“Raised from the grave of oblivion”[1]: Shakespeare’s historical stage.

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ABSTRACT

“Raised from the grave of oblivion”: Shakespeare’s historical stage.

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Examining the embodied experience of early modern audiences leads to a more complete interpretation of history plays. In order to show this, the dissertation investigates the very different world of the 1590’s playgoers. Audiences were much more socially diverse and less literate and their prior knowledge of both plays and history very different. Entrance was relatively much less expensive and the amphitheatres much larger. Plays themselves had evolved; there was increased characterisation to make actors more realistic and techniques to make the audience more familiar with the action by use of language, location and colloquialisms from their own time.

This document uses both theories of contemporaries and twentieth century reception theory to examine the expectations of those early modern spectators, why and in what respect their experience was different and how this adds to a nuanced understanding of Shakespeare’s second tetralogy. *Richard II* maintained the tradition of former history plays in that it was the nobility that made history, so as a fallen prince, the monarch keeps playgoers at a distance. The two parts of *Henry IV* bring royalty and the court into close proximity with their subjects. In *Henry V* the valiant past was very much in the foreground; although the king maintains a certain distance from them, the king depends on his people (and playgoers) to participate in creating the legendary victory at Agincourt. History plays were not only a relief from the concerns of the day; the experience was an opportunity to share the complexity of the past and reflect on its relevance to the present.

This paper argues that the use of informed imagination can transport us sufficiently into the past to enable a refreshed re-evaluation of Shakespeare’s second tetralogy through the eyes and ears of early modern playgoers in order to investigate the extent to which the stage participated in the formation of a collective memory of the nation at a critical time when Shakespeare was exploiting the new genre of the History play before the Bishop’s Ban of 1599.

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Context

This dissertation depends on what Sarah Dustagheer calls informed speculation. Among the hundreds of thousands of playgoers who attended the three major London amphitheatres in the late 1590's, there were no critics to leave their record. However, there is a lot of circumstantial, or alternative, evidence. It is similar to the challenge of recent scholars, John Drakakis writing about Shakespeare's resources, Lena Orlin about Shakespeare's private life, William West on the participation of Elizabethan playgoers and Dustagheer about the original performance conditions at the Globe and Blackfriars, in appealing to an informed, imaginative recreation.[1] This paper expands upon circumstantial information about audience experience to investigate what went on in the minds of the playgoers, how past and present reacted with spectators' consciousness measured in terms of what they recognised, what they felt, what memories the plays stimulated and what effect elevated and/or colloquial language had on them. Its object is to reach a better understanding of what was in the mind of an early modern theatre-goer in order to contribute to a more nuanced and vivid comprehension of these history plays, plays which were based partly on chronicles, themselves written by collaborators, and now witnessed in the form of drama by the collective cooperation of playwright, actors, the text and members of the audience.

Reconstructing the embodied experience of the original playgoers requires "clusters" of evidence. Similar to West's linking of groundlings, confused and contested contemporary thoughts about politics, supposition and the physical experience of attending plays, this reconstruction of what the playgoer might bring to the theatre and how he/she might experience the immersive atmosphere of the theatre brings different branches of the argument of the thesis together. As Holly Dugan describes embodiment, it is "a threshold of understanding about lived experiences of the past," one that "reflects the endless situatedness of perspective." It encourages the cross-referencing of other sources of information "whose enquiries do not share the same

[1] *The Private Life of William Shakespeare* ("evidence clusters" Orlin 17), *Common Understandings, Poetic Confusion: Playhouses and Playgoers in Elizabethan England* ("Supposes" West 7), *Shakespeare's Two Playhouses: Repertory and Theatre Space at the Globe and the Blackfriars 1599-1613* ("informed speculation" Dustagheer 11).

centre of gravity" (Traub 33). Dugan's work on perfume in the early modern era shares some concepts with the experience of contemporary playgoers; smells and experience are both invisible and what they were then is not what they are now. The scent of Elizabethan natural musk is quite different from artificial musk today just as the *raison-d'être* for staging *Henry V* in 1600 and the sensory experience of the performance are radically different today (Dugan 10). A recent Donmar production of *Henry V* opened at the start of the Russian special military operation in the Ukraine, emphasising the unprovoked invasion of France by the English king; *Henry V* at the new Sam Wanamaker theatre in November 2022 used the myth-making elements to emphasise national identity and what Englishness means[2]. In the 1590's England was anticipating a fourth invasion attempt by Spain and an uncertain and potentially catastrophic succession issue. So, at a time when Spain might have occupied England, *Henry V* was, for those playgoers, about participating in a legendary success story and the resolution of the succession issue by a marriage, the experience inflected by contemporary politics as well as the smells, sounds and sights of the theatre.

Richard II sets a distance between kingship and subject-playgoers. There is a fallible monarch and a pragmatic and successful usurper. Elizabeth I, in spite of her exclamation to the contrary, is not a fallible Richard II. Parts one and two of *Henry IV*, in contrast, bring the spectators very close to the seat of power; they participate in the plays fully, visit the Eastcheap tavern, drink and eat with Falstaff and his minions the same victuals as they are consuming at the theatre. They participate in the history. In *Henry V* the legendary element once again makes a space between monarch and spectators, but the audience do share in the invincibility of England. Thomas Nashe's comment in the title of this dissertation makes it clear how linked the reception of history plays is to audience memory and their desire to celebrate the "valiant acts of the past…raised from the grave of oblivion". Today, in like manner, we endlessly reminisce about the first and second world wars on stage, in film and in literature. We constantly compare the present with the past and Nashe reminds us that this impulse was very much alive in the 1590's too.

[2] https://www.shakespearesglobe.com/whats-on/henry-v-2022/ see 'rehearsal trailer'

The playwright may have used these history plays to make test cases for later works. The degree to which Shakespeare included and excluded playgoers from participating in these history plays enabled him to make future choices for topics and plots.[3] At the same time the playwright exploited the opportunity to open the audiences' minds to political analogies, prior to the Bishops Ban on history plays in 1599. To avoid controversy, the author's next history play would be set in ancient Rome. The ban on history plays is evidence that the authorities were highly aware of the impact of reviving their forefathers on the stage.

In the 1590's, not only the experience of playgoing, but the understanding of playgoing was very different from today as West points out: "early modern players and playgoers held in common presuppositions of playing so different from ours that their playing was practically-by which I mean in practice, not virtually or nearly-a different activity from what we now understand it to be" (6). Early modern crowds had access to the cheapest mass entertainment of all time. For the equivalent of C$1.80 in today's money they had a seat in one of the galleries. They could eat, drink, smoke, discourse, see all the other spectators in daylight, were all within fifty feet of an actor and the acoustics in the almost circular amphitheatres enabled crowd participation at the level of today's popular concerts. What did this accessibility mean when their past was being revived, a history whose sources were like the chronicles, collectively written, putting readers and playgoers, in Annabel Patterson's words in a position 'of weighing and considering the past in order to construct their own social memory'? (quoted in Ivic 125). And this social memory is complicated, emerging through "negotiation between opposing interest groups" (Wood 24). As Andy Wood describes his methodology, it is 'multi-directional,' between 'memory, identity, agency, subjectivity and collectivity' (Wood 24); for this paper it is recognition, introspection, memory and language, or what playgoers recognised, what they intuited, what triggered their own memories, and how language immersed them in these particular history plays.

[3] *Richard II* was followed soon after by *Julius Caesar*, another play about the judicial murder of a ruler and its consequences. The *Henry IV* plays developed alongside *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Coriolanus* echoes parts of *Henry V* in terms of bloodthirstiness.

Introduction

our forefathers' valiant acts (that have lain long buried in rusty brass and worm-eaten books) are revived, and they themselves raised from the grave of oblivion, and brought to plead their aged honours in open presence; than which, what can be a sharper reproof to these degenerate effeminate days of ours? Nashe 64

Thomas Nashe, himself a playwright, addresses his readers directly as if on stage in his literary soliloquy, *Defence of Plays* in the voice of scholar and poet Dr. Pierce Penniless. He makes the argument for this dissertation. An eye-witness of *Henry V* and the first part of Shakespeare's *Henry VI*, Nashe's persona clearly merges with Penniless and singles out history plays "borrowed out of our English chronicles," for particular praise in moving and edifying playgoers. By appearing and reappearing on the scaffold "in open presence," Lord Talbot's battle wounds may have occurred two hundred years ago, but they give him immediate immortality. For Nashe, he was the terror of the French, for Shakespeare he was also "the scarecrow that affrights our children so," or the embodiment of what makes the French or playgoers fearful[1]. Talbot embodies the theatrical experience when he triumphs again on the stage and has "his bones new embalmed with the tears of ten thousand spectators at least (at several times) who in the tragedian who represents his person imagine they behold him fresh bleeding" (65). No longer confined to "worm-eaten books," this historical figure's revived body mingles his blood with the tears of the playgoers. Early modern spectators were aware that Henry V's memorabilia were preserved in London but Nashe privileges the stage's display over the display of this "rusty brass." The writer reminds his readers that it was a "glorious thing" and that representing it on stage emphasises the noble and adventurous aspects of history in the most vivid and impactful way; an English king subdues both the king of France and his heir (65). Plays are educational: they dissect and analyse the past, and provide the reader with a guide about the political uses of history, "a Renaissance commonplace," according to Christopher Ivic (129). The impression on audiences does depend also, in Nashe's words, on "the experience of our time" (Nashe 67). After 1919, Henry V's actions could seem horrific (Chernaik 149). In the latest version in the Sam

[1] *1Henry VI* 1.6.20-21

Wanamaker theatre, still playing successfully at this time of writing, the director interrogated the heroic, nationalistic impulses of the play by inserting current critiques of white supremacy and toxic masculinity; one review states that it exposes the English need to coerce foreigners[2]. In this respect, Shakespeare was "not for an age but for all time," as Jonson described, and he is remade for each time (Ingleby 307). Nashe preferred to encourage the honourable and the gallant, rather than the "war-worn coats…so many horrid ghosts;" but they were, and are, all there for the audiences to experience both then and now[3].

This dissertation takes Nashe's commentary on the visceral and virtue-building effects of witnessing a tragedian in the person of brave Talbot fresh bleeding as foundational as it reimagines the experience of early modern playgoers (their hearing, vision, expectation, and experience) as first audiences of Shakespeare's second tetralogy. It is the aim of this project to resurrect the effects of the revivification of historical figures (their blood fresh on the popular stage) on playgoers, (their tears new embalming their forefathers), by examining Shakespeare's second tetralogy through the hearing, vision, expectation and experience of the first audiences. It is a pushback against the tendency for today's audiences to regard his plays from our own perspective, such as when Ron Rosenbaum says about the statue of Hermione coming to life in *The Winter's Tale*: "no matter what happened in the early acts, you know the statue's going to come alive, forgive and redeem" (548). For the first playgoers this was a magical moment, a product of the witchery of Paulina in which early modern spectators believed. In terms of history plays, the first groundlings enjoyed the close clash of real swords in the fight between Prince Hal and Hotspur, Richard II disappointed them when he interrupted the trial by battle between Bolingbroke and Mowbray and they had to suffer the continual erosion of Hal's regard for the oversized character of Falstaff. The object of this thesis is to capture a sense of the original experience and the "imaginary forces" that the playwright appealed to in his first audiences, and their expectation of the dramatization of the history chronicles, their collective past.

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[2] https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2022/nov/24/henry-v-review-sam-wanamaker-playhouse-london
https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/nov/06/what-is-englishness-a-knotty-history-of-bravery-passion-and-lies-printed-on-a-bus

[3] *Henry V* 4.0.26-28

In the history plays, the spectators already had an idea of what was coming from previous plays, legends or history chronicles. Part of the pleasure is the anticipation of what playgoers know is to come, how a king accelerates his own unexpected downfall, a usurper with a conscience survives constant rebellion, and a wayward prince matures into the unlikely victor of Agincourt. These plays resonated particularly with Elizabethan audiences because they not only celebrated a remarkable communal past, but they reminded them of their own recent national achievement in overcoming the first Spanish Armada, less than twelve years previously.

The Prologue to *Henry V* occurs just after trumpets have announced the beginning of the play. It is a direct appeal to the imagination of the almost three thousand strong audience and their essential engagement. The very first word "O" quiets the playgoers and seizes their attention. It also makes it clear that the audience is not only preeminent, but they have power. They equip or "deck" kings, they are king-makers and they have agency over the kingdom since it not only represents the stage, but suggests that monarch and prince-actors behold the audience (2-3, 28). "Gentles all" indicates that the Prologue is addressing a mixed class audience who are encouraged to be arbiter and manipulator (8). Eventually the playwright will exhort them to imagine that a few ragged foils represent the offstage battle. Other Shakespeare plays echo this apologetic but inclusive tone, emphasising the critical importance of those who paid for entrance to the playhouse. Previously in 1595 Shakespeare asked them to attend with patient ears, here in 1600 "gently to hear, kindly to judge our play" (34). He continues to respect them and solicit their cooperation and attention in the prologues of later plays. Asking them to see the assembled Greek fleet at Athens in *Troilus and Cressida*, "like or find fault," he asks them to accept that his play will start in the middle of the story; In *Pericles*, he entrusts to the audience "th'judgement of your eye" (*Troilus and Cressida* Prologue 30, *Pericle*s sc.1 41). Later still in *All is True*, and in keeping with his exhortation to the crowds at *Henry V*, "think ye see/ the very persons of our noble story/ as they were living" (*All Is True* Prologue 25-7). Thirteen years after the first performance of *Henry V*, Shakespeare was still asking the audience for their applause, and maintaining his apologetic and deferential tone to the theatre-crowd in the prologue to *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.

While Shakespeare was bringing English medieval history to the stage, public misspeaking could result in the amputation of a hand, highway robbery in a hanging, espousing a

banned religion publicly in burning at the stake and it was a time when most young men carried knives openly. Within recent memory the most powerful nation in Europe had attempted invasion and was preparing for the next one. Playgoing, bearbaiting and prize-fighting offered in part escapism from these challenges, the equivalent of twenty-first century filmgoing. Theatre was an important part of the show business of the day but with much higher stakes, sharing attention with the official displays of authority in royal proclamations, pageants, tournaments and executions commanded by the monarchy. It was both a social safety-valve for Londoners to explore taboo subjects like the succession and government, and for the city authorities it was a threat to municipal order (Williams 228; Guy 199). It was remarkable and un-remarkable; with over a million visits to the theatre a year, and the population of London only about 140,000, the activity was so commonplace that it was very little commented upon (Gurr *"Stage*" 260, Gilman 35). This thesis investigates the experience of the large audiences at Shakespeare's second tetralogy and how it might have resonated with them in their own time.

Not everyone saw the value for instruction or consolation in history. Trying and failing to make a living in London a generation before Shakespeare began writing, poet Isabella Whitney complained that we never learn from our historical mistakes:

> myself to edify … Histories 'gan read Wherein I found that follies erst, in people did exceed the which I see doth not decrease, in this our present time. More pity it is we follow them, in every wicked crime. (Whitney 3)

Her remedy was to provide a long series of remedial moral maxims. For Sir Philip Sidney, courtier, diplomat and poet, writing his *Apology for Poetry* at a similar time as Whitney, the problem with history was its questionable integrity, its reliance on hearsay and on "old mouse-eaten records."[4] Historians, according to this carpet knight, have no interest in moral improvement or in seeing vice punished and virtue rewarded. Dependent on hearsay and other histories, they cannot avoid misrepresentation.

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[4] Sidney 89. Shakespeare challenges this dismissive opinion about history directly in *Henry V* 2.4.86 when Exeter states that the English king's claim on France is anchored in law and custom, and not "Picked from the worm-holes of long-vanished days,/ Nor from the dust of old oblivion raked."

Shakespeare, however, met the English public's appetite to know more about the past of their own country from these possible misrepresentations of its follies and glories (Nicoll viii). In dramatizing history, the playwright provided them with an entertaining and poetic version of the chronicles. Was he a teacher, as Sidney described the poet? Shakespeare was rather an entertaining communicator, facilitating instruction on the historical past without the addition of any authorial comment, but just by dramatizing past politics, animating the theatre public about the political present. The exploration of the experience of the audiences of Shakespeare's history plays is valuable because it gives an opportunity to (1) look at the plays from the point of view of the first spectators, (2) examine the constituents of those playgoers and the relevance of their cognitive and social situation, (3) identify some of the prior knowledge the audience acquired from what sources and what effect it had on their play-going experience, (4) and demonstrate to what extent moral or factual issues in the plays themselves illustrated the follies, referred to by Whitney, might be considered or debated by the audiences. This dissertation explores the minds of contemporary playgoers in a specific genre of plays at a particular moment in time, prior to the Bishop's Ban of 1599. What was their collaborative, collective and shared experience and how did they participate?

Chapter 1. Previous investigations.

The historian…laden with old mouse-eaten records, authorising himself (for the most part) upon other histories, whose greatest authorities are built upon the notable foundation of hearsay An Apology for Poetry, Philip Sidney 89.

We present men with all the ugliness of their vices, to make them the more to abhor them A Defense of Drama, Thomas Heywood 3:29

In reconstructing the original audiences' experiences off their revived forefathers on the stage, this dissertation appeals to previous studies in the intersecting branches of early modern expectations of history and of the conditions of playgoing. By necessity it builds upon a variety of previous comment and investigation, and adds value to the material about audience experience at that time by synergizing these. It brings together scholarship on the condition of playing and on the embodied experience of playgoing from both an early modern and a contemporary perspective, and on theories of history, in order to bring a fresh historical perspective to plays that originate in a specific historical milieu, but also a contested arena of social and political ideology when the very notion of history was being posed outside of the scholarly and clerical confines of elite university culture. This is a blending of scholarship on the condition of playgoing with expectation of history, to enrich the readings of historical plays Shakespeare was experimenting with before the Bishops' Ban. At the same time, it emphasises something about which they are almost silent, the accessibility of the early modern theatre at such a low cost. It is not so extraordinary that Dr. Penniless should conjure up ten thousand spectators for a performance of *1Henry VI* when the cost of a seat in the gallery at the Globe in 1600 is equivalent to less than two Canadian dollars today[5].

This chapter provides an overview of previous scholarship about the theatre experience and the playwright's relation to historical sources. Different areas of investigation contribute to a more complete understanding of the experience of the early modern playgoer. Writers have examined the social structure of the large crowds, the extent of their comprehension of the plays and which classes predominantly financed the theatres. They explore the depth of engagement of the audience from the increased characterisation of the acting and the impersonation of historical figures. Scholars also connect the impact of the plays with spectators' acquaintance with history

[5] https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/#currency-result

chronicles and previous history plays. This prior knowledge influenced their ability to interpret what they heard and saw. Writers of history provide a perspective of what Shakespeare retained and what he omitted in his dramatizations. Authors of cognitive theory contribute to our better understanding of how much early modern stage techniques connected the illusionist actors on the scaffold with both the groundlings in front of them and the wealthier patrons in the galleries. Sidney privileges poets over historians, but in these history plays, Shakespeare combines both talents together.

For the composition of audiences themselves, and their behaviour, Alfred Harbage takes the position that since the audience, even the lower orders, paid for their own entrance, while they would be on good behaviour, the actors might find holding the attention of the popular audience a challenge (93,159). He does make the supporting point, as does Michael Bristol, that early modern audiences were from a wide range of classes. Bettina Boecker, on the other hand, suggests that the pit or groundlings would have been more ostensibly disruptive and allies herself with Ann Jennalie Cook in claiming that the elite theatre-goers were really the financiers of the early theatre (Boecker 99*,* Cook 271). The evidence for this is not convincing. David Cressy contends that the literacy of tradesmen and craftsmen in London then could have been at least over fifty percent, so mixed society at the plays could be more sophisticated than Boecker and Cook surmise ("Educational Opportunity" Cressy 314). Bristol also argues persuasively that the sustainers of the theatre were from across all the social classes, a view supported by Lloyd Kermode and Robert Weimann that balcony courtiers and groundling cordwainers shared the same kind of intelligence (Bristol "Big-Time Shakespeare" 50, Kermode 7, *"*Tradition*",* Robert Weimann 171). Regardless, the consumption of food and drink, smoking and the fact that almost a third of the audience was packed tightly together and standing, and all in the afternoon subject to the changeable English weather, and the lack of scenery, meant that early modern actors had to work hard to engage all their patrons and that they had an unprecedently large and varied audience.

1.2 *The audiences'* p*rior knowledge: previous history plays and chronicle histories.*

The scholarship of recent historians helped to put the past moralists and chroniclers' accounts into perspective, and provides a rationale for what Shakespeare selected for his dramatization of history to meet the expectation of the 1590's theatre crowds. The prior

knowledge of those crowds derived partly from written chronicles and oral history and partly from previous plays. Among these are plays like *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, and *Woodstock*. An anonymous author wrote *Famous Victories*, a play that premiered in the 1580's from which Shakespeare drew for *1Henry IV*, borrowing the robbery of the king's receivers, the character of the Lord Chief Justice, the deathbed scene between Henry IV and his son, and the dismissal of Prince Hal's erstwhile boon companions. Henry V was put to the test just as in Shakespeare's later version to win the reluctant French princess, with her "How should I love thee, which is my father's enemie?" (*Famous Victories* G). What is conspicuous by its absence in *Henry V* are the king's battle tactics at Agincourt, perhaps used then for the first time according to Edward Hall, the archers ordered to plant sharpened wooden stakes in front of them to impale the French cavalry, "and then recoyle back, and shoot wholly together, and so discomfite them" (67). Shakespeare also borrowed from another play, *Woodstock: A Moral History*, performed in 1594-5. From this came the origin of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, the king's involvement in the murder in Calais of Thomas, Duke of Gloucester. This was John of Gaunt's "brother Gloucester, plain well-meaning soul;" Holinshed preferred to describe Thomas as a royal nuisance, a baronial brigand (*Richard II* 2.1.127, Rossiter 66). The history chronicles added their versions to the literate spectators' prior knowledge. Among them are those of St.Albans, Adam Usk, John Stow, Edward Hall, Richard Grafton, and the popular conduct guide for the eminent of the period, *Mirror for Magistrates*. Influential and another major source for Shakespeare were *Holinshed's Chronicles.*

In the St.Albans Chronicle, author Thomas Walsingham, becomes increasing critical of Richard II after the young king's intervention during the Peasant's Revolt of 1381. When in 1399, the king exiled the Duke of Hereford, "God determined to crush his [Richard II's] arrogance" (Walsingham v2 137). Supernatural occurrences support this observation. The body of the executed Earl of Arundel rises to its feet in protest at Richard's deception and a river reverses its flow presaging the king's downfall[6]. Adam Usk, a Welsh priest, was part of the commission to find reasons for the deposition of Richard II, so his chronicle is also biased

[6] "the headless body then rose to its feet, and stood there without any support, for as long as it takes to say the Lord's prayer; and then at last it fell to the ground." 95 "indicated it was thought, a dissension between the people and the throne, and rebellions against King Richard, which occurred that year [1399]" 115

against the king. Adam criticizes the monarch's banishment of Bolingbroke because he was likely to defeat Mowbray, and Richard's tactics as foolish (*stupifactus*) after his delayed return from Ireland and his confrontation of the invader "with a tiny band of followers" (Given-Wilson "Adam" 20, 59). Both Walsingham and Usk treat Henry IV and Henry V much kindlier. They praise Henry V for his piety, the founding of three religious houses and his dedication to "honour, propriety and dignity of demeanour" (Given-Wilson "Adam" 253, Walsingham v2 621). One issue on which the chronicles and the history plays differed was on the representation of a major battle, so difficult to reproduce on the stage. The battle of Shrewsbury between the forces of Henry IV and the Percies and their allies was necessarily a much bloodier affair than Shakespeare's representation. Regardless, in the theatre Prince Hal is a vigorous chivalrous hero, killing Hotspur in a hand-to-hand fight and saving his father from the Earl of Douglas, to the delight of the playgoers; Shakespeare does include the bleeding of the prince's wounds, but Hal refuses to leave the field. According to Walsingham, and Edward Hall, Douglas was handicapped by losing an eye and his scrotum (Walsingham v2 373, Hall 25, 31). The monk of St.Albans reports that Hotspur was killed in the fighting, "it being doubtful by whose hand," and that the prince was struck in the face by an arrow (Walsingham v2 371, Hall 31). But for the skilful battlefield surgery of John Bradmore, there would have been no Henry V or the play *Henry V*; the arrow had penetrated six inches into the prince's skull.[7]

1.3 *Interpretations and adaption of medieval sources and Shakespeare's editorial choices.*

Jean Creton, a valet de chambre of the French court and an attendant to Richard II may have been another of Holinshed's sources. Creton catches some of the drama when he reports that the king exclaims "he…condemned the hour and the day that ever he had crossed the salt sea

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[7] "Illustrated History" Given-Wilson 92, This serious wound was reported also by Edward Hall, Raphael Holinshed, John Speed & Thomas Lanquet. The surgery is detailed in *Philomena* by John Bradmore: "herry the worthy prynce and eyr of the sayd herry kynge was smetyn in the face be syd the nose on the lefte syd with an arow the wyche sayd arow entryd overwharte and after the schafte wase takyn owt and the hede of a bod styll in the hindyr parte of a bone of the hede after the mesur of vj ynche" "et tunc pars et parum vibrando, cum dei adjutorio, caput sagitte extraxi" (then, by working it back and forth, with the help of God, I drew out the head of the arrow. my translation) S.J. Lang 124,129

into Ireland," and that Henry could see as well as he did, that all was lost.[8] Not all the chroniclers of the time got the story correct. Geoffrey Bullough includes parts of Jean Froissart's 1523-5 chronicles as a possible source for Shakespeare's *Richard II*, but as editor G.C.Macaulay notes, Froissart seems to know nothing of the expedition to Ireland or of the treachery of Northumberland, and apparently thinks that Flint Castle was in the hands of Richard (Froissart 462 note). According to Froissart, at the Welsh fortress, Richard permits Bolingbroke, Earl of Derby, to enter with a retinue of twelve. "Nowe consider what daunger therle of Derby was in, for the kyng than might have slayne hym and suche as were with hym, as easely as a byrde in a cage," but Richard does not, he collapses, "all his spyrites were sore abashed," and agrees to go to London with Bolingbroke (Quoted in Bullough v.3, 428). Shakespeare is not deceived by this, and writes a dramatic end to the king's life, while Froissart has to admit, "how he dies and by what means, I could not tell when I wrote this chronicle" (Froissart 472). With the chroniclers and the principal poets of the era, Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower criticizing Richard II or rapidly transferring their allegiance to Henry IV, it was a sign of Shakespeare's genius that he would make a hero of the errant monarch and give him the most remarkable lines in his play (Pearsall 221, Echard 6). Readers of the chronicles among the first audiences of *Richard II* would not have expected this.

The chronicles, particularly those of Hall and Holinshed, provided Shakespeare with extensive sources. However, literate playgoers must have been surprised by the playwright's selection. The action of *Richard II* is only about the last two years of a twenty-two-year reign. *The History of Henry the Fourth* is a condensed version of what Hall calls "The Unquiet Time of Henry IV," and much more about the fictitious interaction of Falstaff and the young prince Hal and internal rebellions than about the king himself. Shakespeare's title for the next play, *The Life of Henry the Fifth*, promises to emphasize more than just his rule, begun at the age of twenty-seven. However, the playwright's decision to incorporate the much later Treaty of Troyes into the aftermath of the battle of Agincourt, meant that the audience to *Henry V* accessed less than

[8] Webb 115, 137, 357 "Tout est perdu; vous le veez comme moy"

two years of the nine-year rule.[9] Dramaturgy dictated what the author took from the chronicles, while the chronicles determined some of the dramaturgy.

A principal contemporary source for Shakespeare's *Henriad* is Edward Hall's *The Union of the two noble and illustre families of Lancaster and York*, published in 1548 and according to Stephen Booth, the chief source in turn for Holinshed's Chronicles of 1577 and 1587 (41). Readers of Hall who went to the history plays were familiar with what they saw on the scaffold. The chronicler criticized Richard II for his wastefulness, sanctioning the murder of Gloucester, licensing extortion, failing to honour pardons and banishing Bolingbroke. The king deserved to be deposed. What Hall described, Shakespeare dramatized: the denouncing and deposition of Richard II, the plots against Henry IV, the story of the prince 'stealing' the crown from his dying father and in the chapter on *The Victorious Acts of King Henry V*, how the new king was an example of *The Mirror for Magistrates*:

> The shape of a new man, and to use another set of living, turning insolency and wildness into gravity and soberness, and wavering vice into constant virtue…he prohibited his old flatterers and familiar companions ten miles…that he might show himself a singular mirror (Hall 46).

The Union includes the English clergy's anxiety, with which Shakespeare's *Henry V* begins, and the playwright lifts the entire section on the Salic law from Hall (49-50). The new king is cautious, "Scotland shall be tamed before France shall be framed" (54). Harfleur is sacked in Hall's account, a foolish soldier steals a pyx and the offender is strangled, and Henry V prefers to avoid a battle (62,64). Hall, like most of the chroniclers, concentrates on the battle of Agincourt; the crux of Shakespeare's play, on the other hand, is the scene the night before the encounter. Hall does not claim a normal medieval act of chivalry for Henry V after the French raid on the baggage train kills the English varlets and lackeys; the king's instruction to slay the French prisoners is unequivocal, "every man upon pain of death should incontinently slay his prisoner," who is "sticked…brained…slain…throats cut…paunched" (69). This contrasts with the apparently lovestruck monarch when he meets Princess Katherine: "The king of England seeing and beholding so fair a lady and so minion a damsel, should so be inflamed and rapt in

[9] See Appendices 1 and 2

love, that he to obtain so beautiful an espouse, should the sooner agree to a gentle peace and loving composition" (91). Shakespeare's King Henry is both more romantic but more pragmatic, ensuring that the French monarch agrees to all his peace terms including that he is heir to France as a condition of the engagement to the French princess (*Henry V* 5.2.305-7, 315).

Raphael Holinshed and his colleague chroniclers wanted every reader to become his own historian, as Annabel Patterson writes, but they had to be careful of the Tudor censors[10]. After all, they were recording acts of violence by the state while they were presenting documentary history (Patterson "Holinshed" 7, 234). Various rhetorical tricks enabled them to communicate with the "large and largely literate middle class" with phrases like "some say," "others affirm," "some wish" and "this they say" (xii, 16,63). These chronicles, like Richard Grafton's *A Chronicle at Large* of 1569 includes much of Hall's material. They refer often to Walsingham and admit to following Hall and the rather stolid John Stow[11]. Hall, Grafton and Holinshed are a pleasure to read, never dull, bringing the past alive to the page just as Shakespeare brought it to the stage.

Holinshed's group of writers, like the other chroniclers of their time, is critical of Richard II, concerned about Henry IV and laudatory of Henry V. The author identifies one main cause of Richard II's downfall, the exercise of his will rather than reason but, his imagination getting the better of him, accuses the monarch of a serious moral decline for which there is no evidence: lechery, fornication and adultery (Allardyce 51, Holinshed 493). He damns Richard with faint praise, "so given to follow evil counsel and used such inconvenient ways and means through insolent misgovernment and youthful outrage, though otherwise a right noble and worthy prince" (Holinshed 507). Shakespeare emphasises this latter aspect of the king for the theatre audience, Richard's noble and worthy character, his appealing poetic speeches compared with the much more abruptly spoken usurper Bolingbroke. Holinshed's influence, however, appears constantly in the play: Richard casting down his warder to interrupt the trial by battle, his tax-farming the realms of England, the resentment against his blank charters and his seemingly passive surrender of his crown. Readers of Holinshed would notice similar details appearing in the two plays of

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[10] The censorship under Elizabeth I was "a good deal stronger on enforcement…than is popularly believed" Patterson "Holinshed" 253

[11] John Stow *A Summarie of the Chronicles of England*, 1579

Henry IV, the rebels plotting to divide the realm into three, Worcester concealing the king's offer of mercy prior to the battle of Shrewsbury, the challenge of prince Hal's youthful audacity and the reconciliation scene of father and son on Henry IV's deathbed. The stage version of *Henry IV*, however, was not so much about the life of the king as the education of a prince. Holinshed's chronicles are noticeable for the extensive attention to the continual internal resistance to the king's rule and the external threats from Wales and Scotland. After finding a murderous caltrop in his bed, Holinshed sets a general tone of fearfulness for Henry's reign:

> [nor] could he confidently compose of settle himself to sleep for fear of strangling; durst he boldly eat and drink without fear of poisoning; might he adventure to show himself in great meetings or solemn assemblies without mistrust of mischief against his person intended; what pleasure of what felicity could he take in his princely pomp, which he knew by manifold and fearful experience, to be envied and maligned to the very death (519).

As the chronicler and Shakespeare both wrote, the king dies in a chamber called Jerusalem, a reminder of his long intention to go on a crusade there. Just as Shakespeare had simplified the history of the Wars of the Roses for the playgoing public in his series of plays about Henry VI, so he abridged and condensed the reign of Henry V. Holinshed's chronicles provide the playwright with dramatic themes, but are essentially a detailed account of continual warfare in France, the siege of one castle after another, their capture, and the recovery of all the lands and more that King John had lost two hundred years previously. Shakespeare borrows significant elements like the king becoming a new man, his elevation of the Lord Chief Justice, the assassination plot against him at Southampton, the siege of Harfleur and the king marching for Calais, his army "much diminished by flux and other fevers" (543, 548-50). The king will not be ransomed and the night before battle, the French make wagers about the Englishmen at dice (553-4). Where Holinshed and Shakespeare coincide even more closely is over the "fair" French Princess Katherine. Early in the reign, the chronicles report that the French had hoped that her beauty might facilitate better treaty conditions, but in spite of eight meetings "yet no effect ensued" (568). However, Holinshed foreshadows the wooing scene at the end of *Henry V* when he suggests "a certain spark of burning love was kindled in the king's heart by the sight of the Lady Katherine." The extensive description of Queen Katherine's lavish coronation feast in

London illustrates a point Mervyn James makes about Annabel Patterson's *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles*, that Londoners' main interest may have been more in reading about "the glamorous pastimes of the rich and powerful" than chronicle history, and another good reason for their attending history plays like the series in Shakespeare's second tetralogy[12]. The chronicler and author both write similar epitaphs for Henry V: "a king of royal heart, and every way indued with imperial virtues," from Holinshed, and in *Henry V* "Small time, but in that small most greatly lived/ This star of England" (Holinshed 584, *Henry V* Epilogue 5-6).

There were many readers. There was an increase in the number of printers and printing presses during Shakespeare's lifetime, and it is possible that about forty percent of Englishmen and twenty-five percent of women possessed books of some kind, according to Keith Wrightson (141). Chronicles and history plays recorded and illustrated historical change and resurrected memories. Memories in turn recalled grievances, resistance and repression as well as celebration (Wrightson 141-2, 377, 379). *The Mirror for Magistrates* concentrated on the downfall of princes, to provide a conduct guide for sixteenth century decision-makers.

1.4 *A moral mirror*

The literate spectators at the Globe or Blackfriars would have noticed that *The Mirror* of 1559 had contributions from Holinshed (Baldwin 20). Richard II overtaxes the realm, Cambridge and Scrope are apprehended for their plot against Henry V, although there is a question whether Exton kills King Richard at Pomfret castle, or that Henry IV starves him to death (114,117-8, 140,144). *The Mirror*, like Holinshed's *Chronicles*, was the product of a variety of authors and had a disguised tone of resistance to authority; as Scott Lucas comments, it used the *de casibus* tradition, history depending on the fates of men and the fall of princes, to emphasise the value of magisterial independence from strict royal control, an image Shakespeare conjures up in the form of the Lord Chief Justice in 2*Henry IV,* and this official's independence from state interference

[12] "One wonders, too, whether Patterson makes sufficient allowance for the pressure brought to bear on the author-compilers by the more frivolous tastes, preferences and prejudices of the London citizens, their main market, who expected entertainment as well as instruction from a 'historie'. Hence the long, detailed accounts of court ceremonies, masques and pageants…to feed the citizens' appetite for glimpses of the glamorous pastimes of the rich and powerful." James 463

(Lucas 2, 235). Shakespeare employs the fragility of the reflective glass to emphasise the abrupt fall of Richard II; one day the image in the mirror could command ten thousand men, the next the reflective glass breaks and "A brittle glory shineth in his face,/ As brittle as the glory is the face" (*Richard II* 4.1.277-8). With its moral message that "vyces are punished in great kings and magistrates," *The Mirror* was the most widely read work of secular poetry of its time (Baldwin 15, Lucas 2).

