recent English history could be viewed.

*All is True*

*The Famous History of the Life of King Henry VIII* is the concluding title of the 'Histories' in the 1623 Folio, but it was known to audiences in 1613 by another name: *All is True*. The title itself might suggest a departure from Shakespeare's English histories of the 1590s, whose titles typically describe the famous people or dynasties depicted in the play. *All is True* resembles the wittily styled titles of Shakespeare's younger contemporaries, such as Thomas Heywood's *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody* (1604/5) and Samuel Rowley's *When You See Me, You Know Me* (1605), which, though subtitled with historical names, play on (and anticipate) their audience's knowledge of history.<sup>581</sup> Both Heywood and Rowley's plays depend on the recognisability and familiarity of their main characters, Elizabeth and Henry VIII respectively, whose royal bodies also feature on the front of the playbooks; *All is True* would seem to follow in this vein, but is in fact a riposte to the earlier playwrights' claims. In Shakespeare and Fletcher's play 'all is' patently not 'true'; the play exposes history's claims to truth as subjective and selective.

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<sup>580</sup> Ivo Kamps, 'Historiography and Legitimation in *Henry VIII*' *College English*, 58.2 (1996), p. 193.

<sup>581</sup> As well as referring to the immediately identifiable royal figures, the titles may have a secondary meaning. Teresa Grant sees Rowley's play as Tacitean in its commentary on contemporary politics: see Teresa Grant 'History in the Making: The Case of Samuel Rowley's *When You See Me* (1604/5)', in *English Historical Drama, 1500-1660: Forms Outside the Canon*, ed. by Teresa Grant and Barbara Ravelhofer. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 130.

‘Truth’, as the title suggests, is a central theme and one which has been the focus of much more criticism on this play, than it has been for work on Shakespeare’s earlier histories.<sup>582</sup> The alternative title, then, *All is True*, should warn us that this statement cannot be taken at face value. At Gordan McMullan’s count, the word ‘truth’ appears twenty-five times, ‘truly’ six, ‘true’ eighteen, and ‘true-hearted’ once.<sup>583</sup> The prologue suggests the audience’s quest for truthfulness might be a measure of good performance:

Such as give  
 Their money out of hope they may believe,  
 May here find truth, too. (7-9)

At the same time, the prologue suggests the prestigious playing company (the King’s Men) have a reputation for truthful performance (‘the opinion that we bring’, 20) but also that their brand of truth is subjective (‘our chosen truth’) and that the audience will be equipped to be discerning as they are ‘gentle hearers’:

For gentle hearers, know  
 To rank our chosen truth with such a show  
 As fool and fight is, beside forfeiting  
 Our own brains and the opinion that we bring  
 To make that only true we now intend... (17-21)

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<sup>582</sup> Truth is a central focus in, for example, Bosman; Kreps; Kamps ‘Historiography and Legitimation’; Lee Bliss, ‘The Wheel of Fortune and the Maiden Phoenix of Shakespeare’s *King Henry the Eighth*’, *English Literary History*, 42.1 (1975), pp. 1-25; Jonathan Baldo, ‘Necromancing the Past in Henry VIII’, *English Literary Renaissance*, 34.3 (2004), pp. 359-386. A dominant theme of criticism of the earlier histories has been providentialism and kingship.

<sup>583</sup> McMullan, *King Henry VIII*, p. 3.

Significantly the truth of the play is one that has been ‘chosen’, openly signalling the selective process of the writers. Truth can also, paradoxically, be ‘rank[ed]’, suggesting some truths are more credible than others. Alongside these statements of truth, and reminiscent of the Choric pleas in *Henry V*, the audience are invited to collaborate in the act of imagination: ‘Think ye see/The very persons of our noble story’ (25-6), ‘in a moment, see/How soon this mightiness meets misery’ (29-30). Given the disjunction between sight and sound in the earlier plays, these ‘gentle hearers’ should be sceptical about what they do ‘see’ in the play.

In this chapter I argue that the play’s concern with truth- and history-telling is, as we have seen, an extension of the ideas that emerged twenty years previously when Shakespeare first turned his eye to Henry VI.<sup>584</sup> The trial of Buckingham in particular recalls the master accused by his apprentice in *Henry VI, Part 2*. This chapter looks at the trials and falls of the three dominant characters of the play, Buckingham, Wolsey and Katherine, and what these falls suggest about truth, oral, visual and written testimony, and the construction of historical narrative. These events are framed by the truth claims of the Prologue and Cranmer’s final speech, which – along with the title – alerts the audience and reader to be sceptical.

Cranmer’s insistence that he tells the ‘truth’ as ‘heaven now bids’ him at the end of the play prefaces his prophecy of Elizabeth’s successful reign (5.4.15-6). In this christening scene, Cranmer looks upon the ‘royal infant’ and predicts the golden age of her reign bringing ‘[u]pon this land a thousand thousand blessings’ (5.4.17, 19). He deftly handles a future

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<sup>584</sup> Dean sees *Henry VIII* as resembling the *Henry VI* trilogy in structure; there is no single dominating character. Dean, ‘Dramatic Mode’, p. 177.

problem of succession (Elizabeth will remain childless) by treating James VI and I as a mythical son created from the ‘ashes’ of ‘the maiden phoenix’ (5.4.40, 41). Cranmer’s highly selective presentation of events suggests a smooth transition from the reign of Henry VIII to Elizabeth I to James I. The trauma of succession, the bloody intervening years, the reigns of Edward VI and Mary I, and the years of religious turmoil are entirely and staggeringly omitted. As Barbara Kreps has pointed out, Cranmer’s ‘panegyric delivered from the perspective of 1613 is a utopian evaluation of the Elizabethan past’.<sup>585</sup> This reading becomes even more convincing when we consider that it was, at the point of Cranmer’s speech, a future in which he would have no part having been executed under Mary. Henry VIII’s hope in his daughter Elizabeth at the end of the play is incongruous considering the four marriages that followed Elizabeth’s birth and the 1536 Act of Succession which bastardized both Mary and Elizabeth.<sup>586</sup> Historically the play ends in 1533, and the audience must have been aware that Henry still had very different plans for the future: he was still hopeful for a son. Kreps suggests it is ‘doubtful...this irony could have been easily recognised in performance’, but in doing so she gives little credit to Jacobean audiences.<sup>587</sup> Ivo Kamps’ earlier article argues that ‘Cranmer’s unifying historiography sounded archaic and unsophisticated not only to more learned Jacobeans, but also to those who were raised on the popular histories of Holinshed, Hall, Grafton and others.’<sup>588</sup> I would take this one step further and suggest Cranmer’s gloss on history would have been

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<sup>585</sup> Kreps, ‘When All is True’, p. 166.

