

TROY IMAGERY AND COMPETING CODES OF PIETY IN SHAKESPEARE'S  
EARLY HISTORY PLAYS

BY

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## Introduction

### “Is Not the Truth the Truth?”: Shakespeare’s Exploration of the Past

“Is not the truth the truth?” Falstaff angrily demands in II.iv of *1 Henry IV* when the young Prince Hal challenges his narration of the botched robbery.<sup>1</sup> Falstaff has just given his eye-witness account of the band of thieves that set upon him after his own exploits in highway robbery, and he expresses incredulity that anyone would dare question a tale of such iron-clad authority. Of course, the play lets the audience in on the joke with Prince Hal; we know that he and Poins robbed Falstaff in disguise, just to see what kind of exaggerated story they could elicit about the encounter. The scene demonstrates a good deal about the relationship between Hal and Falstaff, and certainly supports the image of Falstaff as the buffoonish lord of the Eastcheap world, but Falstaff’s question raises an important issue for the play. In this case, we must admit that the truth is not, in fact, the truth.

Coming, as it does, near the beginning of Shakespeare’s sixth installment in his eight-play cycle on England’s fifteenth-century kings, Falstaff’s question also has relevance for the history plays as a whole. Plays concerned with the lives, actions, and legacies of historical figures necessarily concern themselves, to some degree, with representing the truth. Though Falstaff constructs a relatively frivolous lie, it produces troubling implications. If someone as transparent as Falstaff has the power to remake historical truth, however unsuccessfully, how can members of the audience, the average citizens of London, ever hope to make sense of past events? Graham Holderness argues that such a question lies at the heart of Shakespeare’s

history plays.<sup>2</sup> Holderness describes the 1580s and 1590s as a period that fell between two important models of historical interpretation. The providentialism so prominent in medieval chronicles, and even in the works of Hall and Holinshed, had largely lost credibility with the influx of Italian humanism, and the progressive “new historiography” of people like Stow, Camden, and Bacon wouldn’t gain prominence until the first decades of the seventeenth century. As such, “The period of the Renaissance history play falls precisely between these decisive historical ‘breaks,’ and represents inevitably a transitional period in which different ideas of history competed for dominance.”<sup>3</sup> In such an intellectual environment where the fundamental nature of history itself came into question, writers employed many different ideological approaches and literary genres in an effort to understand past events. Holderness, therefore, sees less merit in attempting to identify the ideological models that Shakespeare’s histories reflect than in approaching them as pieces that actively participate in contemporary historiography.<sup>4</sup> I will argue that Shakespeare’s historiographical approach in these plays utilizes familiar images of Britain’s ancient heritage to interpret and structure an examination of England’s more recent past.

Holderness finds Shakespeare’s English history plays particularly remarkable because they explore the world of feudal kingship on its own terms, or rather because they trace the transition from a distinctly different feudal world to the modern model of monarchy, familiar to the audience. Paola Pugliati, likewise, views Shakespeare as a historian concerned with representing the past through viewpoints other than that of a modern chronicler or narrator.<sup>5</sup> The plays actively explore issues of government,

kingship, and causality by inserting the audience into the midst of historical events. For Pugliati, the stage play represents more than a simply commercially viable medium; it represents a revolutionary experiment in historical representation because historical plays provide a particular historical experience, entirely different from the one provided by the reading of history books ... While a narrator will have to state and argue the truth of the facts reported, a dramatist can rely on the reality effect of the performance to induce belief in the truth of what is represented.<sup>6</sup>

These plays have the advantage of bringing an audience into direct confrontation with the past by vivifying the people and actions described in history books. The audience would see this, not as a cheap bastardization of historical material, but as important and innovative history in its own right. Rather than relying on the authority of a historian like Falstaff, a theater audience “sees” history firsthand. Yet, as Pugliati points out, the concept of history current in the 1590s looked somewhat different from our modern idea of what history should be.<sup>7</sup> An audience in the late sixteenth century would allow a certain flexibility of historical facts in favor of a narrative that structured events to provide coherence and meaning. Within this context, Shakespeare’s history plays represent a sustained attempt to make sense of England’s recent past throughout the War of the Roses. In doing so, they take part in an important historiographical moment that sought to understand history’s purpose and communicate it in new ways.

In the brief epistle to the reader in his 1579 translation of Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, Thomas North makes clear the important role that history can play in personal education. About the discipline in general, he says, "stories are fit for every place, reache to all persons, serve for all tymes, teache the living, revive the dead, so farre excelling all other bookes, as it were better to see learning in noble mens lives, than to read it in Philosophers writings."<sup>8</sup> Rather than dealing simply in abstract terms, historical matter provides countless examples that illustrate philosophical ideas, moral conduct and any number of other issues that might prove beneficial to the reader.<sup>9</sup> Certainly, North does not present a completely new idea in saying that an illustrative example can have a more profound effect than a simple statement. This goes back at least as far as Horace's description of ideal poetry as *dulce et utile*, both pleasing and useful or instructive in what it presents. However, in using the "stories" of true history to fill that role, North makes a very important distinction about what makes Plutarch a great historian:

For all other were fayne to take their matter, as the fortune of the contries whereof they wrote fell out: But this man being excellent in wit, learning, and experience, hath chosen the special actes of the best persons, of the famoset nations of the world.<sup>10</sup>

Selection functions as the cardinal virtue in North's mind. Whereas simple chronology presents events according to the whims of fate and happenstance, Plutarch has selected specific examples from across the ancient world and presents them in a way that structures and gives them meaning.

North's very brief comments define a vision of the historical project that involves more than simply recording and maintaining a record of the past's great deeds. In the longer introduction to Amyot's French translation, which North also translates and includes in his volume, Amyot waxes eloquent on history's ability to provide scholars and readers with a wealth of examples to illustrate moral conduct and philosophical abstractions. Yet Amyot implies a passive nature on the part of the historian. History consists of an accurate record, a "storehouse" of past actions, and this record's accuracy establishes the virtue of the material. History, he says, "hath a certaine troth in it, in that it alwayes professeth to speak truth, & for that proper ground thereof is to treat the greatest & highest things that are done in the world."<sup>11</sup> If a historian aims at presenting a true account, the history he creates will, by its very nature, provide instructive examples. North certainly takes no issue with Amyot's praise of history, even explicitly abstaining from comment because these virtues "are sufficiently declared by Amiot, in his Epistle to the Reader."<sup>12</sup> He directs his attention instead to Plutarch's ability to look past mere chronicling to a project consciously grounded in interpreting and teaching through history.

North's comments establish an example of seeing the writer of history as more than a compiler of data, but rather someone who selects, arranges, and makes meaning for an audience. One of the most well-known explorations of this process came only a few years later, shortly after 1580, in Sir Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poesie*.<sup>13</sup> In this treatise, Sidney attempts to define the virtues and qualities of poetry and to establish it as the "highest form in the school of learning."<sup>14</sup> With this goal in



mind, he necessarily develops a hierarchy of disciplines, discussing the benefits and drawbacks of many areas of study. Sidney restricts the three most important to history, philosophy, and poetry, with poetry holding the highest position because of its adaptability in teaching through constructed examples. Philosophy ranks below poetry because, while it provides excellent moral guidance, it does so in abstract terms that are “so hard of utterance and so misty to be conceived.”<sup>15</sup> What Sidney calls the “speaking picture of poetry,” however, can correct this deficiency by supplying examples to make the philosophical precept clear. By contributing example to the moral instruction of philosophy, then, poetry achieves Sidney’s ideal that it both “teach and delight.” Poetry couches the moral teaching in an enticing example in order “to move men to take that goodness in hand, which without delight they would fly as from a stranger.”<sup>16</sup>

Within this scheme, history’s position presents a much more complicated matter. History already contains the examples and mental “images” that give poetry its credibility as a vehicle for philosophy. For Sidney, it fails in perfection by lacking the opposite half of the equation from philosophy. History provides the examples, but lacks the moral teaching. History makes this a more difficult issue to deal with because it does not, according to Sidney’s initial consideration, present material as easily adapted to the missing component as philosophy does at the other end of the spectrum. While the poet can construct a feigned image to illustrate a philosophical precept, history already contains those images and examples, but they often resist any attempt to fit them to a moral purpose. Indeed, one could read a great disdain for

history on Sidney's part. He accuses the historian of being "laden with old mouse-eaten records, authorizing himself for the most part on other histories," and "bound to tell things as they were."<sup>17</sup> The historian's fault seems to lie in a lack of flexibility. Such a strict adherence to historical fact has little application beyond the fact itself, leaving no room for moral explication. On initial examination, Sidney seems to set aside the strictures of all historical study in favor of the morally superior "feigned example" found in poetry. Elizabeth Story Donno perceives that the modern critical reception of Sidney often accepts a disparaging view of history out of hand, and she comes to Sidney's defense.<sup>18</sup> She argues that, far from hating history, Sidney was very invested in its study. She cites his studies at the university, his concern with private virtue as a historical subject, and the reading list he outlined for his brother Robert, where historical texts figure quite prominently. To read the *Defense* as an anti-history treatise, she says, mistakes Sidney's purpose, because he only rejects history as a "tactical device" in order to better support poetry.<sup>19</sup> The first part of this statement seems quite valid in that we should understand neither Sidney, nor his *Defense of Poesie*, as anti-history. To say that he rejects history as a rhetorical move, however, oversimplifies the issue by assuming a clear dichotomy between history and poetry. We might see, instead, that the *Defense* creates slippery and overlapping definitions of these two terms, which demonstrates the indistinct boundary between them for a late sixteenth-century audience.

The *Defense* does not reject all history out of hand, but rather criticizes the narrow study of history for history's sake.<sup>20</sup> Throughout the text, Sidney seeks to

qualify history, reconciling it to poetry. He shows how each participates in the other. S.K. Heninger reminds us that Sidney borrows his poem-as-picture analogy from Aristotle and Horace, who both discuss poetry and history as complementary ends.<sup>21</sup> While Sidney establishes poetry as the highest form of learning and, therefore, superior to history, this does not create a complete negation of history. Rather, his discussion blurs the distinction between the two. History can function toward a poetic end, and poetry can provide a historical purpose. Instead of simply separating history out from poetry, Sidney shows how poetry can legitimate history by giving it moral direction, and how history therefore, becomes subservient to the poetical project.<sup>22</sup>

In writing the *Defense* sometime around 1580,<sup>23</sup> Sidney seems very aware of a large body of Italian criticism. Donald V. Stump also suggests a variety of other possible influences, such as Senecan tragedy and medieval discussions of narrative, but concludes that Sidney shows the most coherence with Italian neo-Aristotelians.<sup>24</sup> P. Jeffrey Ford even asserts that the Italian criticism is so pervasive that it's difficult to determine to what extent Sidney presents original ideas and to what extent he compiles a commonplace collection of critical thought. While the *Defense* certainly owes a heavy debt to the Italian material, Sidney provides a unique assemblage and digest of the ideas in order to define ideal poetry, its constituent parts, and its goals.

In the writings of various critics such as Trissino, Giraldi, and Castelvetro, the authors address the question, either directly or indirectly, of the use of history as artistic source material. They voice a general reticence about using history because it has the potential to impose limits on the two great purposes of poetry: the delightful

effect and the moral content. Giraldi, in particular, introduces the idea that Sidney takes as central to his own writing: that the poet presents “things not as they are, but as they should be.” It is important to note, here, however, that Giraldi does not use this as a reason to disregard history, but rather as a way to reconcile it to poetry. He says, “Though the poets write of ancient affairs, they nonetheless seek to harmonize them to with their own customs and their own age.”<sup>25</sup> As a set of simple historical facts, an event can be irrelevant to a poet’s audience; but by manipulating the specifics and explaining them according to the audience’s cultural and moral outlook, the poet gives the event meaning and significance.

