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Play, Death, and History in Richard II

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Like Miranda spellbound by Prospero's story of her origins, Shakespeare's audience was avid to behold the past, and the young dramatist made his reputation by staging English history. Yet like Prospero's tale, Shakespeare's histories open the way to deeper mysteries. Even though the plays defer to Holinshed, Hall, and other authorities, they also fictionalize and improvise at will. Nigel Saul, Richard II's most recent biographer, argues that Shakespeare drew an apt portrait of the king.¹ Yet Richard is sketched in dramatic but also ambiguous brushstrokes. Is his downfall the original sin that plunged England into mayhem and ultimately brought Queen Elizabeth's grandfather Henry Tudor to the throne in providential triumph? Is the play driven, as E. M. W. Tillyard argued, by a propagandist's Tudor myth?² But then, what of Frank Brownlow's contention that Richard's political murder of his uncle Gloucester would remind Elizabethans that their own queen "had also committed (through a servant whom she later disowned, as Richard disowns Mowbray) an act of sacrilegious violence when she ordered the beheading of her kinswoman, the Queen of Scots"?³ Or is Wilbur Sanders right that Shakespeare consistently cultivates "political agnosticism"?⁴ Are the plays opportunistic commercial entertainment? Meditations on centuries of predatory politics and conniving ambition? And what, did the plays mean in a culture that compulsively moralized history,⁵ imagining the past infused with uncanny prophetic intent? The antiquary, Sir Simonds D'Ewes believed the Protestant religion had flourished in England 400 years before Augustine, and been kept alive among the Welsh and the Scots until properly "rediscovered" by the Reformation.⁶ In breaking with Rome, Henry VIII thought he was emulating King Lucius I of Roman Britain:—who was actually a legendary figment, the stuff of dreams. English aristocrats traced their ancestry back through Troy to Adam using history as a credential authorized in heaven.

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Shakespeare's ambiguity is not simply circumstantial. Critics have long been fascinated by his peculiar capacity for evoking multiple perspectives. Dr. Johnson quipped that the pun was a "fatal Cleopatra" that Shakespeare could never resist. Keats praised Shakespeare's "negative capability." Although the terminology has changed, critics still try to bring this fundamental cognitive quality into focus. In a well-known essay (1981), Norman Rabkin compared Shakespeare's radically equivocal conception of Henry V to an optical illusion that allows the beholder to see either a rabbit or a duck, but not both at once.⁷ Rabkin's Shakespeare perfected

a dramaturgy that both idealizes and disenchant his material, producing in this instance a Hal who can be a model king and a ruthless Machiavel. Likewise, on a larger scale, Shakespeare's English history can appear to be a triumphal march toward civic fulfillment (the Tudor myth) or a protracted, murderous storm interrupted by sunlit coronation days.

In actual experience, Rabkin's analogy to an optical illusion is misleading. Once you realize that Hal can be either a rabbit or duck, you may not be able to perceive both configurations at once, but neither are you likely to see one and forget the other. Even if you conceive Hal as a rabbit, you are likely to remain tacitly aware of his potential duckiness. That awareness of latent meanings is characteristic of irony, and Shakespeare's imagination is modern because he sees the world as conditioned by irony. This is why his histories can be so compelling. Where didactic narratives are apt to be flat and coercive, Shakespeare's comprehensive ironies seem to do more justice to the storm of causality that is historical process, the play of motive and accident, the emotional palette of lived experience. In the wisdom of slang, his histories "come to life" for us because their meanings and perspectives can seem inexhaustible.

Yet this is by no means an unequivocal virtue. To peer into "the dark backward and abysm of time," as Prospero calls it,⁸ is to open imagination to the overwhelming mystery of life and death. To the practical eye, life emerges from, and will return to, an abysm of nothingness, even as the cloud-capped towers and the great globe itself will dissolve. Like other animals", we die, rot, and disappear forever, but with a burden of awareness that is unique to humans. As Otto Rank and Ernest Becker maintain, we cope with that threat of annihilation by developing cultural systems that support a conviction of immortality and turn anxiety into a source of energizing heroic values.⁹ Not just religion but everything in culture, from art to law, contributes to that sustaining conviction. Every culture devises stories that give life lasting value. Such public stories are enabling fictions that make the world usable.

In anthropological terms, Shakespeare's theater was a boundary-controlling institution. Like a church, it refocused imagination on the edge of the conventional world and what lies beyond—it is worth remembering that many early chroniclers like Bede were ecclesiastics. Like the church, the theater offered participants a controlled exposure to the intolerable contradic-

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tions of the human situation. In effect, audiences paid to probe the limits of conventional life and the profound emotions invested in fantasies about the ground of being: the purpose of life and the pressure of death. Although Christians expressed proprietary confidence in their own cosmic ground, some of them flocked to hear an actor celebrate the infinite piece of work man is, gag at the decay signified by Yorick's skull, and mime his own death. This suggests that theater augmented the dynamic, reality-testing dimension of religion, opening outward the often defensively homiletic formations of orthodox belief. While theater boasted no ultimate answers, it worked to structure imaginative experience and reinforce values whose popularity could be empirically

measured at the box office. Plays could allow audiences to explore the usually taboo margins of experience and change, enlarging—and testing—the range of things they could safely think about.

For most people everyday life is a closed circle of conventions, a sheltering space of custom and myth circumscribed like the medieval walled city or "the hollow crown / That rounds the mortal temples of a king" (R2, 3.2.160—61). Outside of that sheltered space lies contingency and the unknown: terra incognita, an earthly or heavenly paradise, or the dark abyss, sources of ecstasy and revelation, or madness and annihilation. Cultures fortify that boundary with the structures of symbolic immortality, like the medieval minster that enclosed the faithful in an edifice of immutable stone and ideal design, controlling access through its great portals, mediating the infinite sky with stained glass stories that embodied the past and future, alpha and omega. The medieval mystery plays fashioned a mythic time frame out of holy writ. Herod might rage against the innocents and the mob torment Jesus, but God was the ultimate playwright explicitly directing his story toward revelation.

By contrast, the tremendous dynamic instability of the Renaissance shook and deformed traditional psychic guarantees even as it liberated unprecedented energies. The boundaries of conventional reality became more acutely unstable—think of Prospero's exotic isle—even as medieval castles fell to ruins and cities began to outgrow their medieval walls. Cosmologists like Copernicus reconceived the heavens. Rediscovery of the ancient world expanded Europe's psychic horizon even as feats of circumnavigation did. Unprecedented social changes and storms of new information buffeted imagination, and the need to orient self and society was no mere figure of speech, since the shock of globalization set cultural compasses spinning. At the same time traditional forms of mythmaking met new, complex forms of resistance, from humanist curiosity about the natural world and self-criticism to religious sectarianism and pragmatic commercialism. As in the master trope of the Renaissance, that all the world's a stage, Europeans became fascinated by the invented, nature of cultural forms and verities. The power of analysis to disenchant familiar conventions produced a greater conviction of mastery and freedom, but it also raised the specters of illusion, alienation, and madness.