Audiences were also well acquainted with one of Richard II's predecessors, John Lackland. Shakespeare's *King John*, was published the year before his *Richard II*. Through the legend of Robin Hood, King John was already well known to theatre-goers for the cruelty he would inflict on his nephew Arthur; Ralph Turner suggests that this derived from the king's insecurity (48). John was not only needlessly cruel, but greedy and oppressive and unable to manage either his nobles or the church (18, 261). In the war against the French, Shakespeare provided John with one trustworthy follower, but one was insufficient to change the course of history, and the Bastard loses most of the English army trying to cross the Wash at low tide. With the death of King John, the fictitious Bastard transfers his allegiance to the new young king Henry III. Spectators of *King John* had to wrestle with the same idea that was raised in the time of this medieval king: how members of the aristocracy could renounce homage and take up arms against a cruel or unjust lord without creating a conspiracy. Londoners would be tested during the rebellion of the Earl of Essex only four years after the first performance of *King John*.

Christopher Fletcher and Nigel Saul both agree that Richard II's rule was tyrannical in the last two years of his reign (Saul 366, Fletcher 246). The king was self-delusional and narcissistic, vindictive and extravagant. His decisions to over-tax the realm and revenge himself on the magnates who had humbled him during the Merciless parliament alienated his subjects. Consequently, there was enormous popular interest in the trial by battle between the king's man and a representative of the nobility with which Shakespeare opens his play (Saul 400). Saul treats Richard as an actor, with his "intense self-regard, his craving for attention, his taste for the theatrical, his appetite for grandeur," and credits Shakespeare for this interpretation (466-7). *Richard II* seems to Saul to be as close to the historical reality of Richard the king as we may get. The essence of his tragedy, as Saul says, is that although un-kinged, Richard is still kingly, and the audience hear this through the actor-character's soliloquies. Shakespeare gives the unarmed

king an appealing and heroic on-stage death when Richard despatches two of his assassins before succumbing to a blow from Exton's poleaxe. While some of the literate audience might expect the alternative and more likely end of Richard II by self-induced or punitive starvation, they probably preferred to see this violent and bloody conclusion to the play.

Shakespeare's *Henry IV* plays initially appear to take an orthodox approach to Richard II's successor. Henry usurps the throne, the previous lawful occupant dies on his watch, he nurses a guilty conscience, fights off the ensuing rebellions and dies with the hope that his eldest son is secure in the succession. As K.B.McFarlane comments, a conventional view is that Henry IV's reign is a dull and sordid episode sandwiched in between the mercurial Richard II and the brilliant Henry V ("Lancastrian" 5). Shakespeare transforms this interpretation. From the first appearance of Prince Harry, the audiences expect that the plays will be much more about the development of the wayward prince into the military hero, Henry V. Falstaff is here the facilitator of the prince's education, much to the chagrin of his alternative royal father. Spectators of the plays do not know, although some may suspect, Henry IV's creditable background, as detailed by McFarlane, Chris Given-Wilson and Ian Mortimer. Admittedly the son of a rich man, he was a champion jouster and had been on pilgrimage; he was a reader, a musician, spoke three languages, the same age as Richard of Bordeaux, his born rival (Given-Wilson "*Henry IV"* 61,71,74, Mortimer *"Henry IV"* 19, 47). The first attempt to unseat Henry was only after three weeks; there were seven plots against the new king in five years (Given-Wilson 506, Mortimer 288). Playgoers are spared the long series of revolts against Henry IV's usurpation of the throne that fill Holinshed's chronicles while the playwright also conceals this king's military prowess. To magnify the developing character of prince Hal, Shakespeare invents the prince's rescue of Henry IV at the battle of Shrewsbury and Hal's single-handed defeat of Hotspur as if they were equals. In reality, at this encounter, Hal was 16 and Hotspur 39, and the chroniclers do not know how Hotspur died.[13] Along with telescoping the events of the reign, the playwright presents Henry IV as irascible and moody, as much preoccupied with his errant eldest son as the incessant revolts against his reign. If Nigel Saul is correct, and Shakespeare's history plays are or become the accepted version of history for many, as they were for the crowds at the Elizabethan amphitheatres, then Henry IV was maligned. Mortimer extols the king's spirituality,

[13] Walsingham v2 371 "Henry Percy was killed in the fighting, it being doubtful by whose hand"

his logical thinking, intelligence and tenacity; Given-Wilson comments that unlike his son, Henry IV is not remembered for being a great king, but it is not impossible, given other circumstances, that he could have been (Given-Wilson 541, Mortimer 354-8). Contemporary audiences at Shakespeare's plays were more likely to remember Falstaff, his influence on Hal, and the young prince's developing maturity; playgoers leave at the end of the second part of *Henry IV* with the knowledge of the tender reconciliation between the king and his son before Henry IV's death and the evidence of firm government from the newly crowned Henry V. In the Epilogue there was a false spoiler-alert that there would be more of Falstaff. The Elizabethan audience did not leave with any thought that Henry IV could have been a great king, unless they considered his producing a Henry V.

There is little, ostensibly, for the Elizabethan audience to criticize in Shakespeare's version of Henry V's life. Playing within twelve years of the dispersal of the Spanish invasion fleet of 1588, the play is a tribute to nationalism. Shakespeare uses the most dramatic aspects of his reign (Allemand 434). Not only did Henry win a battle against overwhelming odds, but he marries the French princess and unites the two realms of France and England in what must have seemed a Tudor fantasy (Lake "Politics" 357). There is the matter of him ordering his soldiers to kill all their French prisoners at the battle of Agincourt, but according to Gwilym Dodd, the French had raised the oriflamme banner, signifying that there was to be no quarter (235). Henry's soldiers in the play do express their misgivings about army service, but to a disguised king, this can be excusable. The playwright does not blame Henry in the Epilogue for dying young and leaving an infant heir on the throne. This king is one of England's greatest generals, and with both the audience and Shakespeare encouraging him in the chorus to act V, the hope is expressed that the then Earl of Essex's Irish expedition will have a similar success. Henry does share some of Essex's impetuous qualities, but the king is more intelligent and luckier. The siege of Harfleur took its toll on the English army or King Harry would not have had to exhort "once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more" (*Henry V* 3.1.1). Marching to Calais with a smaller army whose numbers are reduced further by sickness, Henry is baulked by the French and the river Somme, which costs him a one-hundred-kilometer twenty-four-hour diversion to find a useable bridge and an extra day's march to Calais. No commentator talks of him having led his army into a trap; his amazing victory at Agincourt obliterates that. Elizabethan playgoers could view Henry V's sword and armour at Westminster Abbey for the same one penny

admittance that groundlings paid for their afternoon visit to the theatre, evidence that Henry was a legend to the population at large and still held in the high esteem which Shakespeare accords him in *Henry V* (Macgregor 47, quoting Jonathan Bate). This king made the English, for a moment in time, God's chosen people (Allemand 434).

For writing this dissertation, it has been important to know what motivated the playwright to choose the salient parts of history that would provide dramatic impact, and what to omit. Why were these history plays so well received by the first audiences when they excluded Magna Carta, the Peasant's Revolt and Henry V's winning strategy at the battle of Agincourt, stories familiar to the literate members of the London amphitheatre audiences?[14] Shakespeare's more dramatic interpretation of history sharpened contemporary audience reception by choosing among many other embellishments an address to the audience by the imprisoned Richard II, the personal defeat by Prince Hal of Hotspur and the long and rough wooing of the French Princess Katherine by King Henry V. These were all deviations from chronicle history in order to heighten dramatic impact and theatrical illusion.

1.5 *The power of illusion*

Anthony Dawson and Paul Yachnin and AkihiroYamada highlight the importance of imagination at the early modern theatre by emphasising its power of illusion (as in how Desdemona's handkerchief hold the audience's attention and how the dumb and handless Lavinia manages to write the names of her ravishers on the sand with her stumps); they quote Heywood's convincing description of contemporary acting as magic. "So bewitching a thing is liuely 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," comments this playwright (*Othello* 3.3.439, *Titus Andronicus* 4.1.77 Yamada 52 Yachnin 113,118 Heywood 1:12). Robert Weimann draws on Heywood to strengthen the argument that one of the reasons for the impact of Shakespeare's plays on the playgoers was the increased characterisation of roles, particularly when the actors played real historical figures, like Falstaff playing a version of the Protestant

[14] *Richard II* played at the Globe 1611, *1Henry IV* at the Theatre, and perhaps later at the Curtain and the Globe, *2Henry IV* probably at the Theatre or Curtain and perhaps later at the Globe, *Henry V* presumably at the Curtain and perhaps later at the Globe: Wiggins 3: 366, 3:413, 4:104, 6:129

martyr Oldcastle and the off-stage General from Ireland representing the very popular Earl of Essex (Weimann 145 *"*Performance*"*). The popularity of the irrepressible Sir John, so unlike Pity or Perseverance of *Hick's Corner* of the early sixteenth century, illustrates the advance Shakespeare made on creating an intimate engagement with the audience.

1.6 *Engaging the audience*

Jennifer Low and Nova Myhill emphasise how much playwrights sought audience approval through the prologues and epilogues and how the repertory system encouraged regular attendance (29-30). They usefully remind us that the audience and actor were not passive; the interaction of the crowds with their queen at Elizabeth I's coronation pageant in 1559, and the play-acting appropriation of the production by members of the audience in Francis Beaumont's 1607 *Knight of the Burning Pestle* are their examples. Karim-Cooper and Stern remind their readership that the early modern theatre was much more ear over eye, at least until the Restoration of 1660, when women began acting the female parts ("Effects" xi). They also invite the modern reader to understand that the jostling, shoving, pressing groundlings were involved in all the senses of touch, smell, sound and sight. Close contact was unavoidable for the theatre crowds and they noticed this also on the stage in front of them, in Iago's manipulation of Othello, in the crowd scenes of *Coriolanus* and *Julius Caesar* and in King Henry's unfashionable kissing of the French princess Catherine in *Henry V*. Could this be over-emphasised? Ronald Huebert and David McNeil quote Anthony Munday's "young ruffians [and] harlots, uterlie past all shame; who presse to the fore-frunt of the scaffolds, to the end to showe their impudencie, and to be an object to al mens eies" (quoted by Huebert and McNeil 24). Comments like this may be unreliable, they say, but it was a sign of anxieties at the theatre. So, although there are different opinions about the composition and comportment of the spectators, there is a reasonable agreement about how the author engaged and involved the playgoers. With the attention of the audience largely in his hands, how did the playwright assist their understanding: by staging, theatrical teamwork by the cast and the communicative power of the text. However, he also gave them the responsibility "kindly to judge, our play" (*Henry V* Prologue 34).

1.7 *The importance of staging and the influence of cognition*

Some writers came close to my topic, but mainly pursued other research angles. Janette Dillon's *Shakespeare and the Staging of English History* draws attention to how much movement there was on the stage, both horizontally and vertically, creating what for her are "stage pictures", Sidney's speaking pictures, and for many other writers, *tableaux vivants* (Dillon 44-45,48, Rose 15). In competing side by side perspectives, she sets Lady Mortimer against Hotspur's wife Kate; in the vertical, she cites the wheel of fortune buckets of King Richard and his descent into the base court at Flint Castle. Dillon also explores the playwright's technique of using objects like Henry V's glove and the wager with Williams, the theatrical scene in the Boar's Head tavern that mocks a royal interview and some stage directions that derived from the chronicles, for example, when Richard II throws down his warder to stop the trial by battle. She, like Evelyn Tribble, examines how early modern actors managed their appearances and cues and how they moved on the stage (Tribble "Cognition" 31). Tribble applied the 'distributed cognition' concept, coined by Edward Hutchins in 1995, to renaissance drama, arguing that a play is a social event, requiring actors to "combine their efforts in ways to produce results that could not be produced by any individual working alone" (Hutchins 175[15]). Distributed cognition is the complex process of executing an action that includes instructions, visual, audible and tactile clues and include costume and properties. This she linked to verbal and physical cues for actors and stage movement, the touch of an elbow, a gesture, memorisation in chunks and the critical use of entrances and exits (Tribble "Cognition" 14, 34, 161 "Distributing" 153). William West's thinking is on similar lines (West footnote p288 note 4). But, while these scholars focus on staging, this thesis has a different aim, to imaginatively recreate the embodied experience of the playgoer in the late 1590's.

William West, professor of English at Northwestern, published the most recent book on playhouses and players in Elizabethan England last year and explores the value and challenges of resurrecting the past. His investigations of the groundlings, eating and drinking and sword-fighting are particularly elucidating, and his comment that "every audience member wishes to see its interests reflected in the play" very much aligns his views, and those of this paper, with the horizon of expectations of Jauss (West 8, 134). West also underlines the difficulties in

[15] Hutchins's prime example was the complicated process of bringing of a modern naval vessel in motion to its mooring mid-stream and who and what was involved

recreating the atmosphere of this participatory entertainment. His chapter headings alone point to the complexity and intangible quality of the early modern theatre: “understanders”, “confusion”, “supposes”, and “non plus” for example, and the fact, in his opinion, that there was “no clear centre of authority.” (5). West theorises how just such ‘gappiness’ noticed also by Emma Smith, informs the communal reception of the plays. In presenting the politically charged events of the nation’s past, the playwright puts responsibility for interpretation and judgement in the minds of the spectators.

West too is frustrated by the absence of contemporary observations; like attending a play, eating in playhouses was so much a part of the experience that it attracted little comment at the time (187). Concerned both with playing and acting, and the occupation of the “audients,” West deals with the whole period of Elizabethan drama up to the closing the theatres in 1642 in relation to preceding, contemporary and subsequent plays. His findings have particular relevance to the playwright’s decentred, destabilised, yet communal representation of history.

What the audience knew already, their commitment to the plays and the magical illusion of theatrical performance all contributed to the realisation of embodiment in their experience, while any relevant knowledge of history or legend initially directed their communal attention to the past.

Chapter 2. Reception theories: early modern and twentieth century.

Playrs are in vse as they are vnderstood

Spectators eyes may make them bad or good (Heywood 3:27)

Heywood places the meaning and value of a play in its reception.

2.1 *The popularity of playgoing*

Were the history plays instructive or just entertainment for those early modern audiences? Some of the few contemporaries who recorded their opinions opted for the latter. Thomas Platter, Swiss tourist in 1599, describes a visit to the Globe to see Julius Caesar:

> …How much time then may merrily spend daily at the play everyone knows who has ever seen them play or act (Williams 167).

"Merrily" and "daily" are informative. The frequently changing repertory season was well attended[16]. As Andrew Gurr calculates, upward of fifteen thousand theatre patrons attended the main two theatres weekly in 1594 ("Stage" 260). Theatre-going was such a habit, so commonplace, that it was largely not commented on and then only by very few.

2.2 *Thomas Dekker*

Among those few, Thomas Heywood and Thomas Dekker regarded plays as both entertaining and instructive. In satirising the "gull" or wit, Dekker suggested that the theatre provided topics of conversation for the audience and a busy and ideal medium for Philip Sidney's poets:

> The Theatre is your poets' Royal Exchange, upon which their muses, that are now turned to merchants, meeting, barter away that light commodity of words-plaudities, and the breath of the great beast; which, like the threatenings of two cowards, vanish all into air (Dekker 2:246).

…and like the Royal Exchange, a money-maker and fashionable. For Dekker it was a place to be seen and also see the latest style. However, by criticizing the outrageous behaviour of the self-important gulls and gallants to interfere in the plays themselves, he was really calling for

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[16] Runs were short, new plays frequent; there were four hundred plays performed between 1590 and 1603, of which two hundred and twenty-five have been lost. Doran & Jones 544.

spectators to be attentive. Enjoyment was for all; while Dekker made aspersions at wits and fools, and also at the garlic-mouthed stinkards in the yard, the "scarecrows," he was recognising the variety of society among the audiences. For him, plays performed for farmer's sons, templars, couriers, carmen and tinkers.

2.3 *Thomas Nashe*

Thomas Nashe, maybe one of the first eye-witnesses of a Shakespeare play, applauds the theatre for providing both virtuous entertainment and instruction about the past and keeping part of society out of trouble:

> For whereas, the afternoon being the idlest time of the day, wherein men that are their own masters--as the gentlemen of the Court, the Inns of Court, and the number of captains and soldiers about London--do wholly bestow themselves upon pleasure, and that pleasure they divide-how virtuously it skills not--either into gaming, following of harlots, drinking, or seeing a play; is it not better--since of the four extremes all the world cannot keep them but they will choose one--that they should betake them to the least, which is plays? (Nashe 64).

Plays are not only pleasurable for Nashe, but educational; "they show the ill success of treason, the hasty fall of climbers, the wretched end of usurpers, the misery of civil dissention, and how just God is evermore in punishing of murder" (65). In *Pierce Penniless*, in evidence that he was indeed an eye-witness to Shakespeare's history plays, Nashe rejoices at Talbot returning to life in *1Henry VI* and the Dauphin, the king of France and the Monarch of England negotiating in a version of *Henry V* (64-5). Nashe reminds us that there were a number of discharged members of the armed services in the city looking for entertainment. He does not make the argument that the one penny entrance was cheap at the price, but customers would have been aware that whores were much more expensive and dinner expected after (Cook 204). As for our forefather's brave exploits that headline this thesis, which history brought to the light of day to sixteenth century audiences almost for the first time, Nashe emphasises that playwrights tapped into a very basic desire, to own and celebrate something of the past. In place of earlier morality plays like *Hick's Corner* and *Everyman*, with their much more biblical characters like Pity, Perseverance and Fellowship, Nashe points to one of the main reasons for the popularity of the late 1590's history plays for contemporary audiences, the collective and individual recollected memories of the past,

and what they meant. If soldiers, they maybe remembered their campaigns in the Low Countries, if sailors the fortuitous weather that propelled the first Spanish Armada up the east coast of England, if citizens of London the execution of a traitorous Scots Queen at Fotheringay. Apart from their individual recall that could stretch back to the time of Queen Mary, present memories would resonate with collective historical memory, strengthened by the acquaintance with legend, stories, songs, broadsheets and with previous visits to the theatre to see for example *The Troublesome Raigne of John King of England, Woodstock* and *the Famous Victories of Henry V*. Memory, and therefore history, is something that people like to own. Brave acts are recalled and not forgotten, as Nashe reminded his readers. Henry V's sword and armour displayed in a shrine at Westminster during the time of Shakespeare's first history plays, exploited not only the valiant acts of the past, but their less valiant ones also. This is the genius of the genre, so well worked by Shakespeare, that it includes universal themes that are timeless, and a reason that his history plays are still popular over four hundred years later: war, ethics, treason, usurpation, invasion, succession, errant princes, corruption and sequestration of a rival's assets. Shakespeare rescued the memory of Agincourt so vividly that contemporary audiences could feel that they owned a part of it and its glory. At a time of the development of the star actors of the time, they had personally come to know "This star of England" (*Henry V* Epilogue 6).[17] Nashe considered play-going, and particularly what they borrowed from chronicle history, to be an antidote to war-mongers or the retired veterans in the crowd who, he quotes 'if they have no service abroad, they will make mutinies at home' (Nashe 64). Not only do history plays act as pacifiers for the community, but they immortalise the exemplary and reveal the effects of natural justice (65). More, says Nashe arguing against the London city authorities' fear that play-crowds increased crime and disorder, "no play they have encourageth any man to tumults or rebellion" (66). A patron of plays also has a chance to sharpen his wits (68). How Pierce (pun on 'purse') Penniless could afford the theatre, Nashe does not elaborate (5).

2.4 *George Puttenham*

George Puttenham was older than Nashe and died before Shakespeare's first history play came onto the stage, but he asserts the importance of resurrecting the past. In *The Art of English*

[17] stars like Richard Tarleton, William Kemp and Robert Armin. Nashe refers to the audience laughing when Tarleton first showed his head (Nashe 47-8)

Poesie, published in 1589 he also applauds the resurrection of valiant acts in plays, pageants and interludes, "to behold, as it were in a glass, the lively image of our dear forefathers," (1:15.27, 19.31). History, what the author calls "historical poesie," may be fictitious and full of 'faining,' but is a force for the moral good; vice is rebuked, evil reformed and wickedness reproached (1:12.21-2,13.24-5,15.27). Past memory is also good guide to future courses of action, according to Puttenham:

> Memory: because it maketh most to sound judgement and perfect worldly wisdom, examining and comparing the times past with the times present, and by them both considering the time to come, concludeth with a stedfast resolution, what is the best course to be taken in all his actions and aduices in this world (1:19.31-2)

The present time moves too quickly, the future is uncertain, the past is more "autentike," true or genuine, reinforced by the words of wise and grave men. Memory of the past is reliable. According to Puttenham, readers of *Poesie* and patrons of history chronicles and plays should treat them as reliable guides to the future (1:19.32).

And this author put history on a pedestal. We do not know if Puttenham had seen Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* or Marlowe's *Dido* or *Tambulaine* while he was alive, but history that dealt with royalty, notable events or war and peace, he described as "high subiectes" that he elevated to the level of religious matters, and should be addressed only by "Poets Hymnick and historicall" (3:6.128). Like Sidney, Puttenham disapproved of the mixing of high, mean and low matters. They should all be separate and in their context. The author would, on this evidence, not have enjoyed *The Famous Victories of Henry V* of the 1580's for its intermingling of flippancy with "graue and weightie matters" (3:6.129).

He did remember seeing plays. In his own mind, describing the origins of theatre in Roman times somewhat anachronistically, Puttenham reveals some of their development during his own lifetime from the uncovered wagons or carts in the streets, or in open tents, to scaffolds or stages of timber with curtains of cloth or leather to act as rehearsal or dressing rooms for the players, and a place reserved for musicians (1:17.29). The author would have been a boy when the morality plays like *Hick's Corner* and *Everyman* were playing on their mobile platforms, and from this evidence, he remembered morality plays (*Six Plays*). By his inclusive comments on this theme, Puttenham observes that every man is part of the audience.

Every man, however, may be distinguished by social class. Royalty, the merchant class and the common labourers do not require equal attention; affairs of state, common conversation and "low matters" do not require the same treatment or emphasis (3.6.127). Princes are treated with gravity and majesty, the inferior by much more slight offerings (1:20.35). Just as Sidney did not approve of mixing the serious with the comic, so Puttenham disapproved of giving the high and low-born equal attention. Neither author would have approved of the prominence of Falstaff and his gang in the two parts of *Henry IV*, but they were not alive to witness this theatrical development. Falstaff's activities were the very opposite of Puttenham's essential requirement of life, decency (3:24.232 ff). Early modern audience anticipation of the old knight's return to the stage in *Henry V* demonstrates how far theatre patrons' expectations had changed during the sixteenth century. The *Henry IV* plays were popular partly because Falstaff was purposely ignorant of Puttenham's advice to those addressing princes: be submissive, soft-voiced, serious and at cards, let him sometimes win on purpose! (3:23.245-7).

2.5 *Thomas Heywood*

In the introduction to *The Apology for Actors* by Thomas Heywood's friends applauded the fact that plays showed that not only playing cards was sinful:

> Where stabbing, drabbing, dicing, drinking, swearing,
>
> Are all proclaim'd vnto the sight and hearing.
>
> In vgly shapes of Heauen-abhorrid sinne,
>
> Where men may see the mire they wallow in. (Heywood 1:8)

Plays had the power to change the behaviour of audiences, quite apart from showing them the virtues of good conduct. For Heywood, playwright and writer, historical drama in particular was an instructive moment, "to teach the subjects obedience to their King, to shew the people the vntimely ends of such as have moued tumults, commotions, and insurrections…exhorting them to allegiance, dehorting them from all trayterous and felonious stratagems" (3:28). This was appropriate comment after the failure of the Powder Plot of 1605, and its attempt at blowing up King, Council and Parliament. History play-going was also a teaching moment for Heywood. It made the lower classes more alert, informed the ignorant about the past, revealed the chronicles

to the illiterate and widened the knowledge of all men. Like Nashe applauding the re-emergence of Talbot "fresh bleeding" after two hundred years in *1Henry VI*, so Heywood reminds his readers of the like realistic resurrection of Edward III and Henry V on the stage (1:13). Like Nashe, he wanted the crowds to recognise fame and valour and "to see his countrymen valiant" (1:12). Like Sidney, he noticed the meaningful audience reception of realistic impersonation on the stage, "to mooue the spirits of the beholder to admiration: but to see a souldier shap'd like a souldier, walke, speake, act like a souldier," as Bates, Court and Williams do in *Henry V* (1:12). Heywood points out the extent which, by the time of the publishing of his Apology in 1612, actors could with their "witchery" impersonate historical figures for their theatre patrons, the better to teach the ignorant about their history and the illiterate the benefit of the history chronicles.

2.6 *Philip Sidney*

Sir Philip Sidney had had a more idealistic vision for the poet, and a disdain for historians, although he did allow the poet-dramatist to influence politics. For him only the poet was divine, a seer, and a teacher. The historian depends on hearsay; poesy, he argues, is a true Aristotelian representation, "a speaking picture" (Sidney 86). He did concede that the poetic drama could persuade tyrants to recognise the uncertainty of the world (98). However, Sir Philip Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* placed more stress on the ability of the poet, in rhymed or unrhymed verse, to influence the audience's imagination and consciousness. The author contended that the poet embraces both the temporal and the eternal, combining the abstract and general of the philosopher with the particular truth of the historian (89-90). Sidney had seen *Gorboduc* but died in 1586 before he could appreciate Shakespeare's more realistic history plays (110). However, the *Apology* did recognise how actuality influenced the imagination:

> Let but Sophocles bring you Ajax on a stage, killing or whipping sheep and oxen, thinking them the army of the Greeks, with their chieftains Agamemnon and Menelaus, and tell me if you have not a more familiar insight into anger than finding in the schoolmen his *genus* and difference (91).

Sidney continues, "we seem not to hear of them, but clearly to see through them" (91). The poet of his *Apology* has divine breath, is inspired by God, and both teaches and delights, "to move men to take that goodness in hand…and…to make them know that goodness whereunto

they are moved" (87). Poetry could improve morals and persuade men to right action. The history plays all showed that Sidney's harmony could derive from the order that removed chaos; Bolingbroke usurped a corrupt and weak monarch in *Richard II*, Henry IV crushed rebellion and produced a capable heir in the plays of *Henry IV* and Henry's son created a national myth in *Henry V*. The epilogue of the last play cleverly invites a sequel, and a repetition of the cycle of chaos, order, and concord that Shakespeare eventually brought to an end in *Henry VIII* and the birth of the reigning queen. On the other hand, Sidney criticized the historian for using "old mouse-eaten records, authorising himself (for the most part) upon other histories," like Hall, Stowe and the collective authors of Holinshed (Booth 41,66, Sidney 89). For Holinshed, history instructs; for Sidney, only poets could teach, because ambiguity is a critical tool of the poet and enables him to avoid untruths[18]. Shakespeare was a master of this, concealing his own thoughts about politics, succession and religion in Roman, mythical and medieval settings. Poets, in Sidney's words, beautify history, while the historian can be "an encouragement to unbridled wickedness" (Sidney 94), which Shakespeare demonstrates in the three *Henry VI* plays that offer his version of the complicated and bloody Wars of the Roses. Against the background of the chaos inspired by pious and ineffectual king Henry VI, the playwright-poet presents the audiences with the most dramatic elements of the period, the defeat of the militant French maid of Orleans, the threat to the realm of Cade's rebellion and the rise of the murderous Duke of Gloucester, immediate predecessor and victim of the Tudors. In the *Apology*, the poet "maketh things either better than nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew," and nature shows us the difference between good and evil, rather as Shakespeare had done in his first tetralogy (85). The accession of Henry VII, the queen's grandfather represented the good. Sidney suggests that this judgement happens in the audience's imagination (96). Shakespeare takes advantage of this. Playgoers at *1 Henry IV* are present in the Boar's Head to hear a pub-crawling audience enjoy the illusionist playacting between Falstaff and Prince Hal, the spectators' sub-conscious stimulated by the drawers, the sack and the bastard, and the reminder that they could also 'clink the pewter' in

[18] Holinshed 7: "you shall find vice punished, virtue rewarded, rebellion suppressed, loiltie exalted, hautiness disliked, courtesie beloved, bribery detested, injustice imbraced, polling officers to their perpetual shame reprooved, and upright governors to their eternal fame extolled."

nearby hostelries to the Globe Theatre[19]. Sidney did not live long enough to hear *1Henry IV*, or maybe he would have changed his opinion that Kings and clowns should not be mingled, or queens and gardeners in Richard *II*. The laughter that would be prompted by Falstaff, Sidney would have characterised as "scornful tickling" (112). The *Apology* also criticizes the exaggeration of geography and the stretching of time but agrees that poetry strengthens man's wit (111). It would be interesting to know what he might have made of the address to the audience in the prologue to *Henry V,* asking the "gentles all" to imagine that two countries occupy the space of the play-stage, when he was so critical of the exaggeration of geography in plays. If, according to Sidney, poets "lead a man to virtue," (88) but historians encourage evil (94), into what category does poetical and dramatical history fall, except moral instruction?

2.7 *Stephen Gosson*

Not all contemporaries were in favour of the drama. Some, like the city of London authorities, theorised that they encouraged bad civil behaviour; some like extreme Protestants considered play-going immoral. After the Apprentice Riots of 1595 the Lord Mayor wrote to the Privy Council that theatres were to blame for the "late stir and mutinous attempt of those few apprentices and other servants who we doubt not drew their infection from these and like places" (David Smith 91). Civil disorder was a concern to the city authorities. There were thirty-five significant riots between 1581 and 1602 (Doran 378). However, Stephen Gosson, writing in 1579, just prior to the advent of first *Henriad*, in his *The School of Abuse,* targeted the seductive quality of the theatre. Some players were modest and some plays tolerable, but on the whole, he regarded plays as the destroyers of the commonwealth and he denounces them in these terms in his preface. Poets and playwrights are deceptive because they mix honey with gall. Gosson calls for a boycott of the theatres, both because of the opportunity for wanton behaviour, their immoral message and their pernicious influence:

> Such are the caterpillars that have devoured and blasted the fruit of Egypt; such are the Dragons that are hurtful in Afric; such are the adders that sting with pleasure and kill with

[19] Sack was a popular dry amber wine from Spain, and bastard a red wine from Burgundy, Mortimer "Travellers" 261-2. Both feature in *1Henry IV* at the Boar's Head Tavern.

> pain; and such are the Basilisks of the world that poison, as well with the beam of their sight, as with the breath of their mouth (C4,30)

Gosson's wit rather undermines his arguments and did not change the fact that in the seventy years or so of London commercial theatre, "there were as many as a million visits to the playhouse each year" (Gurr "Stage" 260).

2.8 *Philip Stubbes*

Another frustrated writer was Philip Stubbes. His *Anatomie of Abuses* of 1583 more clearly targeted loose behaviour and treason and denigrated the public appetite for entertainment. He warns against going to "plays and enterludes, where such wanton gestures, such bawdy speeches, such laughing and flearing, such kissing and bussing, such clipping and culling, such winking and glauncing of wanton eies" were found (203). Stubbes declared that plays provoked political deviance. "You will learne to murther,slay, kill,picke, steale, rob and roue; …you will learne to rebel against Princes, to commit Treason" (204). Stubbes had a point. Even at the end of the fifteenth century a visiting Italian commented "There is no country in the world where there are so many thieves and robbers as in England; in as much as few venture to go alone in the country, excepting in the middle of the day, and fewer still in the towns at night, and least of all in London" (Judges xv)[20]. It is not easy to quantify sixteenth century crime in England or verify the various claims. William Harrison reports that 12,060 rogues and vagabonds were executed during the reign of Henry VIII. This is only credible if the rate of executions around 1577 when he was writing was 3-400 a year (Harrison 193). The second *Henriad* confronted audiences with a variety of contemporary crimes, both petty and political: treason, theft, murder, robbery, rebellion and prostitution. In *Richard II*, Bolingbroke and Mowbray each accuse the other of treason, Bolingbroke's return from exile is treasonous, the king steals from the Gaunt estates and through blank charters from the nobles, and Exton murders an unarmed king. In the two parts of *Henry IV*, Shakespeare features a highway robbery, Falstaff's thefts from Mistress Quickly and Justice Shallow, his unquenchable bawdiness and dallying with Doll Tearsheet, and the implication that she had been connected with a murder (*2Henry IV* 5.4.6). *Henry V* includes the

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[20] according to John Strype's *Annals of the Reformation*, in 1569 the government apprehended 13,000 masterless men (346). Frank Aydelotte adds that in the 16th century, the number of beggars in London increased twelvefold (74).

hanging of Bardolf and Nym for theft, the execution of the Cambridge plotters for treason and Pistol returning to England as a discharged soldier, to pursue his career as a cutpurse. However, it is not easy to prove that going to plays increased crime, just as the data is unreliable to prove the connection between the famines, poor harvests and inflation of the 1590's resulted in increased convictions of criminals.[21] Thomas Heywood makes an effective counter argument, "we present men with the ugliness of their vices, to make them the more to abhor them" (Heywood 3:29). It was the recurrence of plague and the London city authorities' fear of social disturbance rather than Protestant criticism that caused periodic shutdowns of the theatres, nominally when there were more than thirty deaths a week within the city and its liberties (Gildersleeve 212).

2.9 *Reception theory-Jauss*

What did the theatre crowds expect for their inexpensive afternoons? Hans Robert Jauss's theory of reception provides a useful vocabulary for exploring this. He suggests that we should look at history through the eyes of its contemporaries. He questions whether the historian should ignore the standpoint of his present time for a full objectivity (which is one of the objects of this thesis). Jauss was looking more at readers than theatre-goers, but he does depend on the interaction of author and public, so his theories do apply to playwright and audience as well as to writer and reader. There are many variables, like the fact that readers from different eras will have different expectations; so, for the theatre it is the same, with the same conditions. There is a collective readership and individual readers just as there is a collective audience of almost three thousand in the London amphitheatres of the 1590's, and there were also individual spectators. The individual and the collective do not always have the same reactions and at the same time. William West notices this too, describing the delivery of a play as "orderliness, although not of uniformity. An audience is not of one mind and a play may need to be many things as its audients desire" (West 134). Some members of the audience went to plays for social or criminal reasons, but the vast numbers that patronised the regular repertory season were there for entertainment. There were no critics to help measure how far the plays met expectation, whether they were a spontaneous success, they were rejected, they shocked, they met with approving

[21] for the difficulty of finding data to make this argument see Lawson 100-121 *Property Crime and Hard Times in England 1559-1624*

applause or they met with understanding. Regardless, playgoers were not passive; they responded with shouts, claps, mewes, blares, whews and whistles (Dekker 2:254). However, the audience numbers, increase in the number of theatres and the increasing wealth of theatre-owners marked the obvious success of this new form of an old medium. Playgoing was a great commercial success. From its proceeds Shakespeare was able to become one of the prominent citizens of Stratford-on-Avon.

For Jauss, knowledge of history could not be complete; there are no definite conclusions, but he stated that readers and playgoers have the illusion that it is for them complete, as the epilogues to *2Henry IV* and *Henry V* suggest. They are both present in that moment of reading or witnessing, and can make judgements and draw conclusions. It is no surprize that Jauss uses Sir Walter Scott's historical novels as an example; history for Jauss was a form of fiction, just like Shakespeare's history plays were imaginative reconstructions of history for their Elizabethan audiences. Jauss's process follows Hans Georg Gadamer's theory of hermeneutics, first understanding based very much on whatever prior knowledge exists, then interpretation and finally application, the move from past to present ("Reception" 139). Expectation does not just depend on the subjective opinions of the audience or readership. Jauss fails to distinguish between the whole and individual readership or the whole of the amphitheatre crowd compared with separate playgoers and he was rather jaundiced about what he called pragmatic history. For him it reconstructed "the life of the past from largely mute evidence or from ideologically distorted statements" (Segers 90). Did Shakespeare's history plays meet the expectation of their playgoers simply because large crowds constantly flocked there and the theatres were a financial success? We have no evidence of patrons walking out of plays that disappointed them, or of the 'flat' atmosphere of a play at which the audience is displeased. How important was it that spectators brought sufficient previous understanding with them? Reception theory stressed the importance of prior knowledge. Some background would have been useful for the history plays, but not so necessary for a subject on which everyone had an opinion like the position of women in society in *The Taming of the Shrew*. There was "no tumult, yet no quietness; no mischief begotten and yet no mischief born" (quoted in Low 27); Thomas Dekker suggested that at the end of at least one play there was contentment and interest in the issues, signs that expectation was met.