Minturno may also contribute a key idea to the *Defense*. In defining appropriate material for tragedy, he says that the poet uses “great and famous persons,” but he qualifies this, saying, “yet not all of them, but only those that had a terrifying and miserable end.” Furthermore, he adds, “it is unsuitable ... to bring into view those who, being of the best morals and ornamented with the greatest virtue, find themselves crushed by the blows of some wicked and horrible chance.”<sup>26</sup> We have here a distinction about the poet’s purpose. A poet may suitably use historically accepted subject matter, but he must interpret it according to the moral outcome of the tragedy. Put another way, although the poet uses historical material, he focuses not on accurate representation, but rather on selecting an appropriately tragic example from history. Poetry does not entirely exclude history, but history must serve poetry’s purpose, not vice versa.

All of these Italian critics wrote before Sidney's *Defense of Poesie* and present potential influences. Minturno's idea, in particular, that the poet interprets history, may prove useful in understanding Sidney's position on history. Sidney gives his simplest definition of poetry when he describes "right poets" as those who "most properly do imitate to teach and delight."<sup>27</sup> This provides a simple test by which to measure poetry; it must perform the action of imitating and do so for the two-fold purpose of instruction and delight. Sidney specifies that right poets best accomplish this when they "borrow nothing of what is, hath been, or shall be; but range, only reined with learned discretion, into the divine consideration of what may be and should be."<sup>28</sup> This represents the most effective method because it leaves poets free to pursue only the twin goals of teaching and delighting, without other concerns. He contrasts this most sharply with the pure historian, who he says "is so tied not to what should be but to what is, to the particular truth of things and not to the general reason of things, that his example draweth no necessary consequence."<sup>29</sup> Clearly the concern with historical accuracy has the potential to become an all-encompassing drive in narration. Choosing a historical subject means that the poet may no longer be free to create the plot in accordance with the moral teaching at the heart of the poetic project. Historical accounts contain details that both support and undermine the instructive purpose, and separating one from the other presents a difficult challenge. Poetry, in its purest form, remains completely fictive and independent of "the particular truth of things."

Sidney's own secretary, William Temple, takes issue with this as a logical fallacy. In his *Analysis of the Defense*, Temple argues that a feigned representation cannot exist completely independent of the factual material it imitates. Further, he says, this contradicts Sidney's earlier statement about the legitimacy of religious poetry, since a poet cannot write about the divine nature of God as a fictional subject.<sup>30</sup> We need to make an important distinction here; at this point in the text, Sidney refers to an ideal poet. Poetry, in its purest form, distances itself from anything that might interfere with its goals, and the poet does likewise. In practice, however, he complicates the matter. Sidney only begins discussing the "right poet" after two other distinct classes of poets. First, he explores the idea of religious poetry. Religious poets serve an important function for mankind, in that they "imitate the inconceivable excellencies of God."<sup>31</sup> Under the later description of ideal poetry, this fails because it imitates something real. However, it imitates something that cannot be described in any other way, and thus, it aids in granting access to the divine. While some may wonder if this privileges the poet in the superior position of a divine intermediary, Dorothy Connell suggests that this very need to imitate defines the poet in a strictly human role.<sup>32</sup> With reference to divine nature, the poet cannot create but only imitate and describe. While this may represent the highest human ability, it is only a shadow of God's ability to create. Most important for our question at hand, it allows us to see that Sidney admits a kind of poetry that lacks a feigned subject, or at least a poetry that feigns and creates with the ultimate goal of describing something true.

The second species of poems he discusses includes those “that deal with matter philosophical.” This includes both moral philosophy and history. In spite of his later remarks disparaging these areas of study, Sidney describes such poetry as “the sweet food of sweetly uttered knowledge.”<sup>33</sup> Poems with history as the subject may, in fact, qualify as poetry, though not the ideal poetry created by right poets.

Historians, moreover, can also function as poets by borrowing poetic conventions such as “passionate describing of passions, the many particularities of battles which no man could affirm, or ... long orations put in the mouths of great kings and captains, which it is certain they never pronounced.”<sup>34</sup> The feigned element within a historical narrative appears to be the deciding factor here. As long as the author breaks out of the restrictions limiting the narrative to historical facts and embellishes it for use as a moral example, the writing possesses poetic merit. In this way, Sidney explains, the poet can use historical examples, and in fact, put them to their best use. He says:

So then the best of the historian is subject to the poet; for whatsoever action, or faction, whatsoever counsel, policy, war or strategem the historian is bound to recite, that may the poet, if he list, with his imitation make his own, beautifying it both for further teaching, and more delighting, as it please him.<sup>35</sup>

We can see Minturno’s distinction of purpose, refined here, into a complex definition of poetry and history. History, in its purest form, describes things as they are for the sake of accuracy; poetry imitates the truth of things in order to teach and delight. The

difference between the two lies in the purpose behind the author's composition.

Historical material can function as poetry, but only when it aims at a higher purpose to morally instruct through example. This may mean, as Sidney suggests, altering, adding, or subtracting information, or providing a moral interpretation of the history presented.

In many ways, this creates more problems than it solves, especially with reference to sixteenth-century history and literature. Rather than providing a distinct definition of poetry that we might use to understand how readers approached different texts, Sidney creates a continuum between history and poetry that we must negotiate based largely on authorial intention and perceived accuracy. Yet, simultaneously, this opens up a wider range of possibilities by suggesting that the audience may not observe the same strict boundaries seen by a modern audience. Many critics have tried to evaluate Sidney's own literary efforts according to the criteria he outlines in the *Defense*. John Sutton argues that, in spite of its overtly fictional nature, several scenes in the *Arcadia* have their origins in historical events. In particular, he says, Holinshed's account an uprising in the commons directly informs parts of the narrative.<sup>36</sup> Taking this a step farther, Arthur F. Kinney observes that reading the *Arcadia* as anything but a historical narrative is to "miss the meaning of Sidney's most important poem altogether."<sup>37</sup> In this reading, Kinney sees the *Arcadia* as an allegorical historical digest that Sidney wrote in order to educate his sister in the ways of the world. The essence of historical events functions as the underpinning to the book, but Sidney changes the narrative terms to create a new cohesive whole.



Although Kinney may make a legitimate point in describing the heavy historical background for the piece, it seems to function very well in the ways Sidney says history can be appropriated for poetry. While historical in nature, it functions primarily to teach and delight through an imitation, not a direct representation, of history.

With regard to North's claims about history as a justification for his translation, we may question to what extent Plutarch's *Lives* qualifies as historical or poetic by Sidney's criteria. Plutarch relates the historical and biographical details of many important figures in the ancient world, and does so with a seeming eye for accuracy. At the same time, however, he carefully selects which figures he writes about, pairs them with others of like quality and includes moral essays comparing these matched examples to one another. This arrangement appears to instruct and delight, or more specifically, to instruct through delightful examples. The *Lives* provides an excellent example of the kind of work that complicates Sidney's system as a hybrid of historical and poetic attributes. North presents them specifically as history, but they certainly function to instruct, according to Sidney's rules of poetry.

Edmund Spenser provides another such hybrid creation, though with reversed proportions, in *The Faerie Queene*. In the 1590 letter to Raleigh appended to the beginning of the poem, he says that he wrote the book with the intention "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline." To this end, he has written a poem "coloured with an historicall fiction."<sup>38</sup> Here we have a poem, aiming at poetry's purpose, but borrowing historical material. In this case, Spenser chooses

the historical person of Arthur as the center of his poem. Arthur presents a unique set of opportunities as a historical figure because he exists only in the inconsistent details of legend in the early chronicle sources. This allows Spenser a great deal of freedom to fashion Arthur as fits his needs, and thus, provide what he calls “profitable and gracious ... doctrine by ensample.”<sup>39</sup> Spenser makes no claims that his work presents anything but fiction, yet he still appropriates the gravity and authority of a historical figure to produce his results.

In her discussion of the context for Sidney’s ideas about history, Elizabeth Donno lists the kinds of writing that the public would regard as history at the end of the sixteenth century, including “chronicles and histories, tragical legends, tragical complaints, historical epistles, [and] chronicle and history plays.”<sup>40</sup> The chronicle and history plays in this list, in their structuring of historical material, represent a unique grouping and a unique set of issues. The immediate presence of history on the stage, while possibly the history play’s greatest strength, imposes restrictions that none of the other genres in the list share. In comparison to the chronicle histories, which often provide historical source material for plays, staged history can only present a narrative with very limited scope and few, if any, references to authoritative sources. By contrast, Annabel Patterson describes the wide-ranging, multivocal scope and the amassing of copious sources as the two defining features of one of Shakespeare’s primary sources, Holinshed’s *Chronicles*.<sup>41</sup> The compilers of the *Chronicles*, she argues, strove to accumulate as much information as they could to place before the reader. Furthermore, they asked the reader to compare the differing accounts of

historical events as provided by various authorities and eyewitnesses. Like Amyot's comments above, this method suggests that if a historian records enough facts, the sense will take care of itself. Shakespeare's history plays follow a very different model of history, since they present moments carefully selected from the historical record and ask an audience to take veracity for granted, as they cannot appeal to the authority of a source. The audience's own eyewitness role, seeing the events on stage, replaces this authority with immediate experience. As historiography, these plays limit the information available to the audience, but ideally, they allow members of the audience firsthand experience to make sense of a selected and structured set of historical events.

In his seminal work, *The History Play in the Age of Shakespeare*, Irving Ribner tackles the question of how an audience would understand these plays, specifically if they would regard the plays as history.<sup>42</sup> Ribner eventually concludes that the history play, as Shakespeare inherited it, existed as a hybrid of chronicle history in its truest sense, the medieval morality play, and several other literary genres. Ribner's initial exploration of the subject has sparked much debate, discussion and redefining of the history play as a distinct genre.<sup>43</sup>

While many scholars have produced a rich and profitable discussion on the genre of the history play, I would like to turn my attention to how Shakespeare's early history plays function as history to interpret and present historical material in a meaningful way for the contemporary audience. If we accept at the outset that both Shakespeare and his audience would regard his history plays as valid and serious

explorations of historical material, we can focus on the unique challenges that the drama represents. Without the interpretive voice of a narrator, Shakespeare must rely on the language of the characters themselves to connect a play's action to other narratives and outside ideologies that have significance for the plot. Among other threads, I argue, in particular, that these plays employ familiar images of classical Troy and Rome as a way to structure ideas about conduct and direct the audience's view of the monarchs in question.