<sup>586</sup> Ibid., Elizabeth was restored to third place in the Third Act of Succession 1543/4 but remained illegitimate. p. 170.

<sup>587</sup> Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>588</sup> Kamps, ‘Historiography and Legitimation’, p. 195.

transparently superficial to anyone in the audience with the most basic understanding of recent historical events. While detailed knowledge of the chronicle histories would have enhanced the faultlines in dramatic narratives, these faultlines were also readily visible in performance. The title *All is True* does not imply we should take the events of the play as ‘fact’ but rather questions what ‘truth’ in history means and whether the idea of a single truth is even helpful.

Literary culture was also changing: in the period between the last Shakespeare play discussed, *Henry V* (1599), and the first performance of *Henry VIII* (1613), the first English translation of Jean Bodin’s *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History* (trans. Thomas Heywood, 1608) had appeared. Bodin stresses the unreliability of historical narrative and recalls Aristotle’s advice ‘*That an Author ought not to be accepted with an over-weening credulity,*’ and states that ‘almost all Historiographers are troubled’.<sup>589</sup> While Bodin optimistically argues that ‘*Historie ought to be nothing but a representation of truth*’, his awareness of the many factors influencing historiographers suggests to the discerning reader that this might not be possible. Thus Bodin goes further than Thomas Blundeville had in his earlier treatise *The True order and method of writing and reading hystories* (1574), which expresses confidence that good historiographers can ‘tell things as they were done with out either augmenting or diminishing them, or swaruing one iote from

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<sup>589</sup> Jean Bodin, trans [Thomas Heywood], ‘Of the choise of History, by way of Preface’, *The Two most Worthy and Notable Histories which remain unmained to posterity (viz:) The Conspiracie of Cateline, undertaken against the gouernment of the Senate of Rome, and The Warr which Ingurth for many yeares maintained against the same State. Both written by C. C. Salustius.* (London: Iaggard, 1608). Unmarked page.

the truth.’<sup>590</sup> Historiography was a developing discipline and one that was becoming increasingly sceptical. The heyday of the chronicles themselves had passed; Jean-Christophe Mayer writes that ‘in the 1590s the chronicle was commercially on the wane’ and ‘the chronicles were gradually falling into disrepute’.<sup>591</sup> D. R. Woolf links the same point to the decline of the chronicle history play which he describes as a ‘parasite’ genre, ‘a term that reflects both their feeding upon a chronicle host and [...] an inability to survive once that host has withered away.’<sup>592</sup> He argues that the play ‘proved better able to satisfy public interest in history’ thus rendering the chronicle ‘redundant’, it ‘*dissolve[d]* into a variety of genres’ including the newsbook.<sup>593</sup>

In ‘Satire IV’, probably written at the end of the sixteenth century,<sup>594</sup> John Donne’s quizzical persona even went as far as to lump Holinshed, Hall and Stow together as knowing a deal of ‘trivial household trash’.<sup>595</sup> The theme of false history writing also appears in Thomas Tomkis, *Lingua* (1607). In this play, Mendacio claims he helped Herodotus, Pliny, Rabelais and Lucian: ‘O those two Bookes, *De Vera historia* howsoever they go under his

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<sup>590</sup> Thomas Blundeville, *The True order and method of writing and reading hystories according to the precepts of Francisco Patricio and Accontio Tridentino, two Italian writers, no lesse plainly than briefly, set forth in our vulgar speech, to the great profite and commoditie of all those that delight in hystories* (London: Seres, 1574), Sig. [E. iv?]<sup>r</sup>-v.

<sup>591</sup> Jean-Christophe Mayer, ‘The Decline of the Chronicle and Shakespeare’s History Plays’, *Shakespeare Survey*, 63 (2010), p. 12, 13.

<sup>592</sup> D. R. Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 26.

<sup>593</sup> Woolf, *Reading History*, p. 26.

<sup>594</sup> Ilona Bell dates Donne’s satires to his time at Lincoln’s Inn, in John Donne, *Collected Poetry*, ed. by Ilona Bell (London: Penguin, 2012), p. xlv. Robin Robbins dates this poem to March-April 1597 in *The Complete Poems of John Donne*, ed. by Robin Robbins (Harlow: Longmann, 2008), p. 397.

<sup>595</sup> John Donne, ‘Satires IV’, in *Collected Poetry*, lines 97-98.. In ‘Satire I’, ‘the gathering chroniclers’ are numbered among the worthy texts in the sanctuary of the speaker’s study; a sanctuary that he is very quick to leave, line 9.

name, Ile be sworne I writ them every title.’<sup>596</sup> Considering Mendacio’s name, his claim to have a hand in some of these texts is not so far-fetched, Rabelais and Lucian were satirists writing fake histories. What is interesting is that Mendacio’s long list of writers includes the chronicle historians:

I must confesse I would faine have logged *Stow* and great  
*Hollings-head* on their elbowes, when they, were about their  
 Chronicles, and as I remember Sir *John Mandevills* travells,  
 and a great part of the Decads were of my doing.<sup>597</sup>

The chronicles perhaps no longer had status as authoritative accounts of the national past. Donne and Tomkis’s satirical mode might naturally include the undermining of other writers but they also anticipate the decline of the history play. A much later history play whose title makes a claim to truth, John Ford’s *The chronicle historie of Perkin Warbeck A strange truth* (1634), also begins by suggesting the unpopularity of its genre. The dedicatory verses bemoan ‘The Cynick snarls and the Critick howles’; the Prologue similarly confesses ‘Studyes haue, of this Nature, been of late/So out of fashion’.<sup>598</sup> The history play had been a ‘fashion’ of the 1590s, dominated by Shakespeare. The transfer of the Tudor regime to the Stuart saw a brief reprisal of the genre as playwrights could now write about Elizabeth and her father Henry VIII with impunity.

That scepticism about historiography was not new to Shakespeare has been suggested by Kamps:

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<sup>596</sup> Thomas Tomkis, *Lingua, Or The Combat of the Tongue, And the Five Senses for Superiority* (London: Geld, 1607), Sig Dr.

<sup>597</sup> Tomkis, *Lingua*, Sig Dr.

<sup>598</sup> ‘To my friend and kinsman, Master Iohn Ford, the Authour’, ‘Prologue’, in *The chronicle historie of Perkin Warbeck A stange truth* (London: Beeston, 1634), Sig. [A4r-v].