What about timing? Did the playgoers have different expectations about *Henry V* before and after the abortive rebellion of the Earl of Essex? This is an interesting case. As Stephen Greenblatt points out in his recent *Tyrant: Shakespeare on Politics*, in *Henry V*, the poet makes his only comment on the politics of his time when the Chorus anticipates that the Earl of Essex's pacification of Ireland would equal Henry V's triumphant victory at Agincourt (Greenblatt "Tyrant" 15, *Henry V* 5.0.29-34). Before 1601, the audience received this, and saw this, as an immediate appeal for patriotism; after 1601, they had not personally seen, but they knew, and were conscious of Essex's failure in Ireland, his disobedience to the Queen, his disgrace, botched rebellion and execution. In *Richard II*, Bolingbroke is like Essex, reacting to personal injustice; Bolingbroke returns to claim reparation after Richard II exiles him and sequesters his estates; he is technically a traitor for returning from exile without royal permission. Essex turns treasonous after Elizabeth admonishes him for deserting his Irish post and withdraws his privileges. As Katherine Maus comments in the introduction to the Norton Shakespeare's *Richard II*, the deposition scene was omitted from the playscripts and perhaps also from the performances (973-4). It was inflammatory material, made more noticeable when Essex's supporters commissioned a performance of this 'old' play just before his attempt to arrest the Queen's councillors. The authorities interviewed the players, who were exonerated, but it constituted a severe warning to Shakespeare how far he could test the unwritten rules of what was permitted and what was not. This commissioning of *Richard II* could have been construed as an attempt to rouse the crowd, and Sir Gelly Meyrick, responsible for paying the forty shillings to put on the play and acting in Essex's attempted coup, was hung, drawn and quartered (Greenblatt "Tyrant" 21, 23). If Elizabeth did react in fury to this particular performance by saying "I am Richard II, know ye not that?" then the royal word would have even more affected audience reception of post 1601 performances (NS 974). Just after the Lopez incident, the possible attempt to poison the Queen by her doctor, there was gossip that Essex was aiming at the crown himself (Hammer 139). Essex was an English hero in 1597, marching at the head of the Queen's army of sixteen thousand, the largest contingent ever sent to Ireland, but he was also the traitor executed in 1601 for what looked like an attempted coup against the court, and therefore the crown (Somerset 529). Presentations of *Richard II* therefore provide an interesting example of a different audience reception to exactly the same play. Prior to 1601 Essex had the kind of popularity that Bolingbroke had enjoyed on the stage; after 1601 "the General of our gracious Empress…from

Ireland coming,/Bringing rebellion broachèd on his sword," was probably dropped from the script, along with the many from the peaceful city quitting it to welcome him. After 1601, the general of our gracious empress would have been Mountjoy, Essex's replacement. Political comment like this in plays had been prohibited by the Bishop's Bann of 1599, but as Annabel Patterson suggests, *Henry V* was so identified in the audience's mind with their queen, that Shakespeare's work was uncontested by the state at a time when the government imprisoned Haywood for his badly timed *Henry IIII*, dedicated too obviously to Essex ("Two versions" 45-46). The state, as well as the audiences, had expectations of the plays.

2.10 *Reception theory-Pavis and Suleiman*

Peter Lake was doubtful if there is any way of knowing how the first audiences received plays, and as Alfred Harbage reminds us, we should beware of discerning unintended meaning (Lake "Politics" 65, Harbage 144). Jauss asks us to situate reception in its historical context, its historicity (the horizon of its time), and by his suggestion of "guided perception," the audience finds "the questions to which the text really answered" (Pavis 74, Suleiman 36). This depends on the preconceptions of the audience, and how they were influenced by both previous plays like those about King John and the first *Henriad*, and how the reception of a play resonated with the current political climate[22]. Susan Suleiman and Patrice Pavis explore this in the early 1980's. They both find Jauss's reception theory wanting in some respects, but also useful. As Suleiman states, there is a lot that we can never know (38). She uses an example of Wolfgang Iser's, when looking at the sky, some see the big dipper, some see the plough; in the same way, there is no one single homogeneous reception of a play (23, 37). But as Iser comments, the audience supplies what is meant from what is not said and he gives the example of the gardener's scene in *Richard II*, when by use of concealment and revelation Shakespeare makes a trivial scene profound (111). Pavis agrees that Jauss's reception theory answers implicit questions, and at the same time connects very much with the hero (73,75). This makes 'reception' very obvious when a character is clearly good or bad and leads us back to the audience appreciation of the Earl of Essex when he was *en route* to Ireland, and after his disgrace and execution, when the audience would have had not only to remember the erstwhile popular Earl, but the subsequent success of

[22] The first *Henriad*: *1,2* and *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III*

general Mountjoy in Ireland where Essex had conspicuously failed to achieve another Agincourt (85).

Susan Suleiman suggests in *The Reader and the Text* that there is a self-reflectiveness in the audience at a play, that this audience-oriented criticism depends on a number of things: the involvement of the audience, what they contribute, the intelligibility of the performance and whatever conventions the audience use to make sense of it (4,5,12). In agreeing that context is relevant, Suleiman concurs with Jauss's contention that man makes his own history himself (Suleiman 5, Jauss "Reception" 46). The first audiences of *Richard II* were looking at their own late sixteenth century times through the late fourteenth century medieval lens of the playwright.

Contemporary theorists gave their reasons for the popular demand of the theatre and its educative (and from some quarters its immoral) value. Reception theory helps focus on the expectations of audiences and the relevance of their prior knowledge. It still leaves a wide gap for informed speculation. There is little or no data on how far audience expectation was met for either whole crowds or individual participants, only the obvious popularity and commercial success of the Elizabethan theatres. Even today it is not easy to judge this aspect of theatre-going or quantify it. Susan Bennett alludes to this problem by quoting an older work, *Theatre as a Weapon*. There would have to be an analysis of reactions like:

> a silence; b noise; c loud noise; d collective reading; e singing; f coughing; g knocks or bangs; h scuffling; I exclamation; j weeping; k laughter; l sighs; m action and animation; n applause; o whistling; p catcalls, hisses; q people leaving; r people getting out of their seats; s throwing of objects; t people getting onto the stage (Stourac 20).

We know that many of these reactions occurred, but we are short of witnesses, and according to West "it is not so much that other accounts seem to miss the mark of the experiences of playing as that they do not seem to aim at them" (West 3).

The theorists of the day helped to bring the past into the present for audience experience. They made arguments for the appreciation of valiant acts, the power of poetry to bring the past alive and the moral advantages both for and against going to history plays. Modern theorists, like Jauss, contribute a vocabulary for discussing today all this and other circumstantial evidence that constitute the experience of playgoers at Shakespeare's second tetralogy. The next chapter will

reduce the speculative aspect of the process by examining what we can investigate: who were the audience at these history plays of the 1590's and to what extent the degree of literacy affected their perception. It explores how far chorography and the increased characterisation of the author improved the playgoers' capacity to imagine. The chapter also looks at the effect on playgoers of seeing the prequels, the two plays acted about King John, prior to Shakespeare's *Richard II*.

Chapter three: The audience's preparation, or what did playgoers bring to the theatres

Tragedy, that openeth the greatest wounds, and showeth forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue; that maketh kings fear to be tyrants, and tyrants manifest their tyrannical humors…[and] *teacheth the uncertainty of this world.* An Apology for Poetry, Philip Sidney (98).

This chapter examines the preparation of the 1590's audience from four points of view. Intrinsic to the embodied experience of those playgoers to the second Henriad are the sociological components of the spectators to determine how they received the history plays, whether their level of literacy had an effect on this experience and if so to what extent, the effect of increased characterisation and new theatrical techniques on audience reception, how far their connection with places they knew from both the spoken words and their knowledge of England affected their credibility and immersion in the spectacle and finally how far the previous two plays about King John enhanced or challenged their expectations at *Richard II*, the two parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V*. Shakespeare's *Richard II* immediately follows his *King John*, so the latter play was much in the minds of the crowds that had heard it.

3.1 *Who were the audience the playwrights are preparing and what were the challenges for the actors?*

Those crowds were larger and more congested than today's, almost 3,000 compared with the new Globe's maximum capacity of about 1,400 much more passive individuals. The early modern audience was more socially heterogeneous because anyone with one penny could afford access. Eating, drinking and smoking were permitted. They could talk, they could throw objects at players (and they did), there was the stage noise of trumpets and guns firing and additionally on the south bank of the Thames, as Frank Kermode says, there was the sound of watermen, the nearby bear-gardens and the rival theatre, The Rose (15). Playgoers were all within fifty feet of the actors, but they likely 'heard' a play rather than saw it[23]. Almost one third of them were groundlings, standing up, eyes at the level of the scaffold and able to move around; even those with seats in the galleries could and did circulate (Stern "Galleries" 211). West therefore describes two sections of audience, those "understanders" and the rest: beholders, hearers, the multitude, the assembly or the common people, positioned differently and with different

[23] "Gently to hear, kindly to judge, our play." *Henry V* Prologue 34, Smith 206

expectations (81). If the audiences were rowdier than today, then it was up to the actors to engage them, as Adrian Noble says is still required in the new Globe (2). The Globe, Curtain and the Theatre held performances in the afternoon daylight and in the summer season, so theatre-goers could all see one another and therefore react to the plays collectively. The government banned political topics, actors spoke slightly faster and in a regional accent and boys played the parts of the young women characters. It was also extremely loud; the acoustics of the amphitheatres and the fact that playgoers interrupted with applause whenever they felt like it, meant that audience noise could reach the level of today's rock concert (Craik 124). Early modern playgoing was a rumbustious experience.

The New Globe theatre of 1997 is an immense help to imagining the original audiences in the London amphitheatres of the late 1590's. Regardless of the reduced capacity compared to the original, it gives a sense of the space and intimacy on which it had been modelled. In a recent work on both the Globe and the Blackfriars, Sarah Dustagheer cautions against aligning the seventeenth century with the twentieth, but agrees that the new theatre provides "informed speculation" about how it had been for the audiences in the amphitheatres of the late 1590's (11, 169). Peter Lake observes, "there is no knowing how these plays were received by their first audiences," but if we link the historical allusions in the history plays to the historical experience and collective memory of those first audiences and observe the reaction of a half-size crowd at a modern replica Globe, we can better understand them" ("Politics" 65). What was obviously different for the Shakespearean playgoers? At the full capacity more than 3,000, there were far more of them.[24] The current Royal Shakespeare theatre at Stratford on Avon in England seats only 1,040 and the Stratford Ontario Festival theatre in Canada 1,800. That they could pack more into the theatre is reasonable, given that the average Elizabethan was smaller, only five foot five inches, and therefore of lesser girth (Day 99, Orrell 129). The cost in the 1590's was extremely cheap. At one penny for standing in the yard, the equivalent today would be about £0.60,

[24] The Theatre reassembled as The Globe in 1598-9 was the same size as the Hope and the Swan and The Swan held 3,000 according to De Witt in 1596. Orrell calculates for the Globe: in the yard 600, first gallery 1,000, second gallery 1,000, top gallery 750, total 3,350. Orrell 104, 108, 137. On some occasions the yard packed in up to 1000. Gurr "Playgoing" 21.

whereas the price for standing today at the new Globe theatre is £5.[25] The theatre was not only affordable but extremely popular. Andrew Gurr contends that over the seventy years or so of London commercial theatre, there were as many as a million visits to playhouses a year and this was from a population of only about 140,000 (Gurr "Stage" 260).

Who was this audience? There has been considerable discussion about how far that popular crowd comprised the mosaic of contemporary early modern society. Ann Jennalie Cook's *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London 1576-1642* is well furnished with tables and statistics to bolster her contention that most of the *plebs* could not afford playgoing, even at one penny a visit. If she is correct, then it was indeed the privileged playgoer, the scholars, landowners, nobility and royalty that supplied the majority of the Globe audience (8,9,271). She bases her argument mainly on two premises, that during this period, while the population doubled, the size of the privileged class trebled, and that the plebian playgoers would just have easily spent their small discretionary income on alternatives, brothels, taverns, gaming houses, bearbaiting, cockpits and bowling alleys (98). Cook's economics work somewhat against her argument. If an unskilled workman could earn four to six pence a day in the early 1600's and Elizabeth I's soldiers earned eight pence a day, then the price of entry for the Globe at a penny for the groundlings was well within their ability (196, 232). She is vague about how many of the gentry came down to London from the provinces in those years, and why the Globe attracted a genteel following (86,136). She contends that the lesser citizens came to the theatre mainly on Sundays and holidays only, but her evidence is scant (273). In 1996 Michael Bristol argues the contrary in *Big Time Shakespeare*. For him, Shakespeare's audience is "a shifting and anonymous public," representing all parts of society (50). The Bard was meeting a demand for a new leisure market, where "show business beat the printed book" (Bristol xi, 40, 49). Relatively speaking, however, today's theatre audiences are populated by the educated middle and upper classes, while the blue-collar workers who would have been groundlings or understanders in the

[25] so, the cheapest gallery seats at two pennies then would be equivalent to £2 today and the most expensive Lord's at £5. Tickets for the New Globe's gallery seats today sell for between £25-£62.

1590's and early 1600's are today more attracted to musicals and film. The original Globe, The Theatre and The Curtain audiences were therefore likely more inclusive of society as a whole. One of the few contemporary commentators was Thomas Platter, and he describes its popular appeal:

> Thus daily at two in the afternoon, London has two, sometimes three plays running in different places, competing with each other, and those which play best obtain the most spectators…For whoever cares to stand below only pays one English penny, while if he desires to sit in the most comfortable seats which are cushioned, where he not only sees everything well, but can also be seen, then he only pays yet another English penny at another door. And during the performance food and drink are carried around the audience, so that for what one cares to pay one may also have refreshment…
>
> How much time then may merrily spend daily at the play everyone knows who has ever seen them play or act (Williams 167).

Platter's comments are critical. Few contemporary eye-witnesses recorded their observations. From Platter we know that theatre-going was daily or very frequent and that it was inexpensive. It was not only pleasurable entertainment, but like Dekker's gulls and Heywood's friend Thomas Perkins, it was an opportunity to show themselves off in public[26]. The more affluent were not only there to see and hear the play. Platter suggests it was also for some, socially desirable. Thomas Dekker, himself a playwright, suggests that the theatre crowd was more cosmopolitan than Cook claims, including "farmers, stinkards, car-men, tinkers, tailors, cordwainers, sailors, old men, young men, women, boys, girls, apprentices, craftsmen, labourers, servants and soldiers" (Cook 216,218, 223-4). The theatre crowds of the 1590's were probably socially mixed.

Behaviour in theatres was not the same in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries as in the restored Globe of today. Stern's report of the groundlings throwing pippins

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[26] "Still when I come to playes, I loue to sit, /That all may see me in a public place:/Euen in the stages front, and not to git/Into a nooke, and hood-winke there my face." Heywood Introduction:7

and apples at clowns like Tarleton suggest that there could be a much more robust exchange between the audience and the actors in the old Globe, compared with the new ("Documents" 246)[27]. Tarleton answered criticisms from the audience and from his acting partner; the early modern crowd was both challenger and challenged (Weimann "Tradition" 213). The audience then could even interrupt the play and sometimes even insert one of their own into the play as they did in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Knight of the Burning Pestle***.** Playgoers become spectators of spectators as the citizen and his wife take control of the drama, and influence its course according to their tastes and whims. A play within a play gave the audience a more serious involvement in the process and encouraged them to actively participate. In *The Knight* the wife and grocer ask their apprentice Rafe to recite a "huffing" or elevated speech of Hotspur's to prove he can act and later hear him render a satirical version of one of Henry V's speeches. There is this boisterousness in an earlier play within a play, *I Henry IV*, during the 'act' between Falstaff and prince Hal, performed for the audience at the Boar's Head. Falstaff examines the prince upon the particulars of his life (2.5.343). The hostess acts the crowd, and we hear exclamations, compliments, a couple of oaths and running commentary (2.5.356-361). As Weimann comments, the response of the audience becomes part of the play ("Performance" 82). Theatre-goers were far from passive listeners, according to Bruce Smith in *The Acoustic World of early Modern England* (266). There was probably more horsing around between players and spectators then than now, and more than just the tossing of York's boots from groundling to groundling in act five in a recent new Globe version of *Richard II*. Lucius Cary complained of being unable to hear at all "in the clamorous auditorium…when myne eares could not catch half the words" (Gurr "Playgoing" 271 note 13). There were moments when it went too far. According to Thomas Parrot sometimes those in the yard stormed the stage or rioted; in 1617 rioting apprentices almost destroyed the Phoenix Theatre (49).

Personal hygiene being different in Elizabethan times, it was not unusual that Dekker should notice the "Stinkards, who were so glewed together in crowdes with the steames of strong breath, that when they come foorth, their faces lookt as if they were parboylde**,"** (Dekker 2:53). In Keith Thomas's *In Pursuit of Civility*, "the lower orders were dirtier than their masters, and

[27] although 20th century audiences also talk back to the actors at the reconstructed Shakespeare's Globe. Kiernan 13-17

they were alleged to be habitually flatulent. Notoriously they stank" (75). The carriers in *1Henry IV* give an example of this when they urinate in the inn's chimney hearth (2.1.17-19). Mark Smith agrees in *Sensory History* that the remote past was full of squalor and stench, and modernity by *nostalgie de la merde* (17). Even some contemporaries found it too much; Andrew Gurr quotes John Marston who goes to St.Pauls to avoid the stinkards, "I'faith I like the Audience that frequenteth there with much applause: A man shall not be choakte with the stench of Garlicke, not be pasted to the barmy Jacket of a Beer-brewer…" (Gurr " Stage" 215). Smoking exacerbated smells at the Globe. It was the new fashionable vice. Londoners regarded tobacco as a pleasure, as Thomas Platter reported in his Travels of 1599, and "light up on all occasions, at the play, in the taverns or elsewhere…and it makes them riotous and merry, and rather drowsy just as if they were drunk" (Williams 170-1). Smoking was ubiquitous; there were around 7,000 tobacco shops in London by 1614 from the evidence of Douglas Bush. (51).

Who came to the play? We know from Dekker that there were women among the playgoers. How many women? Andrew Gurr could only document six prior to 1600 and six immediately after. Six out of almost three thousand is insignificant. We can adjust this to "some women" in the audience without quantifying them. In an undeniably patriarchal society women gained visibility without perhaps acquiring increased agency. Jean Howard argues that subjecting themselves to men's gaze in public spaces like the amphitheatres, women citizens may have been establishing a form of escape from patriarchal control and that, as paying customers, they were entitled to have their interests and tastes taken into consideration ("Women" 85). Female spectators "who desire to bee seene" were ignoring the tracts of Stephen Gosson that counseled women to 'stay within' in sober conversation or read a good book (Gosson "Playes"). As Gosson sermonised, "Looking eyes haue lyking hartes, liking hartes may burne in lust." Gosson's tract and the comments of Stubbes, Munday and Nashe are evidence there were enough women attending the theatre to warrant this kind of concern and censure. From Andrew Gurr's account of Nym the theatre was an opportunity to meet new members of the opposite sex, in Caroline days two couples were there with their wives, Marion Frith sat on the stage smoking her pipe, the theater gave prostitutes an opportunity to entice clients and there is a story that maybe a

merchant's wife had lost her purse there.[28] David Cressy estimates the literacy of women at about ten percent in 1600, but you did not need to be able to sign your name or read to enjoy and understand the plays (Cressy "Opportunity" 314). Only the fact that they started at two o'clock in the afternoon may have prevented some of the working women of London being able to attend. Women were important as audience, as the heroes of plays, and as patrons and as characters on stage, even if boys played the women's parts. In 1594 Katherine scolds her fellow-wives and women in general from the scaffold, "place your hand below your husband's foot," and later in 1603 Rosalind addresses the women in the audience in her epilogue, "I charge you O women…to like as much of this play as please you" (*The Taming of the Shrew* 5.2.181, *As You Like It* Epilogue 10-11). In *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* in 1609, the grocer's wife manages to interfere with the action on stage from her seat in the audience. The first part of *The Fair Maid of the West* around 1600 featured Bess as its hero, as did *The Roaring Girl*, Moll Cutpurse, of 1611. Bess captains a ship; Moll defeats a man in a swordfight. Both the wives of James I and Charles I attended the theatre and both played in court masques. Women had to be a small minority at the theatrical amphitheatres from 1596-1600, but they were there as we also know from the comments of Platter, Dekker, Gosson, Nashe, Stubbes, Munday and Shakespeare himself. In the Epilogue of *2Henry IV* he addresses "all the gentlewomen here" (Epilogue 21). This included the gatherers, who were all women (Gurr "Playgoing" 74).

Some who paid their penny or two to the gatherers at the door come to the theatre but had not come for the play. Stephen Gosson wrote that theatre-going youths in 1582 pressed as near as they could to the fairest young women ("Playes" 59). Thomas Nashe agreed that there could be more than one motive for attending the theatre: "my vagrant reveller haunts plays, and sharpens his wits with frequenting of poets. He emboldens his blushing face by courting fair women on the sudden and looks into all estates by conversing with them in public places" (Nashe 63). Gosson warned of temptation:

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[28] In the 1620's from *T.M.'s The Life of a satirical puppy called Nim* in *"*Shakespeare Company*"* Gurr 39, Nym is rebuffed by a woman he tries to pick up as she left a play

Captain Essex and his lady have an altercation with a Lord and his Countess at the Blackfriars. Gurr "Company" 263

A tradesman's wife loses her purse at the theatre. Peacham 249

> "Thought is free, you can forbidd no man, that vieweth you, to noate you, and that noateth you. To judge you, for entring into places of suspicion, wilde Coltes, when they see their kinde begin to bray; & lusty bloods at the showe of faire women, giue a wanton sigh or wicked wishe" ("Abuses" 41).

Both Philip Stubbes and Anthony Munday agreed. Stubbes criticized plays and interludes as a convenient location for similar inappropriate behaviour and Munday echoed it, "yong ruffians [and] harlots, uterlie past all shame: who presse to the fore-frunt of the scaffolds, to the end to showe their impudencie, and to be an object to al mens eies" (Salvian 89). The long title of Munday's polemical blast shows his serious objection to women in the theatre: "A second and third blast of retrait from plaies and theatres: the one whereof was sounded by a reuerend byshop dead long since; the other by a worshipful and zealous gentleman now aliue: one showing the filthines of plaies in times past: the other the abhomination of theatres in the time present: both expresly prouing that the common-weale is nigh vnto the curse of God, wherein either plaiers be made of, or theatres maintained. Set forth by Anglo-phile Eutheo." Anti-theatrical tracts probably deterred the very religious Protestants, but the sheer numbers flocking to the large theatres daily argues for the fact that they had little influence on the majority until by fiat, the government closed all the theatres well over a generation later in 1642. Meanwhile they were not only *rendez-vous* for assignation or misbehaviour, they also attracted prostitutes, of whom Platter comments that "although close watch is kept on them, great swarms of these women haunt the town in the taverns and playhouses" (Williams 134). Thomas Dekker agrees that the theatre was convenient for them in his *Seven Deadly Sinnes of London*:

> The first man that she [the harlot] meets with her acquaintance, shall (without much pulling) get her into a tavern: out of him she *kisses* a breakfast and then leaves him: the next she meets, does upon as easy pullies, draw her to a tavern again; out of him she cogs a dinner, and then leaves him; the third man, *squires* her to a play, which being ended, and the wine offered and taken…him she leaves too: and being set upon by a fourth, him she answers at his own weapon (Dekker 3:269).

Theatregoers had also to beware of pickpockets. Dekker cautioned "know at a new play, he is alwaies about the playhouse door, watches out which side you draw your purse, and then gessing

whether the lyning be worth the ventring, for that serues his turn**"** (Dekker 2:327)[29]. Regardless, for one or two pennies, it was cheap entertainment and the numbers attending demonstrated its popularity. They may have criticized some of the audience, but both Dekker and Munday were playwrights who depended on the attendance of patron-customers.

The convention of modern audiences is that they remain quiet, except for reactions to what is before them. There is no smoking, drinking, eating or exchanging flying fruit with actors like Tarleton. There is no news item about pickpockets succeeding in the theatres. Except for the yard of the new Globe, proscenium theatre-goers are all anchored to a seat. That makes it difficult to imagine another world where there were no such rules, where part of the crowd is mobile and also open to the English weather. The early modern audience heard the history plays in original pronunciation, and not in the received pronunciation of today. In June 2004 David Crystal, professor of linguistics at the University of Wales, worked with the new Globe to produce *Romeo and Juliet* in the characteristic accent of the late 1590's. As he discusses in his book about the project, it was well received by and comprehensible to the audiences, the theatre did not suffer at the box-office, and there were some interesting results. "Authentic," is difficult to justify, Crystal says, since we cannot know about performances in Shakespeare's time, but the delivery is slightly faster, and the almost west country sounding accent, less "posh," is more "down to earth…less prissy…more resonant…less precious…more accessible…rural rather than courtly" (Crystal 7, 142-3, 166-8). It is closer to the metre, and offers fresh phonetic echoes and rhymes, as Crystal and his actor son demonstrate (167).[30] This suggests that Shakespeare connected to his polyglot audience in their own accent, and there was no talking down to the groundlings. There have been other successful attempts to reproduce the atmosphere of the early modern theatre. In 2013 Tim Carroll experimented with his authentic version of *Romeo and Juliet*, changing the lighting to reflect the afternoon at the Globe and eliminating modern blocking altogether (Nestruck)[31]. No one after 1660 has tried using boys for the female roles to

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[29] Will Kemp reported in 1600 that if a pickpocket was caught pilfering, he was tied to a post on the stage to "wonder at" during the remainder of the performance (B)

[30] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPlpphT7n9s

[31] https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/theatre-and-performance/stratford-goes-back-in-time-with-original-practices-shakespeare/article12133556/

give a more authentic reproduction of the early modern play that in England employed only males, until 2004. Then the King Edward VI school at Stratford on Avon started replicating the boys' companies' performances of early modern plays from Shakespeare's time.[32]

What effect did the history plays have on the audiences? How did they receive them? Was it as a better appreciation of language as advocated by Sidney, a pleasurable alternative to other pastimes according to Nashe or examples of how best to be a loyal citizen and avoid politics in the opinion of Thomas Heywood?[33] If it was all three, then the last one was critically important for the playwright. Shakespeare had to be careful. His cousin John Somerville had been arrested in 1583 on his way to assassinate the Queen, Jonson, Spencer and Shaw were imprisoned in 1597 for the prohibited *Isle of Dogs* play and Jonson would be imprisoned again in 1605 for his *Eastward Ho!* (Collinson 250, Gurr "Stage" 37,59). The greatest danger Shakespeare had was the questioning of the cast after the performance of *Richard II* in 1601 paid for by the supporters of the Earl of Essex, but from which the players were found to be absolved. So, the playwright's treatment of divine right in *Richard II*, morality in *1Henry IV*, penitence in *2Henry IV* and relationship with God in *Henry V* was deliberately nonprovocative.

Regardless of the politically unprovocative character of Shakespeare's history plays, the City of London authorities were afraid of crowds, particularly the large ones from amphitheatres like the Curtain, The Theatre and the Globe. The constant threat of disease gave the magistrates the excuse to close the theatres and restrain the plays that they thought primarily provoked disorder, particularly moral disorder, and an opportunity to spread contagious sickness, like spotted fever, smallpox and plague (Slack 25). As Paul Slack documents, the plague visited London almost every year of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, arriving from inbound ships, with a mortality of 60-80%, and major epidemics in 1563, 1593 and 1603 (7,145,147). The groundlings were the most affected, since the plague flourished "in insanitary alleys and in swarming rat-infested tenements, among the ill-fed, ill-clothed and ill-housed. It is exceptional to

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[32] http://edwardsboys.org/

[33] "Playes are writ with this ayme, and carryed with this methode, to teach the subjects obedience to their king, to shew the people the vntimely ends of such as haue moued tumults, commotions, and insurrections, to present them with the flourishing estate of such as liue in obedience, exhorting them to allegeance, dehorting them from all trayterous and fellonious stratagems" Heywood 3:28

find a victim of mark and memory in a London plague" (Wilson 172). There was a real danger in the crowds of theatre-goers infecting one another, as Wilson quotes the Court of Aldermen in 1583 instructing Walsingham on the challenge of:

> The assembly of people to plays, bearbaiting, fencers and profane spectacles at the *Theatre* and *Curtain* and other like places to which do resort great multitudes of the basest sort of people and many infected with sores running on them being out of our jurisdiction and some whom we cannot discern by any diligence and which be otherwise perilous for contagion (52-3).[34]

More than the contagion, the authorities feared disorder, so they closed theatres even when plague had eased, to deal with brawls in 1580, grain riots in 1586, famine deaths in 1587 and food shortages in 1596 (Freedman 36-41). The restraint on players also restrained the audiences. In 1604 the Globe was closed for eleven months (Wilson 113). The extraordinary number of theatre visits mentioned by Gurr is remarkable in the face of the authorities attempts at the restriction of this trade and their fear of groundlings that could include servants, discharged mariners, students, demobilized or runaway soldiers, so-called vagabonds and apprentices, the "masterless men that haunted the liberties" (Freedman 23,28).

3.2 *Literacy and non-literacy and its effect on the audience's capacity to experience the history plays.*

How the level of literacy affected the audience.

Is this an issue? Today we take it for granted that a good understanding of Shakespeare plays, with their heightened language, requires an educated reader. However, in the late 1590's in London, playgoers did not have to be literate to understand and enjoy the plays. Marshall McLuhan makes the pertinent comment that the more literate are more detached, that the non-literate are more realist and they want to bring their world under control (87). The corollary to this is that the less literate would have been more attentive in the theatre. The literate in the late 1590's could *afford* to be more detached; they were the upper elements of society, from the

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[34] The plague virus was comparatively very much more devastating in the early modern era for deaths. London lost 10% of its population in 1593 and 20% in 1603 according to *Plague Writing in Early Modern England* Ernest Gilman 35,129. In 2020-1 with the availability of a vaccine, London lost only 0.1-0.2% to Covid-19: www.coronavirus.data.gov.uk/

nobility, professions and wealthier bourgeoisie. Ability to read gave them a different experience from many of the groundlings.

Literate or non-literate, the early modern audiences were ready for entertainment and for a variety of reasons, could comprehend what they witnessed. In the early 16th century, Thomas More made the claim that six in ten could read to some degree.[35] As Malcolm.Parkes says, and it is hard to disagree, there has been a tendency to underestimate the levels of literacy. The development of cursive handwriting, the greater access to paper, libraries and the encouragement to exchange books, all contributed to the larger readership developing in the fifteenth century. There was a growing reading public apart from aristocrats, among the clerics, lawyers, merchants, bailiffs and reeves, propelled by the increased use of the vernacular (555-577). Even in the late fourteenth century it is possible that up to a third of the population could read to some degree (Strohm 247). Much more recently, David Cressy investigated the level of literacy, mostly from the data about who could sign their names, and made deductions from a study of 5,000 in the Norwich area.[36] However, he agrees that the ability to write a signature may not be the most determining yardstick. Adam Fox concurs, with the added proviso that we should not underestimate those who could not read (49, 408, 409). It was a partially literate society. "Theatre", as Dekker comments, "is your poet's Royal Exchange," and you do not need to be literate to enjoy it (Dekker 2:246). Legends like King Arthur, Julius Caesar and Thomas à Becket were well known, stories were read aloud, it was a golden age of proverbs, and information was exchanged by gossip, fairs, markets, inns, alehouses, chapbooks, ballads and rumour.[37] Broadside ballads were bought even by those who could not read, and there were 3-4 million of them printed in the second half of the sixteenth century (Fox 409). Very often they were accompanied by drawings, and that was a persuasive communication medium, as Foxe's

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[35] *The Workes of Sir Thomas More* 850 "people farre more than fowre partes of all the whole divided into tenne coulde never reade englishe yet…"

[36] Data from 1580-1700: clergy and professional classes 100% literate, gentry and aristocracy almost 100%, merchants and superior craftsmen 92%, yeomen 65%, tradesmen and craftsmen 56%, husbandmen and peasants 21%, labourers 15%, common artisans, craftworkers 12% "Educational Opportunity" 314

[37] Of which Shakespeare took note. There are many proverbs in *Henry V* 3.7: "there is flattery in friendship," "a fool's bolt is soon shot" and "that's a valiant flea that dare eat his breakfast on the lip of the lion."

popular illustrated *Acts and Monuments* bears witness. Literacy could be a very fluid term. There may have been more like John Taylor, a self-educated former ferryman who had only an elementary school education but became a national figure. Taylor illustrates that that it was possible to "be on the margins of the educated and élite worlds," writing in a bawdy, comedic vein about travel and politics, and was as careful as Shakespeare to deter the censor (Capp 49, 61). He produced his collected works in 1630 and many people heard them read aloud (72,76). Among his readers were the servants of great men, who were significant among the theatre audiences (72). Taylor's writing shows that there was a potential growing class of self-taught Londoners interested in bettering themselves, acquiring culture and satisfying political curiosity. They were part of the appreciative audiences for Shakespeare's word-play. Thomas Heywood included a letter from Taylor in the introduction to *The Apology for Actors*, where the water poet sides with the moralists, to assert that plays contribute to the spectator's self-improvement:

> A Play's a briefe *Epitome* of time,
>
> Where man may see his virtue or his crime
>
> Layd open, either to their vices shame,
>
> Or to their vertues memorable fame.
>
> A Play's a true transparent Christall mirror,
>
> To shew good minds their mirth, the bad their terror (Heywood Introduction:8).

For the entertainment of the audiences, actors were not only moralists. Part of Richard Tarleton's skill as a comic was his "mistaking words…in the stage practice," as Adam Fox says, aiming at the less-educated and inferior ranks of society (104-5). As he points out, Mistress Quickly does this for Shakespeare in the history plays. Her misuse of words mocks any social climbers from the lower orders: "he's an infinitive thing," "indited to dinner," "your pulsige," "confirmities," and consigning Falstaff to "Arthur's bosom" instead of Abraham's (104). When we include the bawdiness, the description of tavern life, even criminality in both parts of *Henry IV*, Shakespeare catered very well for the less educated, to retain their attention.

Was there a benefit for those who could read? The reading public had more access to the background to the plays, the history and chronicles that supported the accounts and could link the past events more easily with what was happening in their own recent past and present. Ability to read gave them a different experience from the groundlings. The wealthy and connected did read extensively; for example, according to Peter Burke, probably more than 300,000 read Baldassare Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* of 1528 (153).

While the literate upper classes noticed the untrustworthiness of the medieval king and compared this with the relative reliability of their own Queen, they knew about Richard II's military mistakes and unresisting surrender to Bolingbroke. In addition, in a possible source for Holinshed, the literate had access to the first exchange between Richard and Bolingbroke from an eye-witness, Jean Creton, a valet-de-chambre of the French court, which emphasises the king's weakness:

> Richard "Fair cousin of Lancaster, you are right welcome."… "You perceive, as well as myself, that all is lost."
>
> Henry "My Lord, I am come sooner than you sent for me: the reason wherefore I will tell you. The common report of your people is such, that you have, for the space of twenty or two and twenty years, governed them very badly and very rigorously, and in so much more that they are not well contented therewith. But if it please our Lord, I will help you to govern them better than they have been governed in time past."
>
> Richard "Fair cousin of Lancaster, what pleases you also pleases us." (Webb 137, 167[38])

If Jean Creton's report had the effect of distancing the Elizabethan literate upper levels of society from the events of two hundred years ago, Samuel Daniel's *Civil Wars* brought history close to them and near to Shakespeare's version of this history (2:108). Richard II was a close prisoner of Henry Bolingbroke, just as Mary Queen of Scots had been during the reign of Elizabeth and both

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[38] Tout est perdu: vous le veez comme moy. Beau cousin de Lancastre, vous soiez le treſbn venu.
La comune renomee de vre people si est telle, que vous les aviez par legace de xx ou xxij ans tres mauvaisement et tres rigoureusement gouvernez, et tant quilz nen sont pas bn content; mais sil plaist a ñre seigneur je vous aideray a gouverner mieulx quil na este gouverne le temps paſse.
Beau cousin de Lancastre, puis quil vous plaist, il nous plaist bien. 356, 357,373,374

were murdered in an English castle. Richard II had a rival claimant to the throne, and so had Elizabeth I, or she had two rivals if we include the Earl of Essex.

The literate had an advantage, they had access to information denied to most of the groundlings, the majority of the audiences. But we know that the less literate had the experience of previous plays, and not just *Richard III* and the three plays of *Henry VI*. According to Warren Chernaik, the audience already knew the story (12). For the less literate in the yard or the cheaper galleries, the history plays were entertaining and instructive; for the more literate minority, their experience was on a more conscious level because they knew more of the background. There was a difference, but it is hard to verify or quantify.