The modern French historical scholar Michel de Certeau takes up this very issue of making meaning through history in his book *The Writing of History*. The ideas of selection and adaptation, prized by North, Sidney, and his Italian predecessors, function not simply as ideal methods for Certeau, but as the fundamental givens at the core of the historical project. History, he says, can never truly record the simple facts of past events, but always strives to produce "a new intelligibility of the past."<sup>44</sup> Historical writing and historical interest always deal in a negotiation between the way things are and the way things were, and for Certeau, this modern concept of history begins with seeing the past and present as fundamentally different. In his study of Tudor-era historiography, F.J. Levy uses this idea of anachronism, the understanding that past conditions differ from the present, as one of the prime paradigm shifts of historical thought in sixteenth-century England, which "meant that all of history could no longer be considered as somehow contemporaneous."<sup>45</sup> While Certeau never specifically applies the term

“anachronism” to this phenomenon,<sup>46</sup> he identifies the early modern “differentiation between the *present* and the *past*” as the beginning of what we recognize as history.<sup>47</sup>

This separation represents a crucial element for Certeau because it clearly distinguishes history from tradition. Tradition, like history, has its roots in the past, but unlike history, tradition consists of an action, a belief, or a set of practices that originates in the past and continues, more or less intact, into the present. History, both as the object of study and the process by which scholars study the past, deals with actions, ideas, and conditions situated securely in the past and distinctly outside the present moment.<sup>48</sup> While tradition allows the present to participate in a continuity that links it to the past, history acknowledges the past as something always different from, and foreign to, the present. For any historical narrative the present time becomes the site of production, subjecting historical events to cultural and social influences that select, interpret and direct their presentation. This creates the universal rule that “historians receive from current events the means for their research and the context for their interests.”<sup>49</sup>

Perhaps the most important point, in preface to my own argument, that Certeau makes concerns not only present conditions as the motivation and drive behind historical projects, but also as the reception and interpretive environment for their creation. Historical meaning, he says, never stays static but always remains in flux according to the ideas, terms, and paradigms of the culture in which the historian writes:

Now whenever we seek the “historical meaning” of an ideology or of an event, not only do we encounter methods, ideas, or styles of understanding, but also the society to which the definition of what has “meaning” is always referable.<sup>50</sup>

“Meaning,” in terms of historical understanding, cannot be universal, but always implies an indirect object, an audience, to whom the meaning has relevance and significance. History, as a discipline and an approach to the past, must acknowledge and work within structures that produce meaning for the audience at a given point in time, taking as its central concern “the will to make all things thinkable.”<sup>51</sup>

Significantly, Certeau stresses that the historian does not, and cannot, strive for simple accuracy in representing the past; rather, he says that the historian should always take intelligibility as the primary goal. History does not present untouched, pristine facts for examination, but must, by necessity, structure them into a comprehensible matrix. Any historical meaning or understanding that results from this presentation cannot, then, be the whole Truth, but only a part of the historical truth selected, interpreted, and tailored for the specific audience:

The activity that produces meaning and establishes intelligibility of the past is also the symptom of an activity *endured*, the result of events and structurings that it changes in the object capable of being thought, the representation of an evanescent order of genesis.<sup>52</sup>

Any presentation of the past to a present audience, whether by “present” we mean the beginning of the twenty-first century or the end of the sixteenth, must describe the past in terms, ideas, and images that hold significance for that audience.

Certeau builds some of his initial ideas on the early essays of Roland Barthes, which consider the cultural function of history as a subject and an academic process. However, Barthes’s *Mythologies*, which he revised only a few years before Certeau’s *The Writing of History*, explores this very subject of how audiences make meaning at any given cultural moment. Barthes’s overall schema takes Ferdinand Saussure’s linguistic theories of signification as its basis. In the same way that a textual or verbal signifier combines with its signified object to create a unified and indivisible sign, Barthes posits that this process can function on repeating and ascending levels. Each sign from the linguistic system can itself become a signifier, combining with the cultural ideas and connotations associated with it to produce a new, higher level sign. This process can repeat with virtually no limits, creating a complex, allusive cultural language where images, places, persons, and even periods of history carry vast amounts of implicit meaning.

This structure defines the idea of “myth” for Barthes. It represents “a second order semiological system,” which “is made of material that has already been worked on to make it suitable for communication.”<sup>53</sup> While nearly any act of literary criticism takes as its core the idea that intertextual references and literary allusions deepen meaning, Barthes’s classification of this system as a language highlights some important elements. Each linguistic “associative total” produced by the signifier and

its signified results from an arbitrary pairing, which derives its meaning from an implicit social agreement. For this reason, the exact nature of this relationship remains constantly in flux with shades of meaning shifting over time. Myth, as a much more complex version of this system, contains greater potential to convey ideas, but also has a greater potential for ambiguity. Barthes describes the problems of meaning and myth in this way:

The knowledge contained in a mythical concept is confused, made of yielding, shapeless associations. One must stress this open character of the concept; it is not at all an abstract, purified essence; it is a formless, unstable, nebulous condensation, whose unity and coherence are above all due to its function.<sup>54</sup>

Mythic signifiers accrue multiple and various levels of meaning in the cultural moment where they have relevance. They have the potential to represent separate, or even conflicting, sets of ideas, and as a culture employs these mythic signs with increased frequency, their associate meanings grow, shift, and morph over time.

This process ultimately produces a language of mythic images, albeit a sometimes imprecise and shifting language. Allusions and appeals to cultural references of all kinds can function as shorthand to connote complex ideologies that an audience recognizes and acknowledges without extended explanation or exegesis. Heather James finds references to Troy in late sixteenth-century and early-seventeenth-century England as just such a nebulous and shifting mythic idea. In *Shakespeare's Troy*, she argues that references to Troy would provide a variety of suggestions, rather than any straightforward allegorical meaning, to the contemporary



audience. In discussing the ways in which such references might create meaning in Shakespeare's plays, James writes:

Allusions underscore meanings in a given play, rather than import issues otherwise unavailable ... the Troy legend's many social points of reference—from royal iconography to ballads—shore up rather than scatter the political force of an allusion, allowing for multiple points of entry.<sup>55</sup>

Troy as a place, as a nationality, as a moment in history, and as an identifiable set of persons, carried with it a wide range of potential meanings for Shakespeare's audience. James's study examines how alluding to the events of the Trojan War can frame ideas about shifting power and *translatio imperii* in Shakespeare's classical plays, in particular.

While references to Troy certainly exist most prominently and most copiously in the classical plays, Troy and all things Trojan appear throughout much of Shakespeare's work. In particular, I would like to suggest that their presence in the first tetralogy relies on the contemporary understanding of English history. The early chroniclers Nennius and Geoffrey of Monmouth both begin their histories of Britain itself with the arrival of Brutus on the island. As the great-grandson of Aeneas, Brutus traces his ancestry back to the noble princes of Troy, and more recently, of course, to the progenitor of the Roman state. Brutus defeats the giants that inhabit the island and establishes a reborn Troy, several generations before the infamous twins, Romulus and Remus, establish their new city on seven hills above the Tiber. We can see the importance of this narrative for British identity in London's description as "Troy

Novant,” which King James would fully embrace at the beginning of his reign. This name consciously casts London as a pure refounding of the ancient city, possibly setting it as rival, or even superior, to Rome as the rebuilt Troy. In spite of mounting evidence to the contrary during the sixteenth century, popular belief continued to embrace this narrative, and English historians continued to include it in their chronicles.<sup>56</sup> Allusions to Troy in the English history plays not only display an erudite knowledge of the ancient world, but they also keep England’s Trojan origin constantly in the audience’s minds. Specifically, Hector’s valor and Aeneas’s dutiful actions create ideals by which the plays measure kings such as Henry VI and Richard III. Throughout the following chapters, I will focus on the ways in which the early history plays, in particular, use Troy to represent ancient codes of *pious* conduct, which, combined with Christian piety, create a new British ideal.

Chapter 1 addresses the importance of Virgil’s *Aeneid* for an Elizabethan play-going audience. The sixteenth century saw an explosion of partial translations of the *Aeneid*, many of them focusing on the first four books in which Virgil describes Aeneas’s encounter with Dido. Following the work of other critics such as Robert Miola, I argue that references to Aeneas become a shorthand for qualities that define him in the first part of the epic, specifically the Roman code of *pietas*, prizing duty to the gods, to one’s family, and to the state. Moreover, as the linking narrative between the Trojan War and Britain’s mythic founder, Brutus, the *Aeneid* holds a place in the popular imagination and appears on stage as a part of England’s national identity.<sup>57</sup> Christopher Marlowe’s early tragedy *Dido, Queen of Carthage* presents one of the

most straightforward portrayals of an episode from Virgil's *Aeneid*. The play presents the crucial encounter between Dido and Aeneas during Aeneas's flight from the fallen Troy and addresses the Roman virtue of *pietas* so central to the Elizabethan understanding of the narrative. The anonymous play *Lochrine* from 1595 deals explicitly with the Trojan and Virgilian connection to Britain. The play begins with Brutus dividing his kingdom among his four sons. During this process, he recounts his family history and clearly ties each of the four kingdoms in the British Isles to a common culture and heritage based in ancient Troy. Additionally, in portraying the first British king, *Lochrine* claims to establish the original ideals on which Brutus founded his new nation. The royal entry pageant for James in 1604 and Munday's Lord Mayor's show of 1605 both bring this heritage into the contemporary present for the audience. These cast James as a second Brutus who both inherits the Trojan lineage and perfects Brutus's mistakes by uniting all of Britain under a single Christian government. Although these civic pageants come some 15 years after Shakespeare began his cycle of history plays, they partake in the same mythic history as the two plays, *Lochrine* and *Dido*, written for the public stage. Together, these establish an identifiable trend in popular understanding. We can assume, with reasonable certainty, that much of Shakespeare's audience would have understood Aeneas and the Trojan War as integral parts of their cultural history and identity.

The second chapter examines the first two parts of *Henry VI* with regards to the classical references and the expectations they produce. Throughout *1 Henry VI*, in particular, the war between England and France faintly echoes the Trojan war in the

descriptive terms that create associations between ancient identities, European nationalities, and religious rectitude. Specifically, these references align “English,” “Trojan,” and “Christian” on one side, setting them opposite to “French,” “Greek,” and “satanic.” On the English side itself, we see a distinction between those who strive very actively for the larger good of their country and those who, actively or passively, work for their own personal benefit. *2 Henry VI* makes this evaluation more explicit by overtly comparing the central characters to Aeneas at numerous points in the play. At these moments, the play holds Aeneas up as the ideal embodiment of a *pius* ruler and measures the actions and conduct of the court according to his example. In each of these two plays, Talbot and Gloucester, in particular, enact codes of heroism and patriotic duty in their choices and motivations. By contrast, in *Henry* the plays show us a king who cannot recognize or understand what is best for his country, and therefore cannot work toward it. As such, his failures as a king result from his failure to fulfill the demands of classical *pietas*, which prize balanced devotion to one’s nation, family, and gods above all else.

In chapter 3, I argue that *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III* shift their uses of the Troy myth to create sustained contemplations of loss. As each play in the tetralogy eliminates a character who embodies a defining quality for a good ruler, Henry VI’s Christian piety proves increasingly insufficient to manage the affairs of state. The kingdom’s situation continues to deteriorate over the course of the war; and *3 Henry VI* employs descriptions of Troy as emblems of tragedy, loss, and destruction. The characters repeatedly suggest that England’s civil war matches, if not exceeds, the

Trojan War in sorrow and bloodshed. Troy loses any immediacy for the characters and recedes far into the epic past. In bridging that distance through analogy, however, the play suggests an epic magnitude for England's own national tragedy. With the death of Henry VI and the transition into *Richard III*, classical references and any semblance of *pious* leadership disappear simultaneously. Richard enacts hollow shows of *pietas*, but empties any such representations of their meaning and effect. Likewise, Shakespeare fills the play with images of emptiness and hell, emphasizing the hopelessness of Richard's reign. Deprived of both its classical heritage and Christian faith, England has nothing left by which to define itself.

Chapter 4 examines *Henry V* as the conclusion and resolution to questions of good kingship. Although the historical events in the play precede those in the first tetralogy, *Henry V* comes at the end of the sequence of composition. Furthermore, Henry V's legacy looms large throughout the first tetralogy, providing characters with an idealized English past by which to measure the present. Henry V perfects and resolves many of the weaknesses seen in the earlier plays about his son. He acts decisively and courageously on behalf of the country he rules, but he also shows himself to be a deeply devout and pious Christian king. Whatever the historical chronology, *Henry V* functions as a concluding look at an ideal English monarch.