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History accordingly became a dark abyss full of promise and menace. A confident imagination could be tantalized by the wonders of classical civilization, the origins and secret causes of the world. Yet the abyss* also yielded terrifying phantoms, from atheistical pagans to catastrophes that implied an angry or hostile God. Catholic eschatology had once mapped reassuring landmarks onto the abyss: hell, purgatory, and heaven; ordinary "past and redemptive future. By contrast, the Reformation tried to repudiate such superstitious schemes and face the darkness supported only by vigilant faith. Even on the most practical level there "was danger, since the abyss could spawn histories whose doctrinal or political implications could provoke deadly persecution. Even many decades after Henry VIII's reign of terror networks of spies served an elite whose insecurities and opportunism could turn a careless opinion into a life-threatening interrogation in Star Chamber.

While historians have clarified many of these conflicts, I want to focus attention on the existential processes that the conflicts particularize, and sometimes mask. Lynn White Jr. calls the Renaissance "the most psychically disturbed era in European history." He holds that the era's abnormal anxiety "rose from an ever increasing velocity of cultural change compounded by a series of fearful disasters,"

and that "this spiritual trauma was healed by the emergence, in the minds of ordinary people^ of an .absolutely novel and relaxed attitude toward change."¹⁰ As I see it, popular fascination with Shakespeare's histories was. in part a response to this traumatic stress. It was an attempt to integrate terrifying psychic materials into a coherent'cultural narrative. The dramatist and his audience were groping toward the healthier "relaxed attitude toward change" that White discerns in the century that followed.

That the Renaissance was an era of creative ferment and traumatic injury is less contradictory than might appear. One of the fundamental modes of coping with traumatic stress, in< contemporary therapy as well as in Homer's day,¹¹ is for victims to create a narrative that cap integrate'the violent experience into psychic life. Injury may produce urgent creative striving. Buffeted by a flood of new information and cultural changes, not to mention natural disasters such as plague, early modern culture developed a compensatory dynamism. But'then, Becker would find this dynamism unusual only in its intensity. In his view humankind doesn't simply screen out the terror-of death. Rather, by developing cultures that foster convictions of immortality, people turn terror into a source of energizing heroic purpose. The sense of apocalyptic doom that oppressed many early modern imaginations, for example, also inspired efforts to build a new Jerusalem in North America in the face of staggering .hardships. This compensatory striving resonates everywhere in Shakespeare's histories, most strikingly in the remarkable imaginative scope of their speeches.

Not that creative striving guarantees a happy outcome. Like an inspired playwright, the magician Prospero fashions a triumphal resolution to his

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exile, yet henceforth "every third thought shall be my grave" (*Tempest*, 5.1.312). Again and again Shakespeare's kings construct cloud-capped towers of rhetoric that cannot withstand the seismic shudders of history. As Richard II laments, the lordly mind is full of "self and vain conceit, / As if this flesh which'walls about our life were brass impregnable" (3.2.166-67). Yet at any moment death may "with a little pin / [Bore] through his castle wall, and farewell king!" (169-70). Richard struggles to imagine himself divinely empowered—"a god on earth" (5.3.136) in the formula of the homilies—to counter his* obsessive terror of nothingness, as in his images of shattered mirrors or a bucket plunging into a dark (abysmal) well (4.1.184-89).

Both 'Shakespeare'^ play and Saul's biography record a fault line or fracture that runs through-Richard's character. In the last two years of his reign Richard's behavior became extravagant, sharpening the conflict between his conception of godlike majesty and his incompetence as a ruler. In 1397 the king launched a political and territorial revolution that strengthened the monarchy even as his self-aggrandizement alienated his subjects. In the process he abruptly struck down old enemies among the nobility with excessive cruelty, -contriving the murder of the Duke of Gloucester that in Shakespeare's play indirectly precipitates the fatal rebellion. But then, suddenly confronted by Bullingbrook in 1399, Richard stumbled, lost political control, and collapsed. So striking were these changes in him that some scholars have maintained that the king .became mentally deranged in his last years.¹² Saul, by contrast; plays down psychopathology. He endorses Shakespeare's portrait, construing'Richard as a narcissistic personality (Saul, 459-67), histrionic,

self-idealizing, and dangerously intolerant of criticism.

In Shakespeare, Richard's conflicted nature starkly emerges at Bark-loughly Castle on his return from Ireland in 1399 (3-2). At first the king conjures a providential vision of his* own righteous invincibility and scorns his opponents. When word arrives that his Welsh forces have defected to Bullingbrook, however, he persists in his magical thinking, but with reversed polarity. Instead of celebrating a supernatural self-confidence, he conjures self-intoxicating" rage, condemning the imagined betrayal of his closest supporters, Bagot, Bushy, and Green, and cursing the rebels as villains, vipers, dogs, snakes, and Judases—"each one thrice worse than Judas" (3.2.132).

At this point Scroop reveals that the rebels have*already executed Bagot, Bushy, and Green, and the announcement of punishment and death abruptly collapses Richard's mood, eliciting his famous symphonic monologue about King Death and the vanity of human life. The reversal is startling. Yet his behavior is as coherent as it is unstable. Richard remains deeply self-referential,

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oscillating between unrealistic self-inflation and abnegation* One way to probe the sources of his narcissism is to explore its function as a strategy for self-preservation and terror management. ^

In his speech (3.2.144—77) Richard envisions a Brueghel-like triumph of death, but with murdered kings the salient victims. While he has good reason to fear that he will be killed if deposed, his speech imagines universal doom. In the opposed categories of the speech, the mortal king is besieged by the nemesis King Death. The human king survives by annihilating others through the sublimated killing of intimidation. To "monarchize" is to "be feared" and able to "kill with looks" (3.2.165). At bottom Richard assumes that the world is the wilderness of wolves that haunts the dying Henry IV (2HIV, 4.5.136-37). This is the "all-hating world" (5.5.66) whose basic principle is kill or be killed. In such a world a king must rely on the theatricality of his "little scene" to command respect (3.2.164) and thwart assaults on his life. In such a world the preoccupation with majesty begins to look less self-indulgent and frivolous, and more like a desperate technique to- control—to rise above—relentlessly encroaching competitive violence. Just this wolfish violence marauds through* Shakespeare's English histories, especially when Henry V's premature demise unleashes the predatory frenzy of the Henry VI plays.