How did the audiences of the 1590's acquire prior knowledge, apart from hearing previous plays? We cannot assume their ignorance of current affairs and history because they lacked the coffee-house networking of the late seventeenth century. Knowledge came from legend and ballad; *2Henry IV* quotes a stanza from Robin Hood and the Pindar of Wakefield (Oxford *2Henry IV* 5.3.102, note 262). News travelled increasingly fast in the sixteenth century. It took only fifteen days for the news of Luther's ninety-five theses against the sale of indulgences to reach all of Germany in 1517 (B.Anderson 39). In 1603, Sir Robert Carie rode three hundred miles in less than three days, according to John Stowe's *Chronicles*, to advise James VI of Scotland of the death of Queen Elizabeth (465). News of the appearance of the first Spanish Armada was broadcast by spontaneous signal fires, the treachery of Mary Queen of Scots by broadsides and her execution by the ringing of church bells (McElroy 319-39, Mears 170). Francis Drake's circumnavigation of the world completed in 1580 "so inflamed the whole countrie with a desire to adventure unto the seas yn hope of the lyke good successe" (Milton 171).

Natalie Mears provides evidence for the fact that news was widespread. News came orally to the population that included theatre audiences by proclamations, royal orders and ballads and was disseminated by harpers, cantebanqui, minstrels, church services and ballads ("Queenship" 162-3). Churches helped spread the word; the book of Armada prayers expressed the nation's thanks for "preserving our most gracious queen, thine handmaid, so miraculously from so many conspiracies, perils and dangers" (Cooper 314). In the second half of the sixteenth

century, Keith Wrightson notes that there were roughly three thousand ballads with print runs of 1,250 each, amounting to four million sheets (143). What was formerly didactic and about religion was now about news[39], politics, romance, bawdry, stories and jests. News about the queen had theatrical elements. The state was the stage for her coronation pageant, the anniversaries of her accession, the tiltyard jousts, the ceremony of the order of the garter and her royal progresses, in which she made fifty visits to twenty-six counties in a major spectacle of three hundred carts and two thousand horses (Sharpe 423, 430). Elizabeth was aware of the power of theatrical publicity; in an address to parliament, she emphasises this, "Princes you know, stand upon stages, so that their actions are viewed and beheld of all men" (461). She was star quality and a talented actress long before women appeared on the stage in the Restoration.

For the large crowds in the London amphitheatres, were the two parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V* more accessible to them than *Richard II*? And more understandable to the literate than the less-literate? All three kings die in the plays named after them, but *Richard II* is a tragedy and the only one written entirely in verse. This heightens the language, but makes it easier to remember. Weimann's point is that the use of prose, especially for Falstaff in *Henry IV*, gives an opportunity to emphasise character ("Performanc*e"* 182). Together with the use of low-life roles in the last three plays and the large role given to the carpet knight, a quarter of the audiences in the yard that came from the lower orders of society would have much more in common, more to sympathise with, in *Henry IV* and *V*. Bawdiness in the Boar's Head, sparring in the inn, the hand-to-hand battle between Hal and Hotspur, the miraculous victory of the English at Agincourt and the wooing of the French princess were all easy to digest for any audience. In particular the smuttiness and irreverence of Falstaff was in the argot of those standing in front of the scaffold. In contrast, *Richard II* asks the audience to judge much more esoteric questions: the subject's right to rebel, the divine appointment of the monarch, aristocratic property rights and the

[39] In Kevin Sharpe's *Selling the Tudor Monarchy* he relates an incident of 1578 that became a popular ballad "declaring the dangerous shooting of a gun at court" that extolled the Queen's clemency: "An unfortunate gunner, presumably firing a welcoming salvo, accidentally shot at the queen's barge and wounded one of watermen, narrowly missing Elizabeth herself. The gunner was sentenced to death for endangering the life of the monarch. But Elizabeth, who had scurried to attend the wounded, sent a message to pardon the gunner on the scaffold-before the crowd assembled to witness the execution. At the proclamation of the queen's mercy and pardon, the people shouted with joy before the councillor led all in prayer for the queen" (444).

Machiavellian question, whether might is right, whether Bolingbroke was justified in usurping the throne. Yes, the theatre crowds, both well-read and ignorant, did sympathise with Richard II, for his weakness and his superb oratory, but they would probably much rather "our humble author continue the story with Sir John in it" (*2Henry IV* Epilogue 24-5). In the playgoers' sheer enjoyment, any distinction between the literate and less-literate can be lost.

3.3 *Character and staging practices and their effect on the audience*

How the history play actors improved the playgoers' capacity to imagine.

The developed characterisation and Shakespeare's theatrical techniques of soliloquies, asides to the audience, eavesdroppings, overhearings, disguisings, the authorial voice of prologue, epilogue and chorus, all contributed to the increased engagement and consciousness of the playgoers (Weimann "Performance" 145,160). In Thomas Heywood's terms, they experience the "personator" or actor acting the "personated" or character as if, as in Sidney's description, Sophocles's Ajax really was on the stage before them (Sidney 91). Theatrical illusion enhanced the playgoers' experience. In Shakespeare's *Henriad* audiences experienced their forebearers' valiant acts rescued from oblivion, and brought to plead their ancient honours on the open scaffold, to paraphrase Nashe (Nashe 64). The realisation of flesh and blood characters like Falstaff and prince Hal enabled both less-literate and literate to enter into the history world with little mental effort.

Like Hamlet's advice to actors, Shakespeare's contemporary Heywood argued for 'authentic' performances, less obviously mannered than what had gone before:

> Being wrapt in contemplation, offers to him in his hart all prosperous performance, as if the Personater were the man Personated, so bewitching a thing as liuely and well spirited action, that it hath the power to mold the harts of the spectators and fashion them to the shape of any noble and notable attempt (Heywood 1:12)

Shakespeare, in his history plays, developed character while employing characterisation and acting styles to, as Heywood says, "bewitch" the playgoers. He had the advantage that previous playwrights helped prepare the audiences of the late 1590's.

Sidney on the other hand, in his *Apology*, had been very much against the mixing of genres, of clowns and kings, and condemned 'scurrility' in knavish characters (Weimann "Performance" 30). Both Sidney and Puttenham espoused the older and more didactic view of presenting history, Sidney denigrating historical records and both of them insisting on the importance of appropriate language. Sidney speaks of a magic relationship between poet and listener in his *Apology*. The audience desires to be instructed by the divine breath of the poet (Sidney 90,94), rather similar in terms to the expectation proposed by Hans Jauss. Sidney underlines why the English that Shakespeare will use is so effectively sonorous: the grammar is easy, it makes felicitous word combinations, its syllabic ability "striketh a certain music to the ear," and it has sweetness and majesty (115). This language works "not only to make a Cyrus, which had been but a particular excellency as nature might have done, but to bestow a Cyrus on the world to make many Cyruses, if they will learn aright why and how that maker made him" (85). In this imaginative way, through his use of language, Shakespeare characterised the weak, vindictive failure of a king as the hero of *Richard II*. George Puttenham's *Art of English Poesy* of 1589, like Sidney's *Apologie*, stressed the importance of the pleasure or delight provided by the right language (3:19.164, 23.222). Avoid "mingle-mangle" and retain clarity and take care over pronunciation, word order, metre, word position, laboriousness and pomposity (22.211)[40]. For speaking Puttenham advised the orator to use decency, discretion, speak from experience and avoid arrogance and pride (23.218-222). However, Sidney and Puttenham both suggested that speakers or actors had choices, and this is echoed by Weimann. The latter proposes that the actors of Shakespeare's time had 'discretion' in acting their characters, a form of agency, and from the information about Tarleton and his audience exchanging missiles during a play, there was also some ad-libbing (Weimann "Tradition" 213). There were opportunities to exploit this in the role-playing of Falstaff and Hal in *1Henry IV* and create the make-believe that enable the players and spectators to share the experience (214).

Heywood's *Apology for Actors*, much more about the acting profession than that of poets, making an important argument for new thinking, suggests that audiences could use the theatrical experience to come to terms with their past:

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[40] mingle-mangle, like gallimaufry and hodge-podge, an Elizabethan synonym for stew, West 196

> Playes haue made the ignorant more apprehensive taught the vnlearned the knowledge of many famous histories, instructed such as caanot reade in the discouery of all or English Chronicles (Heywood 3:27)

This is the heart of Nashe's applause for the dramatic revival of history on the Elizabethan stage, enjoying (in his example) "brave Talbot, the terror of the French… fresh bleeding," after two hundred years, reappearing on the stage in *1 Henry VI* (Nashe 65). Plays not only revive legends of the past for playgoers, they are instructive and provide the illiterate with credible oral history.

Shakespeare appeals to these 'unlearned' groundlings directly, those standing under the raised stage, to draw on their imaginations (or expectations in Jauss's terms), in the prologue of *All is True* (NS Prologue 22, note 4):

> …gentle hearers…
> Therefore, for goodness' sake, and as you are known
> The first and happiest hearers of the town,
> Be sad as we would make ye. Think ye see
> The very persons of our noble story
> As they were living; think you see them great,
> And followed with the general throng and sweat
> Of thousand friends; then, in a moment, see
> How soon this mightiness meets misery.
> And if you can be merry then, I'll say
> A man may weep upon his wedding day.

But Sidney had not seen much more than *Gorboduc*, where the actors do not bring the characters alive in the same way Shakespeare does. Compare the bland counsel of Ariostus in *Gorboduc* with Marlowe's *Edward II* and Shakespeare's *Richard II*. Improved character and authenticity replace the less dramatic language:

> …then parliament should have been holden,

And certain heirs appointed by the crown,

To stay the title of established right

And in the people plant obedience (Thomas Norton 264-7).

Christopher Marlowe dramatizes much more effectively in *Edward II*, at the moment that Edward faces death in prison.

Within a dungeon England's king is kept,

Where I am sterv'd for want of sustenance,

My daily diet is heart breaking sobs,

That almost rents the closet of my heart.

Thus lives old *Edward* not reliev'd by any,

And so must die, though pitied by many (Marlowe "Edward II" 2284-2289).

When Shakespeare's Richard II confronts the end of his reign in Westminster Hall, there is theatrical magic in his lines. What changed is that Shakespeare's monarch shows more vulnerability, and the audiences were able to identify with that. *Richard II* illustrates one of Weimann's contentions, that the actor can now work on the audience's imagination, and the actor's practice, subservient to the text, draws more response from the spectators:

Now mark me how I will undo myself.

I give this heavy weight from off my head,

And this unwieldy scepter from my hand,

The pride of kingly sway from out my heart.

With mine own tears I wash away my balm,

With mine own hands I give away my crown,

With mine own tongue deny my sacred state,

With mine own breath release all duteous oaths (*Richard II* 4.1.193-200).

The repetitions persuade the audience to experience the genuine tragedy of the monarch's catastrophic downfall. The actor's voice, according to Weimann, complements and even supersedes the author's pen, as Richard contemplates his fate (Weimann "Performance" 14).

Character could be emphasised by actor legends like Richard Tarleton, the well-known stage clown of the 1580's (Thomson 1). Weimann finds a resonance of Tarleton in Sir John Falstaff, particularly as they both shared a tavern style (2). Tarleton had national recognition and the perhaps apocryphal story of the Queen insisting that there be another play with Sir John in it suggests Falstaff might have achieved the same acceptance (3). Tarleton answered criticisms from both the audience and from his acting partner (Weimann "Tradition" 213); the clown even exchanged missiles with his audience during a play and there was also some ad-libbing (191)[41]. Could Falstaff have reached the level of popularity of Tarleton, when the clown only had to put his head through the curtain to elicit applause?[42] It is highly likely. Weimann quotes Andrew Gurr in emphasising that by 1600 the successful player had to have character in his acting to be successful (145). And not just character, but vulnerability. The evolution of actors becoming well known, like Tarleton and his successors as clown characters William Kemp and Robert Arnim coincided with Shakespeare's development of self-questioning roles. Longer soliloquies and more introspection led to a greater connection with the audiences. In *Tamburlaine* and *The Jew of Malta*, Marlowe included no soliloquies; in *Edward II* there are six speeches that could be considered introspective, but none more than twenty-five lines long. In Shakespeare's *Richard II*, the king shows his vulnerability in many speeches before Bolingbroke imprisons him in Pomfret Castle, but once there, his soliloquy is sixty-six lines long, giving the playgoers sufficient opportunity to sympathise with this misguided monarch, who "wasted time, and now doth time waste me" (*Richard II* 5.5.49).

In the *Henry IV* plays, Falstaff is the most vulnerable character, and also much more conspicuous than any other of Shakespeare's comedic characters. The knight appears in three plays if we include the mention of his corpse in *Henry V*. Sir John extols the virtues of drinking

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[41] about Tarleton and clowns, Weimann quotes Hamlet's new rules, "And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them (Hamlet 3.2 37 ff.)

[42] "the people began exceedingly to laugh when Tarleton first peeped out his head" *Pierce Penniless and his Supplication to the Devil* Nashe 47-8

sack, part of his education of the young prince, in thirty-seven lines; and. Falstaff internalises that he will use the scenes with Justice Swallow to entertain Prince Harry, thinking that this will solidify his hold on the prince and ensure his elevation when the prince becomes king (*2Henry IV* 4.2.78-111, 5.1.53-73, *Henry V* 2.1.79). Endearing himself to the audience with his bawdy humour, his drinking and wenching, his lack of respect for authority, and his expectation that he will be a preferred counsellor to the new king Henry V, Falstaff proves his helplessness when the newly crowned monarch casts him off and sends him and his companions to the Fleet prison. If he did die of the heartbreak suggested by the hostess in *Henry V*, then the spectators shared this pain.

In *Henry V* it is the king who is the vulnerable character. Vastly outnumbered by his French enemies, and on the eve of battle, the audience can emphasise with his self-doubt: the flux affects his soldiers, his force is less numerous and his "army but a weak and sickly guard." (*Henry V* 3.6.141). Not only physically vulnerable, Henry feels the overbearing responsibilities of kingship and admits this to the audience in a soliloquy of fifty-four lines (*Henry V* 4.1.212-266). How did this resonate with playgoers who had seen the dispersal of the monstrous Spanish Armada invasion fleet only twelve years previously? The country itself had been vulnerable.

If the arrival of principal or well-known actors, their character and the increased sympathy they could evoke contributed to the audience experience, so did other aspects of the theatre that Shakespeare exploited: stage directions, sound effects, asides, disguises, eavesdroppings, overhearings, and the authorial voice of prologue, epilogue and chorus.

Stage directions about noise and the reports of interaction between actors and audience are more reliable evidence that the groundlings were not uninformed when they came to the history plays. Actor Shakespeare knew how to provide his audiences with prior knowledge: sennets, flourishes (a fanfare of trumpets, *Henry V* has eight of these), drums and colours and excursions to signal the moving of soldiers (VanSickle 90). At the beginning of act two of *Richard II*, actors carry in John of Gaunt in a chair. Stage directions in the first folio are "Enter Gaunt, sicke with Yorke," and his simple words to the audience "that I may breathe my last" reinforce this to the spectators (VanSickle 183, *Richard II* 2.1.1). The most famous of stage directions, "exit pursued by a beare," from The Winter's tale is in the original playscript, and so is the trick Prince Hal plays on Falstaff at Gad's Hill in *1Henry IV*, "As they are sharing, the

Prince and Poins set upon them. They all run away, leaving the booty behind them" (184). In *Henry V*, after the third act chorus, the audience is left in no doubt about the renewed attack on Harfleur, both visually and audibly, as guns fire, "Alarum: Chambers goe off… Scaling ladders at Harshew" (186).

Sound was already a serious subject for courtiers in 1507. In *The Book of the Courtier*, the effective diplomat was advised to have:

> a good voice, not too thin and soft like a woman's, nor yet so stern and rough as to smack of the rustic's,-but sonorous, clear, sweet and well sounding, with distinct enunciation, and with proper bearing and gestures; which I think consist in certain movements of the whole body, not affected or violent, but tempered by a calm face and with a play of the eyes that shall give an effect of grace, accord with the words, and as far as possible express also, together with the gestures, the speaker's intent and feelings (Castiglione 45).

This is close to Shakespeare's advice to the players in act three of *Hamlet* of 1603:

> Speak…trippingly…do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently…you must acquire and beget…smoothness…be not too tame, neither; but let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance: that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature (3.2. 1-18).

In a re-creation of *Henry V* at the old Globe in the 2011 film *Anonymous*, well-known Shakespearian actor Mark Rylance declaims the prologue. We see the actor downstage, in front of the groundlings, and hear him stamp his foot on the 'scaffold,' perform the appropriate gestures to draw the audience's laughter "when you talk of horses," and with his voice, emphasise that it is "*your* thoughts," the audience's thoughts that must decorate England's kings[43]. Because there was almost no scenery, gesture and sound were supremely important to both personator and audience.

Shakespeare even mocks his own ability at characterisation in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The playwright illustrates though the mechanicals how a play is prepared by the actors: a

[43] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ue2bUpz_uRw&t=8s accessed 31 July 2019

meeting to discuss the play, allocation of parts, how a man may play a woman, permission to ad-lib or extemporize (supporting the idea of Weimann about the increased agency of the actors at that time) and learn their parts (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* 1.2). Later, the company agree to write a prologue in order to inform the audience what is to come, taking care that the characterisation is not too authentic or frightening, and they check that the performance lighting will be suitable (imaginative moonlight in the Globe's daylight) before they start rehearsals (3.1).

Iago and Hamlet are two of Shakespeare's characters who employ effective asides to the audience. The playwright uses the same technique in his history plays to draw in the audience, to make them complicit in the action. Special knowledge engages the theatre crowd. In this respect, Thomas Dekker is not always correct when he states that when the audience applauds, they do not always know why.[44] Spectators know how critical Desdemona's handkerchief is to her downfall and how it can cause a jealous man to become a murderer. In the same way the quasi-authorial voice of the prologues, epilogues and choruses make explicit for the audience what is in the playwright's mind. So, there are both more evident and more hidden messages for the spectators in what seems privy on the early modern stage. As Emma Smith comments, Shakespeare makes the audience feel smart and implicated (299).

The special knowledge that comes from asides, minor characters like the gardeners in *Richard II*, or soliloquies, is amplified and elucidated through the 'authorial' parts of the text. As Tiffany Stern points out, early modern plays usually had prologues and epilogues to clarify the story line for new plays, new actors or performances at court ("Documents" 82). What comes down to us today is very often missing these signposts. Missing also are many songs, like those sung in Wales for the conspirators in *1Henry IV* (122). In *All is True* or *Henry VIII*, Shakespeare asks the crowd in the prologue to take the play seriously, and in the epilogue worries that the trumpets may have woken some of the dozing spectators. In *As You Like It*, he gives the epilogue to a woman. In *2Henry IV* he bookends his play with Rumour and an epilogue that makes false promises and includes a customary prayer for the Queen. Epilogues could also be considered as customary. *Henry V* therefore demonstrates what may have been normal, a prologue and

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[44] The audience "on tiptoe, to Reach-up/ And (from Rare silence) clap their brawny hands,/ T'Applaud, what their charmd soule scarce understands" and "…yet no man understanding anything…" quoted by Low 26-27

epilogue to not only introduce the play but lead to the next chapter, the disastrous civil wars of the Roses that start under the regency of Henry VI. In addition, in *Henry V*, the playwright incorporates choruses to supplement the play's information and call on the audience's imagination. It is only through the chorus that we have 'a little touch of Harry in the night' (*Henry V* 4.0.47).

The introductory character Rumour in *2Henry IV* is a 'pipe' (*2Henry IV* Induction 15). It is high pitched, it is impersonal, it is beyond monarchical or governmental control. Rumour is also instrumental in causing the fall of Richard II. The audience are privy to the information but the king is unaware that the Welsh, who hear the rumour of Richard's death, disband the army he is counting on to oppose the landing of Bolingbroke. Richard II is then captured and surrenders. So, it is not all the water in the rough rude sea that washes the balm off this anointed king, it is gossip. And in addition, it is politics. Shakespeare uses the minor characters of the gardeners to emphasise that by not cutting down the weeds, or opposition, the king left himself vulnerable. The audience and the Queen are the eavesdroppers. This puts the audience privily into the position of political decision-makers. Should Richard II have taken pre-emptive action against Bolingbroke and Gaunt? Richard could have allowed the trial by battle to proceed and hope that Bolingbroke would be killed. Elizabeth I hesitated at first over the decision to execute the Duke of Norfolk for plotting, but after the second plot with Mary Queen of Scots, she issued the warrant, as she did eventually for Mary Queen of Scots herself, and later, the Earl of Essex. Machiavelli had counselled that some cruelty was required for the Prince to succeed. The audience is privy to two more incipient plots by the Bishop of Carlisle and Aumerle's colleagues, so they know that the gardeners were correct. Playgoers then also hear the casual remark of the new Henry IV that he would be rid of a 'living fear' (*Richard II* 5.4.2). The king tries to deny responsibility for the murder of Richard in prison, but in terms of Machiavelli's realpolitik advice, this assured Henry IV's throne. Shakespeare's genius was to make the audience sympathetic to Richard, in spite of his disastrous politics, and because of what they had learned privily.

Privileged information disclosed to the audience also dooms the opposition to the king in *1Henry IV*. Hotspur receives two letters, one from a backsliding conspirator and another from his 'sick' father, declining to join the combined revolt. The most telling information that the

audience possess (and Hotspur does not) is the unconditional pardon offered by Henry IV that Worcester does not communicate. Worcester wants a battle, in spite of the rebels' depleted numbers, and the consequence is that they lose heavily at the battle of Shrewsbury. This shared knowledge involves the audience in the play, so they can rejoice along with the king and his son after they have revelled in prince Hal defeating Hotspur on the stage with real swords! Both William West and Evelyn Tribble agree that the early modern audiences appreciated and enjoyed swordfights at a time when prizefighting was an alternative to theatre-going. Many actors were skilled at fencing and players may have prolonged the fight if spectators were clearly enjoying it (West 224, Tribble "Thinking" 150).

Contrasted to all this aristocratic action for the upper tiers of the old Globe, there was particular information for the groundlings. Falstaff allows the buying out of services from some of the prospective recruits for the army to provide the 'food for powder' for the battle of Shrewsbury (*1Henry IV* 4.2.58). The audience, which likely included some discharged soldiers and sailors, knew about corruption in the armed forces. In *2 Henry IV* this is one of the featured topics. The playwright thus informs all the spectators how the officer class takes unfair and corrupt advantage of the regular conscript.

In *2 Henry IV* Falstaff commits an even more obvious *faux pas* for the understanders. The prince and Poins, disguised as drawers, overhear Falstaff showing off his connection to the prince, and how the prince would make 'a good pantler,' or servant (*2Henry IV* 2.4.212). Challenged, Falstaff backs off with 'no abuse,' and tries to excuse himself, but the audience may feel this is *lesé majesté* a step too far for Hal and part of Falstaff's downward trajectory (2.4.290). The cumulative aggravation ends with the new king Henry V disowning his former boon companion in 'I know thee not old man' (5.5.45). The playwright compensates this loss for someone in the lower order by promotion for someone in the upper echelon. A character for whom the audience knows the backstory, is also under observation, the Lord Chief Justice. Under Henry IV, the young prince Hal boxed his ears, but the justice, with the king's support, sent the prince to gaol. Henry V puts this event aside and acknowledges the Justice's integrity. This set a serious tone for the new reign and the audience can enjoy their inside prior knowledge of why it is a surprise that the Justice is promoted.

There is no sign of the Justice in *Henry V*. The epilogue of *2Henry IV* says the playwright will continue with the story of Sir John and introduce us to the French princess (26-8). Here is inside information that the audience will have to partly distrust. We will hear of Katherine, she will be part of the war booty of the battle of Agincourt, but we will not hear anything more from Falstaff, only that the king had broken his heart. Either collectively or individually, the audience must have been disappointed in this expectation. What did they expect of Agincourt? Publicly the king admits the sickness and reduced numbers of his army; privily, from the conversation of the lower orders, the audience must wonder how the English could hope to prevail with footsoldiers like Pym, Nym and Bardolf. The key scene, prior to the battle, opens with the chorus discussing the confident French while the English king puts on a brave face. The playwright thereby underplays the English and overplays the French, rather as Hal had played the fool as a youngster to appear more royal when he later became serious. The audience therefore understands the king's doubts and responsibilities, 'we must bear all,' and they have to bear them and take the risk along with Henry V (*Henry V* 4.1.215). The battle is off-stage. The English miraculously rout the French. Chorus takes the king to London for his triumph, then back to France for the political settlement. The audience are prepared for this. They had witnessed the earlier scene of the French princess practicing her English with her maid, so the playwright hinted that the French court were prepared for an English victory. When Henry kisses Katherine at the conclusion of *Henry V*, he and Shakespeare meet the audience's expectation.

So, privileged information by eavesdrop, over-hearing, rumour or the prologues, epilogues and choruses fed the audience's prior information and engaged them much more fully in the action of the play. It is the special messages to the audience, denied to the actor characters on the stage, the solitary musings of a character to the crowd and the introductions, conclusions and authorial commentary of the plays that more fully involve the spectators, and without making any decisions for them, invite them to become full participants in the action. The privy communications involve the theatre crowd psychologically, and result in intensifying their experience and challenging their expectation as they watch the new 'star' characters perform before them.

Before turning to the prequels to the second Tetralogy of Shakespeare's history plays, it is worth looking at William West's very recent contribution to the understanding of Elizabethan

theatre, so close to the research topic of this thesis.[45] While acknowledging the difficulty of finding hard evidence but also the need for intelligent speculation, West is particularly effective at explaining the important part eating and drinking took at the theatres and the most successful competitors to playgoing, prizefighting and bear-baiting. At the beginning of the period, he describes the consumption of the ales, nuts and fruit as a "loss leader", capable of even exceeding the takings for plays themselves (185). Few critics mention prize-fighting or prize-fencing, but he shows that this occurred at all the major amphitheatres, the Curtain, the Theatre and the Globe (226). He and Tribble emphasise the fact that playgoers knew a lot about fencing and had expectations for potential and even extended fights in the plays. There were plenty of opportunities for this in *1,2 and 3Henry VI* (222). As for bear-baiting, West suggests that Shakespeare included figurative bears in his plays, Gloucester, Macbeth and Malvolio, although whether they would all conform to West's definition of the sport is arguable, "a lone protagonist… battles a pack of undistinguished opponents" (231).

West might seem ambiguous about the understanders, groundlings, beholders, or hearers, comprising a third of the amphitheatre audiences. They were able to move around, "wavering, shuffling," and in observing the hierarchy in the amphitheatres, there is a joke that there were "understanding listeners above and incapable understanders below" (93). However, in correspondence with him in June 2022, he makes it clear that in his view the groundlings understand plays cognitively although they stand under the playing physically. West constructs the players as "stirred by playing's physical sensibility more than its senses. Experiences of playgoing-of confusion, of understanding, of dislocation, of appetite and consumption, of contest-were the stuff of which plays were made" (6). One of the things he wanted to explore is how the understanders might have represented their attention to plays—if they had represented it. He characterises their habits as receptivity and responsibility (110). They were certainly receptive, in the view of this paper, and assisted in this by their degree of literacy (however limited), their knowledge of their immediate surroundings in London and sometimes elsewhere reinforced by the play texts, the increasingly distinct characterisation of the performers and both

[45] *Common Understandings, Poetic Confusion: Playhouses and Playgoers in Elizabethan England.* University of Chicago Press, 2021.

the stage noise and practices but which West does not emphasise. Playgoers were responsible in the sense that having received the players' theatrical communications, they had an intellectual duty to react, to participate, to share in the experience, silently or verbally like the playgoer who commented on how much he was moved by the stage death of Desdemona in 1610 (see p90).

The development of character and use of new theatrical techniques made less call on spectator's concentration and enabled audiences to more easily immerse themselves in these history plays. In a similar way, so did their familiarity with place.

3.4 *Geography and the audience's awareness of 'nation'*

This section explores how far chorography improved the playgoers' capacity to imagine.

Playgoers' experience was not only enhanced by the illusions on the stage, but also by what the audience knew about England's geography. This leant credibility to the action. Richard Helgerson posited how early modern chorographers wrote an alternative and complementary history of place to set against the chroniclers' account of time (2). This contributed to the development of a national community, just as the captains in *Henry V* represent England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. Howard and Rackin support this assertion ("Norton" *1Henry IV* 410-433). They argue that the proliferation of place in the plays encourages the spectators to translate the past into the present experience, so in Shakespeare's history plays chorography complements chronicle. In *1Henry IV*, the actors move the action from London to Coventry and York, from Kent to Northumberland, and from Glyndower's castle in Wales to Shrewsbury. Including English geography resonated with both the collective audience and the individuals among the London playgoers. They could participate with the public house crowd in the Boar's Head tavern in familiar Eastcheap. In contrast, Christopher Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris* had only one location and his *Edward II*, although it moves the action from Tynmouth and Newcastle to Scarborough to Killingworth Castle, emphasises the monarchy rather than the places with which the audience could connect. Expectation and geography together enlivened spectators' imagination at the playhouse.

Chorography linked geography, history, economics and antiquarianism, and just as Shakespeare's history plays provided the public with a version of their past, so chorography

provided them with a sense of the development of their physical world since the times of the Romans. This provided an authenticity to the action in the plays when the staging was in places well known to the spectators. John Leland's *Itineraries* throughout England and Wales in 1538-43 initiated these investigations and his successors built on them: William Harrison's *Description of England* of 1577, William Camden's *Britannia* of 1586 (translated from Latin to English in 1610) and John Stow's *Survey of London* of 1598. More important than their readership was the fact that they all emphasised the importance of local places that those familiar with them would recognise. They made a considerable contribution to the "cultural noise" that made the history plays credible (Woolf 8). Theatre goers knew for example that Gad's Hill near Rochester was notorious for highway robberies like the one depicted in *1Henry IV*, as was Shooter's Hill by Blackheath, Newmarket Heath and Salisbury Plain (Black 221, McDonald 220).

John Leland must have worn out a lot of horses in his five years of peregrination. When did he write up his extensive notes? He recorded tombs, monuments, family successions, and for subsequent travellers, the location and condition of the many bridges and sources of water, the brooks, creeks and rivers. Writing shortly after Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries, Leland includes the priories, chapels and parish churches and which ones were "suppressed." He lists the main industries of each area, and the opportunities for mining or fishing. He comments about enclosures.[46] Even more remarkable, he listens to and writes down information from the local people. Near Preston for example, he records in the words of Mr.Mzlles the old sayings of the town of Hampton (4:23). This gives his itineraries a remarkable authenticity. John Bale emphasised their value:

> Consiyder a multitude of things here named, yf all their specialtees were broughte fourth ones into light, as he hath collected them together, it woulde apere one of the greatest wonders, that ever yet, was seane in this region. The heavenly father grant the conservacyon of them" (3:2).

The reader hears of the fertility of the ground in the Scilly Isles, and the presence of gulls, puffins and rabbits there, near Tenby the harbour has a bar, so that ships needed a pilot to come

[46] 7:83 Duke Edward enlarged Ellwood Park twice "to the compass of six miles, not without the curses of the poor tenants"

in safely, and that the waters of Bath have the sulphurous and pleasant savour that they still have today (2:66, 3:19, 4:25). As much or more than anything else, Leland lists the profusion of castles in England and Wales, their various strengths or decay, and their presence in all the major conurbations. His record particularly links a sense of the land to the minds of the audiences at the history plays. Many castles featured as locations for dramatic action. *Richard II* includes six castles, *1Henry IV* three, and *2Henry IV* one. [47] The plays also reciprocally encourage the playgoers to explore or recognise places with which they are familiar. *Richard II* takes the audiences to London of course, as do the other history plays, but also to Coventry for the trial by battle, and to Wales, which Leland visited more than once. *Richard II* and *2Henry IV* both visit Gloucestershire, *1Henry IV* and *2Henry IV* Northumberland and *2Henry IV* Yorkshire. With Rochester, Shrewsbury and York and Southampton all in various scenes in these history plays, playgoers' minds mingled history and geography to emphasise how far drama gave them a strong sense of belonging to the land and their past, to both place and history, and not just London. Leland even confirms that Falstaff was not overcharged by Mistress Quickly for his sack; The Mayor of Norwich paid almost exactly the same proportionally in 1561 for his quart as Falstaff did for his two gallons in the first part of *Henry IV*.[48]

Chorographers were an intimate group. William Harrison drew on Leland's information and was friends with both William Camden and John Stow. Among Harrison's description of England, were many themes familiar from Leland like inflation and economics, but also included an insightful view of Elizabethan society, its structure and behaviour. Like Leland, it was detailed; from him we know when all the different classes sat down for their meals and what they ate and drank. As if describing what the tapsters served in the Boar's Head in Eastcheap in *1Henry IV*, Harrison, a Protestant cleric, records that the main imports of wine came from France, including bastard, but that stale ale and strong beer were the main public house drinks (130-1). The writer could have been there himself in *2Henry IV* when he describes the "inferior sort" that were Falstaff's companions, "their table is now and then such as savoureth of scurrility and ribaldry, a thing naturally incident to carters and clowns" (131). When Falstaff makes his

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[47] *Richard II*: Windsor, Berkeley, Bristol, a castle near Harlech, Flint, Pomfret *1Henry IV* (probably) Windsor, Warkworth, Glyndower's castle near Bangor *2Henry IV* Warkworth

[48] "quart of sack 9d." *Itinerarie*s 6: xvi, "sack, 2 gallons 5s.8d."*1Henry IV* 2.5.490

first appearance, he has been sleeping off a hangover that Harrison seems to eerily describe in "it is incredible how our maltbugs lug at this liquor [ale and beer] till they lie still again and are not able to wag." (247). Sir John does not even know what time of day it is (*1Henry IV* 1.2.1). Among the chorographer's list of contemporary punishments, highway robbery is a hanging offense, and makes it clear what serious trouble Falstaff has attracted when the sheriff knocks on the tavern door to arrest him (189). It is in Harrison that we can read the phrase "caterpillars in the commonwealth" that Shakespeare uses in *Richard II* to describe the king's suspect councillors (183). Apart from these links to the history plays, Harrison reflects back to the English (that included the theatre crowds), another non-theatrical version of their way of life, their social categories, how they cheat each other with false measures and hoarding, the times they should go to church and how they spend their time when they are avoiding this obligation, their housing, their poor, the consequences of the redistribution of wealth after the monasteries were dissolved, the expansion of Empire by sea, the penalties for contravening public order and the great learning resource in the two major Universities to provide good pastors. Extravagant attire or licentious and corrupt behaviour he conveniently blames on the French and Italians (75,148,447). The *Description of England* connected the people with their position in their own recognisable society, rather than geographical places in Leland's *Itineraries*, but it was a strong link to place nonetheless.

William Camden travelled in England during 1578-96, researching scientific, economic, social and geographic aspects for his *Britannia* (McGurk 48,53). Camden's contribution to playgoers' experience was, like Leland, not only to connect Londoners to the various localities and local knowledge of the British Isles, but to connect them to their land pictorially. This is analogous to the connection between history plays and the theatre; Camden linked representations of place, like the maps of the counties, with page, the printed word. That he wrote in Latin reduced his readership somewhat, but the educated had a more than passable knowledge of the language. Maps were static pictures of the past; poetry (in the form of history plays) were speaking pictures, as described by Sidney. So, Camden joins those chorographers that helped add credibility to the plays that connected known places with an increasingly understood version of what was bygone.