The concluding essay looks briefly at the images of Troy portrayed in *Troilus and Cressida*. If Aeneas and the *Aeneid* function as fundamental symbols of British identity, it would seem an enormous oversight to ignore completely Shakespeare's portrayal of Aeneas himself during the Trojan War. The Aeneas we see in this play,

however, looks precious little like the epic founder referenced so often in the history plays. Much as the characters in *Troilus and Cressida* must confront the disparity between their ideals and reality, the play places the audience's concept of their noble Trojan heritage in conversation with a paltry and petty Trojan War. The result humanizes the myth, but in doing so, it also reminds the audience of all the mythic attributes the play lacks.

Together these plays draw a distinction between classical and Christian ideals of kingly conduct. On the one hand, *pietas* involves accepting subjection to causes larger than oneself, specifically nation, family, and the will of the gods. On the other hand, piety requires a personal spiritual devotion to holiness and acts of charity and humility. While the plays in the first tetralogy set these up as far removed, and even opposing, objectives, *Henry V* unites them as complementary. This results in an ideal prince who perfects the classical virtues of Aeneas and his Trojan ancestors with the guiding principles of Christian faith.

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<sup>1</sup>This and all subsequent quotations from Shakespeare's plays come from *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Orgel and A. R. Braunmuller (New York: Penguin, 2002).

<sup>2</sup>Graham Holderness, *Shakespeare's History* (New York: St. Martins, 1985).

<sup>3</sup>Holderness 24.

<sup>4</sup>Holderness returns to dealing with the histories in *Shakespeare: The Histories* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000). In this later book, he complicates his earlier argument, saying that history plays often resist our attempts to structure them neatly, since they have traits of both fragmentary episodes and of participation in a larger narrative. In spite of this, however, he still considers them "a long, sustained and extraordinarily innovative dramatic meditation on the nature of history" (8). Edward Burns, for example, takes the fragmentary view to an extreme in "Shakespeare's Histories in Cycles," *Shakespeare's History Plays*, ed. Ton Hoenselaars (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 151–68. Burns argues that the concept of tetralogies in cycles, and possibly the notion of the history play, originates with the Folio editors. I tend to agree with Robert Grene, who sees the two individual

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tetralogies internally revised for coherence, and with Phyllis Rackin and Patricia Parker, among others, who argue for the importance of the inverted history moving from the first to the second tetralogy. Robert Grene, *Shakespeare's Serial History Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History: Shakespeare's English Chronicles* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Patricia Parker, *Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). I will discuss the importance of this inverted structure more fully in chapter 4.

<sup>5</sup>Paola Pugliati, *Shakespeare the Historian* (New York: St. Martin's, 1996).

<sup>6</sup>Pugliati 60.

<sup>7</sup>Pugliati 66.

<sup>8</sup>Thomas North, "To the Reader," *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* (London, 1579) iij.

<sup>9</sup>It is also worth noting here that North's use of the word "stories" corresponds to our modern usage of "histories" rather than its more common meaning of "fiction." In fact, the *Oxford English Dictionary* specifically categorizes the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century usage as "history as a branch of knowledge, or as opposed to fiction."

<sup>10</sup>North iij.

<sup>11</sup>Amyot, in North iiij.

<sup>12</sup>North iij.

<sup>13</sup>Elizabeth Story Donno argues that, in addition to the primary criticisms that Sidney addresses in the *Defense*, he may very likely have had North's comments in mind as a secondary concern to address and expand the ideas from his text. Elizabeth Story Donno, "'Old Mouse-eaten Records': History in Sidney's *Apology*," *Studies in Philology* 72 (1975): 275–98.

<sup>14</sup>Philip Sidney, *Defense of Poesie in Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden*, ed. Allan H. Gilbert (New York: American Book Company, 1940) 419.

<sup>15</sup>Sidney 420.

<sup>16</sup>Sidney 416.

<sup>17</sup>Sidney 418, 424.

<sup>18</sup>Donno 275–98.

<sup>19</sup>Donno 288.

<sup>20</sup>Andrew Hadfield suggests that Sidney's sharp criticism of this narrow focus may have been directed specifically at Sir Geoffrey Fenton, who translated Guiciardini's *History of Italy* in 1579. In a dedicatory epistle to Sidney's mother, Fenton argues for the moral superiority of history above all disciplines. See Andrew Hadfield, "Sidney's Comments on History in *An Apology for Poetry* and Geoffrey Fenton's *Tragicall Discourses: A Note*," *Sidney Journal* 15.2 (1997): 48–51.

<sup>21</sup>S. K. Heninger, *Sidney and Spenser: The Poet as Maker* (London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989) 105.

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<sup>22</sup>Timothy Rosendale uses this idea from Sidney, that poetry combines the strengths of philosophy and history, as a way to understand the theological position of the *Book of Common Prayer* in *Liturgy and Literature in the Making of Protestant England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 138–41. Rosendale argues that the *BCP* similarly presents a concept of sacramental representation that balances Catholic abstractness and Zwinglian literalism.

<sup>23</sup>For a good discussion of the publishing history of the *Defense*, see Steve Mentz, “Selling Sidney: William Ponsonby, Thomas Nashe, and the Boundaries of Elizabethan Print and Manuscript Cultures,” *Text: An Interdisciplinary Annual of Textual Studies* 13 (2000):151–74.

<sup>24</sup>Donald V. Stump, “Sidney’s Concept of Tragedy in the *Apology* and in the *Arcadia*,” *Studies in Philology* 79.2 (1982): 41–61. Most directly, Stump addresses the idea that Kenneth Myrick puts forth in his book *Sir Philip Sidney as Literary Craftsman* that Sidney largely rejected Italian criticism in favor of a theory based on Senecan tragedy.

<sup>25</sup>Giraldi Cinthio, “On the Composition of Romances,” *Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden*, ed. Allan H. Gilbert (New York: American Book Company, 1940) 270.

<sup>26</sup>Antonio Minturno, “L’Arte Poetica,” *Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden*, ed. Allan H. Gilbert (New York: American Book Company, 1940) 291–2.

<sup>27</sup>Sidney 415. This provides us with useful definitions of both “poetry” and “poet,” which I will use throughout the remainder of the discussion on Sidney. Sidney’s treatise defines poetry as material that is artfully feigned, rather than drawn immediately from life, ideally with the intention to teach and delight. The “poet,” then, by extension, is a person who creates such feigned examples with the dual purpose in mind.

<sup>28</sup>Sidney 415.

<sup>29</sup>Sidney 420.

<sup>30</sup>William Temple, *William Temple’s Analysis of Sir Philip Sidney’s Apology for Poetry* (New York: Center for Medieval & Early Renaissance Studies, 1984) 83.

<sup>31</sup>Sidney 414.

<sup>32</sup>Dorothy Connell, *Sir Philip Sidney: The Maker’s Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977) 47.

<sup>33</sup>Sidney 415.

<sup>34</sup>Sidney 409.

<sup>35</sup>Sidney 425.

<sup>36</sup>John L. Sutton, Jr., “A Historical Source for the Rebellion of the Commons in Sidney’s *Arcadia*,” *English Language Notes* 23.4 (1986): 113–31.

<sup>37</sup>Arthur F. Kinney, “Sir Philip Sidney and Uses of History,” *The Historical Renaissance: New Essays on Tudor and Stuart Literature and Culture*, ed. Heather Dubrow and Richard Strier (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) 294.

<sup>38</sup>Edmund Spenser, “Letter to Raleigh,” *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A.C. Hamilton et al. (New York: Longman, 2006) 715.



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<sup>39</sup>Spenser 716.

<sup>40</sup>Donno 278.

<sup>41</sup>Annabel Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). In particular, the four chapters in Part One of Patterson's book address the complex issues of ideology and methodology adopted in compiling such a massive undertaking. Patterson argues that the various writers and compilers of the *Chronicles* actively avoided any temptation to make sense of their documentary evidence, agreeing, instead that "the evidence of diversity that historical inquiry discovers must not, at whatever cost to the historian, give way to the principles of unity and order" (15).

<sup>42</sup>Irving Ribner, *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

<sup>43</sup>For example, David Riggs casts the genre as more specifically heroic rather than moral in *Shakespeare's Heroical Histories: Henry VI and its Literary Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971); in *Historiography and Ideology in Stuart Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Ivo Kamps posits a developing genre that begins by dramatizing accepted chronicle history on the Elizabethan stage and shifts to the Stuart model of the history play, which explores the disparity between the traditional historical accounts and the overlooked complications. Phyllis Rackin presents a similar argument about cultural complexity in the history plays as a whole in *Stages of History: Shakespeare's English Chronicles* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). Similarly, Dermot Cavanaugh in "History, Mourning and Memory in *Henry V*," *Shakespeare's Histories and Counter Histories*, ed. Dermot Cavanaugh, Stuart Hampton-Reeves and Stephen Longstaffe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006) questions the limits of the history play as a definable genre, casting *Henry V* as a memory play dealing more with cultural memory than with accepted history.

<sup>44</sup>Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) 47.

<sup>45</sup>F. J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1967) 7. Levy explores the idea in depth, looking at the implications of anachronism for early modern conceptions of history in Chapter V, "The Chronicle Tradition."

<sup>46</sup>More specifically, the translator, Tom Conley, does not use the term in the only English translation of Certeau's work, though the concept is unmistakably identical.

<sup>47</sup>Certeau 2; emphasis in the original.

<sup>48</sup>Certeau spends a good deal of time in the early chapters of the book elaborating on the dual nature of history as both the historical data, or the object of study, and the method, or praxis employed to study the data.

<sup>49</sup>Certeau 11.

<sup>50</sup>Certeau 34.

<sup>51</sup>Certeau 44.

<sup>52</sup>Certeau 44.

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<sup>53</sup>Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972) 114, 110.

<sup>54</sup>Barthes 119.

<sup>55</sup>Heather James, *Shakespeare's Troy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 38.

<sup>56</sup>F. J. Levy notes that many writers, such as Polydore Vergil and those who followed him, did this reluctantly with a nod to tradition. Levy considers the persistence of the Troy myth in both Chapter IV, "The Popularization of History," and Chapter V, "The Chronicle Tradition." For a discussion of the production and market influences the drove such trends in Tudor history, see also D. R. Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>57</sup>Richard Waswo examines the *Aeneid* as the foundational story, not just for Britain, but for all of Europe in "The History That Literature Makes," *New Literary History* 19 (1988) 541–64. Waswo argues that Virgil's epic establishes an idea of Western culture based on imperial and expansionist ideologies.

## Chapter 1

### *Pietatem Virumque Cano: Virgilian Ethics and the British Troy Myth on Stage*

During the last two decades of the sixteenth century and the first of the seventeenth century, countless plays, pageants and public performances in England dramatized persons and events from ancient Troy and Rome.<sup>1</sup> Even plays that did not deal directly with classical stories often employed classical imagery as a kind of allusive language to aid the audience's understanding by tying the narrative to well-known stories and commonplaces. While the ideals in question certainly varied from play to play, core Roman values of *constantia*, *virtus*, and *pietas* featured quite prominently as the most frequent associations. Furthermore, through the Trojan foundation of Britain, such allusions connected these virtues to contemporary London and its identity as *Troy Novant* or "New Troy." In examining some examples of the Roman and Trojan culture in dramatic performances, we can see that these cast London as a very active participant in its Trojan heritage and define an ideal code of ethics from Aeneas and Brutus.