The clash between historical perspectives manifest in *Henry VIII* is already very apparent, though on a smaller scale, in the stark contrast between the fiercely patriotic Chorus of *Henry V* and the subsequent action of the play.<sup>599</sup>

Kamps' acknowledgement of this conflict as an established theme is highly qualified; *Henry V* was the last of the history plays of the 1590s. I build on his argument for 'historiographical pluralism'<sup>600</sup> by suggesting that this has been at the centre of the plays from the very start. The 'historiographical pluralism' of *Henry VIII* may have been especially apparent given that Rowley's earlier play was reprinted in the year that Shakespeare and Fletcher's play was first performed. The title *When You See Me* and the frontispiece together refer to the iconic image of Henry VIII, clearly as instantly recognisable then as it remains today. Rowley's title also brings together two major strands of this thesis: the relationship between seeing and knowledge. In Shakespeare's earlier histories 'seeing' does not provide accurate knowledge, it is always complicated by other sensory evidence. Rowley draws on the memorable image of the king, confident that the king he presents is one the audience and readers will recognise and 'know'. Indeed the Henry of this play is as we might imagine, quick-tempered and changeable, losing and gaining wives in a mere breath: 'Commend me to the Ladie *Catherine Parry*, [...] She shall be Queene [...] And *Anne of Cleave* shall be sent home again' (vi. 1420-23). Miss the line and the audience misses Anne's entire (albeit short) royal career; his interim wife Katherine Howard is not even mentioned. Henry is even comically described as 'a

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<sup>599</sup> Kamps, 'Historiography and Legitimation', p. 193.

<sup>600</sup> Ibid., p. 193





*3 Gentleman.* That I did.

*1 Gentleman.* How was it?

*3 Gentleman.* Well worth the seeing. (4.1.59-61)

The third gentleman smugly mocks the other two citizens and indeed the audience. It is clearly a joke, and rather an irritating one, to be told something is 'worth the seeing' if it cannot be seen. The other gentlemen cannot see the ceremony as it is now over, the audience cannot see the ceremony as it is not dramatised and no-one can see the actual ceremony as it is in the historical past. The episode reminds the audience that they are viewing the past from the outside, and at several removes; a great many historical events might be considered 'worth the seeing' – but it is impossible to 'view' the past. *Henry VIII* includes plenty of spectacle, but it also repeatedly denies the audience first-hand access to the spectacle itself, as with the coronation in 4.1, and the Field of the Cloth of Gold in the opening scene.

This first scene also reminds the audience to be wary of sense perception. Abergavenny is suspicious of Wolsey but attempts to resist judgement:

I cannot tell

What heaven hath given him – let some graver eye

Pierce into that; but I can see his pride

Peep through each part of him. (1.1.66-9).

Abergavenny is familiar with the idea that it is dangerous to assume knowledge of divine workings; he leaves this for a 'graver eye' to read, but at the same time he is confident in seeing the true character of Wolsey. Paradoxically, he distrusts his ability to read Wolsey and is simultaneously assured that his sight tells him Wolsey's pride comes from 'hell' (1.1.70).

Norfolk encourages Buckingham to ‘read/The Cardinal’s malice and his potency/ Together’ (1.1.104-6) and Buckingham himself sees the danger:

I read in’s looks  
Matter against me, and his eye reviled  
Me as his abject object. At this instant  
He bores me with some trick. He’s gone to th’ King –  
I’ll follow, and outstare him. (1.1.125-129)

This episode of reading faces recalls the many similar instances in *King John*. Buckingham describes an exchange of looks: Buckingham ‘reads’ or sees Wolsey’s eye; Wolsey’s eye ‘revile[s]’ Buckingham; Buckingham declares he will ‘outstare’ the Cardinal in return. The *Oxford English Dictionary* entry (which also uses this quotation) for the verb ‘revile’ defines that word as meaning ‘to subject to insult or abuse; to talk to or criticize in an abusive, angry, or insulting manner’.<sup>602</sup> The word thus describes an oral action; Wolsey’s reviling eye is an unspoken insult, but it is an equally harmful one. Both Buckingham and Wolsey are actively trying to avoid slander in not vocalising their hatred for one another. Buckingham aims to rebuff Wolsey on the same terms – with an equally insulting stare. Buckingham perhaps hopes for the effects that a shaming gaze can have, as we saw with Hubert and John in *King John*. Buckingham does not however succeed in outstaring Wolsey, and it is to the trial of Buckingham that I now turn.

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<sup>602</sup> ‘revile’, v., sense 1a, *OED*.

### *Buckingham*

When Buckingham is arrested for treason in 1.1 he immediately understands the cause: having recently dismissed his surveyor from his post, Buckingham recognises his ulterior motive of vengeance. Perhaps his knowledge of his former employee's character and avarice leads him to state 'My surveyor is false: the o'er great Cardinal/Hath showed him gold.' (1.1.222-3). Kreps sees Buckingham's instant knowledge as evidence that the surveyor's accusations are 'founded',<sup>603</sup> but as we later discover that the surveyor was dismissed from office, Buckingham's knowledge might just as easily stem from his fear of a 'disgruntled' subordinate.<sup>604</sup> Katherine sees exactly this motive for revenge when she hears the surveyor's complaint:

If I know you well,  
You were the Duke's surveyor, and lost your office  
On the complaint o'th'tenants. Take good heed  
You charge not in your spleen a noble person  
And spoil your nobler soul. (1.2.171-5)

Buckingham is found guilty and executed, but the ambiguity surrounding the surveyor's motive is left unresolved. The episode recalls a similarly unsatisfactory trial in *Henry VI, Part 2*, the very first history play that Shakespeare wrote.<sup>605</sup> As discussed in chapter two, this early play includes the trial by combat of the master Thomas Horner and his apprentice Peter. Horner is overcome but his guilt is not entirely persuasive and his innocence is advocated by Hall, Holinshed and Stow.<sup>606</sup> Buckingham's trial

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<sup>603</sup> Kreps, 'When All is True', p. 168.

<sup>604</sup> Kamps, *Historiography and Legitimation*, p. 198.

<sup>605</sup> On the order of the composition of the *Henry VI* trilogy see chapter two.

<sup>606</sup> See my discussion on p. 114

in *Henry VIII* is remarkably similar in muddying the waters of the accuser's motives, and suggesting the superior's innocence whilst having him condemned all the same. Katherine's perceptive comment is also made more credible given her virtuous reputation and association with 'truth' in the play, as we shall see. Like Buckingham, Katherine is also denied a fair trial and so both figures seem to be presented as innocent victims.

In the master-apprentice trial of *Henry VI, Part 2*, the master is found guilty though the play suggests he is innocent, as indeed do the chronicle histories. Buckingham's innocence is suggested in a similar way in *Henry VIII*, but in this case the source material finds him guilty. In the early play Shakespeare illustrates the unreliability of witnesses; in the late play he also points at the unreliability of the chronicle history as a true record. In Holinshed, Kamps argues, Buckingham's guilt is more carefully tested: 'inquisitions were taken in diuerse shires of England of him'.<sup>607</sup> Kamps perhaps understates the case, Holinshed presents a much more thorough trial altogether in which Buckingham is condemned 'by a duke, a marques, seuen earles, & twelue barons'.<sup>608</sup> But Holinshed also gives a second motive for the surveyor: 'hope of reward' from the Cardinal, indeed the surveyor's complaint was 'deuised' by the Cardinal who 'boil[ed] in hatred against the Duke of Buckingham & thirst[ed] for his bloud'.<sup>609</sup>

Buckingham's innocence is further suggested by his final speech in the play. Rather than a conventional and penitent confession, Buckingham's pre-execution speech is indignant: 'Yet I am richer than my base

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<sup>607</sup> Holinshed vol 6, p. 863; Kamps, 'Historiography and Legitimation', p. 199.