He was even harder on his horses than Leland; he included a tour of Scotland and Ireland. Camden followed Leland's lead in what he described, but expanded on the Roman and Saxon history and included maps of all the counties. Maps contributed a descriptive element to place, just as the woodcuts fed the imagination of the readers of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*. Like one of the main themes of *Henry V*, the writer is admittedly patriotic, praising Elizabeth I and James I, and excoriating the gunpowder plotters at intervals throughout his work.[49] Slightly less of a cataloguer than Leland, and writing with greater fluidity, Camden is more inclined, he admits, to digressions but equally keen on detail[50]. We learn among other things that Richard II's Queen Anne introduced the side-saddle into England, about the reverse action of the Severn bore and that Cheshire even then was famous for its cheese, "of a most pleasing and delicate taste." As Daniel Woolf comments, although literacy was at a relatively low level at the end of the sixteenth century, there was an increased interest in the country's past, and the less literate could hear this history from others or see it dramatized at the playhouse (154, 294). The written past of the chroniclers and accounts of the travels of the chorographers provided a record of memories that was looking at its present through a lens of the past. Andy Wood agrees; "place and memory created overlapping little worlds" (223). And memory could span as much as three generations. Wood gives the example of Thomas Brock, who in 1625 could remember serving as an altar boy at the beginning of Mary's reign (88). Camden criticizes both past and present. Richard II is characterised as "that silly and miserable prince," who died at Pomfret castle, "whom Henry the fourth deposed from his kingdom with hunger, cold, and strange kind of torments, most wickedly made away" (414, 696). The chorographer records the resting places of the many that died at Agincourt, reminding his readers of the great victory of Henry V. In *Reges Reginae* about the

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[49] "whereas the kingdoms of Britain, formerly divided…are by…the most worthy prince, King James, grown into one" 7. "Queen Elizabeth of sacred memory for how great she was: religion reformed, peace well grounded, money reduced to the true value, a navy passing well furnished in readiness, honour at sea restored, rebellion extinguished, England for the space of forty-four years most wisely governed, enriched and fortified, Scotland freed from the French, France relived, Netherlands supported, Spain awed, Ireland quieted, and the whole globe of the earth twice sailed round about" 255

[50] Camden is very readable and sometime witty. He says that he does not rely on fables, but expands later at some length on the efficacy of St. Wilfrid's Needle, a hole that was supposed to differentiate between chaste and false women, and described the Duke of Warwick's unreliability as "wavering and untrusty, the very tennis ball." 7, 567, 700

tombs in Westminster Abbey, Camden reminded contemporary readers about the legend of this "king of kings":

> O merciful God what a prince was this,
>
> Which his short time in martial actes spent
>
> In honour of conquest: that wonder to me it is,
>
> How he might compasse such deedes excellent ("Reges" 9)

Camden also writes in *Britannia* about many of the characters that connect to the history plays: Sir John Oldcastle, Sir John Fastolfe, Hotspur, King John, Constance and Arthur and the death of Gloucester at Calais. For his present day there are the "noble exploits" of Drake, the greatness of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester and the fate of the Earl of Essex who "grew so fast into such honour, that all England conceived good hope he would have fully equalled, yea or surpassed the greatest virtues and praises of all his progenitors…but (alas)… he cast himself headlong into destruction" (200, 455, 524). As Woolf rightly states, print has a subordinate role but it contributed to the increased public awareness of links between their past and present that playgoers could absorb through the history plays in the London amphitheatres (8). For London itself, Camden recommended his friend John Stow's *Survey of London*.

John Stow memorialised London and its suburbs by walking the city. Self-educated, Stow was not of the gentry, had no court connections, but respected authority and commemorated the wealthy citizens of London ("Chronicles" 2). Like his fellow-chorographers he is strong on details. The Easter services at Paul's Crosse for example include many sermons, one on Friday, then the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, before the next Sunday there is a rehearsal of all four sermons and a fifth added ("Survey" 176). Edward III's sword, on display at his tomb, weighs eighteen pounds and is seven feet long! (505). Stow is patriotic, like his fellow chorographers, extolling Queen Elizabeth as "a most potent Princesse to be compared with the greatest Kings or Queenes whatsoever" (511). The regulations for living in London are well enumerated in the "statutes of the streets, against annoyances." There is to be no throwing of refuse on the streets, no walking with an unsheathed sword, and no whistling after nine o'clock at night. There is provision for fire-prevention, encouragement of hue and cry for malefactors and a requirement to report profaners of the sabbath, along with drunkards, Jesuits, popish recusants or any

swaggering idle companion who cannot account for himself. (665, 673, 682). Falstaff and his companions in *2Henry IV* here come to mind. Neither Doll Tearsheet or Mistress Quickly could bear swaggerers (2.4.60-6). Stow recommends Eastcheap for its ordinaries, "where they called for meat what them liked, which they always found ready dressed, and at a reasonable rate," like Falstaff's capons, sauce and anchovies (216, *1Henry IV* 2.5.488-491). Among famous tombs at Westminster, Stow mentions those of Katherine Valois and Henry V, but does not mention that Henry's sword is there on display. Like Camden, Stow includes the bear-gardens on Bankside, but makes no comment on the other London theatres of the time, which must have been obvious features. Tracey Hill says (in correspondence) this was because Stow may have regarded them as ephemeral entertainment, unlike the festivities and pastimes of his youth[51]. Stow's editor, Anthony Munday, actor and playwright and writer of the Lord Mayor's show, comments about Londoners' appetite for this improved form of entertainment; theatre was not only a source of city taxes, but fed a London public who were "always eating and never satisfied; ever-seeing and never contented; continually hearing and never wearied." ("Civic Culture*"* Hill 46, 110). This was part of the crowd that went to the history plays, that inhabited Stow's London, that Stow reminded of their remarkable prominent citizens, their heritage, and their modern city, to form part of Woolf's "cultural noise." The chorographers' descriptions of place enhanced memory and added an authenticity to the experience of the playgoers of the 1590's. These writers celebrated the extent and richness of the country and its capital city. They strengthened the audience's sense of national community by linking local knowledge, familiar places and history together. Combining the information from the chroniclers and the chorographers, Shakespeare did the research for his audiences. Playgoers were the beneficiaries of the new relationship between past records both of history and geography that added to the credibility of what the early modern audiences saw on the scaffolds of the Curtain, Globe and The Theatre in the late 1590's.

3.5 *The prequels to the Henriad, The Troublesome Raigne of John, King of England of 1591 and The Life and Death of King John of 1596*

The order of the anonymous *Troublesome Raigne* and Shakespeare's King *John* has been the subject of vigorous debate, and determines their effect as prequels to the second *Henriad*.

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[51] Tracey Hill, author of *Anthony Munday and Civic Culture, Putting London Centre-Stage* and other works

Which play was most influential in preparing the spectators' minds for the later history plays, the break with Rome and the elevation of John as a hero in *The Troublesome Raigne*, or the blinding scene with Arthur and the bastard as hero in *King John*? The weight of scholarship and the opinion of the writer of this paper is very much on the side of *The Troublesome Raigne* preceding *King John.* [52] The former play is longer, more ponderous, more chauvinistic, much more the kind of play that would perform three years after the dispersion of the Spanish Armada of 1588. Shakespeare's play uses the former play as a source but his is more sophisticated, more poetically melodious and with greater character development. Since both plays share so much of the same plot, it is plausible but unproven, that Shakespeare had a hand in the writing of the earlier play, *The Troublesome Raigne* of 1591.

Geoffrey Bullough strikes a cautionary note in his introduction to the *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* for *King John*. "Parallels have been drawn between the reigns of Elizabeth and John, and they were probably intentional, but we must be aware of making them too close" (V iv, 1). However, we cannot ignore them, and the audiences for the *Raigne* had many opportunities to satisfy their horizon of expectations. Charles Forker suggests that the audiences of the early 1590's would have applauded King John's nationalism and hooted the French King's aggression; booed the defection of the English barons to the side of the French monarch and cheered the Bastard when he stabbed the wicked abbot (Peele 56).

The Raigne seems to measure itself against Marlowe's brutal Tamburlaine, as a paean to a hero, a fellow countryman, who stood up to the papacy, "A warlike Christian and your Countreyman [who] set himself against the Man of Rome" (Marlowe"Tamburlaine" Prologue 5,7). For Christian, read Protestant. The play, so soon after the failure of Philip II's first attempt to invade England and convert it back to Roman-Catholicism, is driven by propaganda. It looks back to three excommunications, those of John, Henry VIII and Elizabeth I. There is a sideways glance at the fragility of young aspirants to the throne, like Arthur, to remind the audience of the short-lived reign of Elizabeth's brother Edward VI, and the legitimacy of a rival claimant, like the recently-executed Mary Queen of Scots. It also raises the question of the fealty of the nobles,

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[52] In favour of King John preceding Troublesome Raigne: Honigmann 1987, Boyd 1995
In favour of TR preceding KJ: Furnivall 1913, Bullough 1962, Gary 1971, Sider 1979, Thomas 1986, Kehler 1988, Hamel 1989, Groves 2004, Oberer and Peele 2011

and the serious threat of invasion from overseas; the thirteenth century French of *The Troublesome Raigne* can represent the sixteenth century Spanish to playgoers in Elizabeth's time. Finally, the monarch in the *Raigne* could represent the survival of Protestantism and the Elizabethan church settlement against the Pope's encouragement for fellow Catholics to assassinate the Queen. *The Raigne* is a jingoistic play, designed to stir up audience feelings and encourage patriotic expression, foreshadowing similar elements in Shakespeare's *Henry V*.

Elizabeth did not want to make windows into men's souls, so as David Riggs says, "the state religion was a matter of behaviour rather than belief" (92). In 1588 Pope Sixtus V renewed the excommunication of Elizabeth on the eve of the sailing of the Armada, a reaffirmation of the previous excommunication of 1570 by Pius V. Describing the queen as a heretic, bastard and usurper, the pontiff encouraged his faithful to "areste, put in holde, and deliver up unto the Catholike parte, the said usurper," and pardon those who assist (Sider 216-9). The papal legate and Cardinal of Milan in John's reign, was Pandalf; his political interference begins with an attempt to establish the Pope's authority to appoint the new Archbishop of Canterbury. The monarch's response is as unequivocal as would be Henry VIII's: "never an Italian Priest of them all, shall either have tythe, tole, or poling penie out of England, but as I am King, so wil I raigne next under God, supreame head both over spirtituall and temprall: and hee that contradicts me in this, Ile make him hoppe headless," just as the Tudor king would later execute both his chancellor and his Bishop of Rochester in 1535 (Sider 63, Bindoff 103). What John intended, Henry carried out; the legislation of 1529-34 transferred from the Pope jurisdiction, prerogatives and revenues to the king or to institutions dependent on him (Bindoff 94). Audiences for *The Raigne* experienced on the stage a re-enactment of continent-based threats to invade England.

No Spaniard had set foot in England as a result of the attempted invasion of the Spanish Armada. In the *Raigne*, on the other hand, the French under the Dauphin Lewes succeeded in invading England with an army; the situation was more precarious. Only the defection of the English nobles from the French cause (comprehending their own eventual execution at the hands of the French), persuades Lewes "to depart the Realme" (Sider 181). King John does not have to fight a Northern Rebellion like the one Elizabeth had to suppress in 1569. The unspoken message for the audiences was that the crown had to deal with disaffected nobles somehow, and this theme would be underlined by the history plays of *Richard II, Henry IV* and *Henry V* in the

failure of Richard II to anticipate Bolingbroke's invasion, the challenges of the Percies and Glendower to Henry IV and the Cambridge plotters attempt to assassinate Henry V.

The Queen had divine right on her side, but did she have legitimacy? And did that matter to theatre audiences? Her country accepted her as the rightful sovereign, but her father had declared her illegitimate in 1536 in order to legitimise the son who would become Edward VI, and Queen Mary's first parliament in 1553, by invalidating Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon, tacitly reconfirmed Elizabeth a bastard (Somerset 8, 35). The King John plays make an issue of legitimacy. The character Bastard in both the *Raigne* and *King John* carries an undertone of the acceptance of illegitimacy and admiration for upward social mobility. These concepts may have registered in the unconsciousness of the Elizabethan audience at performances of the *Raigne*; but they were dangerous to voice. In the argument about their legitimacy between the two Fauconbridge brothers, before the king, Philip the Bastard, admits he is the son of King Richard I, the Lionheart, to whom he has a 'lively' resemblance. Elizabeth I was also the progeny of a king, Henry VIII, and survived an accusation of complicity in Wyatt's rebellion when under house arrest in her sister Mary's reign (Somerset 49). Her promotion to Queen came on Mary's death in 1558. In the *Raigne*, the Bastard, having surrendered his claim to the Fauconbridge estates, is first knighted by King John, and later elevated to Duke. He becomes a version of the Thomas Cromwell who dissolved the monasteries under Henry VIII, commissioned by King John to "ransack the Abbeys, Cloysters, Priories,/ Convert their coyne unto my souldiers use" (Sider 71). As effective first minister and the only loyal confidant in high office for his monarch, the Bastard also counsels his king somewhat like Lord Burghley, chief advisor to Elizabeth I, who was still advising the queen at the time when the *Raigne* was staged. The subtext here is that bastards might be more valuable than the more legitimate candidates for office, Philip than his brother, Elizabeth than Edward VI, and that bastards can act as kingmakers, because the Bastard promotes John's son as Henry III, and by her death in 1558, the Catholic Mary Tudor promoted Elizabeth.

The *Raigne* was not only anti-Pope, it was a message directed at Catholics. The Pope's excommunication of Elizabeth amounted, as Anne Somerset describes, as "sanctifying treason" (246). Although the plots against the queen's life were all discovered, she lived in danger of assassination, and she and her spy-master, Thomas Walsingham, had to keep an observant eye on

Cardinal Allen and his school for Jesuit infiltrators to England in Douai. There are three monastery scenes in the *Raigne* that Shakespeare does not duplicate in *King John*. Suzanne Gary sees these as reinforcing the anti-Catholic theme of the *Raigne*, while pleasing the low-brow in the audiences (51). In the first episode, the Bastard is looking for the Abbot's gold, but finds a nun in the gold chest and the clerics "revell so lasciviously" (Sider 81). The Bastard takes the gold and a bribe for sparing their lives. Bindoff says of Henry VIII's despoliation of the monasteries, to which this scene alludes, that few now believe that they were the "dens of iniquity which Cromwell's ruffians described" (Bindoff 105). However, the implication in the play is that Catholics have something to hide. This confirmed in the playgoers' minds that Catholics could indeed be traitors. Mary Tudor burned Protestants; Elizabeth Tudor burned Catholics.[53]

The Troublesome Raigne is a theatrical rough diamond when we compare it to Shakespeare's *King John*. The *Raigne* has many non-sequiturs, like the unfinished business between the Bastard and Lymoges, and the mystical appearance of the five moons; the long sequences of the bastard's hunt for abbey treasure and the preparation of friar Thomas to kill his king that seem out of proportion to the rest of the action. However, this play prepares the audiences for the second *Henriad* in many ways. It alerted them to look out for parallels between their own time and past history with its references to excommunication, the concept that the monarch may depend more on popularity than divinity, that there are various forms of legitimacy, that England is celebrating escape from foreign domination and that a revival of pre-Henrician Catholicism was a lost cause. For the audiences, the experience of the play and its variety of allusions prompted them consciously or unconsciously, as Jauss might suggest, to examine and in some cases discuss how these issues related to their own time.

In the intervening years between *The Troublesome Raigne* of 1591 and *The Life and Death of King John* of 1596, Shakespeare wrote the three *Henry VI* plays and *Richard III*. Even comparing the similarities between the two plays about King John, it is hard to agree with Lily Campbell and Irving Ribner, as Virginia Vaughan points out in her study of the *Raigne* in 1974, that they are so alike that we have no need to discuss them (19). Whether he cooperated in any

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[53] Executions under Mary Tudor, almost three hundred; under Elizabeth Tudor I one hundred and eighty-three: Anne Somerset *Elizabeth I* 47, 392

part of the *Raigne*, Shakespeare had acquired considerable experience in the theatre by the time *King John* was staged. Coming eight years after the dispersal of the Spanish Armada, it is a less chauvinistic play than the *Raigne*, although the loss of the French fleet does evoke the failure of invasion in 1588: "…by a roaring tempest on the flood,/ A whole armada of convicted sail/ Is scattered and disjoined from fellowship" (*King John* 3.4.1-3). The emphasis in *King John* is less on England's fortuitous escape from French occupation, however, than on the employment of murder, or intended murder, to ensure retention of the crown. If this was in any way an allusion to Elizabeth I's execution of Mary Queen of Scots in 1587, *King John* cleverly avoids the government censor, as Mitali Wong suggests, and makes the Bastard the hero of the play (25). It is his loyalty that ensures another key aspect of Shakespeare's play, the passing of the crown to a safe successor, here the prince Henry who will become Henry III, and in Elizabeth's reign, her nephew James. *King John* is less anti-Catholic; there is no long scene of misbehaving monks and nuns as in the *Raigne*, and the king is already sick before the monk at Swinstead Abbey poisons him. As in the *Raigne*, Pandalf, the papal legate, is less moral than either John or the French King Philip, and the politically-motivated excommunication he pronounces acts to recall the animosity for the Pope held by Elizabeth I's father and the creation of a state religion by Henry VIII. The heart of the *King John* play is the cruelty with which John's servant intends to kill the English king's child rival Arthur. In the *Raigne* the blinding was a sin, in *King John* it is more clearly a crime, as Vaughan makes clear (80). The playwright may be alluding to the state torture of Jesuit priests in the 1580's and 90's in Elizabeth's reign. The Shakespeare family had Catholic sympathies (Greenblatt "Tyrant" 9).

The Arthur scene is perhaps crueller than the excavation of Gloucester's eyes in *King Lear*. The order is for Hubert to burn out both the child Arthur's eyes, but John has previously ordered the ultimate sanction "Death" (3.3. 66). In Geoffrey Bullough's sources for the play, he includes the chronicle of Radulf of Cogeshall, in which the original command was for "the noble youth to be deprived of his eyes and genitals, so that he would thereafter be rendered incapable of princely rule" (Bullough 4:57). Holinshed, from his 1587 edition of the third volume of Chronicles, is equivocal; Arthur may have drowned, died of natural sickness, or "king John secretlie caused him to be murthered and made away…king John was had in great suspicion, whether worthily or not, the Lord knoweth…" (33). Turner comments on John's disagreeable

personality. He was greedy, cruel and oppressive and unlikely to be an inspiring leader; however, he was admired by the Tudors for his authoritarianism and stand against the Pope (260-1).

England escapes in the thirteenth century from both internal rebellion and external foreign invasion, according to Shakespeare, more by good luck than good judgement, as it just had also in the sixteenth century.

What did the audience for *King John* hear and experience that they did not see in the *Raigne*? They saw the extraordinarily cruel treatment intended for a rival to the throne, regardless of the fact that he was a twelve-year-old boy (and not the forty-five-year-old woman that was Mary Queen of Scots), neither category of which one would normally be afraid. And they saw much more of the Bastard, a representative of the old Vice, an almost Falstaffian figure, that distracted not just the other characters in the play, Pandalf and the English nobles who changed sides from England to France and back again to England, but also the Master of the Revels who had to license the play or condemn it. They also saw an English monarch vacillate, from defiance of the Pope to submission, in order to preserve his power. As Walter Cohen says in his introduction to the play in the Norton Shakespeare, these were subjects that were unresolved but offered for the audience's meditation (1050). For the early modern playgoers, *King John* foreshadows the second *Henriad* in many ways. There is a weak king in John, as there will be in Richard II, a king who makes provocative and costly mistakes and wishes too late to undo them, a king who provokes his enemy and invites fatal retribution. There are nobles who support the king, and then fight or plot against him, as John of Gaunt almost does with Richard II, and Hotspur does against Henry IV and the plotters in Southampton do against Henry V. There are plausible contenders for the throne who must be eliminated ruthlessly, like Arthur in the King John plays, Mortimer in *1Henry IV*, the Earl of Northumberland in *2 Henry IV*, and the Dauphin in *Henry V*. Then in the King John plays, the audiences could meditate on foreign policy strategies that they would re-evaluate in the second tetralogy. John was very successful when he invaded France; in both plays his mother is rescued and Arthur taken prisoner. His problems begin with the invasion of the French into England and the defection of his own nobles. These events repeat themselves in *Richard II* when Bolingbroke invades and the Duke of York, the Earl of Northumberland, Hotspur and Lord Willoughby are aristocrats that defect from the king's party. Henry IV never went on the crusade he had promised himself, and counsels his

son to occupy his nobles with an invasion of France, "…to busy giddy minds/ With foreign quarrels, that action hence borne out/ May waste the memory of the former days" (*2 Henry IV* 4.3.343-5). By the time of *King John*, Elizabeth I had avoided invasion, her expeditions to the continent had been relatively low budget, and her investment in the piracy of Drake had been more successful than she might have imagined. The subliminal message of the King John plays was the importance of preventing invaders from setting foot in England. This, Elizabeth had achieved for her country, and it was a surprise in these early modern times that it was a woman who succeeded in this. The *Raigne*, and *King John* and Shakespeare's previous history plays like the three *Henry VI* plays and *Richard III*, all reminded the audiences of the new factor of woman-power in politics.

How far might the two King John plays have resonated with Sidney? They did both teach and delight. They taught the playgoers history in the style advocated by Thomas Heywood in his *Apology for Actors* of 1612: "playes are writ with this ayme, and carried with this methode, to teach the subiects obedience to the King, to shew the people the vntimely ends of such as haue moued tumults, commotions, and insurrections" (3:28). Both plays were also effective in what McLuhan described as a suitable 'public address system' for the late sixteenth century, in blank verse, citing its ability to intensify the amplification and exaggeration of feeling (225). The plays delivered their message efficiently and poetically. Compulsory church services conditioned the audience to hear poetic phrases, like "all holy desires, all good counsels, & all just works" and "love, cherish and obey". Archbishop Thomas Cranmer's fondness for triplets contributed a sonority and melody to the weekly church visits of the congregations.[54] Sidney compares the work of the poet to a seductive cluster of grapes, "that full of that taste, you may long to pass further" (Sidney 95) Verse, according to Sidney, is easier to remember than prose, and perfect for a primarily non-literate oral society, where memory among the audiences, was much more acute (McLuhan 106). Weimann takes a different view from Sidney. As this author comments, Shakespeare increases the amount of prose in his dramas during the 1593-1603 period, and we can take Falstaff's orations as an example of this. Increased use of prose allowed deeper characterisation and therefore a closer connection to the audience (Weimann "Performance" 182-

[54] https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/10/22/god-talk

3). But, as Sidney said, it is rhyming and versing that makes poetry, and the year after *King John*, in 1597 the theatre audiences had the all-verse play of *Richard II*.

The conditioning of spectators at this *Henriad* was an important part of realising their experience at these plays. The two King John plays did not just turn audience attention to the past, they subtly challenged the audience to consider political decisions, foreign interference, invasion, the reliability of courtiers and the justification for judicial murder. These two plays helped manifest the present into the past. In the second tetralogy itself, the high and low scenes appealed to all sections of the audience, the read and the less literate. The text anchored them in their own country by constantly referring to places with which they were familiar. Theatrical techniques like the illusion of the time of day, privileged information for playgoers in asides or soliloquies, direction by the authorial voice of a prologue or chorus, use of sound and the development of character, as in Falstaff, all affected and influenced their minds. After all, "what English blood seeing the person of any bold English man presented [on the stage] and doth not hugge his fame, and hunnye at his valor, pursuing him in his enterprise with his best wishes, and as being wrapt in contemplation, offers to him in his hart all prosperous performance" (Heywood 3.27). The playwright prepared the audience for experiencing their history embodied on the stage but depended on their participation.

Chapter 4 "Sworn brother…to grim necessity": playgoers and the distanced fall of princes in *Richard II* (5.1.20-1)

> *Now is this golden crown like a deep well*
> *That owes two buckets filling one another…*
> *That bucket down and full of tears am I,*
> *Drinking my griefs, whilst you mount up on high.* (*Richard II* 4.1.174-9)

Richard II was a very popular play. First printed in 1597, two editions appeared in the following year, and others in 1608, 1614,1615 and 1634, the many editions evidence then that it had been performed often. On the title pages of the quartos, they state that it was publicly acted, and in the 1615 and 1634 editions indicate it was at the Globe (https://folgerpedia.folger.edu/Richard_II). The Queen had seen it, prompting her retort "I am Richard II, know ye not that?" after the Earl of Essex's supporters commissioned the play prior to his attempted coup d'etat.in 1601.[55] There may have been other court performances; Dawson and Yachnin mention a possible performance at the residence of the chief patron of Shakespeare's company, Baron Hunsdon, at the end of 1595, and even on-board a vessel in 1607 (Oxford *Richard II* 78-9). Simon Forman was an eye-witness to a performance at the Globe in 1611:

> Remember therein Also howe the ducke of Lancaster pryuily contryued all Villany. To set them all to gether by the ears and to make the nobilyty to Envy the kinge and mislyke of him and his gouern mentes by which means. He made his own sonn king which was henry Bullinbrocke (Forman fol.201v, Wiggins 3:366).

In 1600 John Bodenham stated that *Richard II* was his favorite play, in 1601 William Lambarde recorded the Queen saying that that *Richard II* had played forty times during her reign (meaning 'often') and in 1613 there is a confirmation of payment for a performance of *Richard II* (Ingleby 72,100,241, Orgel 11).

There was competition, of course. Of published plays from 1596-1601 Shakespeare had ten plays, including four history plays one of which was *Richard II,* in the London theatres. Lyly,

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[55] On February 7, 1601, probably at the Globe by the Chamberlain's men (Sibley 132-3). Jonathan Bate questions the veracity of Lambarde's report p281

Chapman, Greene, Dekker and Heywood had two each. Of the many almost one hundred and thirty lost plays at that time, about a fifth were history plays, showing the popularity of the genre. Dekker, Chettle, Chapman and Hathway were some of the most prolific writers of these lost plays.[56]

The Life and Death of King Richard II fits into the series of history plays, in spite of the fact that its title in the quartos is *The Tragedy of King Richard the Second*. Unlike his first history plays, Shakespeare wrote the second *Henriad* in sequence and both *Henry IV* and *Henry V* deal in part with Henry IV's guilt of the murder of Richard of Bordeaux. *Richard III,* published in 1597, had followed the *King John* of 1596; *Richard II* was also first published in 1597. In the mind of the play-going public it was likely seen more as a theatrical representation of chronicle history than a revenge tragedy like the earlier *Titus Andronicus*. Bolingbroke returns to England to re-claim his stolen inheritance, not at least initially to de-throne King Richard. Critical to their reception is perhaps how much the audience understood about the history of Richard II.

A Mirror for Magistrates, printed in 1559, had already given a personal voice to this king. Intending to suggest the importance of judicial independence through the example of the fall of princes, Scott Lucas describes it as "the most widely read work of secular poetry of its time" (2). By using historical characters, it suggested a way to comment on current political issues without provocation, just as Shakespeare was able to do in his history plays. Richard II reveals himself in the *Mirror* as lustful, gluttonous, lecherous and an avaricious imposer of excessive taxes (Budra 89, Campbell 114):

> I set my minde, to spoile, to iust,
>
> Three meales a day could scarce content my mawe,
>
> And all to augment my lecherous minde that must
>
> To Venus pleasures always be in awe (Campbell 113, Budra 9)

Richard *was* selfish, extravagant, and vain. "There was never before any King of England [than Richard II] that spent so much in his house as he did, by 100,000 florins every year," commented

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[56] see *The Lost Plays and Masques 1500-1642* Gertrude Sibley

Froissart (Froissart 472). Nigel Saul emphasises the king's conviction of his own perfection, his crown-wearings, liking for clothes, *haute cuisine*, and in the 1390's his increased aloofness, arrogance, and increased introspection (391, 449, 459). In the *Mirror* the confessions of princes are meant to punish vices. Paul Budra makes the argument that audiences would only come to know history through the *Mirror* and Shakespeare's plays (10). But the Mirror had to be *read* or at least heard, and Budra interprets David Cressy's data as suggesting that the majority could not read, when it is much more likely that the majority could read to some extent, as has been argued above (pages 9 & 48). However, exaggerated in its view of Richard, the *Mirror* was influential. It prepared spectators for a play that would feature the self-induced downfall of a king.

A combination of recognition, introspection, memory and language make the audiences complicit in the plays and provide the 'awareness' that furnishes their experience. What was clear to them about *Richard II* is that it was a class-conscious play, centred on the nobility. As Budra comments, for the first audiences at the history plays, it seems to be the nobility that make history (14). The playgoers at this play are for the most part *voyeurs* of the upper echelons of society. All the scenes contribute to the eventual usurpation of Richard's crown by Bolingbroke. However, the theatre crowds recognise themselves in periodic vignettes. The episodes of the gardeners commenting on the regime and the groom visiting the imprisoned king enable them to share in the downfall of the monarch and probably unconsciously, feel some guilt themselves as a consequence. There is no Jack Cade or Falstaff here to represent the playgoers. The crowds that participate in the play as if they were part of the audience do not interfere. When they are not observing the action, they are onlookers at the frustrated trial by battle at Coventry, they have lost faith in the monarchy, they witness Bolingbroke leave for exile, and they share the pageant of Bolingbroke's triumphant entry into London and the abuse of their former king. But they and their appearance in the vignettes are important. They are even more included and recognised in Harrison's 1577 *Description of England* that recorded his wide impressions of Tudor social life. They come from the citizens and burgesses, the yeomen, artificers and labourers and Harrison gives them special mention when he aligns them with Cato's "optimos cives rei publicae," the best citizens of the state (8). Regardless of the relatively small representation of citizens, *Richard II* was still popular with London theatre patrons.

The *Mirror*, reflecting Boccaccio's *de casibus* tradition, that Lydgate translated as the *Fall of Princes*, informed all Shakespeare's history plays. At the conclusion of each play, the kings die from unresolved challenges within: Henry VI from naivety, King John from duplicity, Richard III from ambition, Richard II from arrogance, Henry IV from exhaustion or disease and Henry V from over-ambition. Judging from Andrew Gurr's figures about theatre attendance in London at that time, the formula was wildly successful both from the point of view of entertainment and profit. The fact that *Richard II* concentrated on the very upper classes might have increased its general interest and appeal.

The Queen was part of an audience, but the play did not appeal to her. She made her remark about her resemblance to Richard II to the royal archivist William Lamparde in August 1601, seven months after the Earl of Essex's rebellion. Deposition was a provocative subject, and the performance of *Richard II* commissioned by Essex's supporters had been deliberately so. They subsidized the performance, as Stephen Orgel points out (11). Elizabeth saw this performance in the Globe as a direct challenge to the crown. Probably Essex was more interested in removing the Queen's councillors than replacing her on the throne, but the Earl's supporters commissioned a performance of an "old" Richard play to drum up support for their cause. In this context, the deposition section of the play was incendiary, and in sixteenth century texts, this scene was omitted. Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, was the queen's favorite, appointed master of her horse, given financial support through the monopoly on sweet wines. Shakespeare himself was an Essex supporter, and in 1600, in *Henry V*, makes his only political reference to a contemporary character when he compares the "general of our Gracious Empress" to the hero of Agincourt (*Henry V* 5.0.30). Essex was almost too popular, and difficult for the queen to control. "When he appeared in the tiltyard, or rode through the streets, he was enthusiastically acclaimed by the crowd, and when Essex showed his appreciation by modestly bowing, or doffing his hat to them, it redoubled the applause" (Somerset 473). In this, Essex has the engaging attraction of Bolingbroke when "off goes his bonnet to an oyster-wench" as he leaves for exile, and on his return to London, "You would have thought the very windows spake, /So many greedy looks of young and old / Through casements darted their desiring eyes /Upon his visage" (*Richard II* 1.4.30, 5.2.13-15). Did his supporters see Essex as Bolingbroke? We do not know. There were rumours that the Earl was aiming at the crown himself, and after the taking of Cadiz in 1596, he was England's most famous soldier (Hammer 125, 139). However, two hundred years earlier,

Bolingbroke had an army, Richard II had none; in Ireland Essex did have an army, but back in London with just a group of followers, he overestimated his own popularity, and when he realised public support was not forthcoming for his coup, he surrendered to the government militia. The Earl had more in common in the end with Richard II than Bolingbroke. "Thus play I in one person many people, / And none contented. Sometimes I am a king; / The treason makes me wish myself a beggar,/ And so I am," says Richard (5.5.32-4). The Earl of Essex is similarly equivocal about his role in life: "I am not as I seeme, I seeme and am the same;/ I am as divers deeme, but not as others name" (Irish 175). One was traitor to himself, the other a traitor to his queen. The royal audience was safe; of those who commissioned and saw the "old" play, three were beheaded and two hanged. The Queen was lenient. But there was a general public feeling that Essex's execution had been excessive. In this respect there had been perhaps some of both main characters of *Richard II* in the Earl. He had both enjoyed a popularity like Bolingbroke and the sympathy earned by the martyred king. His two *alter egos* had been heard and watched by both very select audiences, and the crowds in the amphitheatres. The most titled audience member had a negative experience looking back at this history play; as Lamparde discovered, the Queen had a portrait of Richard II, but significantly kept it in the basement (Orgel 12)

The general audience was also watching a play with allusions to politics, although this may not have been obvious to them. What they did recognise was that, as in the *Mirror*, vices were punished. They may have also tacitly recognised how different from medieval times life was under Queen Elizabeth. The queen sends a general to deal with an Irish rebellion; Richard leaves the country to lead his army himself. He is everything that Queen Elizabeth is not. She is always present in London or the nearby counties, she is inordinately popular and the complaint about her use of monopolies is just that, a protest, not an attempt to remove her. She concedes, at least verbally; Richard, by contrast, seizes the vast Gaunt and Bolingbroke estates illegally. Richard picks favorites that the commons hate when they execute his rapacious policies; Elizabeth never lets her favorites control her.[57] When the Earl of Essex makes a surprise return from Ireland, she is furious. "By God's Son, I am no queen; that man is above me: who gave him command to come here so soon? I did send him on other business." (Guy 323). An aspect of the

[57] Bagot: "If judgement lie in them [the commons], then so do we/ Because we ever have been near the King;" Bolingbroke: "You have misled a prince, a royal king" 2.2.133-4, 3.1.7

contrast between Richard II and the reign of Elizabeth I that the playgoers would have noticed were their respective receptions by the city of London. Bolingbroke rides Richard's horse in triumph, while "rude and misgoverned hands from windows' tops/ Threw dust and rubbish on King Richard's head" (*Richard II* 5.2.5-6). By comparison, the city welcomed Elizabeth with a coronation pageant that she celebrated annually with her accession day celebrations and tournaments at Whitehall. Anne Somerset reports an observer at her triumphal progress on January 12, 1559, "Her Grace, by holding up her hands and merry countenance to such as stood far off, and most tender and gentle language to such as stood nigh…did declare herself thankfully to receive the people's goodwill" (71). The Queen was far from being Richard II.

The smaller audience invited by Essex's followers had a different experience from the regular patron. The commissioning of this 'old' play obviously intended to emphasise the deposition of one monarch in preferment to another, a seditious message. Bolingbroke committed treason when he returned to England with a small force, as his uncle the Duke of York pointed out to him, "thou art a banished man, and here art come/Before the expiration of thy time/ In braving arms against thy sovereign" (Richard II 2.3.109-11). This performance of *Richard II* was a sign of Essex's increasing desperation. As head of the army in Ireland he had disobeyed his sovereign's instructions, while away from the court he had been isolated by the Cecil faction, few in government took notice of his vehement opposition to Spain, the loss of his monopoly of fine wines would bankrupt him and, being out of favour with the Queen, he was secretly courting her nephew James VI of Scotland. The players in this *Richard II* were questioned and excused. If any of this audience joined in the two hundred or so that accompanied Essex's abortive attempted coup, they would have been arrested by the militia along with the Earl.

4.1 *Recognition*

For the regular playgoers, however much they felt for the popular earl of Essex, they first recognised in the play noise, costume and their favorite actors. It was a place for the commingling of the senses, of smell, taste, sound, sight and if they were in the yard, of touch due to the close quarters (Karim-Cooper 215). Trumpets sounded the beginning of the play, more than once at the trial by battle in Coventry with the sound of a cannon, another flourish of trumpets before Richard leaves for Ireland, trumpets and drums as Richard returns to England

and Harlech Castle, drums as Bolingbroke reaches Flint Castle to confront the king, trumpet flourishes within and without, before the king agrees to accompany Bolingbroke to London with another trumpeting. There are predictable door knocks at the unravelling of a conspiracy against Henry IV and the unexpected last stage sounds in the play, the sound of music coming to Richard II's cell in Pomfret Castle. The play also gives the audience an opportunity to travel around England and recognise places that they had visited or heard of. Apart from the castles of Flint and Harlech in Wales, and the episode in Coventry, the action takes patrons to both Windsor and Bristol Castles, Westminster Hall, Ely House, the Duke of York's Garden, Gloucestershire and somewhere near the Tower of London. Castles were visual evidence of the past, easy references for spectators to recognise, making fewer demands on their imagination and therefore providing them with increased satisfaction, since their expectation was connected with their foreknowledge (Fox 213, McInnis 16).