Richard's panicky speeches show public violence resonating in the depths of intimate experience. As his biographers witness, Richard's entire life was marked by appalling insecurity. His father, the valiant Black Prince, returned from war wasted by illness, in a long bedridden decline. When Richard was four, his older brother Edward died. At nine he finally lost his father. In 1394, while still in her twenties, his beloved wife Anne died, possibly of plague. Early in his reign, still only a boy of fourteen, Richard faced the Peasants' Revolt, "the largest and most serious outbreak of popular unrest in England in the middle ages" (Saul, 56). When he ascended the throne, recurring episodes of plague had probably reduced Europe's population by half.¹⁴ Throughout his reign, often ineptly if not unwisely, he quarreled with factions of the nobility. Such strife was by no means new—after all, his great-grandfather Edward II had been overthrown. But in Richard's time and for a century afterward England's evolving structure of governance proved to be especially precarious.

For Richard the first crisis came in the great Peasants' Revolt of 1381, to be followed by a virtual coup in 1388, when a faction led by his uncle Gloucester effectively deposed him for several days. His friend Robert de Vere raised a force to defend the crown, but it was routed in

Oxfordshire, leaving the king helpless to resist the Appellant lords and the "Merciless Parliament" they convened. "The period of the Appellant coup and its -aftermath," says Saul, "was the most anguished and harrowing that Richard had yet lived through. He had seen his policies reversed, his household taken over and purged, and his friends either exiled or sent to their deaths. He himself had

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been subjected to humiliation and constraint" (Saul, 195). He had also potentially faced the same sort of assassination that -overtook him in captivity a decade later. The traumatic near collapse prefigured and helps to explain Richard's fatal demoralization in the final struggle with Bullingbrook.

In this context Richard appears not weak or deranged in his last years but worn down by—and overcompensating for—morbid stress. It shows in his fascination with corpses that "was apt to combine with his finely honed sense "of the theatrical possibilities of burial. Several times in his later years he intervened to secure for a servant or friend reburial in grander or more dignified surroundings" (Saul, 461). Attending the reburial of Robert deVere, for example, he "ordered the coffin to be opened so that he could touch his friend's fingers and gaze on his face one last time" (Saul, 461). These reburials used funeral art's to dramatize a posthumous glory capable of consoling the departed soul and the grieving king. In this respect funeral monuments functioned like inflated majesty in kingship and self-aggrandizing eloquence: each served as important means of managing basic existential dread.

As in the King of Navarre's opening speech in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Richard's monumentalizing urge crystallizes the more general cultural drive to create lasting structures and values that can make life seem significant and everlasting. The compensatory nature of the drive is evident in Richard's preoccupation with the ceremonies of majesty, especially in his last years. Saul quotes a celebrated description of the thrice-yearly crown-wearing ceremonies, when Richard "ordered a throne to be prepared for him in his chamber on which he sat ostentatiously from after dinner till vespers, talking to no one but watching everyone; and when his eye fell on anyone . . . that person had to bend^his knee to the king" (Saul, 342). The taboo dramatizes the wish for omnipotence that could humble—and disarm—anyone who came within his sight.

Looked at this way, Richard's behavior fascinated Shakespeare and his audience as a style of coping "with ultimate threats one example of many in the larger project of the histories. In adapting one of Holinshed's accounts of the king's death, for example, Shakespeare chose to emphasize that fear infected even the triumphant Bullingbrook. "Didst thou not mark the King," asks Sir Pierce Exton, "what words he spake? 'Have I no friend will rid me of this living fear?' Was it not so?" (5.4.1-3). In fact the new king "urg'd it twice together" (5), and "he wishtly look'd on me, / As who should say, 'I would thou wert the man / That would divorce this terror from my heart' " (7-9). Exton takes this terror to be "the King at Pomfret" (10), but in fact Henry will be actively managing pangs of anxiety until he draws his last breath in 2 Henry IV. Although he will prove far more realistic than Richard, he too will try to tame fear with monumentalizing fantasies, notably his vow to "make a voyage to the Holy Land" (5.6.49), which will be ironically fulfilled at his own death in the Jerusalem Chamber.

In his preoccupation with death, then, Shakespeare's Richard gives voice

to fears that resonated far beyond the theater. "Europeans of 1300 to 1650 had an obsession with death," says White, "because death, in, hideous forms descended about them so often" (White, 29). Outbreaks of pestilence devastated Shakespeare's London, especially the visitation of, 1593, about the time he was preparing to write *Richard II*. Periodic famine terrorized the poor and contributed to civil unrest such as the Peasants' Revolt. Even in the 1590s starvation was still a menace.¹⁵ During the sixteenth century population growth soared after two centuries of stagnation, but with increased "economic activity came inflation, unemployment, enclosures, land speculation, vagrancy, and related evils that threatened ordinary folk. Shakespeare's generation experienced the aftershocks »of Henry VIII's reign, and paranoid themes shadowed the regime of Good Queen Bess too. To the end of her life and the belated peace treaty with Spain, they felt embattled and anxious about invasion. Political unease resonated with many other deep currents of persecutory, feeling evident, for example, in reactions to natural disasters and atrocious religious persecution. York's murderous rage, against his son Aumerle expresses a terror of being tainted by treason that was chillingly real to many in Shakespeare's audience. The Duchess's humiliating ibegging mission to Henry must have been dark comedy for spectators who saw political terror strike down victims from recusant Catholics to the incidental madman—r-as it would claim the Earl of Essex.

Richard II dramatizes some* of the processes by which imaginations adapted to the psychic stress White describes. To be sure, in the middle ages and in Shakespeare's day, people coped with death anxiety in bewilderingly individual ways, from religious asceticism to wild abandonment, the more extreme in times of great stress. As a result it makes sense to look at *Richard II* for signs of shifting attitudes rather than some "definitive change in cognitive style. In the histories, immortality fantasies focus on the crown because the monarch personifies the fount »of cosmic vitality even as his power to subsume and command his subjects palpably acts-out seemingly unlimited access to more life. For Shakespeare's audiences, this fantasy system remained charged with tremendous energy, despite currents of disenchantment that surfaced in Essex's rebellion and a few decades later, in, the English Revolution.