In the final scene of *Hamlet* when the dying prince requests of Horatio, "report me and my cause aright to the unsatisfied," Horatio replies simply, "Never believe it, I am more antique Roman than a Dane"(V.ii.321–4). Although he explains in the next line that there is "yet some liquor left" by which he may presumably effect his own death, it seems clear that the term "antique Roman" carried a self-explanatory meaning for Shakespeare's audience. In this case, his self-identification as Roman makes it clear that he intends to follow the examples of Cassius, Brutus, Lucretia,<sup>2</sup>

and others and commit suicide in the wake of the chaotic slaughter that has just decimated the court. Additionally, with that proposed action comes an implied set of ethics and a code of honor that governs his behavior. Horatio places his allegiance and duty to the court, and to Hamlet in particular, above the value of his own life. Rather than live with dishonor as a constant reminder of the political turmoil and scandal, he offers to join Hamlet in death as a completely devoted royal servant. Clifford Ronan takes Horatio's self-label "antike Roman," as it appears in the Folio, as shorthand for the sixteenth-century view of Roman Stoic philosophy, and as the title of his book on the subject. Ronan suggests that the use of the word "Roman" or other derivatives of *Romanitas* in this context would naturally suggest the concepts of "nobility," "constancy," and "resolution" to a Shakespearean audience.<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey Miles, likewise, in his book *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans* argues that the Stoic virtue of *constantia* formed the central concept in the way Elizabethan readers envisioned Rome.<sup>4</sup> These readings load the term "Roman" at the end of *Hamlet* with the tenets of Senecan Stoicism, making Horatio's proposed suicide a noble action: his concerns move outside his immediate emotional desires, and he transcends the pettiness of earthly politics.

Hamlet, however, sees things differently. After snatching away Horatio's intended instrument of self-destruction, he appeals to Horatio's devotion and charges him with a different task:

O God, Horatio, what a wounded name,

Things standing thus unknown, I shall leave behind me!

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,  
 Absent thee from felicity awhile,  
 And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,  
 To tell my story (V.ii.327–32).

Hamlet inverts the Stoic values of Horatio's statement, casting suicide as the easy, and even dishonorable, way out. Horatio's death would bring ignominy to Hamlet as no one could truly repair his "wounded name." Regardless of the constancy, detachment, and resolve that suicide would demonstrate on Horatio's part, Hamlet requests that he truly act on behalf of a greater good at his own expense.

In his book, *Shakespeare's Rome*, Robert Miola sides with Hamlet to present us with a competing notion of what defined Rome for an Elizabethan audience. From the outset, Miola acknowledges that the "paths to Rome" for a sixteenth-century English audience were many, and trying to trace the complexity in the many views, ideas, and images of Rome becomes a monumental, if not truly insurmountable, task for the modern scholar. That said, however, he identifies the virtues of honor, constancy and *pietas* as the core of the Tudor-Stuart conception of Rome. His own argument further focuses on *pietas* as the "essential Roman virtue for Shakespeare as well as Vergil."<sup>5</sup> This quality, as defined by the actions of Aeneas in Virgil's *Aeneid*, constitutes "the loving respect owed to family, country and the gods,"<sup>6</sup> seen most clearly when Aeneas flees Troy carrying his father and his household gods and leading his son with the task of founding a second Troy in Rome.

The descriptions of Aeneas as *pious* begin early in the epic, during his initial flight from Troy and arrival in Carthage. The first descriptor comes from Jupiter who calls him *magnanimus*, literally “great-souled Aeneas” (I.260).<sup>7</sup> This draws the reader’s attention to him as more than a common man, more even than a semi-divine hero, but as someone whose soul and very nature hold the gods’ attention as great. Jupiter reinforces this description with a detailed prophecy about Rome and the great things Aeneas’s descendants will give to the world. The following definitions as *pious* seem to explain what makes him unique in the gods’ eyes. Shortly after, when the homeless Trojans first arrive in Carthage, Virgil presents a defining example of Aeneas’s character:

At pius Aeneas per noctem plurima uolens,  
 ut primum lux alma data est, exire locosque  
 explorare nouos, puas uento accesserit oras,  
 qui teneant (nam inulta uidet), hominesne feraene,  
 quaerere constituit sociisque exacta referre (I.305–9).

(But the dedicated man,  
 Aeneas, thoughtful through the restless night,  
 Made up his mind, as kindly daylight came,  
 To go out and explore the strange new places,  
 To learn what coast the wind had brought him to  
 And who were living there, men or wild creatures—

For wilderness was all he saw—and bring  
 Report back to his company) (I.411–18).

The action that follows tells us much about how we should understand the word *pius* that begins the description. Aeneas shows *pietas* in his concern for the safety of those traveling with him. He sees it as his obligation and his duty to evaluate the land personally as the leader and one responsible. Robert Fitzgerald’s modern translation tellingly wrestles with the term, highlighting the inadequacy of “pious” to fully or accurately represent *pius*.<sup>8</sup> “Dedicated,” in fact, works quite well here, in that Aeneas dedicates himself to protecting the remnants of his nation.

Less than 100 lines later, in a conversation with his disguised mother, Venus, Aeneas describes himself as *pius*:

sum pius Aeneas, raptos qui ex hoste penatis  
 classe ueho mecum, fama super aethera notus;  
 Italiam quaero patriam, et genus ab Ioue summo (378–80).

(I am Aeneas, duty-bound, and known  
 Above high air of heaven by my fame,  
 Carrying with me in my ships our gods  
 Of hearth and home, saved from the enemy.  
 I look for Italy to be my fatherland,  
 And my descent is from all-highest Jove) (519–24).

Again, Fitzgerald's "duty-bound," while not an exact translation of *pius*, captures the essence of the two actions Aeneas describes. He carries his ancestor's gods with him, stolen away from his enemies, and looks for a new land where fate dictates he will found a replacement fatherland. In everything he does, he remains "dedicated" and "duty-bound" to causes greater than himself.

This virtue, as demonstrated by Rome's mythical founding father, has a distinctly active quality, which Miola goes so far as to call "the quintessentially Roman and Vergilian subordination of the self to obligations of the family and the city."<sup>9</sup> Emblematically, Aeneas takes his heritage with him in the person of his father, guides the future good in the form of his son, and preserves his religious obligations in the *penates*. Like the stoic suicide above, adherence to *pietas* means giving one's own desires less priority than a greater good, in this case the institutional trinity of family, nation, and religion—usually in that order. Although Miola can posit a suicide like Lucretia's as according with these demands because of her motivations, in Horatio's case, we find conflicting ideas of Roman conduct. Instead of seeing it as a noble, selfless and transcendental act, Hamlet casts Horatio's proposed suicide as "felicity" which he must forgo in favor of the duty he owes to his friend and prince. The request that he "draw [his] breath in pain" for the good of his country rather than end his life appeals to tenets of *pietas* and gives Horatio a decidedly more-active way to aid his country than the nearly-passive death he proposes. He eventually concedes and abandons his plans for stoic self-sacrifice in order to carry out Hamlet's request. Yet his loyal actions in addressing Fortinbras and his promise to deliver an account of



the “carnal, bloody and unnatural acts” (V.ii.364) may prove him to be “more antique Roman than a Dane” after all in the service he does for the good of the nation.

*Hamlet*, which seems a distinctly non-Roman play, nevertheless contains a multitude of Roman references and allusions, especially to the Caesars. Lisa Hopkins surveys the uses and cultural meanings of the Roman Caesars in Renaissance drama, and she devotes a lengthy section to analyzing the references in *Hamlet*.<sup>10</sup> In a historical context, she suggests that some of this material results from *Julius Caesar*'s immediately preceding *Hamlet* in the original composition and performance order.<sup>11</sup> This certainly suggests that Horatio's descriptions of the omens at Julius Caesar's death and Polonius's claim to have played Caesar on the stage in the university would have held additional, immediate significance for an audience that may have witnessed these events in a recent trip to the theater.<sup>12</sup> More important, however, the references to the Caesars portray the characters as personally remembering Rome, as Horatio does in the example above, keeping popular ideas about Roman history always in the audience's minds. As Hopkins further suggests, the names in the play add to this effect. Marcellus, as one of the first characters on stage, brings to mind Augustus's nephew and original heir-apparent, and Claudius himself bears the name of an important Julio-Claudian ruler. For Hopkins, these names and references evoke ideas of power and abuse, especially through imagery of Caligula, to focus audience attention on the politics of both fictional Denmark and present England.

In a non-Roman play so invested in Roman ideas, it seems reasonable to ask how Miola's equation of Virgil with Rome and the governing notion of *pietas* might

fit with the play, especially given the final episode with Horatio, discussed above. *Hamlet*, of course, has an overtly Virgilian moment with the player's speech in II.ii. When Hamlet first encounters the players come to Elsinore and presumably has the chance to ask for any speech, his mind goes immediately to the death of Priam. Numerous scholars have proposed answers to the question of what this scene means both for Hamlet as a character and *Hamlet* as a play. Harry Levin, for example, proposes that the actions of Pyrrhus show Hamlet a model for the kind of revenge he should enact,<sup>13</sup> while Arthur Johnston argues the exact opposite, that the truly hellish imagery of the account shows revenge's ugly and gruesome nature.<sup>14</sup> Barry Nass combines elements of the two, saying that the speech emphasizes "Hamlet's difficulties in imitating the heroic code of a past age" for the audience, while showing Hamlet himself the frightening consequences of the act of revenge.<sup>15</sup> Finally, as the title of his essay "Ambivalence in the Player's Speech in *Hamlet*" would suggest, Joseph Westlund embraces a full double meaning for both Hamlet and the audience as they hear the account of Priam's death.<sup>16</sup>

However we want to see the balance of these representations, the element of Hamlet's choice to hear this speech remains of utmost importance. This presents an important moment of intertextuality as the play considers the situation in Denmark through Virgil's epic and all the cultural baggage that comes with it. Furthermore, we see a strong intratextual element, as well, as the characters put several narratives in conversation with each other within the play's larger framework. Johnston places the account of Pyrrhus within a series of narrative mirrors held up throughout the play, in

which various characters confront analogs to their own situations. Hamlet asks Polonius to see himself in the story of Jephtha, both Claudius and Gertrude must see their own actions in *The Murder of Gonzago*, and Hamlet recognizes his own inability to act in the enormous military movements of Fortinbras at the end of Act IV. In this reading, then, Hamlet finds himself confronting the monstrosity of vengeance when the player gives his performance. However, Westlund makes the obvious, though significant, statement that because “Hamlet chooses ‘Aeneas tale to Dido’ ... an audience must assume that he finds this particular tale attractive for some reason.”<sup>17</sup> While the speech moves Hamlet to introspection, it comes from subject matter that he himself chose, not as a result of some external image foisted upon him that causes him to confront something he doesn’t want to consider. Upon engaging the players in conversation, his mind goes immediately to “Aeneas’s tale to Dido, and thereabout of it especially when he speaks of Priam’s slaughter”(II.ii.387–8).