Sound effects, properties and costumes all contributed to making the experience richer for the audiences (3). The gages thrown down by Mowbray and Bolingbroke as they accuse each other of treason before the court and later the host of gages thrown down in the presence of Henry IV instruct theatre patrons visually and audibly, and when Richard and Bolingbroke each hold part of the crown, the symbolism would not be lost on the crowd. When Richard breaks a hand mirror in Westminster Hall the sound of breaking glass emphasises his "brittle glory," his vulnerability, to the watchers (4.1.277). Among the other properties in this play to engage the audience were flags, sceptre, weapons and a coffin. Costume enhanced the characters and was a primary attraction in the theatres (Weimann "Performance" 117). Elizabethan sumptuary laws, ostensibly to protect the English wool industry, dictated who could wear what and provided fines for those who exceeded their social station. Clothes were a symbol of power. Anyone who had a license from the Queen, and this included acting troupes and actors, was exempt, so this created a second-hand clothing commerce between the wealthy and the theatre companies (Jones 189). Actors wore their own clothes, the products of tailors and whatever was bequeathed to the theatre companies or bought by them (Stern "Documents" 118). Some came from the court (Jones 189). Gabriel Egan commented that the clothing stock of a theatre company could easily exceed the value of the building they were performing in and gives the example of the gown for Patient

Griselda at £15, equivalent to over $2,000 today.[58] It was a theatre company's largest investment (Orgel 105). A gown for Cardinal Wolsey cost £39[59], and theatres needed a lot of gowns and coverups to allow for the quick costume changes required by the frequent doubling of casts (MacIntyre 109,112 Bevington 92). Actors sometimes played many parts, and we hear a confirmation of that in *As You Like It*.[60] In *Richard II*, apart from the Queen's and the Duchess of Gloucester's clothing, and the appropriate clothing for the gentlemen of the court, gardeners and groom of the stable, there was armour and a gorget to help engage the onlookers. As Jones and Stallybrass comment, what the actors wore provided early modern playgoers with visual challenges to provide clues about the play they were seeing; clothing stimulated a cultural fantasy, the ability for a short time, to enable theatre patrons to participate in an imagined world, and in the history plays, worlds to which they would not otherwise have access (207).

Another feature of audience recognition was their familiarity with some of the actors. The repertory system encouraged frequent attendance, and the public anticipated the appearance of for example the comic actors of their time: Richard Tarleton with his tavern style, able to evoke laughs just by putting his face through the curtain, as Derricke in *Famous Victories*, William Kemp appearing in *The Three English Brothers*, with his jigs and bawdiness, and Robert Armin who played Touchstone and Autolycus (Butler, Thomson, DNB).

In *Richard II* in particular, the crowds recognised some of the links that connect former times with their own. Trial by Battle had been long out of favour as a means of the settling of accounts. Katharine Maus describes this as "archaic" and "discredited" for the late 1590's, but a settling of accounts by violence fits well within the late Tudor period (NS 973, 977). Most young men carried knives, fencing was one of the popular spectacles among the bankside attractions and the other leading playwright, Marlowe, had been stabbed by a poniard in the eye in 1593. So, here was a popular fight to the death, scheduled at Coventry, and attended imaginatively by more than three times the full capacity of the London amphitheatres. The accusations and counter-accusations of Mowbray and Bolingbroke recalled the quarrel between Sir Philip Sidney and The

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[58] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-vXnSCjgQoo&list=PLaMJJKzC7LcK9TNyhee4WeJhylIIDP2lC&index=3.

[59] Equivalent to more than $5,300 in today's money

[60] "one man in his life plays many parts" 2.7.143

Earl of Oxford; just like Richard II dropping his warder and stopping the contest at Coventry, Elizabeth I prevented Sidney and Oxford from fighting a duel, although for a different reason, largely because of the unseemliness of a knight challenging an earl.

Theatre patrons also noted Bolingbroke's popularity, so similar to their own sovereign's. After the successful celebration at her accession, she made Accession Day an annual event, with pageants and tournaments. Her progresses throughout the home counties showed her to her people. She made visits to the universities. She was an excellent orator. *Richard II* sympathises with the king and his self-destruction, but makes it obvious how important public relations is for Bolingbroke's cause. The Elizabethan audience would relate to the common touch that their queen used so effectively. Both in his leaving the country in exile and on his triumphant return to London, Bolingbroke excels in this, as Richard reluctantly accepts:

> [We] observed his courtship to the common people,
>
> How he did seem to dive into their hearts
>
> With humble and familiar courtesy…
>
> …A brace of draymen bid God speed him well,
>
> And had the tribute of his supple knee
>
> With 'Thanks, my countrymen, my loving friends,'
>
> As were our England in reversion his. *Richard II* 2.1.23-34

During the invasion, as Scrope explains to the king, both young and old, the elderly and women-weavers join the rebellion (3.2.108-115). The king has lost the golden touch enjoyed by Gaunt's son. The Duke of York describes Bolingbroke's popular connection with the London crowds, the very ones hearing the play in Shakespeare's time, and very much in keeping with Queen's Elizabeth's methods of self-promotion[61]:

> …all tongues cried "God save thee, Bolingbroke!'…

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[61] Somerset 71, quoting an observer during the queen's ceremonial entry into London in 1553: "did declare herself thankfully to receive her people's goodwill" and "she thanked them with exceeding liveliness both of countenance and voice"

…Whilst he, from one side to the other turning,

Bare-headed, lower than his proud steed's neck,

Bespake them thus: 'I thank you, countrymen',

And thus still doing, thus he passed along (5.2.10-21)

The play lets Bolingbroke echo Queen Elizabeth's intimate connection with her people, and enables the audience to recognise this.

In the crowd scenes, the audience observes itself, so they participate in disliking Richard's rule, they bid a reluctant farewell to the exiled Duke, and they celebrate the usurping Bolingbroke's triumphant procession through London and the disgrace of Richard. They also recognise themselves as the voice of the people in the gardener and the groom. The gardener describes the political situation metaphorically. He well understands the link between pruning and cultivating, and the art of successful government:

O, what pity is it

That he had not so trimmed and dressed his land

As we this garden…

Had he done so to great and growing men,

They might have lived to bear, and he to taste,

Their fruits of duty (3.4.57-64)

Richard, contrary to the gardener's comments, had "cut off the heads of too fast-growing sprays/ That look too lofty in our commonwealth," the Duke of Gloucester, Earl of Arundel and Earl of Warwick.[62] His mistake was not to have pursued Mowbray (who was complicit with Richard in the death of Gloucester), and Bolingbroke, a potential rival for the throne. In 1595, Elizabeth had thirty seven years of creditable reign behind her; in 1398 at the time of the trial by battle, as the play indicates, Richard's effective rule had been far less than the twenty-one years since he came

[62] Richard ordered the murder of Gloucester, executed Arundel and exiled Warwick; *Richard II* 3.4.35-6

to the throne; now his favorites were alienating his barons, his arbitrary taxation was impoverishing them, and his decisions to banish Mowbray and Bolingbroke for life inequitable and self-serving. In the play, Shakespeare asks the audience tacitly to judge whether this king has the right to rule, and they could, but they would recognise that it would be treason to similarly criticize their Queen. Through the visit of the groom the theatre crowd visits the king in his cell at Pomfret Castle. With the news that Barbary, Richard's former horse that he had cared for, carried Bolingbroke proudly on his coronation day, spectators have to decide whether they feel more sympathetic to the doomed monarch, or that he deserved his fate through the poor exercise of his duty. The audience in their turn have an obligation to judge.

4.2 *Introspection*

Play audiences also experienced *Richard II* through some self-questioning. However, their degree of observation would be different from today's audiences. In 1597 and immediately after, no one among the spectators would have been able to read the playscript beforehand, or study it. Introspection in the late sixteenth century would have been more visceral and more elementary. One thing they could do at any of the history plays was to imagine the death of the monarch, particularly prior to *Richard II*, those of King John, Richard III and Henry VI something that if voiced in 1597 about their own monarch was as good as treasonous as their Queen reached her sixty-fourth year (Shapiro "Lear" 9). Patrons in the galleries and Lord's room would have looked more inward than those standing in the yard, purely from the point of view of their higher social status and therefore education. Any self-questioning would have been basic. However, playgoers had feelings; there was pity, as a 1610 letter described the conclusion to Othello:

> Desdemona.killed in frint of us by her husband, although she acted her part excellently throughout, in her death, moved us especially when, as she lay in her bed, with her face alone she implored the pity of the audience (Dawson 19)

Revenge would have struck a chord. Gaunt refuses to avenge the murder of his brother on the orders of his nephew, Richard. Theatre patrons were familiar with the very popular *Spanish Tragedy* of Kyd, first performed in 1587, and both *3Henry VI* of 1595 and *Richard III* of 1597

fall into this revenge category. Gaunt prefers to let God deal with it. That was weak. Cancellation of the trial by battle at Coventry must have been a major disappointment to the theatre crowd and theatrically devastating; Phyllis Rackin describes this event as alienating the audience ("Stages" 49). Sword fights were one of the many alternative entertainments to the theatre on the bankside, and the Queen's accession-day tilts at Whitehall were an important annual feature of London life after 1581, featuring the jousts and foot-combat that Richard II had denied (Young 33). After all, playgoers had anticipated experiencing half a ton of man, armour and horse clashing at a combined speed of forty miles an hour, and then a fight to the death (Mortimer "Henry IV" 43). Did anyone in the theatre have inner feelings about the king's spiteful attitude to his most senior and revered counsellor Gaunt when Richard invokes God "to help him to his grave immediately"? (1.4.59). Maybe not, and maybe they did not react to Richard's obvious unfairness at the different penalties imposed on Mowbray and Bolingbroke. They could envisage the next parts of the play as a game of checkers: Richard leaves for Ireland by the west coast, Bolingbroke returns to England on the east coast; Bolingbroke has a small force that quickly becomes an army, Richard's army evaporates with the rumour that he is dead. When Richard's uncle York refuses to contest Bolingbroke's illegal return, the game is over. The audience can feel this when the king sits on the ground to tell sad stories that bring him physically down to the level of those standing in the yard. Up to that point, no monarch real or actor-personator had expressed his thoughts to an audience from such an abased position. Visually but unconsciously it diminished respect for the institution of monarchy, as did the situation that kings and queens were in the history plays on display and subject to the judgement of the large socially-diverse crowds of theatre-goers. The Queen herself acknowledged this increase in general familiarity (Sharpe 461). Elizabeth stood, Richard sat.

Embodying the feelings of a theatre audience four hundred years ago involves some supposition. As Annabel Patterson comments about the group of writers that contributed to Holinshed's Chronicles, they were not beyond writing conditionally, "some say…," "others affirme…," "some wish…," and "this they say…" (Paterson "Holinshed" 63). Even in 2017 an English professor[63] writing about drama in the period qualifies many assertions with "let us now

[63] Akihiro Yamada in *Experiencing Drama in the English Renaissance-Readers and Audiences*

suppose," provided that," "must have been," and "surely this is…". However, Sarah Dustagheer argues that there is an intellectual value for "informed speculation" in her example, the different experiences of audiences between the seventeenth century Globe and Blackfriars theatre and the reconstructions of the twenty-first century (11). We are now in a post-Freudian society, when feelings are examined. In 1597 and just thereafter, it is questionable to imagine that audiences felt the same way as modern theatre crowds about experiencing compassion for the humbled but not contrite King Richard, as the crown slips away, and Bolingbroke continually humiliates him. However, at the conclusion of the play, patrons finally get the kind of entertainment they craved since the cancellation of the trial-by-battle, a fight to the death with blood on the cell floor. The prisoner heroically manages to kill two of Exton's armed men before Sir Piers cuts him down. Richard dies honorably, unlike King John or Henry VI. As for Henry IV's declaration that his "soul is full of woe," as Harbage wrote in 1961, there is always a danger in assuming unintended meaning (144). In Shakespeare's next two plays, Henry strengthens his position and tries to deal with the wilful next-in-line to the throne; he never goes on the expiatory pilgrimage that he promised at the conclusion of *Richard II*. But the audience could question the extent of Henry IV's self-confessed guilt.

4.3 *Memory*

Memory in the 1590's, as we know from Thomas Brock (see p69) went back to Mary Tudor's reign and almost to the extent of three generations, well into the reign of Henry VIII. Puttenham considered it a source of improved judgement and wisdom (1:19 31-2). McLuhan makes a point of the fact that in a semi-literate oral society such as London in the 1590's, memory was more acute than it is today. Audience memory influenced the play-going experience then in many ways. One issue was repression. Mary Tudor had repressed Protestants, Elizabeth Catholics (see note p75). Richard leased out his tax collecting and dunned the wealthy with forced loans. Then, contrary to his coronation oath, he confiscated all the Gaunt and Hereford estates after the death of John of Gaunt and the exile of Bolingbroke. It was a different kind of autocracy but Richard's heavy-handedness in the play conjured up memories of the Marian burnings and in Elizabeth's time not only the weekly obligation to read one of the book of homilies in church but in 1581 a financially crippling fine of £20 for non-attendance and in 1593 imprisonment (Griffiths 1:4-5, Mortimer "Travellers" 84-5). Another memory evoked by *Richard II* was the rebellion of the Earl of Essex in 1601 and his abortive coup. As Andrew Gurr

comments, the Essex faction saw the Earl as Bolingbroke and even the government had this suspicion (Gurr "Playgoing" 141, Dutton 170). It was also the gossip of the street (Hammer 139). In 1598 Essex had voiced the key theme of the play, "Cannott Princes erre? Cannott subjectes receive wrong? Is an earthly power or authority infinite?" (339). When Essex's followers commissioned a production of this 'old' play, they reminded audiences that they were watching a treasonous attempt to take over the monarchy.

Bolingbroke defied his exile and returned to England to reclaim his estates. The difference that many of the playgoers may not have noticed is that Bolingbroke had a following that increased to become an army; Essex had a small power base in England and his two hundred odd followers were insufficient to overcome the Queen's militia. If Essex's likeness to Bolingbroke was common gossip, then the rebellious coup elicited a vivid memory for spectators of *Richard II* after 1601. After 1605 this memory was enhanced by the Powder Plot; Bolingbroke's invasion on stage, Essex's attempt to seize the court and the gunpowder plotters' attempt to eliminate king and parliament were all efforts to unseat legitimate authority. A third memory for playgoers was the execution of a reigning monarch. It was only ten years before the first performance of *Richard II* that Elizabeth I had signed the death warrant of her cousin, Mary Queen of Scots. There was public rejoicing at the news of the execution, church bells were rung in London and throughout England (Mortimer "Travellers" 97). Celebrations were universal and included theatre patrons who had also may have seen the death on stage of Marlowe's Edward II. Richard II, Mary Queen of Scots and Edward II all died in royal castles. Like Bolingbroke, Elizabeth had ordered the death of a god-appointed monarch (Gurr "Elizabeth" 346). One more memory for spectators of *Richard II* was royal favorites. The presence of the venal Bushy, Bagot and Greene as the king's counsellors reminded playgoers of their own times. Robert Earl of Leicester had a major influence on Queen Elizabeth until his death in 1588. The Earl of Essex, stepson and godson to Leicester, and Walter Raleigh competed for the Queen's favour after 1588, both physically and poetically. They were all memorable and noticeable but they had short careers. Bolingbroke executed Bushy, Bagot and Greene in the play, Elizabeth I executed Essex and James I executed Raleigh.

4.4 *Language*

Language directly connected the audience to the play. In the Elizabethan amphitheaters everyone was with fifty feet of the actors and heard, even if their sightlines impeded their view (Smith "Acoustic" 206)**.** Language made everything clear. As an example, Dustagheer mentions the presence of a ring in *All's Well that Ends Well*. Even if a spectators could not see it on stage, actors use the word twenty-nine times (135). *Richard II*, with its rhyming iambic pentameters is particularly rich in language. Patsy Rodenburg describes the declamatory effect as the beat of the heart, the sound of the sea, a "constant passionate pulse of energy" (84,90). As an actor at the new Globe, Adrian Noble agrees about the pulse and that the feel for rhythm is as natural as breathing (65):

> [the] verse line is somehow the perfect conduit for thought and expression in the English language. It has strong forward motion but at the same time can merely underscore a line; it has good length to allow expression of thought; and it can contain an almost infinite amount of variety…crucially, it seems to most accurately represent the way language expresses itself (50).

Noble emphasises that in Shakespeare's time, theatre patrons were an audience rather than spectators, so, Hamlet asks Polonius "Will the king *hear* this piece of work?" (Hamlet 3.3.41). Today we go to *see* a play (Noble 1). The 1590's was still very much an oral society. Language produced mental images and these in turn led to visual effects that demanded imaginative engagement on the part of the theatre crowd (Syme 131). The followers of distributed cognition, Hutchins and Tribble suggested that language is socially distributed understanding (Hutchins 232). That accurately describes the reception of audiences in the 1590's. Their understanding came principally from the actors' words, supplemented by their recent and current memories (Tribble "Minds" 601).

Ben Jonson would claim a timelessness for Shakespeare's works. However, the words of *Richard II* had a different context in the late sixteenth century. The deposition scene was politically sensitive both in the light of Essex's attempted coup and his followers' paying for a presentation of the play at that time. Language mattered. Most of today's audiences are much further from the stage, and no palace revolt threatens. Then, many plots had been foiled against

the life of the Queen, many European rulers assassinated and in 1601 her most famous general threatened to overthrow her. Elizabeth was not in fact Richard II, but the dramatic arc of the play was unsettling for the theatre crowds listening to an unseemly squabble among the upper class over the crown, after their experience of the much longer turmoil in the preceding plays of *Henry VI*, *Richard III* and *King John*. Compared with their hero-worship of their Queen, playgoers heard that the fourteenth century monarch was guilty of the murder of his uncle, sexual deviance, rapacious taxation and poor judgement. Gaunt accuses Richard to his brother's widow, "correction lieth in those hands/ Which made the fault that we cannot correct," and Bolingbroke smears the king's name at the arrest of his favorites, "You have, in manner, with your sinful hours/ Made a divorce betwixt his queen and him,/ Broke the possession of a royal bed…by your foul wrongs" (*Richard II* 1.2.4-5, 3.1.11-15). Richard "farm[s]" his tax-collections, uses "blank charters" to extract money from the rich and on Gaunt's death, "we do seize to us/ The plate, coin, revenues,,and moveables/ Whereof our uncle Gaunt did stand possessed" (1.4.44, 47, 2.1.161-3). Cancelling the trial by battle at Coventry and banishing the combatants seems to remove the taint of Richard's connection to the murder of the Duke of Gloucester, but when the king reduces Bolingbroke's exile from ten to six years, the king's unfitness to rule and his capriciousness resonated for the audience in Bolingbroke's sarcastic comment, "such is the breath of kings" (1.3.208). The playwright sets up Richard for his tragedy. He has betrayed his duty, compared with the Tudor Queen, whom the general population applauded for the elimination of her rival ten years previously, who was very publicly virtuous, spent government money parsimoniously and was constant in her judgement, even if this frustrated her close counsellors.

The play is essentially a contest between Richard and Bolingbroke for the crown and its brilliance is in the fact that as Richard's powerlessness becomes apparent and Bolingbroke becomes increasingly strong enough to dispossess Richard from the monarchy, the king's language is more poetic and his rhetoric more emphatic while Bolingbroke's contributions are briefer and less impressive. The weaker character is made stronger through language. The popularity of the play through its frequent re-printings means that this major aspect of the play likely resonated with playgoers. When Richard returns from Ireland, and claims that "Not all the water in the rough rude sea/ Can wash the balm from an anointed king," his other musings give

the impression that he is dangerously detached from reality (3.2.50-1). God will not guard him when his army has evaporated, hearing a false rumour that the king was dead. Even before he hears that his uncle York has joined Bolingbroke and all Richard's northern castles have surrendered, the king sits on the scaffold at eye level with the groundlings in an unprecedented abasement of the might of monarchy, in a removal of the mystique of princely power that reduces him to lowly subject:

> For you have mistook me all this while.
> I live with bread, like you; feel want,
> Taste grief, need friends. Subjected thus,
> How can you say that I am king? (3.2.170-3)

Bolingbroke approaches Richard at Flint Castle, kneeling. Richard is still nominally king. But since he is obviously also a prisoner, he concedes, "Your own is yours, and I am yours, and all," and acknowledging that Bolingbroke has overcome him with a stronger force, whether legitimate or not, "What you will have I'll give, and willing too;/ For do we must what force would have us do" (3.3.195, 204-5). In practical terms, the king has surrendered the crown, but Bolingbroke wants to have the approval of legitimacy and attempts to extract an official confession from the former king. Here, Richard has an opportunity for his oratory to soar and appeal to the sympathy of the theatre crowd. He cannot see through his tears, yet his eyes "can see a sort of traitors here," and his nobility has been usurped (4.1.236). "Good king, great king-and yet not greatly good," Richard addresses Bolingbroke, sarcastically (4.1.253), before he asks for the hand mirror to parody if he can still see himself as king. He breaks the glass; glory, he declares, is a brittle as his image in the mirror.

Richard does not get an opportunity to win a large crowd, like Mark Anthony's speech after the assassination of Julius Caesar, he only has the courtiers at Westminster Hall, almost all solidly behind Bolingbroke. Now he can only prophesy doom to Northumberland and those who helped Bolingbroke usurp his throne and muse, in prison, on his final days. Language enables him to do both in a powerful envoi:

> He shall think that thou, which know'st the way
> To plant unrightful kings, wilt know again,
> Being ne'er so little urged another way,
> To pluck him headlong from the usurpéd throne (5.1.62-5)

Greed will bring this to pass in the next play, and by this the audience know there is to be a sequel. Richard's heroic attempt to defend himself and his murder in his cell provides a dramatic climax to the play, and fulfil the expectation for violence that he had encouraged in the audience at the thwarted trial by battle in Coventry. If the theatre patrons were sympathetic to him, they had been conditioned to this by his eloquent prison thoughts on the descent from monarch to no-person:

> Sometimes am I king;
> Then treason makes me wish myself a beggar,
> And so I am. Then crushing penury
> Persuades me I was better when a king.
> Then am I kinged again, and by and by
> Think I am unkinged by Bolingbroke,
> And straight am nothing. But whate'er I be,
> Nor I, nor any man that but man is,
> With nothing shall be pleased till he be eased
> With being nothing (5.5.32-42).

Shakespeare's Richard II is an actor, and knows how to play the crowd. He loses his crown to Bolingbroke, yet through language he not only wins the sympathy of the audience but severely discomforts his rival. In this history drama of Shakespeare, playgoers did see their forefathers' acts raised from oblivion as Nashe had described. However, the playwright invited the audience to judge whether the weak but oratorical king fighting for his life in a prison cell or the usurping but comparatively taciturn noble were the more valiant. While they might have been discussing this in their ordinaries after the play, the author had challenged their imaginations to relate an unworthy but ordained ruler to an invading usurper, to compare a fourteenth century situation to

their own, to consider the past in terms of the present. Their queen personified for them the embodiment of the experience of feeling they were part of history when she exclaimed that she saw herself as Richard II.

Chapter 5 “I am sworn brother to a leash of drawers”: playgoers as familiars of royalty and on the periphery of the court in *Henry IV* (*1Henry IV* 2.5.6)

1 Henry IV

> *Can no man tell me of my unthrifty son?...*
> *Enquire at London ‘mongst the taverns there,*
> *For there, they say, he daily doth frequent*
> *With unrestrainèd loose companions…*
> *So dissolute a crew.* (*Richard II* 5.3.1-12)

1Henry IV was even more popular with audiences than *Richard II.* The play was reprinted in quartos twice in 1599, and there were four more iterations before the first folio of 1623. Its long title informed playgoers that it would be more than a history play. This would now be the valiant past with comic attributes.[64] Playgoers realised they were in for a treat; William Kemp, the crowd’s favorite clown in 1598, was probably in the role of Falstaff, as Jean Howard suggests (NS 1184). Records show that this play performed “at The Theatre and perhaps later at the Curtain and the Globe” (Wiggins 3:366). Andrew Gurr confirms that there were performances at court in 1612-13 and 1624-5 but there is no record of a court performance prior to 1603 (Gurr “Company” 303-4). There is a tradition that Queen Elizabeth asked Shakespeare for more Falstaff, as evidence that she was part of an audience for *1Henry IV*, and this prompted *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, but Walter Cohen regards John Dennis’s assertion of 1702 as dubious (NS 1257). So, we cannot prove that the queen heard *1Henry IV*.

However, the play had a long life after 1600, particularly because of the character of Falstaff (Ingleby xxxv). There is a record of payment for this play, along with *Richard II* in 1613 and *1Henry IV* was among the fifteen of Shakespeare’s plays acted between 1623 and 1663 (241,322). With opportunity for the audience to seem to share in the action in the Boar’s Head tavern, and by including so much of which playgoers were already aware, the playwright ensured

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[64] The historie of Henrie the fovrth with the battell at Shrewsburie betweene the king and Lord Henry Percy, surnamed Henry Hotspurr of the North with the humorous conceits of Sir John Falstaffe newly corrected by W. Shakespeare (https://folgerpedia.folger.edu/Henry_IV,_Part_1).

its participative, inclusive and enjoyable quality. With the recognition of what they knew, the recall of past times, the feelings the play engendered in them and by their familiarity of the language, the author made it easier for theatre patrons to immerse themselves in the experience, without being conscious of the effort. As Tribble phrases it, "the present can slip into the past" by these techniques ("Minds" 601).

Whoever had seen *The Famous Victories of Henry V* in the 1580's would have recognised parts that appeared in *Henry IV* and *Henry V*. The anonymously written *Victories* was an obvious source play for Shakespeare. It starts with a robbery of the king's receivers by prince Hal and his cronies near Deptford, much nearer London, but it is also much less reverent, and Hal seems to incorporate something of the Falstaff to come as makes his exit from the Fleet prison:

> here's poisoning, here's hanging whipping and the Divell and all: but I tell you sirs, when I am king, wee will have no such things, but my lads, if the olde king my father were dead, we would all be kings (9).

The old tavern in Eastcheap is there in *Famous Victories*, together with the good wine that Hal and Falstaff will enjoy in *1Henry IV* and the wenches in *2Henry IV* (9). Apart from the advantage of those in the amphitheatre who recognised this old play from the previous decade, and in *1Henry IV* noise, costumes and props, Shakespeare filled his play with anachronisms, geographical references and enabled theatre patrons to participate in what to many was a familiar meeting place from *Victories*, the tavern. Almost effortlessly for theatre patrons, they recognised parts of the world they inhabited: the dangers in road travel, vulnerability to impressment in the army, the prevalence of pickpockets, and the many opportunities for self-indulgence represented by Falstaff.

Stage noise does not compete seriously with the noise inside and outside the amphitheatre until the battle of Shrewsbury, when there is a series of calls for trumpet, drums and alarums, and then the hand-to-hand fights between the king and Douglas, Douglas and prince Hal and finally what the audience had been long awaiting, the defeat of Hotspur at the hands of the young prince. Prior to that, the sounds were relatively soft, a knocking on the door, Falstaff snorting in his stupor, some sobbing, some Welsh spoken, a song and the unusual sound of the king weeping with frustrated love for his wayward son "with foolish tenderness" (3.2.91). Properties enriched

spectators' experiences, adding visual clues to the sound and action, a lantern to signify night, the disguising visors and traveller's money to dramatize the robbery at Gadshill and Falstaff's superfluous sword and buckler. Later, Falstaff will appear with a truncheon, and his pistol holster filled with a bottle of sack, additional evidence to the audience of his being a "coward on instinct" (2.5.251). A map emphasises to playgoers the serious intent of the rebellious plotters and Hotspur brushes aside the letters of a messenger, he is so impatient to engage the king's army. One item above all would have resonated with the audience, the papers in Falstaff's pocket that reveal the bill for his food and drink and his extravagance. He paid five shillings and eightpence for sack at a time when an able-bodied man could feed well for a day on about five pence (Cook 232). Inflation was rife in the 1590's. Playgoers would have known how much bread Falstaff got for a halfpenny; at the start of Elizabeth's reign half a penny would buy a loaf of 28 ounces which by the time *1Henry IV* opened would have bought only 4 ounces because of the effects of the rapid rise in prices (Youings 275). The actor-prince was probably not the only one who found Falstaff's menu choices monstrous.

The play begins with the rich and expensive costumes of the king and his lords. The very next scene is a vivid contrast, with Falstaff in prince Hal's apartments. He may have the respectable name of Sir John Falstaff, and from the long title to the play the audience knew he would appear, but what he wears in his inordinate size is a surprize for the theatre crowd. Falstaff is not only plump by his own admission, but described by his companion actors as a fat rogue, fat-witted and instantly recognised by the sheriff, "one of them is...a gross fat man" (2.5.466). He is a "tun of man," "out of all compass, out of all reasonable compass" (2.5.8-9, 3.3.17). So, Falstaff's barrel-like costume was an extraordinary attraction (as it still is today). As Emma Smith comments, Shakespeare gives this character the most thorough physical description in all of his works, more even than the blackness of Othello (115). Falstaff's costume and appearance show than he cannot be confined and his escape from his garments, as prince Hal says, could only be effected by unbuttoning (1.2.2). The actor in any era has to be careful not to upstage the rest of the cast, because, as Smith says, Falstaff's appearance takes over the play ("Shakespeare" 126). Prior to the battle of Shrewsbury, and an opportunity for the combatants to put on stage armour, Falstaff has changed to the quilted jacket and equipped his pistol holster with a bottle of sack (4.3.43, 5.3.53). Hotspur has already drawn his sword by the time prince Hal discovers Falstaff's trick, and the battle is on, with armoured actors and fights with real swords. Costumes

provide spectators with recognition, and improve their awareness, as do stage directions. Shakespeare the actor knew what his fellow actors needed and the robbery at Gadshill is a good example: thieves *coming forward, they rob them and bind them, as they are sharing the prince and Poins set upon them, they all run away, leaving the booty behind them* (2.2.75 ff). By this means, audience recognition is enhanced. So, it is also when Falstaff decides to claim Hotspur as his personal triumph at the battle of Shrewsbury: *Falstaff… falls down as if he were dead, the prince killeth Hotspur, Falstaff riseth up, stabbing Hotspur, He takes up Hotspur on his back* (5.5.75 ff). Playgoers' recognition eased their need of imagination; the seemingly dead knight has a resurrection in front of them.

Did Falstaff represent the morality plays, ready to brandish the dagger of lath associated with the Vice character, or did he more personify the Carnival (*1Henry IV* 2.5.124)? The answer seems to be a mixture of the two, and not exactly what either of them originally stood for. Falstaff is both an evolution of the forms of morality plays and Carnival celebrations prior to Lent. Until the 1560's, when a new kind of drama was wanted, the Vice had been the dominant actor, always on the stage, servant of the seven deadly sins, trying to destroy Mankind (Withington 743). He set the mood of the play and promoted intimacy with the audience who were naturally more interested in his evil than his comic side (Jonassen 259). Falstaff, however, has no sinister intent, his soliloquies are about drinking and the disowning of the honour-code, not like the Vice's customary self-revelations. He is Hal's dupe and never fully in control. Although heavily involved in promoting the Vice's seven deadly sins, as Jonassen says, Falstaff is "an innocent Vice" (52). The Vice too had origins in holiday (167). Carnival preceded Lent, and is associated with eating, drinking, masks, disguises, fat men, men dressed as women (as in the theatre), and a communal activity, but with no boundary between actors and spectators. It is like the "house turned upside down" described by the carrier in Rochester when regular authority is not only absent, it is defied (*1Henry IV* 2.1.10). But when the thin Hal of Lent sends the fat pleasure-seeking Falstaff of Carnival to the Fleet prison, stability replaces holiday license. The knight even criticizes his own corrupt recruiting practises since "the good householders, yeoman's sons…[and] contracted bachelors" had all bribed their way out of conscription (4.2.14-15). By this, although he is a facilitator of misrule, Sir John endorses authority, as Robert Weimann and Hugh Grady notice (Grady 618). Falstaff coveted not prince Hal's soul, but a sinecure at the court of Henry V, and he attempts this through a playfulness as much associated

with carnival as the morality plays, setting his own rules, as he does with his brilliant and improvised excuse to avoid combat with the "true prince" at Gad's Hill.

5.1 *Recognition*

The audience recognised Shakespeare's anachronisms without thinking. Life two hundred years previously was brought into their present day largely without playgoers realising it and particularly in the tavern scenes. Onstage in the Boar's Head in Cheapside patrons drink the same brown bastard and sack imported from Spain in Shakespeare's time and eat capons, an Elizabethan delicacy. Contemporary snacks of egg and butter are served at the Rochester Inn. The tapster Francis's master is an upwardly-mobile *Elizabethan* Londoner for the crowd to laugh at "this leathern-jerkin, crystal-button, knot-pated, agate-ring, puke-stocking, caddis-garter, smooth-tongue, Spanish-pouch" (2.5.64-66). Shakespeare uses "leaping-houses" for brothels for the first time and many other terms that are found only in the sixteenth century like foot-landrakers for highway robbers, underskinkers for tapsters, strikers for footpads, maltworms for drunks, and muddy for stupid (OED on line). Hotspur's fop at the battle of Holmedon has an Elizabethan pouncet-box. Anachronisms, as Tribble comments, are polytemporal; although they access memory on many levels, they are only one way to link past and present ("Minds" 588, 592-3). Another method the playwright used to provide helpful mental images to the theatre-going crowds was to connect them to familiar geography.

As Jean Howard acknowledges in her introduction to the play in the *Norton Shakespeare*, Shakespeare makes much more in *1Henry IV* of the cosmography so extensively written about by Leland, Harrison and Stow (NS 1179). The effect is to enable the audience to more easily imagine themselves in their own land, and link the stage action to what they recognised. London is, of course, well served by the prince's apartments, the palace and the tavern at Eastcheap, but in the course of the play, the carrier will deliver to Charing Cross, Hotspur teases his wife about walking to Finsbury, Hal makes an appointment to meet Sir John at one of the Inns of Court and as Falstaff quips, makes an unsavoury reference to Moor-ditch, one of London's open sewers. The other locations enable the theatre-goers to recognise what was near and further afield. Nearby was the innyard at Rochester, scene of the 'robbery,' further were the battle at Shrewsbury, Falstaff marching near Coventry and the plotters dividing up England in Warkworth castle, north of Newcastle, and York, home of another plotter, the archbishop. The playwright

takes the armchair travellers at the amphitheatre much further. Hal invokes the festival at Manningtree, Essex, as Hotspur does too, after his victory over the Scots at Holmeldon, and Northumberland remembers Bolingbroke's landing at Humberside. Bridgenorth, near Shrewsbury; Burton on Trent, Sutton Coldfield, St.Albans, Daventry, Kendal and Doncaster all occur in the play. Like locations, rivers are not ignored and there are references to the Wye, the Severn and the Trent. The inference is that Shakespeare knew a lot of English geography and understood that his theatre patrons would recognise his references and this recognition would add credibility to the illusions on the stage. There were other advantages to geographical references. They contributed continuity to the stories. The Boar's Head tavern in Eastcheap in *1Henry IV* is the same location in *2Henry IV* and *Henry V*; the Percies plot rebellion against the king at Warkworth castle in the first part of Henry IV and the playwright resumes the second part at the same location. For the more literate spectators, the links between what they knew of history which were now re-connected to place in front of them, added to the integrity of the play, literally "grounding" the history in the playgoers' personal experience, making them participants in the history of the place. What the audience might not have understood was the playwright's talent at presenting the action as if in many places simultaneously, which made the illusion more realistic (NS 1179).

5.2 *Introspection*

Cognitively, the audience may have found it difficult to access their feelings at this play. Contrary to Sidney's admonition not to mix clowns and kings, this performance depended on their juxtaposition. Such was the powerful spectacle and irreverent speech of the gargantuan Falstaff that it had to be challenging to take the history in the play seriously. Honour, duty, obedience and strict parenting, the concerns of Hotspur and King Henry, could all give way to the attraction of enjoyment. Falstaff is not only a character for "all the world," but he has the street smarts that the crowds appreciated. Teased about his part in the highway robbery, his riposte that he could not touch the true prince is a brilliant piece of quick-thinking. Play-acting King Henry in the tavern, he makes a good case for his role as an alternative father-figure for Hal, and in pretending that he had personally defeated Hotspur at the battle of Shrewsbury, he is cunning. Only by his shady recruiting process and lack of feeling for his many dead conscripts would he have inspired disgust among the ex-servicemen and some others in the amphitheatre.

The dour king and the quarrelsome rebels play their parts, but Falstaff for the most part sucks the theatrical oxygen out of the air whenever he appears and make the spectators anticipate his return for new tricks, like his appreciation for sack or his philosophy about honour. They love Sir John for his principal and irreverent role and for providing more humorous conceits than they expected.

Falstaff also satisfies audience curiosity about the world of the court, even if it is in their imagination. In the scene in the tavern playgoers at the Globe watch the denizens of the Boar's Head view the playacting between the king and his son, acted in alternating roles by the prince and the knight. In this play within a play, spectators are as if they themselves were inside the Boar's Head and the playwright represents them on the tavern stage. It is the very definition of Heywood's description of theatrical witchery. It is also farce. But even if a parody, theater patrons can feel that they participate in a dialogue within the royal family, and to support this belief, one of the actors is actually the son of the king. What makes this even more enjoyable for those in the yard and the galleries is that they already knew Henry IV was irritated by his son's behaviour from *Richard II*. What they did not know was that the prince would harden his heart against the former loose-companion after he had learned more about the craft of being royal.