While the histories explore one of the basic motive forces in culture, Shakespeare was also criticizing its equivocal nature,, its volatile mixture of spiritual aspirations and survival greed. For although the monarch can be a parent to his people, that symbiotic relationship may falter under stress"; releasing predatory greed for life. The king may begin to feed on his subjects' vitality, or they may destroy him. *Richard II* came of age hearing himself compared to Christ, treated as England's hopscotch deliverance.¹⁶ As king, he stressed the hieratic aspects of monarchy. Deposed, he construes himself as the sacrificial Christ (4.1.170, 239-42). To his enemies, however, Richard*and his cronies are greedy parasites,-"caterpillars of the commonwealth," swarm-

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ing on the body-politic (2.3.165, 3.4.47). *Richard II*'s eloquent suffering after his overthrow is fascinating, among other things, because Shakespeare makes us see that, his real selfishness and obstinacy are rooted in deep existential hopes and fears that compulsively drive his personality.

But then, the histories are remarkable just because of this awareness of deep motives: they repeatedly probe the way immortality fantasies shape strategic policy. At the opening of *I Henry VI*, at the

beginning of the English histories, for example, the corpse of Henry V dominates the scene, evoking dread of lost power and spurring compensatory fantasies. Gathered around his bier, the distressed nobles compare the fallen king to the superhuman warrior-Christ of the Apocalypse (1 H VI, 1.1.110-14). They feel weakened—tainted—by death: "Like captives" forced to witness "death's dishonorable victory" (2 H VI, 1.1.22, 20). In reaction, they scapegoat the French, inciting each other to righteous violence against these demonized enemies. On the French—the mourners project their own unconscious motives, as subsequent plays will demonstrate in episode after episode of murderous contention. In this light the histories unfold from the traumatic death of a strong leader and an outbreak of anxiety that inaugurates an era of violent political transformation.

What can Richard's strikingly individualized interior life tell us about the radical existential motives at play in the histories and the historical moment? For one thing, Richard II argues that neither kings nor beggars can live by ritualistic absolutes. Symbols of transcendent authority can protect him no better than the castle walls that death can penetrate with "a little pin" (3.2.169). In fact, the frantic effort to fortify identity threatens to dissolve the self entirely, so that either Richard is an immortal monarch or "must nothing be" (5.1.200). In the middle scenes of the play he oscillates hysterically between these extreme positions. Then gradually, as in childhood, his voice begins to manage the split between infantile omnipotence and abjection. Subjectivity emerges most strongly as imagination relaxes its obsession with ritualistic identity. As Hamlet puts it, the readiness is all. Subjectivity turns out to be not the discovery of a preexisting inner self but rather a process of self-fashioning and self-presentation.¹⁷

The play emphasizes the dynamic potentiality of the self, its constructedness and instability—its theatricality. In his thoughts the imprisoned Richard discovers a throng of incipient roles and no self-evident, godlike principle to organize them. "Thus play I in one person many people," he concludes, "And none contented" (5.5.31-32). The speech calls attention to the self as a mediating process that has no reassuring natural resolution. This

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sense of living through mediation is especially revealing" in the play because it crystallizes defining conflicts in early modern culture.

Richard's great soliloquy could be the wondering voice of the dramatist contemplating an imagination overcharged with possible characters and stories, forced to "hammer out" a plot coherent enough to engage the world. But it could also be the voice of the nation in the 1590s: specifically the nation as seen by a gentry perplexed to find the populace it governed grown too expansive, protean, and unruly to fit the older, unitary concept of a body politic; an elite anxiously trying to "hammer out" or enforce a nostalgic civil harmony. The 1590s were a time of discontent for the nation, especially in London, where the city fathers repeatedly shut down the theaters to forestall disturbances among the crowds. Barbara Freedman argues that criticism has consistently underestimated the pressure of distress in the decade.

However culturally determined one's view of crisis is, the years between 1594 and 1597 [the years of Richard II's composition] fit the most

stringent requirements. These years saw the lowest real wages and the highest,* most continuous .price inflation of any time in the,century. For a predominantly agricultural economy, the result of four bad harvests between 1594 and 1597 spelled disaster. Jobs were scarce for the rapidly expanding London population; yet work was mandatory and unemployment criminalized. Wages, when achieved, were insufficient to purchase bare necessities, and resources such as grain had to be shipped at considerable expense from other countries. That widespread starvation and unemployment were in fact perceived as a crisis is corroborated by the unprecedented number of food riots, and the greatest poor relief legislation the century had known.¹⁸

Although Richard envisions his thoughts as "many people, / And none contented," the social world as he imagines it is actually split between only two categories, immortal monarchy and mortal beggary:

sometimes am I king, Then treasons make me wish myself a beggar,
And so I am. Then crushing penury Persuades me I was better when a
king
(5.5.31-35)

The mood of civic crisis, that is, is structured like the psychic crisis associated with the collapse of belief in traditional, ritualistic monarchy, and both disturbances reveal deep concerns about death. The resemblances, I take it, are not simply coincidental patterns or artistic contrivances, but signs of the way individual and cultural forces interact to shape each other. An older mentality structured around polarized opposites—king, beggar; heaven, hell; life, death—is developing toward a structure emphasizing multiplicity, strategy, and dynamic equilibrium. Unlike his cousin Bullingbrook—or even more,

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Bullingbrook's son, the future Henry V—Richard is tragically unsuited to carry through that development.

But this is exactly why Richard's behavior deserves attention. Unlike his triumphant enemies, Richard wrestles revealingly with death, and his coping style can tell us something about the mentality of Shakespeare's world. In fact, we are able to see Richard's psychic defenses clearly because they fail. He is more existentially aware and anguished—and also convincing—than the warriors who expire in glib couplets on the battlefield in the *Henriad*. What's more, his sense of human futility and .doom is associated with the *theatrum mundi* trope of life as theater. Throughout the play monarchy is plainly theatrical, yet even the most cynical participants pretend to believe in its shows. For them the theatricality of rule poses a danger only of deception or disillusionment. By contrast, the deposed Richard begins to recognize that kingship is show, but also that shows are not just variations of some "true" reality. Rather, he begins to see what makes Shakespeare's concept of theater distinctively modern: that as Macbeth puts it, life is but a poor player strutting and fretting over an abyss and then silenced forever.