Hamlet fixates on Pyrrhus’s revenge, but does so through the story of Aeneas and Dido. As part of his argument about narrative mirrors, Johnston notes that the tale of Priam ends a series of three allusions beginning with Jephtha and Dido. Since Jephtha sacrifices his daughter and Dido is abandoned by Aeneas, Johnston sees the focus on Priam as a passive victim, which puts ideas of betrayal and downfall in the center of Hamlet’s mind. Certainly this line of reasoning has some validity, but I propose another possible ideology encoded in these three stories. If we return to Miola’s idea that references to Aeneas called to mind the virtue *pietas*, the second of the three ancient narratives might function as the central figure. The combination of

Dido's name with Aeneas's produces especial potency in this regard, since this part of Virgil's account most clearly demonstrates Aeneas's *pietas*. When he tells Dido of the fall of Troy in book II of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas has found a place of refuge at her court after fleeing his burning city. Although he will find romantic love with Dido and potential for a new life in Carthage, Aeneas follows the will of the gods and leaves Dido in order to found Rome. This encounter and the ensuing choice between competing priorities constitutes a major test in which Aeneas must sacrifice his own desires for the good of his descendants and future nation. Shifting the focus away from his daughter for a moment, Jephtha also sacrifices something he loves to the demands of a higher authority. Although Hamlet's reference to Polonius as "Old Jephtha" (II.ii.352) almost certainly refers to his callous exploitation of his daughter, the song Hamlet quotes refers to Jephtha's "One fair daughter and no more, The which he lovèd passing well" (II.ii.349–50). Jephtha's pledge to God that he will sacrifice the first creature he sees as an act of thanksgiving may be rash, but he faithfully fulfills his promise in spite of the great personal loss to himself. Hamlet even calls the ballad of Jephtha a "pious chanson" (II.ii.361), drawing attention to this virtue, however ironically he may mean it with reference to Polonius's foolish sacrifice of his own daughter.

Seen in this light, the account of Pyrrhus and Priam embodies ideas about actions demanded by *pius* duty. Several critics have noted the puzzling change of details in the scene from the Virgilian original, especially Pyrrhus's black clothing as a substitution for the glittering silver in Virgil's description.<sup>18</sup> Barry N. Nass

embraces this as an important element that casts Pyrrhus as both a force of hell and of revenge.<sup>19</sup> While this is certainly true, Hamlet significantly delivers this description himself. After a halted opening where he describes Pyrrhus as the “Hyrcanian beast,” he stops and amends his description, beginning instead with the following lines:

The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,  
 Black as his purpose, did the night resemble  
 When he lay couchèd in the ominous horse,  
 Hath now this dread and black complexion smeared  
 With heraldry more dismal”(II.ii.392–6).

In addition to the iconography of evil purpose that this description carries, it directs the audience’s attention more literally and directly to the figure of Hamlet himself. If we can take him at his word in I.ii that he wears an “inky cloak” and the “customary suits of solemn black” as a mourning observation for his father, the initial description of Pyrrhus, delivered by an obsessed and enthusiastic Hamlet, perfectly describes the clothing of the actor reciting the words.

The play gives the audience an immediate connection to Pyrrhus in the frenzied, black-clad prince who begins the narration. Indeed, we cannot resist comparing Hamlet and his situation to the classical son he pulls from his memory, single-mindedly bent on revenge. This moment, however, creates other, problematic, associations for the audience. Hamlet’s seemingly just quest to avenge his father sits at odds with the gruesome image of “the hellish Pyrrhus,” “horridly tricked with the blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons”(II.ii.401, 397–8). Pyrrhus functions

simultaneously as a model for Hamlet and a repulsive villain slaughtering indiscriminately during the siege of Troy. He avenges a father's death, but does so through the ruthless murder of aged "reverend Priam." Although the player's speech omits the Virgilian detail that Pyrrhus trips Priam in a pool of his own son's blood, its imagery certainly depicts Priam as the victim and Pyrrhus as a ruthless monster. Finally, Hecuba's sorrow and the pathos it evokes seem to trump all other images. After the gruesome descriptions where a ruthless warrior slays a piteous old man, Hecuba's plight ultimately moves the speaker to tears, interrupting the narrative with the final image of a shattered family and a bereft wife.

We see an excellent example here of Heather James's idea that Trojan references reinforce various ideas within the play, rather than importing any single definable idea that would be otherwise unavailable. This narrative from the *Aeneid* creates a messy tangle of implications for the play rather than providing a clean corollary or allegory to the present situation. Like a prism, the image of Pyrrhus lays out a myriad of meanings from a common source, but presents finite pieces for the audience's attention. Each element, character, and idea in the recitation suggests multiple interpretations. Vengeance is both a noble motivation and a hellish enterprise. Pyrrhus is both Hamlet and Claudius, both the avenger and the murderer. Hecuba is Gertrude and also Hamlet, the bereft family members. The story is one of redemption, loss, transgression, justice, and injustice. It contains all of these elements simultaneously without contradiction. The initial imagery originates in Hamlet's mind with the contemplation of his own plight, and the subsequent details connect to

various issues and characters throughout the play. One unifying concept here, however, might be the central concern for *pietas*: dutiful action. Pyrrhus dutifully seeks revenge for his father's death on the king he holds responsible. Priam dutifully makes his last stand on behalf of the city he rules, in spite of his age and inability to fight, and Hecuba's sorrow brings the injustice to the gods' attention. Finally, Aeneas, at the moment of narrating this story, represents a paragon of dutiful *pietas*. He pays tribute to his host, Dido, by recounting the tale she has requested, he serves the memory of his fallen country and murdered father-in-law by telling their story, and he serves the gods and future generations by seeking out Italy for a new homeland. More than dealing with the question of vengeance, then, the allusion to Pyrrhus places the focus on duty, perhaps asking how Hamlet can best fulfill his various obligations to family, country, and God.

The *Aeneid* seems to have been a very important text for the English reading public during the sixteenth century. For the well-educated, literate in Latin, publishers produced a variety of original language texts with a wide array of commentaries.<sup>20</sup> Roger Ascham, in his 1570 educational treatise *The Schoolmaster*, never even entertains the question of whether a student learning classical languages should read the *Aeneid*; he takes as a given Virgil's status as the greatest Roman poet and devises exercises in imitation and composition that use his epic as the central exemplar.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the sixteenth century saw a number of important translations.<sup>22</sup> After numerous English paraphrases by authors from Chaucer to Caxton, Gavin Douglas produced a translation of the entire work in Middle Scots in 1513, which many

consider to be the first true, Renaissance-style, verse translation of the *Aeneid* into a dialect of English. The Earl of Surrey rendered books II and IV into English by 1557, and in 1558 Thomas Phaer produced a partial translation. Phaer dedicated his translation, which Thomas Twyne would complete after his death, to Queen Mary and couched it in decidedly Catholic, though distinctly English, terms. Finally, Richard Stanyhurst translated the opening books of the poem in 1585.

The earliest of these published translations begins by directly addressing the issue of *pietas* and pious action. Douglas's opening commentary defines Aeneas according to *pietas*, telling his audience to read the term "quhylys [sometimes] for 'rewth,' quhils for 'devotion,' and quhilis for 'pyete' and 'compassion.'"<sup>23</sup> Colin Burrow argues that Douglas's background in Scottish clan politics colors his understanding of these terms, and the entire poem, with a particular emphasis on family. In his translation, *pietas* specifically denotes loyalty and allegiance to family and clan units, above all else. Interestingly, the fragmentary status of the subsequent sixteenth-century translations may reinforce this idea for their contemporary audiences. Phaer's initial effort contained books I through VII, Stanyhurst published I through IV, and Surrey limited himself to books II and IV. While this similarity in scope likely comes most simply from multiple translators starting logically at the beginning of the poem, it does mean that the reading public had more access to the unified narrative of Aeneas in Carthage in books I–IV than any other part of the poem. This section contains the defining descriptions of Aeneas as *pious* and repeatedly posits his father's health and his son's inheritance as Aeneas's strongest



motivators. The first third of the poem distinctly casts him as a man with obligations to his family, the remnants of his nation, and his promises to the gods.

Such a concern with dutiful action made the *Aeneid* a popular text for teaching and for moralizing. One posthumous account of King James's son, Prince Henry (1594–1612), provides evidence that this triple obligation (family, nation, gods) formed the central tenet of a common reading at the beginning of the seventeenth century. In a section discussing both Henry's modesty and his aptitude in learning, the author of *The True Picture and Relation of Prince Henry* records the following conversation between the prince and his father, James I:

The Kings Majestie asking him, which were the best verses that he had learned in the first booke of *Aeneides*, he answered; These,

*Rex erat Aeneas nobis, quo justior alter*

*Nec pietate fuit, nec bello major & armis.*

In English

*We had a King Aeneas cald, a juster was there none,*

*In virtue, or in faites of warre, or armes could match him one.*

Which indeed is a most excellent commendation, concerning the three principall Vertues, of a worthy Prince to Wit, Piety, Justice, and Valour.<sup>24</sup>

In selecting the most important idea in the first book, Henry immediately turns to the moment when Aeneas's men first describe him to Dido. The men plead with Dido for any news of Aeneas because this particular combination of traits makes him an ideal king. Although Aeneas himself hears this description, his mother, Venus, has made

him invisible by shrouding him in a cloud, thereby ensuring that the men speak candidly before Dido. Virgil creates a moment where both the audience and Aeneas himself can contemplate how his companions regard him. It seems likely that the education Henry received, as heir to the throne, focused on the qualities of a good ruler and therefore directed his attention to these lines. The commentary from the author suggests that this defines proper kingly conduct in “the three principall Vertues of a worthy Prince,” showing also the components of Roman *pietas*. Moreover, this moment remains central to any reading of the poem. James’s own intense interest in kingship and princely virtue led him to write *Basilikon Doron* as a manual for his son on how to be a good ruler. The above conversation gives us a glimpse into that education and shows the *Aeneid* as an important ancient text whose content gives it specific interpretive and instructional uses.

In a work that focuses on Aeneas as an epic founder, these opening events demonstrate the qualities which define the central figure and the empire he will found. His men distill the essence of his leadership down to piety, justice, and military strength. Combining this moment with the various times Virgil describes Aeneas as *pious*, we start to see the breadth of meaning this word contains. If, as Miola succinctly describes, *pietas* denotes dutifully acting on behalf of family, nation, and the gods, it subsumes, rather than competes with, the other defining Roman qualities, *virtus* and *constantia*. Both *virtus*, as a heroic strength, and *constantia*, as a selfless detachment, contribute to carrying out the duties defined by *pietas* and help construct Aeneas as an ideal epic founder.<sup>25</sup>

English historians, certainly from the Norman period onward, sought to connect their kingdom and national identity with the epic story of Rome's foundation.<sup>26</sup> The eighth-century chronicle history of Nennius first connects Britain to the story of Aeneas through his great-grandson, Brutus. Brutus, banished from Italy for accidentally killing his father while hunting, lands on the nearly empty island of Britain and founds a new nation. The more famous version of this story, of course, comes through Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, completed in 1136. Geoffrey takes the histories of Nennius and others and expands them to create a comprehensive history of Britain from the time of Brutus through the Saxon conquests. He presents the book as filling in a gap in the historical narrative with reliable information. After lamenting that so little has been known about Arthur and the ancient kings that preceded him, Geoffrey relates how the Archdeacon of Oxford presented him with "a certain very ancient book written in the British language," which, "attractively composed to form a consecutive and orderly narrative, set out all the deeds of these men, from Brutus, the first king of the Britons, down to Cadwallader."<sup>27</sup> He presents his chronicle as a translation of this "ancient book," thereby affording it the authority of antiquity, though, most likely, it simply represents his own embellishments on earlier histories.

Geoffrey strives to give Britain, its rulers, and its people a clear and noble heritage on which to build their identity. Beginning with the person of Brutus, himself a direct descendent of Priam, the *Historia* traces the royal lineage through Arthur and beyond, to the figures monarchs of his day could readily identify as their own

ancestors. In this way, he links the legendary figures of ancient Troy to Britain's heroic, ideal king, and connects it all to contemporary rulers. He creates a continuity where Trojan, ancient British, and current English all partake in the same identity. Even more significant, in the first book of his chronicle Geoffrey links the institutions of England to those of ancient Troy. After Brutus leaves Italy, Geoffrey situates him in his own mini epic. He wanders the Mediterranean, freeing various groups of Trojans still in captivity from the Trojan War. He leads his new followers on a campaign against Gaul, sacking several major cities and eventually ending up on the island of Albion. He finds a race of giants and, defeating them, proposes a permanent settlement. Here we find a moment of clear intersection of ancient epic and British history.