<sup>608</sup> Holinshed, vol 6, p. 865.

<sup>609</sup> Ibid., vol 6, p. 862.

accusers, / 'That never knew what truth meant.' (2.1.105-6). Final words before death were considered crucial in the early modern period, as the moments preceding death were when salvation or damnation was definitely decided.<sup>610</sup> This would therefore be an important moment for honesty. Buckingham's accusation seems to confirm his innocence and the surveyor's false accusation. This reading seems to have been the one the Duke of Buckingham favoured in 1628, as McMullan argues, when the Duke sponsored a performance of the play at the rebuilt Globe.<sup>611</sup> The character's faith in his own innocence is assured; the only conventional aspects of this final speech are his thoughts on heaven, as his belief in being 'richer' is not a comment on worldly wealth, but on the riches that await him in the afterlife as reward for his honesty. In the play Buckingham is indignant, perhaps even arrogant, when he describes himself as 'richer' than his 'base accusers' (2.1.104). In Holinshed he is gracious: 'but my lords I nothing maligne for that you haue doone to me, but the eternall God forgiue you my death, and I doo'.<sup>612</sup> In the play Buckingham maintains the surveyor's guilt to the end, both he and his father were 'Fell by [their] servants' (2.1.122) who repaid them with 'A most unnatural and faithless service' (2.1.123). His bitterness perhaps undermines his innocence; however, I would argue the play suggests his innocence while at the same time allowing him a more human and natural reaction – anger.

Holinshed laments Buckingham's evil ambition (his pretensions to the crown) but equally blames the Cardinal. The case of Buckingham must be

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<sup>610</sup> See Richard Wunderli and Gerald Broce, 'The Final Moment before Death in Early Modern England', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 20.2 (1989), 259-275.

<sup>611</sup> McMullan, *Henry VIII*, p. 15.

<sup>612</sup> Holinshed, vol. 6, p. 865.

significant: Kreps rightly states that ‘the play refuses to forget Buckingham’,<sup>613</sup> he is mentioned again in act four. Buckingham himself insists: ‘I had my trial, / And must needs say a noble one’, but as Dean argues, ‘the stress on the obligation to vindicate the fairness of his judges is a little disquieting.’<sup>614</sup> Wolsey undermines the jury when he knowingly chastises the lords who come to strip him of the King’s Seal:

The Duke by law  
Found his deserts. How innocent I was  
From any private malice in his end,  
His noble jury and foul cause can witness. (3.2.253)

‘Private malice’ is exactly what Holinshed stresses; in the play, then, Wolsey equally implicates the jury as guilty of choosing to see only Buckingham’s fault. The episode goes further than the earlier play *Henry VI, Part 2* – it questions the validity and malleability of witness statement as well as confusing and complicating an already ambivalent historical record. The conflict began with the threatening exchange of looks, the competition is only resolved through more looks (now the witnesses of the jury that Wolsey appeals to for their credibility). Shakespeare thus illustrates the proliferating reflections that obfuscate true judgement and through which an individual can be made to seem innocent just as easily as they can be incriminated. Buckingham’s statement that his accusers ‘never knew what truth meant’ equally belies the instability of the meaning of truth itself.

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<sup>613</sup> Kreps, ‘When All is True’, p. 175.

<sup>614</sup> Dean, ‘Dramatic Mode’, p. 184.

### *Wolsey*

Wolsey's eyes appear to be successful again at his banquet in 1.4. The Cardinal identifies the masked king immediately whereas in Holinshed he incorrectly guesses a knight, who 'much more resembled the kings person in that maske than anie other,' to be the worthiest person there.<sup>615</sup> The performance as recounted in Holinshed undoes the straightforward relationship of seeing and knowing by rendering the very recognisable body of the king unrecognisable. Shakespeare's alteration works to make Wolsey omniscient and altogether more dangerous. 'Let me see, then', he states, appearing to only humour the king, 'here I'll make/My royal choice.' (1.4.84, 85-6) In Holinshed's version the king changes his clothes and so once again returns to the recognisable body. In the play he does not change costume (it would unnecessarily extend the scene), but remaining in his shepherd's costume makes an interesting statement about the status of Anne Boleyn and a prospective marriage. Such a reminder of her less worthy status perhaps detracts from the exalted praise of Elizabeth at the end of the play.

Wolsey's apparent omniscience and power allows him to make patently false claims:

So much fairer  
And spotless, shall mine innocence arise  
When the King knows my truth. (3.2.300-2)

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<sup>615</sup> Holinshed, vol 6, p. 922.



This confident assertion comes after his letters to the pope have been intercepted; Wolsey thus experiences his first visual error. Where before his looks or his sight have been powerful or perceptive, at the moment of his downfall he fails to see the power of the written document and accidentally includes his letter to the Pope amongst the papers he gives to the King. Buckingham had been successfully condemned by oral testimony at Wolsey's behest, and by the framing of his own reviling looks. Now Wolsey will be condemned by visual testimony in the form of the written record.<sup>616</sup>

In fact the visual element of the discovery is stressed earlier in the play in the prophetic lines 'Heaven will one day open/The King's eyes, that so long have slept, upon/This bold bad man.' (2.2.41-3). Wolsey's power has grown in the comfortable shade of the king's blindness; when the king discovers papers condemning Wolsey, Norfolk declares that 'Some spirit put this paper in the packet/To bless your eye withal.' (3.2.129-30). Wolsey recognises the beginning of his downfall again through looks: he describes the king's 'frowning [...] as if ruin/Leaped from his eyes' (3.2.205-6). In *King John* the series of visual exchanges between Arthur, Hubert and John leads

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<sup>616</sup> 'That Wolsey is undone by writing reveals an underlying competition in the play between the oral and the written for command of the realm's memory'. Baldo, 'Necromancing the past' p. 370. Bosman also writes about 'The competing truth claims of auditory versus scriptorial authority', 'Seeing Tears' *Shakespeare Quarterly*, p. 464. I have used 'visual evidence' to refer to what Bosman calls scriptorial evidence. But Bosman treats the Surveyor's testimony as visual – the surveyor is present and sees Buckingham strike a fearful pose when he suggests treasonous ambition. Buckingham is condemned by his 'pose' and 'performance' when he allegedly makes an oath; Bosman treats this as visual evidence because the body reveals a truth that words cannot, p. 466. I think this is an interesting point but the Surveyor's testimony is *oral*, as the surveyor is speaking. Bosman only briefly acknowledges this catch, saying even a representation of visual evidence acts as truth. I would suggest that it is only reported visual evidence – it is contained in oral testimony. The picture the surveyor paints is not visual evidence, it is an example of persuasive rhetoric, of ekphrasis.

eventually to confession and contrition, whereas in *All is True* visual acts, rightly or wrongly, destroy individuals.