Richard only begins to see because although the terror of the abyss lurks in his speeches, he is a transitional figure. Although he repeatedly uses the word "nothing," for example, his nothing usually implies a reassuring "something." No jnan, he vows, "With nothing shall be pleased, till he be eased /With being^nothing" (5.5.40-41). In systematically opposing kingship and nothingness, however, he uses a cognitive style that keeps him from seeing death's "nothing-ness" as annihilation. Not to be king is to be a "beggar" (5.5.33), a religious ascetic (3.3.147), or some other abject personage. "Nothing" here implies social death—a tormented condition but better than Hamlet's

sinister-sounding "undiscover'd country" (Hamlet, 3-1.78) or annihilation. Similarly, if he is "buried in the King's highway," he will still ambiguously exist because "subjects' feet / May hourly trample on their sovereign's head" (3.3.154—56). This sort of death is picturesque and euphemized by a sense of righteous victimization. It is tamer than Macbeth's vision of "sound and fury signifying nothing" (Macbeth, 5.5.27-28).

Richard's polarization of roles produces dizzying oscillations of mood, and yet the sum of these cognitive shifts is a shadowy condition of intense but controllable anxiety, not terror. In effect, the oscillation keeps the anxious mind fully occupied and therefore distracted from the engulfing threat of death. The dynamics of this oscillation are akin to ritualism, as in the absorbing process of chanting or telling prayer beads. Listen to his hypnotic-sounding rhetoric:

I'll give my jewels for a set of beads;
My gorgeous palace for a hermitage;
My gay apparel for an almsman's
gown; My figur'd goblets for a dish of
wood;

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My sceptre for a palmer's walking-staff;
My subjects for a pair of carved saints;
And my large kingdom for a little grave,
A little little grave, an obscure grave—
(3.3.147-54)

Here as in many of the Sonnets, the repetition is self-intoxicating. It can be seen as an effort to concentrate the mind to withstand forces that would fragment it into a mass of thoughts (5.5.8—11) and incoherent roles (31). As in the Sonnets, this magical rhetoric functions as incantation, concentrating thought on an absolute, immortal meaning. In crisis, Richard conjures armies of angels.¹⁹ With imperative verbs and the magic of names he summons his already tacitly alienated will from sleep: "Awake, thou coward majesty! Thou sleepest. / Is not the King's name twenty thousand names? / Arm, arm my name!" (3.2.84—86). But as in the Sonnets, and like all magic, the sense of transcendence is furiously unstable and periodically collapses into panic and despair. The more Richard tries to "hammer out" his thoughts (5.5.5), the more obsessive the need for rhetorical force to save the mind from terror and madness.

The Sonnets systematically exploit incantatory rhetoric to create an experience of praise. The repetition, wordplay, and paradox so compound rational meanings that they exceed the mind's ability to process them all in reading. The result is an exploded, riddling sense that is emotionally clear—the poem celebrates love—even as its exact meaning is beyond us and may seem uncanny:

What is your substance, whereof are you
made, That millions of strange shadows on
you tend? Since every one hath, every one,
one shade, And you, but one, can every
shadow lend.

These lines from Sonnet 53 project a superabundant, seemingly transcendent meaning which is itself ambiguously the "substance" or essence of the beloved. Since "shadows" is Elizabethan slang for actors, the poem is conjuring an immutable integrity in the beloved that can transcend the threatening illusions of the world as stage. In effect, the Sonnet is systematically risking incoherence to disarm critical reasoning long enough for a sense of absolute meaning and value to emerge. The poet is quibbling as fools do ("since everyone hath, every one, one shade"), but in order to induce wonder and faith as a priest might.²⁰

Compare this quatrain with Richard's use of theatricality when he

riddles on the words "face" and "shadows" with a mirror for a prop in the deposition scene. He plays fool and priest, trying to evoke "the substance" of his "unseen grief" (4.1.276—99)- Like Sonnet 53, he strives to make a transcen-

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dent meaning substantial. "Give me the glass," he commands, "and therein will read":

Was this face the face That every day
under his household roof X5lci ke'ep ten
thousand men? Was this the face That,
like the sun, did make beholders wink?
Is this the face which fac'd so many
follies, And was at last outfaced by
Bullingbrook? A brittle glory shineth in
this face, As brittle as the glory is the
face.

[Dashes the glass against the ground.]
For there it is, crack'd in an hundred
shivers. Mark, silent king, the moral of
this sport, How soon my sorrow hath
destroy'd my face.

Richard is using theatricality to moralize his overthrow, attempting to conjure pity and guilty awe in his enemies. Bullingbrook, however, breaks the spell by criticizing Richard's incantation as a self-deceiving show: "The shadow of your sorrow hath destroy'd / The shadow of your face."

Trying to recapture the initiative and control the emotional impact, Richard redoubles his riddling, turning Bullingbrook's criticism into a stale truism that can be rationally taken apart to reveal its inadequacy and a deeper, ineffable truth. Like the poet in Sonnet 130 ("My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun"), he exposes the superficiality of conventional rationality in order to point to an indefinable truth beyond "false compare":

Say that again. The shadow of my
sorrow! Ha, let's see. 'Tis very true, my
grief lies all within, And these external
[manners] of laments Are merely
shadows to the unseen grief That
swells with silence in the tortur'd soul.
There lies the substance

(4.1.293-99)

The "substance" of "unseen grief" eerily anticipates Hamlet's attempts to conjure "that within which passes show" (Hamlet, 1.2.85). The problem is that this sort of conjuring depends on imaginative sympathy;—the "marriage of true minds" in Sonnet 116—which Bullingbrook cannot feel. In the end the priestly invocation of "substance" is moot, and Richard is left with the voice of the subversive, carping—and impotent—fool. When Bullingbrook hypocritically offers to grant "One boon" (4.1.302), and calls him "Fair cousin," Richard plays the fool, inverting his terms:

"Fair cousin"? I am greater than a king;
 For when I was a king my flatterers
 Were then but subjects; being now a
 subject, I have a king here to be my
 flatterer, Being so great, I have no
 need to beg.

(4.1.305-9)

When Bullingbrook deflates these paradoxes—"Yet ask"—Richard is reduced to asking for his freedom: "Give me leave to go." Bullingbrook asks, "Whither?" "Whither you will," Richard parries, "so I were from your sight." At which point his opponent trumps him—"convey him to the tower." The voice of the fool then shrinks to sententious sarcasm: "O, good! convey! Conveyors [thieves] are you all, / That rise thus* nimbly to a true king's fall" (310-18).

While this exchange is about the transcendent "substance" of "true" kingship, the mentalities implied are complexly disenchanted. Bullingbrook is coolly strategic, while Richard uses rational rhetorical techniques to subvert rationality and point to a chimerical absolute authority. Trying to "hammer out" an understanding of his own crowded thoughts (5.5-5), Richard intensifies self-awareness to try to dispel it and evoke a ground for personality. This quixotic creativity in the face of annihilation is quintessentially Shakespearean; it prefigures the imaginative styles of the poet of the Sonnets as well as the great lyrical, tragic voices of Hamlet and Cleopatra, who are also uncannily expressive but doomed poets.