The final section of Geoffrey's first book establishes classical etymologies for geographical names, most notably those of the island and its people:

Brutus called the island Britain from his own name, and his companions he called Britons. His intention was that his memory should be perpetuated by the derivation of a name. A little later, the language of the people, which had up to then been known as Trojan or Crooked Greek, was called British for the same reason.<sup>28</sup>

While this passage actually constructs the perpetuated memory it claims to preserve, it provides noble signification to the island's name for Geoffrey's readers. Cornwall receives a similarly elevated status in deriving its name from Brutus's lieutenant,

Corineus. Finally, Geoffrey gives special attention to Brutus's actions in choosing and naming a capital:

Once he had divided up his kingdom, Brutus decided to build a capital. In pursuit of this plan, he visited every part of the land in search of a suitable spot. He came at length to the River Thames, walked up and down its banks and so chose a site suited to his purpose. There he built his city and called it Troia Nova.<sup>29</sup>

Brutus sites, constructs, and names his city through deliberate actions and choice. With no happenstance involved, such as situating the city to commemorate a great battle, sacrifice, or victory, London's origins give it a distinct sense of identity and purpose. A direct descendent of Priam evaluates the entire landscape, selects the choicest spot, and builds his city, which he calls New Troy. Even Rome cannot boast such a clear continuation of its mother culture. In fact, Geoffrey stresses the historical context surrounding Brutus's actions as part of their significance. At London's creation, he says, "the priest Eli was ruling in Judea and the Ark of the covenant was stolen by the Philistines," and Aeneas Silvius, son of Aeneas, ruled over the kingdom in Italy.<sup>30</sup> This establishes Britain as a contemporary nation to ancient Israel and significantly older than Rome itself.

A cultural primacy exists here, made even clearer by John Stow when he creates a synopsis of the various English chronicles more than 400 years later in 1579. Stow begins his history with the founding of "the citie of newe Troy, nowe called London," where he specifies that Brutus "established therein the Troian

lawes.”<sup>31</sup> Not only did the city represent an image of Troy and a home for displaced Trojans, but also, according to this tradition it maintained a continuity with the government and laws, as well as the culture, native to the fallen city. To complement this, Stow lists the following event at the end of the description for the year 766 B.C.: “Rome was builded in Italie by Remus and Romulus, 356 years after Brute arrived in the lande.”<sup>32</sup> The message here seems unmistakable. By the time the legendary brothers quarrel for control of the Capitoline hill, London has existed and flourished for three and a half centuries. Whatever Rome becomes, the chronicles seem to suggest, “Britain was here first and did it better.” In terms of Aeneas’s mission to found a new Troy and build a great nation, an identity that Augustan Rome eagerly claimed through Virgil’s epic, the British could reasonably claim to be more Roman than the Romans themselves.

Although only available in manuscript and continental editions during the sixteenth century, Geoffrey’s chronicle, with its towering Trojan Brutus and heroic British Arthur, became the basis for English histories that followed it. From the early adaptations by Layamon and Wace, through Caxton and the great sixteenth-century chronicle histories of Camden, Hall, Holinshed, and Stow, among others, the story of Brutus holds a prominent place and sets the tone for the history to follow.<sup>33</sup>

“The Elizabethan age was more historically minded than most,” F. J. Levy states simply in beginning his discussion of the many kinds of material dealing with history available to a reading and watching public in the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>34</sup> Richard Helgerson claims that this proves particularly true for a generation

of writers born into the middle-class between 1551 and 1564.<sup>35</sup> Helgerson sees a near obsession with questions of English origins and modern English identity, not only in the obvious genres of history, poetry, and drama, but also in geography, legal theory, and legal history. At this time, he says, “things English came to matter with a special intensity both because England itself mattered more than it had and because other sources of identity and cultural authority mattered less.”<sup>36</sup> At a time of major religious and political upheaval at home and on the larger European scene, and at a time when the boundaries of the map were, quite literally, expanding, we can observe a growing desire for context. Theatergoers and readers of all kinds created a market for material addressing their British heritage and, consequently, their identity in the world.

Helgerson sees this interest permeating the culture and manifesting itself in many disparate areas of study and art. While this ubiquity becomes obvious in hindsight when we can look at the culture as a distanced whole, it presents the problematic question of how these various modes of discourse and expression interacted on the individual level. Levy anticipated this question 25 years earlier as a methodological issue if one wishes to examine historical understanding in various spheres. Confronted with the large variety of materials that deal with historical content, in one way or another, he says, “These were books of all sorts, written for a variety of audiences. This...creates confusion for the historian of ideas, [who] not only must consider the phenomenon of cultural lag but must worry about the class of audience.”<sup>37</sup> Determining to what extent the merchant reader of a popular chronicle,

for example, read Spenser's poetry or saw a history play is difficult; therefore, it remains problematic to know how these texts and genres interacted with any single hypothetical reader. Levy solves this problem by encapsulating individual genres as groups with their own internal logic. It seems reasonable to assume that a reader of popular chronicles might read other popular chronicles, a reader of Spenser might read other similar poetry, and an audience member at one history play likely saw others.

In this current project, which aims to examine allusions to the Troy myth in Shakespeare's history plays, Levy's logic provides some useful direction. Assuming that audience members had read Hall or Holinshed or any other chronicle to augment their understanding of the plays may prove fruitful ground and provide interesting connections, but it may also result in misleading conclusions. Other public performances from the same time period, however, can suggest what knowledge and ideas an audience had, or might be expected to have, on entering the theater. Four works in particular provide a potentially representative composite view from the turn of the seventeenth century. Christopher Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (1590)<sup>38</sup> presents one of the most direct stagings of material from the *Aeneid*. The play's action covers events from the end of book I, when Aeneas arrives in Carthage, through the end of book IV with Dido's suicide and Aeneas's exit. *Dido, Queen of Carthage* engages the episodes that test Aeneas's *pietas*, but moves beyond simple epic representation. By creating very sympathetic, humanized characters in Dido and Aeneas, Marlowe demonstrates the personal cost and sacrifice of a leader dedicated to



larger familial, national, and religious causes. The anonymous play *Lochrine* (1595) focuses on the first kings of Britain, Brutus's sons, and the tragedy that results when they divide Britain into separate realms. The play opens with an aged Brutus who recounts his family history and bequeaths this heritage to his sons and the kings that come after him. Finally, two London civic performances, James's royal entry pageant of 1604 and the Lord Mayor's show of 1605, both overtly link James to Brutus, casting the new king as the completion and perfection of his Trojan origins.

In his essay, "Fate, Seneca, and Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage*," Richard Martin argues that Marlowe's audience would have seen the story of Dido and Aeneas as a commonplace for the dangers that can arise if one allows transitory lust or passion to interrupt a greater purpose.<sup>39</sup> This view casts Aeneas as a man bound for a great destiny, while Dido simply serves as a distracting temptation along the way. Aeneas proves his *pietas* by overcoming Dido's charms when the gods tell him he must move on to Italy. Along with this reading directed by Virgil's epithet of "pius Aeneas," however, came the Ovidian and medieval tradition that cast Aeneas as the emblematic false lover. Since he accepts Dido's help, lives as her consort, and then leaves her in despair, he becomes the quintessential model for an opportunistic cad, regardless of the piety in his actions. Chaucer embraces this view with the first English version of the story in his *Legend of Good Women*. Although he consciously repeats Virgil's account, he takes a specific moral stance, calling his account the "Legenda Didonis martiris" or the "Legend of Dido the Martyr."<sup>40</sup> Dido clearly plays the victim here, and Chaucer is no less direct about Aeneas, calling him a "fals

lovere” and a “traytour” whose protestations amount, at most, to the theatrics of “false teres”(1236, 1301, 1328). Dido finds herself undone by her trusting virtue, and Aeneas coldly uses her as a means to achieve his destined end.

Some modern critics attempt to place Marlowe’s *Dido* within this tradition, since it presents Dido in a sympathetic and tragic light.<sup>41</sup> This does not account for Marlowe’s Aeneas, however, who looks very little like his cold and opportunistic counterpart from Ovid’s *Heroides*. Instead, Martin sees Marlowe responding to this idea by redirecting the focus of his play to the implications of Senecan fate. Marlowe’s Aeneas is not simply a “creature of destiny” as he is in Virgil, but a human being torn between free will and fate.<sup>42</sup> We can use this idea from Martin to understand Marlowe’s portrayal of Aeneas in his play. While Virgil’s Aeneas is cold, calculating, and evasive when it comes to dealing with Dido, leaving her when her hospitality ceases to be useful, he acts very differently in Marlowe’s *Dido*. Although he does leave, Aeneas shows signs of real love, commitment, and attachment to Dido. An agonizing division of loyalties surrounds his decision to leave, rather than a blunt acceptance of the will of Jupiter. The audience sees a true measure of Aeneas’s *pietas*. The play emphasizes the magnitude of the sacrifice involved in his epic duty, which comes at the cost of Aeneas’s desires and free will.

We might certainly, like Irving Singer, describe Aeneas’s journey to Italy as an “impersonal mission,” and such a description necessarily influences our understanding of the characters.<sup>43</sup> As they exist in Virgil, Aeneas *is* Rome, and Dido *is* Carthage. Thus robbed of any real, personal motivations, they can only function as

stand-ins for the countries they will found. Virgil's Aeneas, then, must overcome Carthage in the person of Dido and subject himself to the greater glory waiting for him in Italy. His single-minded determination, while undesirable in a human character, becomes an admirable quality in his epic representation. He does not allow a ready, but inferior, position in Carthage to distract him from his divine mission. By contrast, Marlowe's Aeneas keeps his function as an epic founder, but we also see the inner struggles that make his sacrifice meaningful.

We see this internal conflict most clearly in Aeneas's attitudes and feelings toward Dido. To the account he took from Virgil, Marlowe adds reactions from Aeneas that crucially establish his personal engagement with Dido. Virgil keeps the reader distant from Aeneas's emotions, showing only those of the amorous Dido. In the cave scene in book IV of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas seems little more than an incidental object. Clearly the gods treat this as a marriage ceremony:

Primal Earth herself and Nuptial Juno

Opened the ritual, torches of lightning blazed,

High Heaven became witness to the marriage,

And nymphs cried out wild hymns from a mountain top (IV.229–32).

Virgil describes a wedding, but his focus in this scene remains on Dido; he does not mention Aeneas at all, except to say that he comes to the cave during the storm. His wording of Dido's reaction, however, tells the reader much about what happens here. He says,

neque enim specie famaue mouetur

nec iam furtivum Dido meditatur amorem:

coniugium uocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam (IV.170–2).

(Dido had no further qualms

As to the impressions given and set abroad;

She thought no longer of a secret love

But called it marriage. Thus under that name she hid her guilt) (IV.234–8).

The crucial final line of this passage in Latin is “coniugium uocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam,” and it really hangs on the word *culpam*, meaning “guilt,” “fault” or even “crime.” That she *praetexit*, or conceals, this fault behind the name of marriage further heightens the dishonest, and potentially ambiguous, nature of the situation.