The role of the written document in Wolsey's downfall also recalls *Henry VI, Part 2*. In this early play, Eleanor of Gloucester is condemned by the treasonous paper recording the answers of the spirits that Mother Jourdain conjures, and papers are also used to mark her public shame and penance. In both cases the written document provides more legitimate and more credible proof of crime than the trials dependent on oral testimony, because the written document resolves any oral-visual contradiction.

Wolsey's is the second fall of the play, but the presentation of Wolsey after this final turn of the wheel is perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the play. After his dishonesty is discovered he becomes a man new-made:

Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye!

I feel my heart new opened. (3.2.365-6)

The avaricious Wolsey of the first half of the play now adopts a *contemptus mundi* pose, but rather than the bitter desperation we might expect of this character, he feels his 'heart new opened'. He is opened to a new kind of truth: earlier in the scene his claims to truth are all but lies, but after this point his appeal to truth is without guile and so more genuine. He learns a new kind of truth and advises Cromwell to 'Let all the ends thou aimest at be thy country's, / Thy God's, and truth's.' (3.2.447-8). Rather than rail at Thomas More's 'sudden' appointment (3.2.394), he hopes for his success 'For truth's sake' (3.2.397). As Howard Felperin has suggested, Wolsey's

fall is an example of a 'fortunate fall'.<sup>617</sup> Others' discovery of his treachery leads him to learn a new Christian truth, and the play graciously allows him to repent (a generic feature of the late plays). Cromwell's loyalty to Wolsey to the last again grants Wolsey admirable status. Even the malicious Wolsey in *All is True* evokes nostalgia.

Perhaps surprisingly, another Catholic in the play receives equally nostalgic and sympathetic treatment, Henry's first queen. Katherine's one brief moment of cruelty, however, is in her memory of Wolsey remembering only his many faults:

Yet thus far, Griffith, give me leave to speak him,  
And yet with charity. He was a man  
Of an unbounded stomach, ever ranking  
Himself with princes; one that by suggestion  
Tied all the kingdom. Simony was fair play.  
His own opinion was his law. I'th' presence  
He would say untruths, and be ever double  
Both in his words and meaning. He was never,  
But where he meant to ruin, pitiful.  
His promises were as he then was, mighty;  
But his performance, as he is now, nothing.  
Of his own body he was ill, and gave  
The clergy ill example. (4.2.31-44)

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<sup>617</sup> Howard Felperin, 'Tragical-Comical-Historical-Pastoral: *Cymbeline* and *Henry VIII*, in *Shakespearean Romance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 201. Felperin argues that Shakespeare is more interested in the 'spiritual rise that follows' a fall, and that 'The falls of Buckingham, Katherine and Wolsey are all romantically, rather than tragically conceived.' p. 202.

Katherine's initial desire to speak 'with charity' is undermined by what follows. She is decidedly uncharitable in her summary of Wolsey's life as one of pride, arrogance, avarice, lies, deception, malicious intent, hypocrisy and indulgence. Indeed Katherine condemns him of committing no less than the seven deadly sins. The seven sins are described in the Book of Proverbs as

A proude looke, a lying tongue, and hands that shed  
innocent blood: An heart that deuiseth wicked  
imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief: A  
false witnesse that speaketh lies, and him that soweth  
discord among brethren. (Proverbs 6: 17-19).<sup>618</sup>

Katherine's claim that Wolsey sought 'to ruin' recalls the execution of Buckingham and so the crime of bloodshed in the Proverbs verse; similarly 'soweth discord among brethren' is suggested by Wolsey's equivocation and 'ill example'. The more bodily sins of lust and gluttony are implied in Katherine's accusation that Wolsey was of 'his own body ill'.

Her gentleman usher Griffith reminds her that 'Men's evil manners live in brass, their virtues/We write in water.' (4.2.45-6). He proceeds to give a more generous account of the fallen Wolsey:

He was a scholar, and a ripe and good one,  
Exceeding wise, fair-spoken and persuading;  
Lofty and sour to them that loved him not,  
But to those men that sought him, sweet as summer.  
And though he were unsatisfied in getting –

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<sup>618</sup> This quotation is from the King James Version, given the play's publication after 1611. *The Bible in English*.

Which was a sin – yet in bestowing, madam,  
He was most princely: ever witness for him  
Those twins of learning that he raised in you,  
Ipswich and Oxford – one of which fell with him,  
[...] The other [...]  
So excellent in art, and still so rising,  
That Christendom shall ever speak his virtue.  
His overthrow heaped happiness upon him,  
For then and not till then, he felt himself,  
And found the blessedness of being little.  
And, to add greater honours to his age  
Than man could give him, he died fearing God. (4.2.51-68)

Griffith provides a rather different account of Wolsey's life from Katherine's; both views can be found in Holinshed. While in the chronicle Wolsey is initially the 'hautiest man',<sup>619</sup> the various sources that make up the chronicle allow for varied views. Katherine's view is representative of Hall's as recounted in Holinshed:

This Cardinal [...] was of a great stomach, for he compted himself equall with princes, & by craftie suggestion gat into his hands innumerable treasure: he forced little on simonie, and was not pittifull, and stood affectionate in his owne opinion: in open presence he would lie and saie vntruth, and was double both in speach and meaning: he would

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<sup>619</sup> Holinshed, vol. 6, p. 917.

promise much & performe little: he was vicious of his  
bodie, & gave the clergie euill example[.]<sup>620</sup>

More shockingly, Holinshed seems to imply that the Cardinal aided his own death:

Edward Hall saith (vpon report) he partlie procured,  
willinglie taking so great a quantitie of a strong purgation,  
as nature therewith oppressed, and vnable to digest the  
same; so that in fine he gaue up the ghost [.]<sup>621</sup>

Hall's severe account comes at the end of Holinshed's section on Wolsey, but is the first view offered in Shakespeare and Fletcher's scene. The playwrights vocalise an earlier view in Holinshed through Griffith. Griffith echoes Edmund Campion, in Holinshed whose summary is intermixed with praise and condemnation. Campion describes him as:

fair spoken [...] loftie to his enimies [...] to those that  
accepted and sought his freedship woonderfull courteous, a  
ripe schooleman [...] insatiable to get, and more princelie in  
bestowing, as appeareth by his two colleges at Ipswich and  
Oxford [...] [The Cardinal] ended so perfectlie, that the  
houre of his death did him more honor, than all of the  
pompe of his life passed.<sup>622</sup>

Griffith adopts an even more generous perspective, he follows Campion closely but omits the more harsh criticism included there. In Campion, Wolsey is also 'high minded, full of reuenege, vitious of his bodie [...] thrall

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<sup>620</sup> Holinshed, vol. 6, p. 922.