The "substance" Richard tries to project is a form of symbolic immortality arrived at through wit's self-intoxicating exploitation of magical language. Like the "special providence" Hamlet envisions in the fall of a sparrow (Hamlet, 5.2.220), it is a radically equivocal cognitive behavior that can signify some ineffable absolute or merely "bodiless creation ecstasy" (Hamlet, 3.4.138). Asked if he is content to resign the crown, Richard tries to create an insoluble riddling answer, an intermediate, ecstatic reality that would defer the moment of self-loss:

Ay, no, no ay; for I must nothing be;
 Therefore no no, for I resign to thee.
 Now mark me how I will undo myself:
 I give this heavy weight from off my
 head

(4.1.201-4)

The wordplay (ay = I; I = ay; no = know) and possible nuances ("Therefore no 'no,' " for instance) create a cloud of indeterminacy. The possible meanings of his answer defy immediate comprehension. Although he vows "I must nothing be," Richard is actually multiplying himself in his meanings; rather as Falstaff parries Prince Hal's annihilating scorn in 1 Henry IV by inflating himself into "sweet Jack Falstaff, kind Jack Falstaff, true Jack Falstaff, valiant Jack Falstaff," and so on (1 Henry IV, 2.2.475-76).

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The play criticizes Richard's artful magic as it does Falstaffs, but in both cases with radically mixed feelings. Shakespeare knew that wishes are not omnipotent, and that nobody can live merely as a mask, by forcibly manipulating self and others. But then, to be stripped of masks is to face nothingness. Hence the dialectic of fool and priest, the artful creation of tacit, mediated identity, and the riddle of the later tragedies, that readiness or ripeness is all. To be able to be aware of that shockingly conditional sense of being is the closest compensation in a fallen world for the lost grace that imagination nostalgically dreams on.

For the sake of this glimpse of dangerous exaltation theatergoing mortals submit to the exertions of drama.

Like a spectator in a playhouse, Richard, too, grasps for the same moment of story potential in his frantic effort to hammer an identity out of his swarming thoughts. All along he has tried to turn death into a narrative he can control: "Let's talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs" (3.2.145); "let us sit ... / And tell sad stories of the death of kings" (156); "tell thou the lamentable tale of me, / And send the hearers weeping to their beds" (5.1.44—45). These fantasies imagine him mirrored—given substance—by an audience, and tacitly deferring nothingness. They function like the looking glass he calls for at his deposition. They also reflect an obsessive mentality since like all stories and narratives of self, even tales of a king's demise grow stale and need continual retelling and renewal.

Hence the precarious mood of heroic striving and exhaustion that haunts Richard's final soliloquies. Trapped in a dead end, he sees the self as endlessly interchangeable roles and himself as time's "numb'ring clock" (5.5.50). Once again a kind of magical riddling suspends the self over the abyss, in a state of grieving indeterminacy:

My thoughts are minutes, and with sighs they
jar Their watches on unto mine eyes, the
outward watch Whereto my finger, like a dial's
point, Is pointing still, in cleansing them from
tears.

(5.5.51-54)

The speech prefigures Macbeth's nightmarish "To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow" (Macbeth, 5.5.19) in its sense of terminal, exhausted meaning and imagination that can neither fully live nor die. The "hammer" of obsession (5.5.5) flattens or expands meaning into riddling indeterminacy, until it becomes like the music that evokes Richard's speech.

As a kind of sense beyond words, music depends on intuition. It may sound right or chaotic for reasons that are not readily fathomable. As the music plays, Richard's determination to hammer out sense becomes identified with "clamorous groans" (5.5.56) as he turns into the numbering clock striking. The simultaneity of real and figurative music is a palpable analogue of the verbal magic of concatenated riddling meanings: a kind of

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expanded sense that shimmers with uncanny-seeming significance or intimations of mad chaos. This is the "music of men's lives" now "broke" and "disordered" (46). Although music "have help madmen to their wits, / In me it seems it will make wise men mad" (62-63). As in the late romances, music dramatizes art's shimmering intimations of wondrous ecstasy and hellish madness. Richard cannot sustain a conviction of visionary exaltation, and the obsessive jarring of the clock marks suffering relieved* only by a final spasm of physical violence as he, like Macbeth and Hamlet, dies fighting for his life.

What can this exploration of radical existential motives tell us about Richard II as history? I have isolated Richard's cognitive style of managing terror because it sheds light not only on him but also on Shakespeare and a charged moment in cultural development. His

rhetorical defenses, work to preserve vestiges" of consoling ritualism even as ritualism was losing its conviction in the world outside the theater. As attested by the fabulous magical practices catalogued by Keith Thomas in *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, Shakespeare's contemporaries were complexly equivocal about ancient psychic guarantees. A wax figure of the queen found with pins stuck in it could cause serious alarm, even as a Reginald Scot and Samuel Harsnett could systematically debunk witchcraft and jugglery.²¹ Richard's mentality reflects just this sort of transitional complexity.

Compared to the hysteria and disordered thinking that accompanied outbreaks of plague and intermittent hunger, especially among the lower classes, Richard's panic reflects the mental world of an educated, economically sheltered elite. His primary defense is argument and verbal self-substantiation. His appeals to the supernatural are comparatively abstract, ratiocinative, and homiletic, with almost no traces of dreams, superstitions, and other folk materials, and virtually none of the psychotic disturbances that were common among the poor in the throes of calamity. When terror overtakes him, he invokes orthodox angels (3.2.36-62). In later plays such as *King Lear*, Shakespeare would become more adept at dramatizing the pain, horror, and frenzy of the poor, perhaps in part because his audience was¹ also better able to tolerate a more direct presentation of what Piero Camporesi calls "the terrifying dreams of the collective unconscious during the pre-industrial period."²² Although the prospect of beggary frightens him, Richard uses beggars didactically as the antithesis of king, reinforcing a sense of pattern and meaning in the scheme of things. In *Poor Tom*, by contrast, *King Lear* makes a more palpable, although still somewhat bookish, attempt to evoke the uncontainable dementia that real beggars suffered.²³

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Richard comes to glimpse a universe of fear through hyper-rationality and the disintegration of formal ideological guarantees. Compelled to reimagine his life in a world suddenly teeming with unaccustomed thoughts and roles, he also tacitly mirrors the perplexity of the dramatist and his culture. His political tragedy is also a comedy—or tragicomedy—of reluctantly liberated imagination. Death for him is partly, a problem of disinhibition. Even as he relinquishes a monolithic fortress mentality, he finds himself imprisoned in a castle and not free to explore the field of possibilities opening before him. Just this volatile dilemma confronted the 1590s as imaginations strove to devise narratives that could make new freedoms livable.