Theatre patrons might have felt some scorn for Hotspur and the impetuousness and old-fashioned sense of honour that they could have linked to the Queen Elizabeth's favourite, the Earl of Essex. After Hotspur's success at the battle of Holmedon, he and Essex share some similarities: passionate beliefs, fiery temper, rash rudeness, an overdeveloped sense of his own ability and like Hotspur at the battle of Shrewsbury, Essex often had an inability to carry strategy through to its desired conclusion. Neither of them were good listeners. Hotspur's very name suggested to the audience that they could judge him for making hasty and poor decisions. Were playgoers sympathetic to the king's loss of control of his son, to the extent that it caused him to weep on the stage? This is doubtful. They had heard Henry declare in a rueful moment that he would rather have sired Hotspur than prince Hal[65]. They know that Hal is having much more enjoyable parenting at the hands of Falstaff. The knight's size, presence and irrepressibility tend to eclipse the theatre crowd's feelings for other deserving stage characters, although Falstaff's

[65] O, that it could be proved/ That some night-tripping fairy had exchanged/ In cradle clothes our children where they lay,/ And called mine Percy, his Plantagenet"(1.1.85-8)

inability to take anything seriously means that the crowd's introspection about alternative characters would not go very deep.

5.3 *Memory*

Rebellion prodded memory in the audience, but perhaps not as strongly as in the previous play. In *1Henry IV* it is only one of three themes, the self-education of prince Hal, the revolt of the king's former allies and the trajectory of the larger-than-life Falstaff as he tries to position himself for influence in the next reign. There were seven plots against Henry IV in five years, but Shakespeare included only four of them in the two parts of *Henry IV* (Mortimer "Henry IV" 288). Memory of the Northern Rebellion of 1569 which had also included the Percy family was over thirty years ago and may have faded at the time of the first performance of 1*Henry IV*. However, the queen obliged the theatre crowds to go to church every Sunday to hear a reading from one of the two books of homilies, and they specifically reminded congregations about rebels: their deaths are shameful, unworthy of burial, their mischief comes from Luciferian pride, and linking the authority of state with church, they are damned for committing a crime against God (Griffiths 1:114,553,555 2:571,574). Very resonant would be the recent rebellion of the Earl of Essex after 1601 and the powder plot for performances after 1605. In more recent memory, the dispersal of the first Spanish Armada in 1588 and the Queen's heroic appearance before her troops at Tilbury find an echo in the wounded prince Harry at the battle of Shrewsbury: "God forbid a shallow scratch should drive/ The Prince of Wales from such a field as this" (*1Henry IV* 5.4.10-11). Those of the spectators' forefathers *and* the Queen's valiant acts are raised from oblivion together. The presence of England's arch enemy Glendower in the play, although Welsh, reminded English spectators of their still ungovernable colony in Ireland. Falstaff's recruiting practices recalled for ex-soldiers in the audiences the blatant venality of some of the officer-class that the knight would make even more evident in the second part of *Henry IV*. The playwright made a point of bringing this corruption into public awareness.

5.4 *Language*

"Now shalt thou be moved," says Falstaff, as the prepares to address the prince and tavern audience (and larger amphitheatre patrons) in the guise of the king (2.5.350). In this play, Shakespeare demonstrates his mastery of the language to "move" both audiences. Thomas Wright emphasised the power of this influence, writing in 1604:

> By mouth he telleth his minde; in countenance he speaketh with a silent voice to the eyes; with all the universal life and body hee seemeth to say 'Thus we move, because by the passion we are moved' (214).

With a chair for a throne, a makeshift sceptre and cushion for crown, Falstaff does not hold back; "Stand aside, nobility," he says and after the prince has bowed to his 'father,' the playwright draws the audience into the play-acting (2.5.355). The writer employs speech very familiar to spectators: proverbs, puns, biblical references, mimicking, insults, swearwords, slang and bawdy humour. Proverbs were "the voice of the people" according to Adam Fox, and there may have been as many as twelve thousand in general use (113, 135). "Give the devil his due," says prince Hal, and Bardolf responds to Falstaff "I would to God my face were in your belly[66]" (1.2.106, 3.3.42). The early modern audience appreciated puns, and in this play they are plentiful: blood royal for ten shillings, pray for prey and ride up and down[67] (1.2.125-6, 2.1.74). With bibles in every church and accessible to all in the vernacular, playgoers absorbed well-known texts like Falstaff's "watch tonight, pray tomorrow" link to Matthew 26:41, and his reference to Dives, the rich man who refused to feed Lazarus in Luke 16:119-23 (2.5.254-5, 3.3.27-8).

The language of mimicking served to let members of the audience participate in the speaking character, because they could share the joke with the other actors on stage. The king complains that Hotspur is not surrendering his prisoners for ransom, and in return Harry Percy criticizes the king's unsuitable messenger, an Italianate Englishman, "fresh as a bridegroom…perfumèd like a milliner…smell[ing] so sweet…like a waiting gentlewoman" (1.3.32-54). The exchange between prince Hal and Falstaff at the tavern, each in turn acting the prince or his father puts the listeners, both in the tavern and in the theatre, into a parody of the court. The knight first takes the part of the king, and mock-chastises the prince for questionable behaviour while pressing for an acknowledgement of the virtue of a certain "goodly, portly man" (2.5.384). Prince Hal, taking the role of his father in turn, mock-challenges Falstaff mimicking the prince, for following "that villainous, abominable misleader of youth," still in jest, until Hal seems to step out of his role to declare that he will banish "plump Jack" (2.5.421, 438).

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[66] equivalent to 'stick it down your throat' (NS 1232, note 4)

[67] a Royal was a ten-shilling coin, 'ride' sexually (NS 1194 note 4, 1204 note 4).

Banishment will not come until the conclusion of the second part of *Henry IV*, but by sharing this mimicking with the audience, the playwright enables the crowd to glimpse part of the special knowledge that increases their awareness of where the play will take them. In subtly foreshadowing the decline of Falstaff's influence, the author improves the experience of the audience by making them privy to inside information, sharpens their understanding and includes them in the history unfolding before them. This involving them in the play, the sharing of information of which the stage characters like Falstaff are unaware, made them complicit and participants in the action on the stage. Because of this, they own their own history more deeply; they can not only look backwards, but they know something of what is to come.

Prior to this, prince Hal has already demonstrated his prowess at imitating others. To his friend Ned Poins, he parodies Hotspur's seriousness and devotion to duty: "he that kills me some six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast, washes his hands, and says to his wife, 'Fie upon this quiet life! I want work!'" before also acting Hotspur's wife (2.5.95-7). Language enables the prince to be whatever he chooses, and helps the theatre patrons imagine that they are both in their own world and that of two hundred years previously at the same time. Insults, swear words, the use of slang and the bawdy humour of their own contemporary world, all improve their perception and sometimes occur together:

> PRINCE HARRY: …This sanguine coward, this bed-presser, this horse-back-breaker, this huge hill of flesh—
>
> FALSTAFF: S'blood, you starveling, you elf-skin, you dried neat's tongue, you bull's pizzle, you stock-fish---O for breath to utter what is like thee!—you tailor's yard, you sheath, you bow-case, you vile standing tuck[68]--- (2.5.224-29)

"Gogs wounds" from *The Victories* becomes "zounds" in *1Henry IV*, and Gadshill illustrates underworld argot with his "Saint Nicholas's clerks" and "long-staff sixpenny strikers" [69](2.1.58, 70). The playwright's use of contemporary slang made audiences comfortable with the transition from their own world to that of Henry IV. It did not merely provide them with accessibility, it unconsciously immersed them in an earlier time, without much effort on their part. For the two

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[68] yard=penis, sheath=foreskin, standing=sexually erect (NS 1215 notes 4 & 5)

[69] highwaymen/ armed thieves (NS 1203-4 notes 7 and 1)

hours of their attendance at the play, the playwright facilitated their absorption into medieval times by employing their own argot and vocabulary.

This is the language that enables prince Hal to command all the good lads in Eastcheap when he is king and enables audiences to immerse themselves in such very familiar experiences of their own time, that they may have been hardly aware they were exerting any intellectual effort to enjoy and follow the play. It is another reason for its popularity. As an actor, Shakespeare knew how to please and engage the audiences who were now ready for the sequel. Prince Hal had provided the valiant acts, the heir and Falstaff had each embodied the king for the tavern crowd, in turn watched by the theatre audience, but in this first part of Henry IV, the familiarity of everyday language gives playgoers more of the present than the past in shaping their experience of this history.

2 Henry IV

> *If I had a thousand sons, the first human principle I would teach them should be to foreswear thin potations, and to addict themselves to sack* (*2Henry IV* 4.2.109-111)

Would the sequel give the audience the same experience as *Henry IV* part one? They likely had that expectation. The main thrust of the play follows the title closely, the king defeats rebellions but sickens and dies, to hand the crown to his much-reformed son. Prince Hal matures while the fat old reprobate Falstaff overreaches. Meanwhile the audience enjoy the process, and the playwright enables them to do this with the least effort by providing them with what Andrew Gurr calls ‘mental furniture” (“Playgoing” 6). The play gives them familiar actors from the repertory company, theatrical clues in the employment of costume, sound and stage properties, geographical references to enhance the play’s authenticity and an opportunity to explore unconsciously, their own feelings about characters on stage, and the characters about each other. The play awakens their memories, about former plays, about aging and sickness and family relations. Finally, through language, particularly their own sixteenth century vocabulary, the play on words and delight in bawdiness, they could seem to participate in the deeds of the past themselves.

The audiences knew from the even longer title to the play than the first part of *Henry IV*, that they would enjoy more of the fat old knight, together with an outlandish companion, Pistol.[70] The second part, however, was not as popular as the first. It was "at sundry times publicly acted by the Lord Chamberlain's men by 1600, probably at the Curtain and perhaps later at the Globe," but it was not reprinted so often (Wiggins 3:413). After the printing of the quarto in 1600, it next appears only in folio in 1623 and 1632. There are many more of Falstaff's loose companions to entertain the theatre crowds with the playwright's inventiveness, but less history. It also has a melancholy character, as audiences heard both the defeat of the rebels and the downward trajectory of the expectant Falstaff when he anticipates the crowning of prince Hal as Henry V after the death of his sick father.

Familiar and famous actors improved the audience experience. The company's comic clown Will Kemp, well known to the audiences, probably played Falstaff again, according to Jean Howard and P.H.Davison (NS 1329, Davison "Henry IV part 2" 285-6). The epilogue certainly suggests that the actor would use his legs to dance out of their debt, and Kemp was not only famous for his jigs, but would famously morris-dance his way from London to Norwich[71]. If so, the sight of the now disgraced and gigantic actor-knight dancing the finale should have made the amphitheatre erupt. Apart from Kemp and other actors from the repertory team like Alleyn as Pistol, playgoers were informed by other sound-clues beyond the voices of those on stage, saw the various theatre properties, and heard about the streets of London and parts of England that the author wove into the action (Gurr "Playgoing" 167). All this contributed to their recognition of different aspects of the play and improved their mental awareness of what was happening on the scaffold.

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[70] "The second part of Henrie the fourth, continuing to his death, and coronation of Henrie the fifth with the humours of sir John Falstaffe, and swaggering Pistol as it hath been sundrie times written by William Shakespeare publikely acted by the right honorable, the Lord Chamberlain his servants" (https://folgerpedia.folger.edu/Henry_IV,_Part_2#/media/File:STC_22288a_copy_1_title_page.jpg)

[71] *Kemps Nine Daies Wonder*

Brawls on stage, knocking, shouts, singing and the sounds of swords being drawn all precede the trumpets sounding the retreat after the engagement at Gaultres forest. The audiences know from the title of the play that the conclusion will be the coronation of Henry V, but in the interim, the actor-author entertains them with a varied sound design. Falstaff and Bardolf draw their swords and brawl with the sergeants attempting to arrest the knight for unpaid debts. Maybe playgoers remembered, maybe not, but Falstaff was not always a coward on instinct. At the robbery at Gadshill in the previous play, his companions had all run off, but the knight only "*after a blow or two*" (*1Henry IV* 2.3.11 stage directions). So, the knight does not always retreat immediately, and the playwright, after an interval of two more scenes, now involves Falstaff and the swaggering Pistol in another brawl with Bardolf, sword and rapiers[72]. By this Shakespeare satisfies audience's expectation of fighting, soon after the previous play and the hand-to-hand fights on stage at the battle of Shrewsbury. With the exit of Pistol pursued by Bardolf, the playwright then calls for music and a contrasting short romantic interlude for Falstaff and Doll Tearsheet. Playgoers associated music in the previous play with the rebels in Glendower's Welsh castle. In *2Henry IV* the playwright uses the soundscape to give the audience distinct changes of atmosphere to suit very different changes of situation. Here the two old lovers have a romantic tryst, while later at Westminster, more lugubrious music will play at the king's deathbed; very much later, in Gloucestershire, the curiously named Justice Silent sings to accompany the group of drinkers, before Falstaff dances the Epilogue's concluding jig. Authoritative trumpets sound again at the coronation of Henry V, not only emphasising the ceremonial aspect of this event, but the king's official and public disowning of Falstaff in front of the London crowd and the Globe audience, signalling the end of career to the largest and most beloved character in the amphitheatre that would be partly mollified by the fat man's dance.

5.5 *Recognition*

The first costume-character the audience see is Rumour in the Induction, with the stage direction *Enter Rumour painted full of tongues*, a challenge for the wardrobe master-mistress. Rumour requires both tongue and ears to spread, and as René Weiss notes, "in 1553 the Revels

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[72] conforming to Harrison's *Description of England* of 1577: "Our nobility wear commonly swords or rapiers with their daggers, as doth every serving man also that followeth his lord and master…of a greater length and longer than the like used in any other country" 237-8

office paid for a coat and cap to be painted with 'Ies tonges and eares for fame'" (2*Henry IV* Oxford 117 note). They have to wait for a long recapitulatory scene before they once again recognise the very much larger than life entrance of Falstaff. This is the second part of a previous play, with at least fourteen additional characters, so although many of the costumes for the first part may have been used again, there were new attractions in the presentations of Doll Tearsheet, Pistol and the Lord Chief Justice in Eastcheap, the rustics Falstaff was impressing as soldiers in Gloucestershire and those characters at the home of country Justice Shallow. Costume as part of disguise is a special entertainment for the audience, because they are privy to what some of the actor-characters on stage are unaware of; so, the leathern jerkins and aprons enable prince Hal and Poins to spy on Falstaff and, unthinkable in the reign of Elizabeth I, royalty became temporarily invisible. The most spectacular costume was reserved for the concluding scenes of the play, that of the newly crowned Henry V in velvet gown and satin doublet, embroidered with gold lace (Jones 183).

Theatre properties in the second part of *Henry IV* complement the actor's stage-work, objects like letters, a coin, papers and a schedule. The angry Northumberland throws off his crafty-sickness when he casts aside coif and crutch and the dying Henry IV is carried in (and out) on a bed. The most eye-catching property is the crown, taken from the king's pillow by prince Hal under the impression that his father was already dead. Playgoers who had heard *Richard II* would recall the tussle between the deposed king and Bolingbroke over the crown as Richard says "Here, cousin, /On this side my hand, on that side thine" (*Richard II* 4.1.182-3). The Henry IV plays concern themselves with succession at a time when this was very much in the mind of the English, there being no named successor to their Queen now in her late sixties. The king now questions the prince, crown in hand, "Dost thou so hunger for mine empty chair /That thou wilt needs invest thee with my honours/ before thy hour be ripe?" in a possibly veiled allusion to the fact that the queen's nephew, James VI of Scotland, was a potential king-in-waiting across the border (*2Henry IV* 4.3.224-6). If some of the crowd did not think of this, the crown was still a powerful representation of who held power.

Theatre patrons recognised where they were, even more than in the previous part of *Henry IV*. Shakespeare references many more parts of London, including Southwark. Apart from

the scenes of so much action in Eastcheap and Westminster palace, the play includes St.Pauls, three Inns of Court, Smithfield, Lombard Street, the Fleet and Mile End Green. Anachronisms familiarised spectators with what they knew particularly well, Pie Corner for its foul smells and Turnbull Street, notorious for thieves and prostitutes (*2Henry IV* Oxford notes 150, 208). Nearer at hand were Windsor and St.Albans; further off the playwright made reference to Shrewsbury, Basingstoke, Oxford, Stamford, Chester and Pomfret and the counties of Northumberland, Staffordshire, Norfolk and the home of the country justices in Gloucestershire. The play resurrected the valiant past but set its scenes very much in a present that the crowds recognised.

5.6 *Introspection*

How did audiences feel about characters in *2Henry IV*? Was there any introspection on their part to enhance their awareness of what was happening on the scaffold in front of them? Prince Hal had rather reigned in the excesses of Sir John Falstaff by the frequent encounters they had in the first part of Henry IV. Now in the second part Falstaff has the major part of the play and they only meet twice, so in part two the knight acts much more as himself. Theatre patrons can still admire his anti-establishment tirades, his bawdy humour and his ability to escape from the tight corners his boasting or thievery have led him into. However, there is less to applaud in this second part. Falstaff refuses to answer the Lord Chief Justice for the Gadshill robbery, flatly declines to settle his debts with Mistress Quickly with whom he has committed breach of promise, badmouths the prince thinking he is out of hearing range, accepts bribes to excuse impressed recruits and persuades country justice Shallow to lend him a thousand pounds that will never be returned. So, in this second part, playgoers can feel different things at different times about the play's main character. They can be sympathetic to the anti-establishment element of the fat knight, but anxious about the harder edge of the character that leads him to missteps and overconfidence. The prince is in the gradual process of reforming but his favour is Falstaff's to lose, as the prince makes clear, "I do allow this wen to be as familiar with me as my dog, and he holds his place" (2.2.91-2). Showing off to Doll, and unsuspecting he will be overheard by the prince (and the theatre audience), he mouths the fatal words to describe prince Henry, "a good shallow young fellow. A would have made a good pantler; a would ha' chipped bread well" (2.2.211-12). No abuse was intended says Falstaff, but it is too late. The crowd will realise that

the old man still believes, even after his curt dismissal at Henry V's coronation, that he will be "sent for soon at night," and if they saw Kemp dancing the jig in the Epilogue in Falstaff's costume, promising that the next play would continue with Sir John in it, then they had the expectation that this magnificent representative of the lower orders of society would survive into the next reign (5.5.84-5). Shakespeare was advertising his next play to his clients but their hope would not be met!

Playgoers did not see much of prince Hal in *2Henry IV*. After the disappointing escapade to see Falstaff "in his true colours," the prince concerns himself about his sick father. Audiences could sympathise with this familiar family issue, the headstrong son and the overbearing father. Playgoers see the youth's vulnerability as the king lies dying, and the genuine and unavoidable feeling that occurs when you lose a loved one:

> Thy due from me
> Is tears and heavy sorrows of the blood,
> Which nature, love, and filial tenderness
> Shall O dear father, pay thee plenteously (4.3.167-170)

This is a side of the prince that the audience had not yet seen, and prefaces a touching and reconciling scene between father and son before the impending death of Henry IV. This development of seriousness in the character of the prince is more evident at his coronation. Now it is not the sympathy of the spectators that he commands, but their respect. In confirming the appointment of the Lord Chief Justice, who in *Famous Victories* had jailed him in his youth for misbehaviour, the new king sets a tone to uphold the law and punish corruption. Playgoers receive a subtle mental nudge; the new king, already a legend to them with his battle armour on display in central London, made his intentions clear. They could hold him in equal esteem as their queen for his virtuous character.

Theatre patrons still see the king wrestling with the challenges of fatherhood, in spite of the redemption of prince Hal after he saves Henry's life at the battle of Shrewsbury. The king worries that in the company of Poins and his followers, "his headstrong riot hath no

curb,/…When means and lavish manners meet together,/O, with what wings shall his affections fly/ Towards fronting peril and opposed decay?" (4.3.62-6). When the prince takes the crown away from the comatose monarch, Henry wrongly imagines that his greedy son has pre-empted seizing his inheritance. The interaction between father and son is familiar to the audience and the reconciliation satisfies a pleasant expectation. The other issue that Henry IV contributes to the cognitive experience of the theatre crowds is the burden of kingship or queenship, if they gave a thought to their own monarch. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, Shakespeare made Henry IV human, subject to the same family, health and social challenges experienced by his theatre patrons. Henry appeared before crowds when he left in exile and when he returned in triumph to London: Elizabeth appeared before her subjects both at Pageants and in progresses. Seen through the lens of Tribble's distributed cognition, history plays like *2Henry IV* contributed to the complex and gradual comprehension of the many Londoners that kings and queens were mere mortal like themselves, contrary to previous thought. Patrons had been unused to hearing or seeing kings on the scaffold in front of them, before the cycle of history plays began in the 1560's, let alone in a confessional mood to draw in some sympathy for the role. In a soliloquy to the audience, Henry bemoans the fact that while a simple shipboy on a rough voyage can sleep, he cannot, because "uneasy lies the head that wears a crown" (3.1.31). It is arguable whether seeing the stage representations of monarchs diminished some element of respect for the institution. This did not happen while Elizabeth was on the throne, but when the crown started to lose popularity under James and Charles I, the theatre public had had an opportunity to imagine that royalty were humans like themselves. When they felt sympathy or shared some similar feelings with the stage versions of kings, they mentally lessened an assumed gap between the highest levels of society and the rest.

Pistol is not a virtuous character; he is a swaggerer. The playwright has already labelled him contentious and quarrelsome, so playgoers anticipate that he will cause a disturbance. Mistress Quickly and Doll Tearsheet voice their strong antipathy to the admission of a swaggering cheater before Pistol enters and as Musgrove describes it, Doll out-swaggers the "Captain" in return for what she considers a sexual taunt, "Charge me?…away you cutpurse rascal, you filthy bung, away! By this wine, I'll thrust my knife in your mouldy chaps an you play the saucy cuttle with me" (2.4.103-109, Musgrove 57). In Pistol's first appearance, he draws

his sword and excites the theatre crowd in their expectation of violence, soon duly met when Falstaff draws his rapier and calls for Pistol to leave, and a quarrel ensues. Although he features in the title of the play (along with Falstaff), the audience only have three short scenes to develop any feelings for him. Musgrove is probably correct to suggest that the playwright changed his mind about a prominent role for Pistol (56). After the anticipated physical feud in prose, Pistol switches to verse and a verbal brawl ensues including many error-prone theatrical references from a character that spectators do not expect to be any kind of theatre habitué. It is an alter-ego that flashes in front of the audience for a moment, and never reappears again after some forty lines[73]. It is, however, a tirade of incomprehensible wordy bombast, an indulgence of melodious sound, and an example of the effectiveness in the theatre of what Puttenham had criticized as "mingle-mangle" (338). Pistol is a good example of Dekker's "Gull," a nonentity keen to rise up the social scale by trying to impress with borrowed "play speeches, which afterwards may furnish the necessity of his bare knowledge to maintain table-talke" (Dekker 2:204).[74] Pistol's second intervention brings Falstaff the news that prince Hal will now be crowned king and both the fat knight and his cronies rejoice at the expected benefits and sinecures coming their way. If it is possible, Pistol still swaggers in his ornamented speech, trying desperately to be in fashion, with his "I speak of Africa and golden joys," or anticipated wealth, and "Sir John, thy tender lambkin now is king" or all your efforts to groom the prince have now paid off (5.3.93, 108, Boughner 235). Despite his obfuscation, and character description as one of the "irregular humourists," Pistol's message is well received. Finally, Pistol is present after Henry V's coronation and witness to Falstaff's great expectation countered by the disownment of the knight by the newly crowned king. Ensign Pistol's extravagant language is still trying to draw attention to himself at the critical moment of Falstaff's downfall. Perhaps at this point, the author had already decided (contrary to his declaration in the Epilogue still to come) that the knight would not appear alive in the next play, and that *Henry V* might need Pistol to help carry the burden of entertainment that had been so well provided by the Eastcheap tavern actor-crowd and meet the expectation of the audience that had enjoyed that entertainment for the length of two plays. In

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[73] *2Henry IV* 2.4.130-174

[74] Ben Jonson had no time for this type of character either: "Swaggerers in a Taverne…the one milkes a Hee-goat, the other holds under a sive…the Truth is lost in the midst, or left untouch'd" *Discoveries* 42

Henry V, Shakespeare promotes him in the title of the play to *Auncient Pistoll*, the equivalent of 'old' Pistol. Pistols as firearms in late Tudor times were a new weapon, but very unreliable, as Ensign Pistol would prove to be (Jorgensen 73). This character would earn his place in the headline of the next play just by managing to stay alive.

5.7 *Memory*

Andrew Gurr makes the argument that the presence of guns, trumpets, noise and fighting in the years after the dispersal of the first Armada reminded the audiences of this national triumph ("Playgoing" 161). The first and second parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V* all facilitated this. And he points out that the Elizabethan thrust stage was very well adapted for swordplay and battle scenes (162). The presentations of the contest between rule and misrule so particularly evident in *2Henry IV,* illustrated by the increasing disruption posed by Falstaff and his group and the growing seriousness of the prince, also reminded playgoers of their present government's desire for order. The Lopez plot of 1594 to poison the queen, and the attempted coup of the Earl of Essex in 1601 to remove the queen's council proved to them that there was, as Henry IV reasoned in the play, an important part to play of "necessity" (3.1.68). In *2Henry IV* there was an allusion to some off the last lines in *Gorboduc* of 1561, about the importance of an assured succession:

> And certain heirs appointed to the crown,
> To stay the title of established right
> And in the people plant obedience (264-7)

If they did not remember that, then every week in church, there was a reading of one of Elizabeth's homilies, which, quite apart from damning rebellious subjects, included an admonition that could remind them of the relations between Falstaff and prince Hal, "the subject that provoketh him [the prince] to displeasure sinneth against his own soul" (Griffiths 1:552). Hal had addressed the knight, after all, as a "globe of sinful continents" (2.4.257).

The play reminded audiences of other displeasures of life, old age and disease. At a time when the average life-span was between late thirties and early forties, there are many in *2Henry IV* who exceeded that with some disabilities and it made reference to diseases that afflicted the general population, even the queen (Palliser 53[75], 62). Of the queen's principal councillors, Sir Francis Walsingham had died in 1590, aged 58 and Lord Burleigh in 1598, aged 77. The queen herself was approaching her seventieth year when the second part of *Henry IV* first played. Henry IV had endured fits; the queen had suffered the same in 1578, according to John Dee (John Dee[76] 5)**.** The old, sick and dying in this part of the play prompt playgoers to consider mortality. Northumberland, Falstaff and the Lord Chief Justice are all old. Northumberland is "crafty sick," and walks with a crutch, Falstaff has just visited the doctor when he appears and is not sure if he has gout or the pox. Doll Tearsheet, in her role as prostitute, is a spreader of disease, and together with Pistol, may be responsible for a murder (5.4.15-16). The two country justices, Shallow and Silence are also old, bemoaning that so many of their acquaintances are dead, adding to the lugubrious tone of the play. The audience, with this in mind, have to also absorb the gradual death of the king during the action of the play, his sight failing and his brain giddy, ill, swooning, before he dies off stage in the Jerusalem chamber of Westminster palace. Playgoers were familiar with death and likely all knew someone nearby in London who had been carried off by the plague waves of 1593 or 1603.

5.8 *Language*

Language provided audiences with a familiar medium that unconsciously let them hear the past in contemporary words, improving their awareness of the unfolding action on the scaffold. With Falstaff and his followers on stage more than anyone else, and freed from the restraints prince Hal had provided in part one, the text is a rich resource of what the patrons now expected: puns, insults, parodies, proverbs, bawdiness, biblical references and phrases of *lèse-majesté*. In part one, insults had a mocking tone; in part two they are more vituperative. "That trunk of humours, that bolting-hutch of beastliness, that swollen parcel of dropsies" has an

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[75] lowest average 37.4 in 1591, highest 43.7 in 1581. The smallpox outbreak of 1562 almost killed Queen Elizabeth.

[76] "Oct.16th, Dr.Bayly conferred of the Queene her disease…Oct. 25th, a fit from 9 afternone to 1 after mydnight."

almost complimentary ring to it, as the prince addresses Falstaff in tavern-play (*1Henry IV* 2.5.410-11). Doll Tearsheet's response to Pistol's sexual innuendoes for example, is of higher order of insult: "you poor, base, rascally, cheating, lack-linen mate…you mouldy rogue…you cutpurse rascal, you filthy bung…you bottle-ale rascal, you basket-hilt stale juggler…damned cheater" (*2Henry IV* 2.4.106-116). When the beadles arrest her, later in the play, she is even more aggressive, "arrant knave…damned tripe-visaged rascal…paper-faced villain…you blue-bottle rogue, you filthy famished correctioner!" (5.4.1-19). While the anachronistic accusations used current Elizabethan vocabulary, Mistress Quickly's malapropisms and Falstaff's bawdiness were primarily for entertainment. With her "conformities" for infirmities and "debuty" for deputy, and his riding the mare and coming off "the breach…to venture on the charged chambers bravely" in sexual innuendo (2.1. 69-70, 2.4.45-6, 50, 73). When the audience recognised the insults, mistakes and off-colour jokes of their own day, they were probably insensible to the stagecraft of the author, how subtly and intelligently he made the present seem to coincide with the past.

Like the first part, in the second there are many puns, proverbs and biblical references to make playgoers more aware of their experience. In addition, Pistol parodies Marlowe's *Tamburlain*e with his "packhorses/ And hollow pampered jades of Asia,/ Which cannot go but thirty miles a day[77], " while Falstaff not only includes a variety of play on words, but some of the most memorable and anachronistic language. Audiences enjoyed their own sixteenth century vocabulary with his rapier, biggin, besonian, caliver, tiltyard, bullet and kickshaws for example[78]. The subject of the old knight's favorite drink, sherry sack, came into London in the 1530's. Using current words enhanced public awareness at the plays, and there was the added enjoyment of topical themes with invented phrases like Falstaff's derisory description of short-haired puritans as "smoothy-pates" and Julius Caesar as "the hook-nosed fellow of Rome" (1.2.33, 4.2.37). Carelessness with words is what sours his relationship with the prince,

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[77] Marlowe *Tambulaine* part 2 4.3.3980-1 "Holla, [to the prisoners drawing his chariot] ye pampered jades of *Asia*:/What can ye draw but twenty miles a day,/ And haue so proud a chariot at your heeles,/ And such a Coachman as great *Tamburlain*e?"

[78] thin-bladed sword 2.4.176, night-cap 4.3.157, sturdy rogue 5.3.115, musket 3.2.250, tilt-yard 3.2.288, bullet 4.2.30, fancy dishes 5.1.24. All 16th century words according to the OED

something that language enables theatre patrons to perceive, but not the character-actor himself. His tender lambkin may now be king, and Falstaff still in expectation that he will be sent for, even after Henry V has warned him "not to come near our person by ten mile" (5.5.63). Henry's words are unequivocal; Sir John regards them as a pretence. The language of the Epilogue leaves the audience with an ambiguous ending, while the playwright advertises his next play. There is even a double-entendre in the last words of the play, "good night," or good knight (Epilogue 28-9). This promises to continue the story with fair Katherine of France and Sir John in it…but one of these two characters will be absent, and the playwright calculated the patrons would come back for *Henry V*, in spite of this disappointment. Shakespeare was confident in his ability to continue to attract the crowds.

In the second part of *Henry IV* there were not so many valiant acts, but whatever they were, they were noted by the audiences. The king's brother defeats a rebellion and the prince reconciles with his father. The succession is assured. The embodied experience for playgoers in this play is primarily in their identification with not only the largest character, but the one with the biggest part, Falstaff. If there was 'table-talk' after the play, it would have been setting the fat man's glorious jig against his own abrupt and unanticipated downfall.

Chapter 6 "We band of brothers": playgoers as participants and co-dramatists of valiant acts of the past in *Henry V* (4.3.60)

> *...Let us, ciphers to this great account*
> *On your imaginary forces work…*
> *Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts…*
> *For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings*. *Henry V* Prologue 17-18, 23,28

Chapter six explores the audience experience at the first presentations of *Henry V,* that began in 1599. Twentieth and twenty-first century playgoers see this play differently. Coming only eleven years after the dispersal of the first Spanish Armada, many modern critics see the play as a tribute to growing English nationalism and Elizabethan patriotism. Film versions reinforce this view by including the battle scenes of the siege of Harfleur and Agincourt that Shakespeare had to omit for practical reasons[79]. Seventeenth century records suggest that *Henry V* was not as popular play as *1Henry IV* or *Richard III*. Regardless, the playwright made sure (perhaps because of this) that the audience was even better prepared for this play compared with any other in the canon, by including the guiding voice of the chorus, prologue and epilogue. This personal address to the audiences asked for their participation and contribution, encouraging them to invest themselves in the play along with the actors. making them responsible for 'decorating' the heads of government. It makes them co-dramatists and gives them authority. If they were noisy in previous plays, the chorus of *Henry V* encourages them to be even louder.

The conceit of the chorus invited and authorised spectators to participate and made their creative thoughts responsible for the success of the play. Rather like theatrical asides, the chorus adds details for theatre patrons that do not appear in the action. This strategy takes the audience into the play's confidence, giving them advance knowledge of the action, like when the actor-character gives them prior warning of the French plot to assassinate the king before his departure. "Work, work your thoughts" enables them to see the English invasion fleet crossing the channel and later setting up the siege of Harfleur (3.0.25). The chorus performs a particularly

[79] Olivier's 1944 version was a morale-booster for the British airborne forces; Branagh's 1989 film emphasised much more the brutality of war

critical role in describing the eve of the battle of Agincourt by asking the audience to exercise its imagination. Where the character has previously foreshadowed the fact that the English would be outnumbered "like little body with a mighty heart," now the forecast is that the king's confident appearance, "walking from watch to watch, from tent to tent," will make the difference (2.0.17, 4.0.30); signalling an important dramatic arc after the miraculous English victory, the chorus celebrates Henry's joyous return to London, before, in an act of somewhat prosaic stage magic, immediately returning him to France to negotiate the peace treaty. The chorus speaks the Epilogue, in traditional apologetic tone like the Prologue, where the play's imperfections depended on the audience using their insight. Now he asks for favorable interpretation from playgoers, in spite of the playwright's "rough and all-unable pen" (Epilogue 1). The chorus may be the voice of the playhouse, suggest Bruster and Weimann ("Prologues" 114). This character gives power to the audience and solicits their cooperation. It also acts as an interpreter for playgoers. No other Shakespeare play that has come down to us offers this, so the author intended the chorus to particularly intensify the embodied experience for theatre patrons in this play, more than the equivalent of three-dimensional cinemascope for films in the 1960's, as a total participatory immersion in excitement. This character also provided the horizon of expectation for the audiences, the promise of a battle, the foiling of a plot, the anticipated siege of Harfleur, the eve of Agincourt, that is an integral part of Jauss's reception theory. Later writers on the subject like Suleiman and Pavis agreed about the importance of guiding the playgoers' perception to a better understanding of the text; although they do not name the chorus specifically, this character-actor of *Henry V* plays an important part in this (Suleiman 112, Pavis 74).

Considering that the chorus guided audiences about the history, how could there be such radically different interpretations of the play? Norman Rabkin posed the question in 1977; was Henry the perfect man or a Machiavellian prince?[80]. For early modern audiences, with his battle armour on display in the most famous London abbey, it is clear that for them, this king was a legend. The chorus does not disturb this interpretation, because its guidance of act five and the epilogue balance what had preceded them. The king may be returning to England with bruisèd helmet and bended sword, but there is talk of peace negotiations and that this episode is just part

[80] 'Rabbits and Ducks and Henry V'

of the continuation of history "which oft our stage hath shown" (Epilogue 13). This provides equivalence to the prelude to war, sword and fire, the youth of England on alert, the gunner at the siege of Harfleur and on the eve of Agincourt itself, even steed threatening steed. As Gary Taylor rightly describes, modesty and confidence characterise the chorus, and what is critical is the tone in which the actor delivers the lines (Oxford "Henry V" 56). The prologue invites playgoers to judge his play. The ambiguity in the playwright's work allows Rabkin to question our interpretation of *Henry V* and a more modern version of the play takes it to extremes. Last year's performances at the Donmar in London show Henry's soldiers executing their French captives on stage (an option in the stage directions), letting a female actor playing Bardolf hang just prior to and continue to swing during the interval, and the English king forcing a kiss from the French princess rather than negotiating it[81]. The production was upstaged by the coincidental start of Putin's "special military operation" in Ukraine. In the late 1590's the unprovoked invasion in the minds of the spectators was Spain's repeated attempts to despatch naval Armadas to subdue England. The fact that the next three Armadas after 1588 were also destroyed by bad weather and storms may have reinforced the idea, as at the conclusion of *Henry V* in 1600, that God was on the side of the English.