<sup>621</sup> Ibid., vol. 6, p. 922.

<sup>622</sup> Ibid, vol. 6, p. 917.

to affections, brought a bed with flatterie' and 'stout in euerie quarrell'.<sup>623</sup> The playwrights thus not only reverse the order found in Holinshed by placing Griffith's view second, but also diminish the negative aspects of that view. Edmund Campion was a Jesuit who was executed under Elizabeth I; Griffith's modification of Campion's history could be read as a criticism of that individual. That Griffith chooses to follow Campion's view at all however, undercuts again the praise of Elizabeth at the end of the play.

Dean comments on the significance of the exchange between Katherine and Griffith:

This scene strikingly reduplicates, within the play, our experience of the play. It shows a debate over the character of an historical figure, viewed now as a political Machiavel, now as a notable moral exemplum. The poles of historical interpretation contained in the play are here openly opposed. Katherine's final verdict is a gesture towards Romance, in the sense of an ideal transfiguration of observable fact.<sup>624</sup>

In addition to illustrating the potential bias in interpretative narrative, when compared with Holinshed this episode in the play seems critical of the more harsh stance adopted in the chronicle. Griffith's generosity earns him the label of 'honest chronicler', one who has spoken 'With [...] religious truth and modesty' (4.2.72, 74). As suggested at the beginning of this chapter, chronicle history was no longer a staple form, and the various

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<sup>623</sup> Holinshed, vol. 6, p. 917.

<sup>624</sup> Dean, 'Dramatic Mode', p. 186.

contradictions illustrated in this dissertation perhaps make the phrase ‘honest chronicler’ seem a little oxymoronic. The play seems initially to ask ‘which is the true version?’. R. A. Foakes has suggested that they might both be; they are not ‘mutually exclusive’.<sup>625</sup> The answer might be in the title: all is true, but the play also favours Griffith’s view as the one that expresses ‘religious truth and modesty’ (4.2.74). Katherine is edified by Griffith’s merciful portrait and confesses that Wolsey, ‘[w]hom [she] most hated living’ she can now ‘honour’ (4.2.73, 75). Being close to death herself she now wishes ‘no other herald’ but someone like Griffith. The play not only exposes history as subject to manipulation or perspective, and a true account as inaccessible, but reminds the audience to be forgiving in their memories.

Katherine stresses again the desire for a single chronicler, wishing for ‘No other speaker of my living actions’ (4.2.70). The chronicles themselves, as we have seen in the case of Wolsey, contained many, sometimes contradictory voices. Through Katherine, the playwrights seem to speak directly to the pluralism of historical narrative, not just the many voices represented in Holinshed, but the many voices of all textual and oral transmission. *All is True* thus demonstrates the many problems of recording history. Firstly, that even in the present, what is really happening is not clear – as in the case of Buckingham – and that eye- and ear-witnesses may be unreliable. Secondly, that perspective leads to different interpretations of history as demonstrated through Katherine and Griffith.

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<sup>625</sup> R. A. Foakes, ‘Shakespeare’s Other Historical Plays’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare’s History Plays*, p. 227.



But even the most virtuous individual might be guilty of judgement. Katherine up until now has been associated with truth: she claims herself to be 'a true and humble wife' (2.4.21), and when Wolsey and Campeius come to counsel the queen, she bids them speak in front of her waiting women, since 'Truth loves open dealing' (3.1.39). In this scene she also prefers to speak in English over Latin. At the last moment before death, however, as show above Katherine undergoes re-education at the hands of her usher. As Felperin argues:

Each of the falling characters of Shakespeare's last play leaves his trial, mounts the scaffold, or faces ignominy and death with a new access of spiritual strength and self-knowledge. The falls they painfully endure turn out, after all, to be the means of their spiritual redemption and of their reconciliation to the world which persecutes or punishes them.<sup>626</sup>

Griffith illustrates Wolsey's spiritual redemption when he expands on Campion's brief comment that Wolsey was 'neuer happie till this ouerthrow'.<sup>627</sup> Griffith explains 'For then, and not till then, he felt himself,/ And found the blessedness of being little.' (4.2.65-66). Wolsey at the end learns humility, (being little) and so dies 'well' – recalling Katherine's first question about his death in this scene (4.2.10). Wolsey's death is now an 'example' for Katherine (4.2.11). The word recalls Buckingham's parting words who also asks to be remembered as a 'sad'

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<sup>626</sup> Howard Felperin, 'Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*: History as Myth', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 6.2 (1966), p. 244.

<sup>627</sup> Holinshed, vol. 6, p. 917.

example (2.1.134). Buckingham perhaps means that his example is ‘sad’ because he feels it is unjust. But Wolsey’s good death, along with Buckingham’s equivocally ‘sad’ one is compromised when we consider how these are reported. Neither combine concrete visual and aural evidence, but both rely on *reported* visual evidence. Griffith’s account of Wolsey’s death is based on how ‘the voice goes’ (4.2.11). The report seems convincing as it provides a clear picture of Wolsey’s final days and hours:

he came to Leicester;  
Lodged in the Abbey, where the reverend abbot,  
With all his convent, honourably received him;  
[...]  
So went to bed, where eagerly his sickness  
Pursued him still [...]  
full of repentance,  
Continual meditations, tears and sorrows ,  
He [...] slept in peace. (4.2. 17-30)

Griffith paints an effective picture of the death that is not dramatized. The play still favours Griffith’s view, it can after all be corroborated by the audience who have witnessed Wolsey’s change of heart. This final play perhaps obfuscates what constitutes visual evidence. It is pertinent then that Cranmer’s final speech recalls *Henry VI, Part 1* in its reference to the Queen of Sheba. In the early play *The Countess of Auvergne* is aligned with Sheba in requiring the confirmation of visual evidence to prove oral report. In *All is True*, the child Elizabeth is aligned with Solomon and wisdom as ‘Saba was never/More covetous of wisdom and fair virtue/Than this pure soul shall be’ (5.4.23-5). In *Elizabeth*, Cranmer signals a new age

of wisdom (though Henry VIII of course had also been aligned with Solomon),<sup>628</sup> and indeed an age in which the history play would reach its height. Paradoxically the play problematizes visual evidence while at the same time championing another kind of sight. Katherine's new charitable outlook precedes Cranmer's speech in the final scene of the play, and so the play favours vision with pity. Before Cranmer's simultaneously prophetic and historical account of Elizabeth he defends himself: 'the words I utter/ Let none think flattery, for they'll find 'em truth' (5.4.15-6). The praise that follows might indeed be considered flattery; however, in 1613 the playwrights are describing the dead, and so flattering the Tudors no longer had any purpose. The version of history that is presented is an example of the kind of 'religious truth' that Griffith offered us in an earlier scene. The pluralism of the earlier scene is reduced to a single narrative in Cranmer's speech. It is forgiving in its account of a turbulent monarchical succession.