One of those new freedoms was the theater, which was after all a way of collectively thinking about the new horizon of possibilities. In adversity, Richard discovers powers of language and narrative that sustain him in crisis but are poignantly insufficient. He shifts from conventional aristocratic eloquence to the magical riddling of the courtier-poet, a figure more sympathetic—and accessible—to the Shakespeare who was affiliated with the Earl of Southampton and his circle. The play treats Richard with a mixture of nostalgic sympathy and deflating scorn. Through him Shakespeare was able to exploit his own verbal resources, exploring the visionary extremes of his imagination, criticizing its delusions but also celebrating its ambiguous sense of transcendence.

After all, the dramatist also behaves like the poet of the Sonnets, deliberately compounding so many perspectives and ironies that the play's meaning becomes teasingly immanent but inexhaustible. Shakespeare makes Richard relinquish the narcissism of lordly social

masks, even as he mocks the inadequacies of theater as show. In effect, this negative maneuver empties out conventional expectations, allowing intimations of more removed meaning to emerge. The riddling Richard dies onstage but the play lives on, full of coherence that resists our attempts to simplify it. Criticism registers this multiplicity in the play's, many cruxes, but spectators directly experience the play's perspectivism—ideally at least—as wonder. This is where, Shakespeare's plays get their reputation for lifelikeness and how they inspired the popular illusion that they are deathless creations, inexhaustible, not for an age but for all time.

This conviction is partly a trick of cognitive framing. On the verge of death Richard begins to see the baffling fullness of life invisible to the quotidian eye. Like Gaunt on his deathbed; he unfolds a wider perspective. Moreover, he sees that he is seeing deeper into the mystery of things. Contemplating his own thoughts'as incompatible roles (5.5), he is like a spectator at a play or even a dramatist baffled by the anarchic abundance of the world. Analogously, on another level, Richard II exposes its spectators to a wondrous superabundance of perspectives. The play disposes spectators to identify with, and criticize, Richard's struggle with subjectivity and the abyss, in the projected historical distance but also in the dramaturgical present, where a group of

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ordinary people is trying to fathom an actor's speech about the mortal destiny that is pressing on them too. This implies that the spectators* can recognize Richard's frightening sense of disintegrated self and also tolerate it better than he can because, instead of being imprisoned in a nightmare as he is, they can give it a still wider-frame. The spectators are neither beggars nor monarchs, but that new species of citizen, the playgoer. With their ambiguous sense of imaginative autonomy and their ability to hear the play's story, they can experience the concatenation, of perspectives before them—like the compounded meanings of the Sonnets—in the largest kinetic frame, readiness or wonder.

At the end of the twentieth century this style of cognitive manipulation has become familiar, especially in writers like Joyce and Faulkner. Critics have construed Shakespeare's myriad, ironizing mentality, in countless ways. For my purposes it is important to see that it is rooted in a historically particular engagement with the problem of death, in a moment when an older belief in word magic was developing toward psychological understanding, with an emphasis on the creative powers of imagination and the constnltedness of the world as stage. It also represents, a new degree of respect for analytical inquiry and the materials of the past. The many unresolved critical questions about the play testify to its multiplicity, its effort to resist reductive, didactic, narcissistic manipulation. I am not claiming that Shakespeare really was the godlike visionary that tradition has apotheosized but rather reminding us that his imagination—and the imagination of his culture¹—was fascinated by that paradigm.

That Shakespeare could depict historical causality as overdetermined is in itself a remarkable development. It presupposes an increased capacity for imaginative sympathy and tolerance in himself and his audience. Like the riddling language of Richard and the Sonnets, an overdetermined plot can be radically equivocal, conforming to the rules of neither comedy nor tragedy. Even the wonder or readiness it arouses may be volatile, intimating visionary coherence or madness. Such a»plot may be shockingly dynamic, allowing the beholder no repose. Richard dies, for example, but there is no gratifying closures Bulling-brook's ambivalent rebuke to Exton only deflects the play's

motion into new directions, with new conflicts and biases that will unfold as civil slaughter in subsequent plays. Richard's agon ends in death, yet Shakespeare's perspectivism can support not only traditional, pious solemnity but also the sort of disillusioned satirical energy that John Halverson finds in the play.²⁴

The range of interpretive responses to *Richard II* argues that the multiplicity of behaviors framed onstage had an analogue in the imaginative behaviors of the theater audience. The play thinks out loud, so to speak, about such disturbing subjects as killing a king and being killed. This loosening of imaginative controls can be taken as one sort of corroboration for White's hypothesis that the "spiritual trauma" people endured in the Renaissance "was healed by the emergence, in the minds* of ordinary people, of an absolutely novel and relaxed attitude toward change" (White/26). In the the-

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ater change can register not only onstage—in this case as a momentous political upheaval—but also in the fluid responses spectators may have to that change. The possibilities of interpretation in the play invite spectators to explore different perspectives. Some views, the play insinuates, are truer than others, but no absolute judgment of Richard or Bullingbrook is possible. This is not a carnival inversion of order, but a different sort of development: a licensed public argument that encourages the public to find pleasure and even heroic purpose in the freedom to change your mind and to live with the resulting provisional, heuristic reality.

One of Shakespeare's fundamental insights, reiterated to the end of his career, is that force confounds itself. The engineer is hoist with his own petard; like Macbeth, Othello, and Leontes, Richard II unleashes havoc by seeking chimerical security. His attempt to hammer out the logic of an overwhelming world perversely drives toward paralysis and obsessive dread that "will make wise men mad" (5.5.63). Such force is maddening because it springs from terror, trying to overcome death. The compulsiveness of this project grips the histories. They show a hundred years of English history as a monotonous succession of murderous plots and monstrous appetites: an epidemic of fear and violence.

Shakespeare and his audience were fascinated by that epidemic terror, yet they also wanted to believe in the power of sublimation and negotiation—as in theater—to manage the boundaries of experience. Shakespeare himself, we know, invested in law and Stratford real estate in creating a stable gentry identity for himself in his middle years. At the same time, in play after play, the prosperous businessman was writing about inscrutable forces shaping the world. His cultivation of riddling magical language was an effort to experience—to objectify and control—those forces. Again and again he intimates that the experience of the play is akin to dreams, comic bliss or tragic nightmare. In this way the plays are part of a larger project to expand and tame the further reaches of thought.