Like the second part of *Henry IV*, according to the printed quartos, *Henry V* was played "sundry times" by 1600 and Wiggins states "presumably at The Curtain and perhaps later at the Globe" (4:104). It was republished only in 1600, 1602, 1608, 1623, and 1632. The title of the quarto promises not only the history of Henry V but the battle of Agincourt and once again the inclusion of Pistol[82]. *Henry V* played on January 7, 1605 and it was one of fifteen Shakespeare plays acted between 1623 and 1663 (Taylor 9, Ingleby 1:132). Later allusions to the play are sparse; Pistol is mentioned in 1600 and the king's dismissal of Falstaff in 1633; Davenant was altering the play in 1666 (Ingelby 1:90, 2:96). As Gary Taylor says in the Oxford *Henry V*, the play *should* have been a success, but we do not know if it was (9). Henry V was a legendary warrior to playgoers, with a shrine in the Abbey. Elizabethans had been at war in the low

[81]https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/henry-v-donmar-warehouse-kit-harington-theatre-review-emma-smith-accessed 10 May 2022

[82] The Cronicle History of Henry the fift, with his battell fought at Agin Court in France. Together with Auncient Pistoll as it hath bene sundry times playd by the Right honorable the Lord Chamberlaine his servants (https://folgerpedia.folger.edu/Henry_V)

countries, were ready to repel yet another Armada from Spain, and the play opened on the Earl of Essex's expedition to subdue an open revolt in Ireland. In the play the author hopes that like Henry V's post-Agincourt reception at Blackheath, "the General of our gracious Empress--/As in good time he may—from Ireland coming,/ Bringing rebellion broachèd on his sword,/How many would the peaceful city quit/ To welcome him!" (*Henry V* 5.0.30-34). Shakespeare raised this expectation. Unfortunately, Essex returned from Ireland in disgrace. This is not the only expectation that is disappointed in *Henry V*.

6.1 *Recognition*

As in the history plays that preceded it, this performance also familiarises theatre patrons with much that they already recognised, from places, stage properties and costumes, sounds and the many anachronisms that made the fifteenth century seem familiar to them. More than half the play is set in France, but Londoners heard their own city mentioned, along with Blackheath and scenes are also set in Westminster and Eastcheap. Nearby, the action includes Staines, Dover and Southampton and with increasing trade and cosmopolitanism in the capital city, apart from the need to know some French in this history play, the author takes them to Harfleur, Agincourt and the French court at Rouen. From the opening trumpets and the chorus's first "O" addressing the crowd, this is a noisy play, unlikely to enable anyone to fall asleep[83]. Agincourt may be simulated by a few ragged foils, but there are continual flourishes, alarms, gunfire, beatings drums and trumpets and the drawing and replacing of swords that populate the plot. Stage directions allow English soldiers to kill their prisoners in front of the groundlings. The audience witness Williams, a soldier from the ranks, striking an officer and Captain Fluellen striking Pistol, in contrast to the days of Falstaff's fraudulent manipulation of the recruiting process. There are also rousing speeches from the English king that might have reminded playgoers of Queen Elizabeth's celebrated address to her train bands at Tilbury in 1588. There were many costumes to admire among the thirty or so nobles or royalty on stage at different times. They were in "modern-dress," Elizabethan clothes, to represent what was worn two hundred years previously, a technique that today would suggest yet another form of putting the audience at ease, enabling them to interpret the play with less mental strain, as did also the playwright's use

[83] "Some come to take their ease,/ And sleep an act or two; but those we fear,/ We've frighted with our trumpets" Epilogue 2-4 *All Is True*

of time, bridging the gap between the battle of Agincourt and the Treaty of Troyes (see appendices)[84]. For the actors impersonating commoners or regular soldiers, Jones and Stallybrass suggest that they also wore contemporary clothes, perhaps inherited from their masters (182, 189). The Eastcheap group most likely wore the same as they had from the second part of Henry IV. Theatre properties do not play so much of a part in this play. Except for Pistol drawing his sword on his tavern companions in a fit of bad temper, the other significant prop is the "tun" of tennis balls with which the Dauphin insults king Henry. Siege and battle happen off-stage. Props do help the theatre audience with bridging the distance in time, and another technique also assists, the use of anachronisms. Whether the author used these intentionally we do not know, but they enabled the crowd to recognise familiar objects like ruffs, strossers and whiffler, and descriptions like bedlam and hilding[85]. Locations, stage noises, properties and the misplacement of medieval words to Elizabethan times all continued to supply mental support to the audiences and improved their reception of their nation's heroic history.

6.2 *Introspection*

The productions brought introspection and feelings to the historical events, with the help of the characters and text. The play is strong on patriotism, rousing rhetoric, winning against the odds and a strong sensation that if God is not an Englishman, he is at least on their side. Many early modern playgoers would have transferred the sentiments against the French to their current foe, Spain, and the triumph of Agincourt to Drakes's circumnavigation and capture of the treasure ship Cagafuego, the dispersal of the first Spanish Armada and the recent sack of Cadiz in 1596 in a pre-emptive strike against a new Spanish naval invasion force. In 1599, London crowds had seen off the Earl of Essex and his army to Ireland with the same enthusiasm that the playwright staged the sailing of the fifteenth century army to France; this was a contemporary invasion to which the plot of *Henry V* alluded. At the staging in 1605, the audience's feelings would have been very different. The Earl of Essex had failed miserably in his Irish campaign, and the Queen had him executed in 1601 for his attempted *coup d'état*. Still, Henry V was an English legend. Theater crowds could be proud of their ancestry. Henry's achievements were the

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[84] As did also the playwright's use of time, to bridge the gap between time frames as between the battle of Agincourt and the Treaty of Troyes and to condense history (see appendices)

[85] OED on line: ruff=neck frill, strossers=trews, whifler=official, beldam=mad, hilding=worthless

"valiant acts" Nashe had described and this king had managed a Tudor fantasy, the uniting of England with its nearest continental neighbour. Further, the clergy, historical documents and the Dauphin's mocking insult all combined to justify the assault. Both the king's and the audience's conscience were clear. With a large war chest courtesy of the church, "by God's help/ And yours, the noble sinews of our power,/ France being ours we'll bend it to our awe,/ Or break it all to pieces," Henry is determined (1.2.221-4). The author gives playgoers encouraging advance notice of how the play will unfold when they hear the French princess Katherine practice her skills at English. Why otherwise would she say "Il faut que j'apprenne à parler"? (3.4.4-5). This is also a signal to the audience that in spite of the coming battle, they should expect that this 'history' of Henry V will eventually end in romantic comedy. Meanwhile the king, in keeping with the inclusiveness of the "dear friends" with which he had addressed his troops and theatre patrons at Harfleur, unites both army and audience with his pre-battle morale-raising speech at Agincourt, ensuring that they both feel part of history and will be remembered as "we few, we happy few, we band of brothers" (3.1.1, 4.3.60). The English army miraculously prevails, and satisfies playgoers by including further justification of the slaughter of the French, who had committed a war-crime by killing the unarmed boys of the English baggage train. The second part of *Henry IV* had promised to make the audience merry with fair Katherine of France, so the author had prepared them for this expectation and this feeling is reinforced when they see the king kiss his princess in fairy-tale conclusion (5.2.255-6).

On the other hand, playgoers may or may not have noticed the effect on their feelings as the play toyed with their emotions. The production includes several disappointments, which Ron Rosenbaum suggests were theatrical tricks of the playwright, to intentionally frustrate the hearers with an expectation of loss (439). Shakespeare had foreshadowed this in his previous play when the newly crowned king rejects Falstaff with "I know thee not old man," but still promised to "continue the story with Sir John in it" (*2Henry IV* 5.5.45, Epilogue 24-5). Rosenbaum refers to a remark of Booth, that these setbacks represent the friction between what an audience expects and what it gets. Jauss had agreed about this also[86]. Playgoers never see Falstaff again, he dies off-stage in *Henry V*. Another disappointment is the king's decision to hang Bardolf, another of his tavern companions of former days, for theft. This respect for French possessions in war-time was

[86] "the horizon of expectations may confirm or disappoint". "Aesthetic" xii

good policy, but showed how brutal was the severing of all relations between Henry and his former life, which had so entertained playgoers. *1Henry IV* had at least a hand-to-hand sword-fight between prince Hal and Hotspur, the two great rivals, representing in part the battle of Shrewsbury, so expectations for the battle of Agincourt in this play should have been high. In *Henry V*, however, there are not even the few ragged foils promised by the chorus, except among low-life English in their home tavern. Henry seems almost surprised to hear that he has won the field with his "I know not if the day be ours or no;" "the day is yours" is the response of the French herald (*Henry V* 4.7.76, 78). Another disappointment that audience and king share is the reaction of his soldiers to the disguised Henry on the eve of battle. In a gesture to the development of more humane unwritten rules of war, the custom in medieval times was that nobles and royalty were ransomed rather than killed. So, the soldier Williams had the reasonable expectation that the king would survive, regardless of any promises he had made to the contrary, while his soldiers were slaughtered, an expectation with which the theatre crowds may have agreed. This was an argument Henry could not win without betraying his disguise. It was also in opposition to the dramatic tradition of other plays of the 1590's that projected accord between unsuspecting subject and a king-in-disguise (Barton 97[87]). As Anne Barton argues, the lower orders had faith in their monarchs, and in this episode, the playwright destroys the audience's emotional expectation and opposes romantic tradition (99-100). This attempt by the king to commune with his band of brothers incognito, fails, and also fails audience expectation. Gary Taylor suggests another disappointment, "leaving out the oaths of allegiance at [the treaty of] Troyes" (Oxford *Henry V* 28). This is arguable. Princess Katherine and her maid are already on stage at the beginning of the final scene and playgoers' eyes and expectations would be drawn unavoidably towards the promised betrothal and romantic conclusion: "Prepare we for our marriage. On which day, my lord of Burgundy, we'll take your oath" (5.2.341-2). The king in Shakespeare's play could wait to sign the treaty off-stage, after the play's conclusion.

6.3 *Memory*

One thing that would not wait was audience memory, both individual and collective. Playgoers came to *Henry V* with minds prepared not only by the other three plays about Henry V

[87] c.1590 *George a Greene, The Pinner of Wakefield*, c.1591 *Edward I*, c.1590 *Fair Em*, c.1590 *The True Chronicle History of King Leir*, 1599 *The First Part of Edward IV*. Barton 93-95

of the 1590's, one seen by Nashe and one of the others *Famous Victories*, but the re-emergence of characters from Shakespeare's two parts of *Henry IV*. They remembered Falstaff and his tavern companions for the entertainment and anti-establishment views they had espoused, but did they recall the newly crowned king's resolution to adopt a more serious approach to life?:

> the tide of blood in me
>
> Hath proudly flowed in vanity till now.
>
> Now it doth turn, and ebb back to the sea,
>
> Where it shall mingle with the state of floods,
>
> And flow henceforth in formal majesty. (*2Henry IV* 5.2.128-32).

They did remember the violent personal on-stage battles at Shrewsbury in the first part of *Henry IV* and would expect that the larger encounter at Agincourt would provide more of the same or better. *Henry V* satisfies neither of these expectations. Taylor, in his introduction to the Oxford version of the play, rightly questions how the audiences of 1599 received a play with so much discouragement, compared with the esteem with which it is held today for its seemingly chauvinistic tone. In the early modern era, the play was more about the glory of king Henry V, the legend, than about the glory of war. What happens in the present tends to change the way we think about the past. Modern film versions play the battle scenes, the flights of arrows unrecorded by any chronicler and the English sharpened stakes (to counter the French cavalry) included in the accounts of Hall and Holinshed, all omitted by Shakespeare[88]. Laurence Olivier's film of 1944 runs ten minutes of the Agincourt battle that playgoers never see, and Kenneth Branagh's 1989 film includes fifteen minutes of military action and its aftermath. These film scenes are part of a modern 'take' on Agincourt that makes it much harder to envision how memory was different for the early modern theatre patrons. In 1599 and 1605 they saw the killing of the French prisoners on stage as justified to prevent a counter-attack after the report of the slaughter of the boys in charge of the English baggage train; a recent production treats this as

[88] "he caused stakes bound with iron sharp at both ends of the length of five or six feet to be pitched before the archers…at this time first invented" Hall 67, and Holinshed 552

a war-crime[89]. Otherwise, the battle is a *fait-accompli,* somewhat to the surprise of the preoccupied Henry V. The play does not even include the "four or five most vile and ragged foils" that the chorus promised to illustrate the battle of Agincourt (*Henry V* 4.0.50). In this last of a series of Shakespeare plays about the valiant past (at least until 1612 or 1613 and *All Is True*), playgoers had no precedent in Shakespeare's history plays for the romantic conclusion of *Henry V*, and it must have come as a pleasant surprise to those at the first performances. The Epilogue, however, addressing the audiences directly, reminded them that they already knew the sequels, the three parts of *Henry VI* and *Richard III*. Compared with these two kings, "this star of England" had made England great "for a small time" (Epilogue 5-6). Henry V's legendary status, in contemporary playgoers' minds, was undiminished.

6.4 *Language*

Similar to *Richard II* and the two parts of *Henry IV*, *Henry V* used familiar language to complement the (then) modern dress costumes to enrich audience experience. However, there were differences. Pistol has more of a role in this play, but altogether, the low-life element that had entertained audiences in the two parts of *Henry IV* have much less stage-time in *Henry V* and therefore contributed less language from the lower orders of Elizabethan society. However, it is still colourful and familiar to playgoers. The hostess speaks many of the entertaining and misspoken lines, like "he'll yield the crow a pudding," asserting that Falstaff is in "Arthur's bosom" instead of Abrahams's, "carnation" for incarnation, and "quotidian-tertian" for a fever that should be either one thing of the other and not combined (2.1.78,107-8, 2.3.9,29). There is less bawdiness; the hostess is ignorant of the meaning of her own remark that "we cannot lodge and board a dozen or fourteen gentlewomen that live honestly by the prick of their needles, but it will be thought we keep a bawdy-house straight" (2.1.28-31). The author also made the language of the tavern and the court more distinct from each other, enabling the understanders to hear their own accents and the upper elements of society to hear their exaggerations mocked. Pistol assumes the overemphasised role of his precursor Falstaff, with provocative phrases: "O viper vile!/ The *solus* in thy most marvellous face,/ The *solus* in thy teeth, and in thy throat,/ And

[89] "his troops react with numb horror when he makes them execute the French prisoners-something we unusually see here see take place on the stage"
https://www.timeout.com/london/theatre/henry-v-review

in thy hateful lungs, yea in thy maw pardie—and which is worse, within thy nasty mouth" (2.1.40-4). Part of Shakespeare's technique was the dropping of consonants for the lower classes, as in the affecting speech of the hostess at the death of Falstaff, "A made a finer end, and went away an it had been any christom child. A parted ev'n just between twelve and one, ev'n at the turning o'th'tide" (2.3.10-12). The chorus and nobility take no short cuts in grammar, in order to elevate their status to the crowds. The chorus, in particular, takes extraordinary care with language. On this character depends the vital stimulation of audience imagination, the enthusiasm for war, "Now all the youth of England are on fire," crossing the channel, "behold the threaden sails,/ Borne with th'invisible and creeping wind," and creating the atmosphere on the eve of battle, "from the tents/ The armourers, accomplishing the knights,/ With busy hammers closing rivets up,/ Give dreadful note of preparation" (2.0.1, 3.0.10-11, 4.0.11-14). Appropriate words also help the chorus manage his responsibility of aligning the hearers with Henry's glorious exploits: his similarity to Mars, warning of a plot on his life, describing the enthusiasm of his soldiers, personally visiting his men to encourage them on the eve of battle "with cheerful semblance and sweet majesty," and on his triumphant return to England, modestly giving honour for the victory to God (4.0.40).

Pistol uses inappropriate vocabulary in his ambition to be part of high fashion (Boughner 235). Shakespeare signalled the demise of Falstaff and his part replacement by the Ensign in the title of the play in the quartos. There was no mention of any conceits of Sir John but *Auncient Pistoll* gets a headline, alongside Henry V. Like his confederates, Bardolf and Nym, Pistol is only a soldier courtesy of Sir John, and Fluellen correctly describes him as a "rascally scald beggarly lousy knave" (5.1.5). In *Henry V* the Ensign has moved slightly up the social scale; he married the Hostess and became the part proprietor of the Boar's Head tavern. A noisy bully he remains, however, with none of Falstaff's charm. The playwright uses the character to show playgoers how far the underclass will go to represent the non-valiant, and at the same time applauding the valiant as the king does. Henry's commemoration of the proud wounds that would be won on Crispin's Day are matched with Pistol's intention to flaunt the scars he received from a cudgelling by his own officer. Captain Gower had predicted this. On the field of Agincourt, the only encounter with weapons besides the killing of the French prisoners is that of Pistol and Boy with M. le Fer, and the Ensign extorts two hundred crowns for letting his prisoner go free. It is a travesty of the battle scenes the audience had expected. They witness that not

everyone in this play is part of the "band of brothers" (4.3.60). The playwright's naming of Pistol in the title of the play suggests that he (and the audience) wanted the continuity of high and low life that he had initiated in *1Henry IV* and without the presence of Falstaff in *Henry V*, the Ensign now represents the comedic lower orders of society. Pistol performs this, but his short temper, his self-interest, thievery, bullying and cowardice, what the boy calls his "killing tongue and a quiet sword," must have made theatre patrons long for the charm and genuine wit of the departed Falstaff (3.2.32).

Spectators enjoyed puns and the play on words, and they exist in the play to reward theatre patrons, but there are fewer. The three traitors are guilty of taking the gilt of France and Harfleur is "half-achievèd" (2.0.26, 3.3.85). The arrest and execution of three of the nobility not only reminded the audience of recent attempts on their own queen's life, but enabled the theatre crowds to explore the quality of mercy, perhaps in an echo of the judgement of the Lord Chief Justice debated by the newly crowned king in *2Henry IV*. The treacherous trio do not advocate mercy to a tipsy subject, so the audience can approve the king's decision not to show mercy to the would-be assassins. Playgoers, by their complicity in this judgement, translate themselves into their past history and participate in the fate of their nation. The playwright also makes an impression on the audience in this play with the variety of popular proverbs. Pistol provides one with the reference to Holdfast[90], but the French knights produce a rash of them: "Ill will never said well," "there is flattery in friendship," "give the devil his due," "a fool's bolt is soon shot," before they pun on shot over and overshot (3.7.103-10). By this, language conveys to playgoers a flippancy in the French nobles compared with the English. With the absence of Falstaff and Doll Tearsheet, insults are infrequent and muted by comparison. Pistol makes an obscene gesture to both Fluellen and the disguised king; Fluellen will exact his revenge. Williams unknowingly insults Henry in his disguise on the eve of the battle of Agincourt, and the king's later attempt to play a practical joke on the soldier seems to fall rather flat. This jest seems to be what the former prince Hal would have done, but was probably unsuitable for a monarch. What the early modern audience made of this we do not know, but a joke that does not work must have been a disappointment. Williams's predicament also illustrates how easily a disguise can attract an insult, how role-playing can run into trouble and this involves the audience, in the person of

[90] "Holdfast is the only dog" from "Brag is a good dog, but Holdfast is better"

Williams, insulting the monarch, something they would never contemplate off-stage. Shakespeare made the early modern audience uncomfortable both by their inside knowledge of the trick and their witness to its anti-climactic conclusion.

After his disappointing discussion with his soldiers, in his disguise, playgoers hear Henry confess his real feelings, and only to them:

> Upon the king.
>
> 'Let us our lives, our souls, our care-full wives,
>
> Our children, and our sins, lay on the king.'
>
> We must bear all. O hard condition (4.1.212-5)

This is a monarch baring his own soul, expressing a vulnerability that kings never do and are never expected to. So, his language invites the sympathy of playgoers and enables them to identify with royalty in an unusual and personal way, because although he may be disguised to his soldiers, he is not disguised to his theatre patrons.

There was more than one language in *Henry V*, because it included a Scotsman, and Irishman and two Welshmen if we include the king himself, Harry of Monmouth. This was an opportunity to introduce Londoners to the outer parts of the realm. Fluellen speaks his suggested dialect indicated by the script, and the text also gives a lilt to Captain Jamy, the Scot. Whether the Irish Captain Macmorris could present any Irish accent distinct from the Welsh in his few lines, is a question. But the audience had an opportunity to experience, hear and judge representatives of far-distant parts that they never normally met.

In *Henry V*, they had met a legendary king that had depended on and connected to his people in a way that was familiar to playgoers, in exactly the same way that their Queen related to her people. The hero-king and the dramatist both use a similar strategy to exploit the complicity of their followers and their theatre- patrons. The victory at Agincourt, shown in the play as the personal triumph of the king, had relied on "the lads of Eastcheap," representing the same crowds sitting in the theatre galleries and standing in the yard. The play, and particularly the chorus, "forces audiences to a more creative participation far more active than usual" (Barton 101). Playgoers' experience was consequently intensified, by the uplifting episodes of the king's

rousing speeches at Harfleur and Agincourt and the rough wooing of French princess Katherine, and for the deflating effect of Falstaff's death, the hanging of a former drinking-companion and the brutal honesty of his soldiers. The Epilogue asks politely for acceptance from the "fair minds" of the hearers, while hoping that they already know the sequel in the plays of Henry the Sixth.

In *Henry V* the valiant act is huge. The whole audience shares in the unlikely triumph of the battle of Agincourt. The embodied experience of the spectators derives largely from the performance of the king. Regardless of some of the aspects of the play that may have disappointed the early modern playgoer, and the fact that "our names" celebrated on the feast of Chrispin Chistian are the aristocrats, "Harry the King, Bedford and Exeter/ Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester," it celebrates an overriding English and national success (4.3.51-4). It had recently been "we few, we happy few" that had deterred the first Spanish Armada from landing, seemingly the same few that united the crowns of England and France in 1415, in front of the theatre crowds (4.3.60). This was how present and past, past and present, perfectly met their expectation.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

On 4 June 1599, the authorities specifically censored history plays:

That noe Englishe historeys be printed excepte they bee allowed by some her majesties privie Counsell

That noe playes be printed excepte they be allowed by suche as haue aucthoyritie (William Jones 333)

The Bishop's Ban included 'satyres,' but one of their principal targets was John Haywood's history play *Henry IIII*, dedicated to the Earl of Essex, who had just left with his army for an Irish campaign in March. They were afraid that Essex would be identified by the reading public with Henry Bolingbroke and Queen Elizabeth with Richard II. Generally, Elizabeth's censors had a light hand, but this ban demonstrates that history plays were sensitive and under continual scrutiny by the government and that they thought some of the valiant past should be concealed (Clegg 76).

After *Henry V* and the Bishop's Ban, history playwriting ceased, except for a handful of plays that the censor must have considered so uncontroversial as to be beneath his notice.[91]. Did the plays educate their audiences with history to any effect? After 1603 there was no threat of foreign invasion, there was no succession issue because James I had two sons and a daughter, and the king set up the Hampton Court conference to diffuse and settle religious issues. Only the Catholic-inspired Powder plot of 1605 seemed to suggest that some history was repeating itself. The experience of the audiences at history plays seems to have had an immediate cathartic effect, because there were few obviously 'history' plays in the reign of James I, although the genre remained popular[92]. In 1613 there is a record of payment for *Richard II* and *1Henry IV*; and fifteen of Shakespeare's plays performed between 1623 and 1663, including *Henry IV*, *Henry V*

[91] for example, 1605 *When You See Me You Know Me* about Henry VII by Samuel Rowley, 1613 *All Is True* William Shakespeare about Henry VIII and the birth of princess Elizabeth, 1624 *A Game of Chess* about the abortive attempt to match Prince Charles to the Spanish Infanta got Thomas Middleton into trouble for representing a living king on the stage, 1634 *Perkin Warbeck* by John Ford about Henry VII's reign

[92] excepting *Henry VIII*, but its first title is *All is True*, and it could be described (NS 3119) as a tragicomic romance.

and a version of *Richard II* (Ingleby v1 241, 322). Isabella Whitney's forecast that follies would repeat themselves, however, would come true in the following generation after Shakespeare's death in 1616. They included a deposition of the monarch, this time on the public stage, following extensive civil war; there would be an attempted invasion from Scotland, the repression of Ireland and the resumption of war with Spain.

Shakespeare's next play in 1599 about the assassination of a great leader was set in Rome, and after that in 1603 came a play about the disintegration of a royal family, and their Danish kingdom taken over by a foreigner with a claim, a nightmare scenario for the English (Emma Smith 168). There was not even an allusive connection to the foreign James VI of Scotland's replacing Elizabeth I. It was a sign that history plays were somewhat *passé*, or too risky a medium for thinly veiled observations on politics. For this Jonson, Spencer and Shaw were imprisoned in 1597 for the satirical Isle of Dogs, Meyrick lost his life for commissioning Richard II in 1601 and Jonson was imprisoned again in 1605 for his anti-Scottish Eastward Ho! (Collinson 250, Gurr "Stage" 37,59).

What has been the value of examining the experience of audiences at Shakespeare's second tetralogy while the genre was so popular? It provides a more nuanced view of the plays, seen imaginatively from a lower gallery at one of the London amphitheatres. The theatre was more frequented, more popular and less expensive than today; it was more crowded, smellier, smokier and noisier, more like modern day attendance at a soccer stadium or hockey match, where everyone can see each other and patrons can enjoy the advantage of the collective spirit endorsed by Francis Bacon[93]. The physical space of the Elizabethan amphitheatres compelled actors to share the performances with the audience and participate with them; they were an audience's theatre (Falocco 165-6, 175). Performances more than fulfilled Sidney's description of moving pictures, with the increase of characterisation; and as Alfred Harbage suggested, since they paid their entrance, spectators had expectations that were sometimes different from the government, as The Bishop's Ban made clear.

[93] "and certainly it is most true, and one of the great secrets of nature, that the minds of men are more open to impressions and affectations when many are gathered together, than when they are alone" (129)

What was a social escape valve for the authorities was in part escapism for the masses. Theatre crowds came for pleasure, and playwrights like Shakespeare fed this inclination in history plays by connecting with their memories, what prior knowledge they had about history and the pride in their national identity. Additionally, the locations were almost all English, drawing on what audiences knew about their own country to sharpen the action on the stage. The large audiences in the amphitheatres, and their closeness to the thrust stage, meant that they could share and participate in the plays, as the chorus in *Henry V* invited them specifically to do. What Emma Smith calls Shakespeare's "gappiness" or the room he left for interpretation, and his ambiguities, enabled playgoers to become arbiters of their valiant past and this added ownership to their enjoyment; in the same way that Saxton's great collection of county maps (as well as other important works of cartography and chorography) permitted Englishmen to take "visual and conceptual possession of the physical kingdom in which they lived," the revival of history on the stage enabled them to take possession of and participate in their past (Smith 3, Helgerson 11).

Puritans warned against its moral corruption while playwrights emphasised how the experience improved civic behaviour. The City of London would have preferred to close theatres down altogether. However, the repertory system offered the theatre-going public an ever-changing variety of cultural fare, and in the case of the second *Henriad*, a unique experience. In *Richard II*, however close he sat near them on the stage, the playwright maintained a distance between the monarch and the theatre crowds, between their past and their present. *Henry V* maintained that distance but invited playgoers to momentarily be his brother and share the miraculous English success at the battle of Agincourt, while participating in the creation of the legend. The two parts of *Henry IV* allow the audience full involvement in both rule and misrule, and provide an opportunity for them to participate and indulge with the performers in Elizabethan bawdiness, slang, vice and anti-establishment sentiments. Theatre patrons understood the argot and *double-entendres*. The more socially-mixed crowds did not hear 'heightened language,' it was normal.

And their expectations were different and worth investigating. When they saw kings on the scaffold in front of them, did it affect their concept of authority? Or when royalty trod the boards themselves? The wives of James I and Charles I both attended theatre performances, and acted themselves in amateur masques, foreshadowing the appearance of professional women

actors after the Restoration. In a parody of the shopkeeper class, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* enabled parts of the audience to influence the acting and plot of the play itself and in another city comedy, a medieval king sits down to eat with an artisan in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*. Richard II had abased himself by sitting on the scaffold in front of the groundlings; now actor-citizens were invading the stage itself and actor-monarchs sitting down to eat with commoners. Even Henry V had admitted to his soldiers, "I think the King is but a man, as I am' (4.1.99). In 1603 Henry Crosse criticized this aspect of kingship in the theatre and its representation:

> There is no passion wherewith the king, the sovereign majesty of the realm, was possessed, but is amplified, and openly sported with, and made a May-game to all beholders, abusing the state royal…Must not this breed contempt to them and their places…it must needs breed disobedience and slight reward for their authority, whereof ensueth breach of law and contempt of superiors (Crosse P3v).

Not only might royal authority be abused on the stage, but if the crown lost national support, it could breed political disobedience. Elizabeth I saw herself as an actor, and she took advantage of it to enhance her popularity by her progresses in the counties and annual pageants and tournaments in London. Bolingbroke doffing his hat to the crowds in Richard II, prince Hal in Henry IV mixing with the lads of Eastcheap and Henry V referring to his soldiers as his band of brothers was royalty using the available media for their own ends. Demystification of the sacred aura of the monarch on the stage becomes a disadvantage only when the crown loses popularity; it would haunt and damage the two early Stuart kings (Howard "Stage" 151).

Did 'domestic' history plays have a positive influence on audiences, fashioning their hearts to what is noble and notable, as Thomas Heywood suggested in his Apology for Actors? (1:13). The commissioning of *Richard II* in 1599 did not prevent the Essex rebellion, and no play stopped the Powder Plot attempting to incinerate the whole government in 1605.

As for audiences, there were the courtiers for both their own masques and stage plays, and after the opening of the indoor Blackfriars, and continuation of success in the amphitheatres, two kinds of theatre to attend at two different price points. Now there was, for a higher cost, a place for the wealthier to attend and show off their dress and their sophistication by candlelight.

Both types of theatre continued to enjoy great commercial success until the closing of all theatres in 1642.

In line with the thrust off this dissertation, it would be interesting to subject the Marlowe plays to a similar investigation, particularly the effects on the experience of audiences at what they recognised, the feelings the playwright engendered, what they recalled as a result of the action on stage and to what extent his use of language resonated with his theatre patrons. What effect for example did *The Massacre at Paris* of about ten thousand Protestants have on the theatre-going public, seeing their own recent history on stage?

Valiant acts were raised from oblivion in *Richard II, Henry IV* and *Henry V*, but the audience decided on the degree of valour, and this was part of how they participated in the theatrical event; the playwright required their involvement because their thoughts must now deck his kings (*Henry V* Prologue 28). Shakespeare let the playgoers judge what they felt about the deposition of a legitimate monarch, the crushing of rebellion sometimes by devious means, the education of an earlier prince Henry, and the miraculous destruction of the much larger army of an arch-enemy. Whatever prior knowledge or memories they brought to the theatre contributed to their expectations. No-one in the yard or galleries had read or analysed the play before their first viewing. As the playwright advised them through the chorus of *Henry V*, he still depended on their imaginary forces to bring those valiant acts to life. As an actor Shakespeare knew that theatrical success came from a close collaboration between actor and audience.

The object of this document has been to give a more complete and rounded view of some of Shakespeare's history plays through the minds of the first audiences. It is like William West's shared objective, to interrogate playing and playgoing "more richly (if not more completely or more finally)," and to communicate what was different through "common understandings," part of the title of his work (1). Where this paper diverges from West's recent publication is to narrow the focus on audiences rather than both players and spectators and use Shakespeare's second tetralogy for illustration instead of the whole spectrum of Elizabethan drama. It concerns itself specifically with how the "potentialities of meaning" generated by the visceral experience of the stage informed understanding and reception of national historical material. This dissertation takes a neurological approach to the subject, exploring not just the feelings that are part of West's goals, but including what playgoers recognised, what might have prompted introspection,

how their memories interacted with the scenes in front of them and to what extent language provided them with theatrical cues. These were the aspects that contributed to their "awareness," the sense that they all belonged to an imagined community. It has required imagination. Whether we call it "informed speculation" like Sarah Dustagheer, or "reanimation" like James Axtell, use of imagination has been vital to conceiving what was in the minds of those early modern theatre crowds as they absorbed the valiant deeds of the past in their present time. This dissertation began with Nashe's exhortation to rescue notable past history. His plea echoed a similar demand from the maritime historian Richard Hakluyt who:

> For the benefit and honour of my country zealously bestowed so many years, so much travail and cost, to bring antiquities smothered and buried in dark silence, to light, and to preserve certain memorable exploits of late years by our English nation achieved, from the greedy and devouring jaws of oblivion (Hakluyt 11)

Fortunately, Shakespeare's ambiguities caused these history plays to escape the Bishop's Ban and enabled early modern theatre patrons to ponder on these memorable exploits.

Envoi

Imagination or informed speculation, terms with which we started this dissertation, James Axtell regards as the most important tool in the historian's toolbox. Like William West, he describes the past as fugitive. To capture this element, historians need imagination to originate, to re-create and to bring relationship to different elements. Axtell's, own word for this embodiment, like Nashe's, is revivification (Axtell 10, Nashe 64). If this paper has achieved its object in reviving the past and our forefathers' valiant fifteenth century acts for the late 1590's, then it hopes to have done so in the same terms that Axtell set himself to write, a history to engage the reader as it impacted the playgoer.

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Appendix 1

Richard II-history	*Richard II*	Henry V-history	*Henry V*
1377 Richard's accession (aged 10)		1415 Henry reburies Richard II A Lollard plot foiled	Henry reburies Richard II
1381 Peasant's revolt suppressed		1414 the churchmen advocate war with France	the churchmen advocate war with France
1384 Woodstock threatens Richard		1415 Cambridge, Scrope and Grey plot foiled Siege of Harfleur Battle of Agincourt	Cambridge, Scrope and Grey plot foiled Siege of Harfleur Battle of Agincourt
1388 Merciless parliament		1417 Henry V's 2nd invasion of France Capture of Sir John Oldcastle	
1389 Richard II assumes power		1418 execution of Oldcastle	
1394 Richard's 1st Irish war		1420 Treaty of Troyes Henry V betrothed to Katherine	Treaty of Troyes Henry V betrothed to Katherine
1395 Richard m. Isabella (aged 9)		1421 Katherine crowned Queen of England And bears Henry V a son	Katherine bears Henry V a son
1397 arrest of Worcester, Arundel and Gloucester. Murder of Gloucester		1422 Henry V dies at Bois de Vincennes He is buried in Westminster Abbey	Henry V dies in France
1398 trial by battle at Coventry stopped	trial by battle at Coventry stopped		
1399 John of Gaunt dies Richard's 2nd Irish war Bolingbroke's invasion Richard's abdication and death	John of Gaunt dies Richard's 2nd Irish war Bolingbroke's invasion Richard's abdication and death		

Appendix 2

Henry IV-history	*Henry IV parts 1 & 2*	Elizabeth I-history
		1553 Wyatt's rebellion
1367 Bolingbroke born		1555 Dudley plot
1387 Prince Hal born		1562 the Queen's smallpox scare
1390 Bolingbroke on crusade in Lithuania		1563 the 39 articles
1392 Bolingbroke on crusade in Prussia		1567 Elizabeth restores the currency
1397 Bolingbroke created Duke of Hertford		1566 Elizabeth sick again Birth of James VI (of Scotland)
1398 the aborted trial by battle at Coventry Richard II sentences Bolingbroke to exile Prince Hal well treated by Richard		1567 Mary Queen of Scots abdicates
1399 July-Bolingbroke lands at Ravenspur Sept-Bolingbroke claims the throne Oct-Bolingbroke's coronation as Henry IV		1569 the Northern rebellion
1401 Prince Hal attacks Glendower in Wales Plot to assassinate Henry IV		1570 the Ridolfi plot
1403 Henry IV quarrels with the Percies: 1st rebellion Battle of Shrewsbury Death of Hotspur	Henry IV quarrels with the Percies: 1st rebellion Battle of Shrewsbury Death of Hotspur	1572 the St.Bartholemew Day massacre in France
1404 another plot to assassinate Henry IV		1583 attempted assassination of Elizabeth by Somerville Throgmorton Plot
1405 2nd rebellion, Earl of Nottingham & Archbishop Scrope	2nd rebellion, Hastings, Mowbray & Archbishop Scrope defeated by perjury	1586 the Babbington plot
1408 defeat of Bardolph and Northumberland at the battle of Branham Moor		1587 execution of Mary Queen of Scots
1411-12 Henry IV and prince Hal reconcile	Henry IV and prince Hal reconcile	1588 the 1st Spanish Armada-attempted invasion
		1594 general unrest
		1596 *King John*
		1597 *Richard II*
		1598 *1Henry IV*
		1600 *2Henry IV*
		1599 Essex in Ireland *Henry V*

		1600 arrest of Essex