Shakespeare's contribution to this history play is filtered through the lens of his later tragedies and his romance plays. The latter in particular concentrate on restoration, and restorative processes, and as a result offer redemptive narratives. The same might be said of *All is True*: it is not historically accurate, but that is not the 'truth' it seeks to promote. It is a satisfying story that works to repair the injuries of upheaval left by the events of the mid-sixteenth century. In this closing scene the restorative narrative that Cranmer offers is analogous with sermons offered at the Spital. With their emphasis on London's acts of charity, the sermons

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<sup>628</sup> McMullan, *Henry VIII*, pp. 88 -92. Bosman, 'Seeing Tears', p. 476.

sought to counteract more cynical perspectives of the city. While I argued in the first chapter that the perspective of the sermons might have contradicted the visual scene, the message may nevertheless have been a comforting one. *All is True* similarly balances opposing narratives: Buckingham and Wolsey, Katherine and Anne, Protestant and Catholic, Tudor and Stuart. Appleford situates the first performance of the play in relation to the recent removal of James VI and I's mother's body, Mary Stuart, to Westminster Abbey, Mary Stuart's tomb on the south side and Elizabeth's on the north: "The symbolic balance was scrupulously careful."<sup>629</sup> The play is highly sensitive to these potential conflicts and like the symmetry of the tombs keeps them in careful balance. Competing narratives aside, the play also explores another dichotomy: that of looking forwards and backwards simultaneously. Lois Potter, in her recent biography, considers this phenomenon:

*Forsan et haec olim meminisse invabit* (Perhaps one day we will remember even these things with pleasure; *Aeneid* 1.203) is Aeneas's consolation to his sailors during a storm at sea. It may be echoed when Romeo answers Juliet's "Oh think'st thou that we shall ever meet again?" with "I doubt it not, and all these woes shall serve/For sweet discourses in our times to come" (3.5.51-3). Looking forward to a time when the present will become the past is a characteristic Shakespearean theme. When Dido asks Aeneas [p. 27] about his history, he begins his tale with the words,

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<sup>629</sup> Appleford, 'Shakespeare's Katherine of Aragon', p. 166.

*Infandum, regina, juves renovare dolorem* (O queen, you command me to renew an unspeakable sorrow; *Aeneid* 2.3).

Aegeon answers a similar request in *The Comedy of Errors*:

“A heavier task could not have been imposed/Than I to speak my griefs unspeakable” (1.1.31-2).<sup>630</sup>

All of Potter’s examples, from Shakespeare’s early work, regard the past as painful to recount and as being full of sorrow. *All is True* thus continues a theme that had been in Shakespeare’s mind from the beginning of his career. While the late play moves toward the perspective of forgiveness, it does not do so naively; the play keeps in its eye every discordant element. These early examples look forward to a time when sorrow is a distant memory, like Griffith’s generosity in history telling, they look forward to recalling even the worst of times with fondness. Rather than a sceptical engagement with the falsity of history telling, the title *All is True* is not mocking but hopeful in its presentation of the past and as Baldo suggests, the future:

the play heralds a future that is already doubly past, since in the interim England lost not only Elizabeth but also its hopes for an Elizabethan future in the person of Prince Henry.<sup>631</sup>

The death of James VI and I’s son in November 1612 is another nuance in the emotional complexity of this play, as are the unspoken deaths of the secondary characters that would follow – More, Cromwell, Cranmer, Anne,

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<sup>630</sup> Lois Potter, *The Life of William Shakespeare: A Critical Biography* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p. 27-8.

<sup>631</sup> Jonathan Baldo, ‘Necromancing the Past in *Henry VIII*’, *English Literary Renaissance*, 34.3 (2004), p. 373.

the Princess Mary. We could add to this the next four marriages of Henry VIII, perhaps prefigured in Katherine's dream vision of the six figures in white in 4.2. Perhaps the recent trauma of royal succession was still profound enough that to 'remember even these things with pleasure' – would still only potentially happen at a point in the imagined future. The play's emphasis on weeping reinforces this idea that more fond remembrance is still in the future. Weeping is mentioned by the prologue who promises 'noble scenes as draw the eye to flow,' and who invites the audience to 'let fall a tear' (4, 7). Wolsey states 'Let's dry our eyes' (3.2.431) and Cranmer sheds 'joyful tears' (5.2.208). Little did the playwrights know that the new century and the new dynasty would bring its own troubles. All may not be historically true in this play, but what the playwrights do offer is a more comfortable backwards glance which reassures the audience but at the same time – and here is its innovation – draws attention to its fictive element.

## CONCLUSION

Contrary to what has been the dominant trend in studies of Shakespeare's histories, this dissertation has treated *Henry VIII or All is True* as a history play. Rather than exploring affinities with the late plays, I have suggested that Shakespeare returned to thinking about his very early work, in particular the *Henry VI* trilogy. In her *Critical Biography*, Lois Potter puts forward a possible theory that Shakespeare felt embarrassed by these early plays, or that the thought of revising them for the folio may have been too 'painful' and overwhelming a task for the writer who had developed so much.<sup>632</sup> Instead I have argued that the playwright was still playing with the same themes and ideas that had intrigued him at the start of his career. The construction of narrative from sensory information is a recurring theme and one that Shakespeare interrogates in order to expose the fallacy of objective or truthful narrative. In Shakespeare's histories of the 1590s, the senses are often depicted as untrustworthy, especially when the source of information is through a single sense. Oral report is most often called into question, and is only made credible when visual evidence corroborates it. Thus sight would seem to be superior, in accordance with conventional hierarchies. But sight alone can also be misleading; Hal encapsulates this when he states "We will not trust our eyes without our ears" (5.4.136) in *Henry IV, part 1*. The plays seem preoccupied with the gap between perception and interpretation. In chapter four I quoted Salisbury's commentary on finding the dead body of the boy Arthur in *King John*:

*Salisbury.* Sir Richard, what think you? You have beheld.

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<sup>632</sup> Potter, *Critical Biography*, pp. 402-3, (p. 403).