This, I think, is why *Richard II* shows Bullingbrook sidling or stumbling into violence. For a time the usurper seems to be the model of strategic calm, as in the comic pardon of Aumerle that the play contrives. But then Exton kills Richard on the strength of wishful words overheard almost by chance—"Have I no friend will rid me of this living fear" (5.4.2)—as if to illustrate the power of lurking terror to slip out of civilized restraints. Like Richard's riddling speech, Bullingbrook's words have spun off supercharged meanings, and one of those meanings has put a king to death as if by magic. The words that seal Richard's doom shimmer with contingency. "From your own mouth," says Exton, "did I this deed" (5.6.37). Exton could have echoed Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and soothed Bullingbrook's fears by quipping, "How easy

is a-bush suppos'd a bear" (MND, 5.1.22). But as if misled by Puck, for whatever mysterious reason—dogged obedience? self-promotion?—he followed out a different subtext. Like the Bishop of Carlisle's

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prophecy, which Richard's death begins to fulfill, the moment has an uncanny aura, holding the possibilities of calculation, chance, and providence in suspension.

The critical history of *Richard II* is a story of increasing freedom to recognize the disturbing openness in its conception of history. Generations of critics have chided kings such as Richard II or Henry VI for their supposed weakness, as if life were not tragic but merely problematical,* to be successfully negotiated through a proper choice of maps or fidelity to blueprints. Derek Traversi typified this style of prudential commentary—when he lamented Richard II's "hysteria and self-pity."²⁵ Such criticism was tacitly normative, sometimes openly speculating about the qualifications of Shakespeare's ideal, king, or debaring about the true character, of Henry V. More specifically, researchers have fixed on Richard II's perplexing role in the Essex rebellion and its relation to E. M. W. Tillyard's magisterial thesis that the histories play out a Tudor scheme of providential ideology that culminates in England's rescue by Henry VII. Whatever their particular merits, these projects are themselves expressions of our own culture's need to keep devising and renewing convictions of heroic immortality. Like other imaginative endeavors, literary criticism—from hardheaded archival scholarship to the most aggressively skeptical postmodernism—is inescapably implicated in immortality striving. The most naive practitioners have unwittingly behaved like early historians who tried to extract order from the past that could rationalize the present or predict the future.²⁶ Centuries of such work¹ made Shakespeare a monument of western civilization, the object of sublime hero worship, especially, in crises like World War II: an all-embracing and enduring figure in a world whose real leaders are all too apt to betray or tragically fail their followers.

In recent decades much work on *Richard II* has proved to be more tolerant of the play's peculiar fractures and, ambiguities. The range of work shows a wide variety of methodological styles and sometimes remarkably fresh imagination. In the essay that follows, Morgan Griffin sorts out some of these virtues and liabilities, explaining how we selected essays for this collection. The essays repay study as contributions to the centuries-long engagement with Shakespeare, but also because, they show first-rate minds incidentally coming to terms with radical existential concerns, managing our deep creaturely compulsions by seeking greater particularity and accuracy even as they cultivate greater tolerance for contingency and the siren songs of insight just over the shimmering horizon.

Notes

1. Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1997); hereafter cited in the text. For a compact biography, see Peter Saccio, *Shakespeare's English Kings* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), 17-35.

2. E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (New York and London: Macmillan, 1944; New York, 1962).

3. Frank Brownlow, *Two Shakespearean Sequences* (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1977), 4.

4. Wilbur Sanders, *The Dramatist and the Received Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1968), 158.

5. As Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton point out, scholars mined

history for instructive antecedents that could be used to guide statecraft in the present. See "Studied for Action: How Gabriel Harvey Read his Livy," *Past and Present* 129 (1990): 30-78.

6. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner's, 1971), 424.

7. Norman Rabkin, *Shakespeare and the Problem of Meaning* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1981), 33-62.

8. *Tempest*, 1.2.50. Quotations are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

9. See Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1973) and *Escape from Evil* (New York: Free Press, 1975).

10. Lynn White Jr., "Death and the Devil," in *The Darker Vision of the Renaissance*, (ed. Robert Kinsman (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1974), 26; hereafter cited in the text.

11. See, for example, the historical overview in Jonathan Shay's *Achilles in Vietnam* (New York: Atheneum, 1994).

12. Saul describes and argues against the theories of Bishop Stubbs, Anthony Steel, and May McKisack (pp. 462-63).

13. "Terror management" is the term used by Jeff Greenberg, Sheldon Solomon, and Tom Pyszczynski, "Terror Management Theory of Self-Esteem and Cultural Worldviews: Empirical Assessments and Conceptual Refinements," *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, ed. Mark E. Zanna, vol. 29 (New York: Plenum, 1997), and in their account of terror management in *Psychological Inquiry* 8, no. 1 (1997): 1-20, 59-70.

14. This is Lynn White Jr.'s estimate in "Death and the Devil" (p. 29).

15. See Andrew Appleby, *Famine in Tudor and Stuart England* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1978). In *Bread and Dreams: Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1996), Piero Camporesi describes the psychological damage that could accompany famine.

16. In an address to Parliament as Richard was about to inherit the throne, for example, Bishop Houghton said that God had sent Richard to England to redeem his people the same way that God had sent Christ. See Saul, p. 18.

17. "Self-fashioning" is Stephen Greenblatt's term. See *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980).

18. Barbara Freedman, "Elizabethan Protest, Plague, and Plays: Rereading the 'Documents of Control,'" *English Literary Renaissance* 26, no. 1 (1996): 29-30.

19. The historical Richard openly relied on supernatural help. He "appears to have paid a considerable amount of attention to astrological predictions," Saul tells us, and owned astrological apparatus, including a "beautifully produced book of divinations, the *Libellus Geomancie*" (p. 324).

20. For a demonstration of this process, see chapters 1 and 2 of my *Shakespeare's Creation: the Language of Magic and Play* (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1976). See also Sigurd Burckhardt, "The Poet as Fool and Priest," in *Shakespearean Meanings* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968).

21. Reginald Scot, *Discovery of Witchcraft* (London, 1584); Samuel Harsnett, *A Discovery of the Fraudulent Practises of John Darrell. . . .* (1599); *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures* (1603, 1604). . . .

22. Camporesi, *Bread and Dreams*, 89.

23. Shakespeare (or Edgar) borrows many details of Poor Tom's madness from Harsnett's treatises.

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24. John Halverson, "The Lamentable Comedy of Richard II" *English Literary Renaissance* 24, no. 2 (1994): 343-69

25. D. A. Traversi, *An Approach to Shakespeare*, 3rd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1969), I, 168.

26. See, for example, Jardine and Grafton, "Studied for Action."