Or have you read, or heard? Or could you think,  
Or do you almost think, although you see,  
That you do see? Could thought, without this object,  
Form such another? (4.3.41-4)

Salisbury asks the other lords how they interpret what they see and in doing so he also asks the audience what they see. The audience have already seen Arthur fall and die accidentally, or perhaps they saw an accident precipitated by King John's cruelty: in the latter case, perhaps they see what Salisbury sees, a boy murdered. In all cases, the audience also sees that not everybody sees in the same way. By the time *All is True* is staged, the playwrights are even clearer on the plurality of 'truth', openly advertising that the truth of their play is one that has been 'chosen' and that can be 'rank[ed]'.

In *Henry VI, Part 1* the fictions surrounding Talbot and Joan are divided along national lines, by the perspectives of the English and the French. In *Henry VI, Part 2* the perspectives of Cade and Iden are divided along class lines. In *All is True* the bias in historical narrative is demonstrated in the two consecutive accounts of Wolsey's life; here perspective is no longer defined by social concerns (nationality or status) but perhaps by theological ones – the two perspectives of Wolsey depend on the speaker's charitable feeling. In *Henry VI, Part 3* Richmond is identified as England's saviour in a successful and confident example of face-reading – perhaps because of the credibility of the object rather than the trustworthiness of the senses. But face-reading in *King John* becomes markedly more complicated and intersects with a series of reciprocal gazes – each modifying the viewed object in its turn. The 'look' becomes a kind of visual act with the power to



touch others – a further way to extend this project would be to connect this with the extramissive theory of vision. Marcus Nordlund has argued that Shakespeare is committed to this traditional theory and that characters who embody the extramissive theory, or ‘speculative’ vision to use his term, embrace unity, while intromissive viewers seek to ‘sow discord’. This may have some application to the histories, though perhaps not so neatly.<sup>633</sup>

The second tetralogy considers the potential of oral manipulation. Bolingbroke and his son, Henry V, construct narrative through rhetoric, in other words, through only oral means without the necessary supporting visual proof. The Lancastrian kings condemn others, such as the counsellors Bushy and Green or the reprobate Falstaff, or as in *Henry V* create a narrative of divinely endorsed victory. The subordination of visual evidence in these plays to the power of the spoken word is particularly interesting in the wider context of a reformed culture which praised the power of preaching and the importance of audition in faith. As Andrewes insisted in 1588 at the Spital, his sermon was not to be treated as a spectacle; his words would not ‘vanish’ never to be heard again.<sup>634</sup> There has not been space to develop this idea with regard to a more scientific understanding of sound. Understood to be composed of particulate matter, sound travelled through the air and entered the body. Perhaps there was a physiological strain to sermons on the popular topic of the parable of the sower and the seed. The image of the preacher planting seeds that would grow into healthy plants (an allegory for the Christian’s response to the Word) compares the word spoken to seeds, to particles that enter the body

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<sup>633</sup> Nordlund, *Dark Lantern*, pp. xxxvi.

<sup>634</sup> McCullough, *Selected Sermons*, p. 80.

and take root. The superiority of the ear in Protestant theology cannot have been so clear, as I argued in the first chapter, as the Spital Easter sermons were also visually arresting occasions. As with the sermons there is a marked disjunction between what is seen and what is heard. Aural responsibility in sermon hearing is important for understanding Falstaff in the two parts of *Henry IV*— his wilful deafness leads to his fall, just as Cade's failure to observe proper regulation of the senses leads to his. The necessity of sensory obedience in maintaining sometimes mythic narrative is demonstrated through the characters of the first tetralogy; Talbot and Iden's mythic heroism is achieved through an oral narrative that describes something different to what is seen on stage. In the same way Joan, Richard III, Richard II's favourites are all villified. All of these examples rely on the subjection of the senses not just of the characters but of the audience — the audience can choose to accept the truth of what they see or of what they are told, in accepting one truth they ignore one channel of sensory evidence. In recognising and acknowledging the two different truths the audience can appreciate dramatic irony. The plays present a complex paradox in which the political state is justified and endorsed, but its dependence on sensory obedience and collaboration is equally exposed as is its manipulation of truth. All of this might be better understood in the light of the early modern vogue for paradox. With this in mind, rather than seek the answer as to who or what the playwright favours (the Tudor state, rebellion, the Catholic Wolsey and so on) we should perhaps acknowledge that the different, often antithetical perspectives offered are suspended in equal tension. The equivalent truths of each perspective must mean that potentially 'all is true'.

## APPENDIX 1

John Gipkyn, *Old St Paul's (Sermon at Paul's Cross)*, Oil on panel, 1616.

Image removed for copyright.

## APPENDIX 2

Section from the Copperplate map, (c. 1559).

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### APPENDIX 3

Oral/aural words in the first scene of *Richard II*. This list is by no means exhaustive, and does not include words related to for example oaths, spitting, or asking.

hear 1.1.5	cries 1.1.104
sounded 1.1.8	tongueless 1.1.105
hear 1.1.16	sayst 1.1.110
speak 1.1.17	deaf 1.1.112
deaf 1.1.19	slander 1.1.113
speech 1.1.30	liar 1.1.114
speak 1.1.36	ears 1.1.115
throat 1.1.44	speech 1.1.123
tongue speaks 1.1.46	throat 1.1.125
words 1.1.47	liest 1.1.125
tongues 1.1.49	swallow 1.1.132
hushed 1.1.57	lie 1.1.132
say 1.1.57	confess 1.1.140
speech 1.1.55	begged 1.1.140
throat 1.1.57	pray 1.1.150
slandorous 1.1.61	Slander's 1.1.171
lie 1.1.68	breathed 1.1. 173
spoke 1.1.77	tongue 1.1.190
swear 1.1.78	sound 1.1.192
speak 1.1.87	teeth 1.1.192
say 1.1.92	breathest 1.2.24
say 1.1.98	say 1.2.35

word 1.2.58	breathing 1.3.173
groans 1.2.70	breath 1.3.173
swear 1.3.10	plaining 1.3.175
speak 1.3.14	swear 1.3.180
say 1.1.11	swear 1.3.191
speak 1.3.34	confess 1.3.198
lament 1.3.58	word 1.3.215
breath 1.3.66	breath 1.3.215
prayers 1.3.73	word 1.3.231
mouth 1.3.94	breath 1.3.232
sound 1.3.121	tongue 1.3.234
breath 1.3.133	taste 1.3.236
drums 1.3.134	slander 1.3.241
harsh-resounding	say 1.3.243
1.3.135	tongue 1.3.245
bray 1.3.135	words 1.3.253
quiet 1.3.137	tongue 1.3.256
word 1.3.152	sigh 1.3.263
breathe 1.3.153	say 1.3.282
mouth 1.3.155	gnarling 1.3.292
tongue 1.3.161	
mouth 1.3.166	
tongue 1.3.166	
teeth and lips 1.3.167	
speechless 1.3.172	
tongue 1.3.173	

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