While Dido believes that she married Aeneas in the cave, Virgil makes it clear that the belief remains one-sided; Dido uses a convenient situation to resolve guilt about an illicit relationship. Lest there be any doubt about Aeneas’s understanding, he later objects, saying, “nec coniungis umquam / praetendi taedas aut haec in foedera ueni” (I never held the torches of a bridegroom / Never entered upon the pact of marriage) (IV.338–9/467–8). Virgil also gives a subtler clue to his attitudes, saying that Aeneas and Dido spent the winter “cupidine captos” or “captivated by desire”(IV.194).

*Cupido* lacks much flexibility in its meaning here, denoting lust or desire as opposed to love. Virgil never describes Aeneas as being in love. This passage conspicuously lacks any form of the word *amor*, which would imply something other than physical passion.

Marlowe, however, presents a very different Aeneas in this scene. When Dido professes her love for him, Aeneas voluntarily responds:

With this my hand I give to you my heart,  
 And vow by all the gods of hospitality,  
 By heaven and earth, and my fair brother's bow,  
 By Paphos, Capys, and the purple sea  
 From whence my radiant mother did descend,  
 And by this sword that saved me from the Greeks  
 Never to leave these new-upreared walls  
 Whiles Dido lives and rules in Juno's town—  
 Never to love another but her! (III.iv.42–50)<sup>44</sup>

A number of scholars have trouble taking this passage seriously, claiming the rhetoric flies too high for the situation.<sup>45</sup> Clare R. Kinney, however, argues that Aeneas “moves from complete self-deprecation to apparently complete self-commitment” at this moment.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, one finds it difficult to look past the obvious marriage vow wording, despite the fact that Marlowe never mentions the word “marriage” in this scene. Aeneas makes all the standard rhetorical moves for a wedding; he vows by body, divinity, and talismanic object, actively offering commitment, specifically a commitment of love, in response to Dido's own offers. He willingly embraces his situation in Carthage, establishing a strong emotional investment in staying.

Marlowe defines Aeneas's situation through conflicting epic and personal goals throughout the play. In the *Aeneid*, Aeneas resolves any doubts he has about

whether he should stay in Carthage by saying, “I sail for Italy not of my own free will” (IV.499), relinquishing his agency to destiny. He entertains no arguments and leaves without looking back. We see no such iron will in Marlowe’s play, however. After his first warning from Hermes, Aeneas says,

Jove wills it so, my mother wills it so;

Let my Phoenissa grant it, and then I go.

Grant she or no, Aeneas must away (IV.iii.5–7).

These three lines aptly demonstrate the conflict and choices that Aeneas faces for the rest of the play. His initial reaction shows his personal priorities; although the gods, one of whom is his mother, give him instructions, his compliance depends on Dido’s approval. This explicitly sets family and gods on one side against the hero’s personal desires on the other. He immediately reverses his decision, however, and then goes on to justify it by recounting details of his promised kingdom in Italy. Starting at the beginning of Act IV, his desires as an individual human being with personal interests assert themselves repeatedly in conflict with his imperialist purpose.

He tries on several occasions to reconcile these two motivations, though without any success. On first deciding to leave in Act IV, Scene iii, Aeneas imagines that he hears Dido calling him back so that “As one we may sail to Italy” (IV.iii.30). This, of course, remains an impossibility for both parties, as Dido has her own national duty to fulfill. In this first attempt, Aeneas tries to preserve his nationalistic goal and conform his private life to it. Finding this impossible, he inverts the equation. This time, he tries to preserve his private affairs and adjust his political

destiny accordingly. He accepts Dido's offer in IV.iv to rule as king of Carthage, and outlines the new plan to his men in V.i. He says:

Triumph my mates, our travels are at end.

Here will Aeneas build a statelier Troy

Than that which grim Atrides overthrew.

Carthage shall vaunt her petty walls no more (V.i.1–4).

If he can make Carthage function as an acceptable end to his journey, he can rebuild his new Trojan state there and be with Dido. The limitations to this plan soon become clear, however, when Aeneas concedes that the size of his city can be “Not past four thousand paces at most” (V.i.17). The size of his newly accepted kingdom has a clear limit; and, as Hermes points out a few lines later, it limits his future glory as well.

Aeneas cannot find a compromise and must, reluctantly, make a decision. He finally excuses himself in Act V by lifting a line directly out of Virgil's Latin: “*Italiam non sponte sequor*” (I sail not for Italy of my own free will) (V.i.140). Unlike his epic counterpart, Marlowe's Aeneas cannot simply take his leave of Dido with these words, because she is “his dear love” (V.i.93). Instead, he quotes Virgil only after several failed attempts to stay and a great many sincere protestations. A few lines earlier, he explains the crux of his situation when he says, “Not from my heart, for I can hardly go. / And yet I may not stay” (V.i.102–3). He shows true love and attachment to Dido, but his personal desires sit at odds with his epic fate. It is irrelevant that in his “heart” he “can hardly go,” because the gods' will means that he “may not stay.” This difference in attitude holds an important implication for Rome's,

and Britain's, foundation. While Virgil's epic shows Aeneas as a role model, valiantly putting aside his own passions for the good of his progeny and race, Marlowe's play complicates this hero by making the audience acutely aware of his personal sacrifice.

Aeneas displays hesitancy and inner turmoil at one final moment in the play, when Marlowe gives us Anna's last sighting. She tells Dido,

I cried out, "Aeneas, false Aeneas, stay!"

Then gan he wag his hand, which, yet held up,

Made me suppose he would have heard me speak.

[...]

They gan to move him to redress my ruth,

And stay a while to hear what I could say;

But he, clapped under hatches, sailed away (V.i.228–30, 238–40).

Even in his last narrative moment in the play, Aeneas hesitates. Although he is already underway on the sea, he waivers momentarily and almost turns around in response to Anna's plea. He experiences such a strong inner struggle that he cannot completely resolve himself to a course of action until he has already taken it, and even then, he must stay "clapped under hatches" to maintain his determination.

Aeneas's role as a national symbol and his human desires are completely incompatible in Marlowe's play. Love, the most human emotion, and fate, the most epic purpose, manifest themselves in two competing, potential narratives for Aeneas. One narrative has him acting for his own happiness, marrying Dido and ruling as king



in Carthage. The other has him working for a larger good, obeying the gods and founding Rome. These narratives cannot coexist, however; and the play shows us what happens when one of them overpowers the other. We can see this most clearly if we return to the beginning of Act V, mentioned above, when Dido and Aeneas revert to the original Virgilian Latin. Only two lines of Latin occur in the play, both direct quotations from different places in the *Aeneid*, each encapsulating one of the two characters. Dido pleads for Aeneas to change his mind, and Aeneas states that he has no choice but to follow his fate to Italy.<sup>47</sup> In these lines, Marlowe's human narrative breaks down, forcing the couple out of their own story and into the source material. Regardless of what the characters want as individuals, their status as iconic, historical figures and their duties as founders and leaders determine the outcome. At this deciding moment, Virgil's original epic narrative takes over so completely that even its language overwrites the play. Aeneas must choose in favor of larger obligations.

*Dido* portrays a tragedy for Dido herself and an unhappy ending for Aeneas; but more significantly, it engages the costs and personal sacrifices associated with a larger good. Although Marlowe's humanized Aeneas shows hesitation and expresses doubt about playing his designated role, he shows even greater inner strength by finally setting aside his personal desires in favor of the actions demanded by *pietas*. Deanne Williams suggests that the play makes ongoing, though subtle, references to Elizabeth as a monarch making difficult decisions in the best interest of her nation at the expense of her personal desires.<sup>48</sup> Whether we see Elizabeth as Aeneas or Dido, both of which Williams thinks plausible, this argument highlights an important

implication for Marlowe's audience. While Aeneas's decision to leave may be heart-wrenching, it results in the Roman and British empires and produces Aeneas's noteworthy descendants, including Brutus, Arthur, and, eventually, Elizabeth herself.

While Marlowe's play contains an implicit link between Aeneas's story and England's history, the London stage sees the connection made explicit in the anonymous play *Lochrine*, published in 1595.<sup>49</sup> The play focuses largely on Britain's division into northern, central, and southern kingdoms, which the contemporary audience could recognize geographically as Scotland, England, and Wales. The disputes among Brutus's three sons, who rule these kingdoms, further provide a look at the moment when Britain became politically divided as well as geographically organized.

Framing this action, two scenes specifically focus on Brutus's accomplishments and the legacy he established in founding Britain and its capital, Troynovant. The play opens with Brutus on his deathbed, looking back on his life and disposing of his property to his sons. He narrates his personal history, creating something that closely resembles a shortened version of Geoffrey's first book, told in first person. He recounts his celebrated deeds from the time he accidentally kills his father, Silvius, through freeing Trojans around the Mediterranean and fighting in Gaul, ending with his conquest of the giants in Britain. In conclusion, he ends with his nascent kingdom, saying to his nobles and sons,

In that isle at length I placed you.

Now let me see if my laborious toils,

If all my care, if all my grievous wounds,

If all my diligence were well employed (I.ii.121–4).<sup>50</sup>

The mini epic he recounts, echoing the heroic deeds and travels of Aeneas and Odysseus, culminates quite simply in one important act: placing the Trojans in a new home in Britain. Much like Marlowe's Aeneas above, he makes it clear that, as leader, he acted on their behalf at great cost to himself. He has lived a life filled with "laborious toils" and "grievous wounds" to provide a safe haven for exiled Trojans outside of Rome.

Corineus's lines immediately following this speech further show that Brutus not only sacrifices his own comfort for the greater concerns of his nation, he rewards his followers that do the same. Corineus recounts:

When first I followed thee and thine, brave king,

I hazarded my life and dearest blood,

To purchase favour at your princely hands,

And for the same in dangerous attempts

In sundry conflicts and divers broils,

I showed the courage of my manly mind,

[...] For this I fought with furious Gogmagog,

[...] And for these deeds brave Cornwall I received (I.ii.125–30, 133, 135).

These lines imply that Corineus receives Cornwall, not for specific heroic deeds in killing the giants, but for his complete devotion of "life and dearest blood" to Brutus's goals. Brutus and Corineus both show the same *pietas* defined by Aeneas.

As a key concept in making this work, each man must understand his role and act accordingly. Aeneas and Brutus both function as leaders to lost peoples and fathers to great dynasties, so they must act in the best interests of those they protect. Corineus, as a follower and a strong warrior, best plays his role by whole-heartedly following a *pius* king. Although all three may garner a reward in the end, they do so by placing their personal interests last.

Brutus passes on this advice to Lochrine as a crucial part of his inheritance. Before granting him any part of the kingdom, Brutus gives him these instructions:

Be thou a captain to thy bretheren,  
 And imitate thy aged fathers steps,  
 Which will conduct thee to true honor's gate,  
 For if thou follow sacred virtue's lore,  
 Thou shalt be crowned with a laurel branch,

[...] Sorted amongst the glorious happy ones (I.ii.150–4, 156).

A king fulfills his duties most properly in the role of a captain, literally as the head to a body. While a captain leads, he does so through a relationship of mutual dependence between himself and those beneath him. Keeping their good in mind, following in his “aged fathers steps,” will make Lochrine a truly great king. Virtue may be its own reward, but allowing “sacred virtue” to guide his actions brings with it the additional prizes of “true honor,” the “lawrell braunch,” and “a wreath of sempiternall fame,” all of which describe intangible rewards returned by a well-

governed people. Brutus promises no personal comfort or material rewards for acting as a *pius* king; instead, he offers history's favor as the outcome.

Of course, after Brutus's death *Lochrine* shows anything but princes acting selflessly on behalf of those they rule. Lust, deception, ambition, and paranoia quickly fracture Britain into warring and irreconcilable kingdoms. Lochrine, England's first proper king, falls due to his own short-sightedness and that of those around him. Yet, even in last moment of the play, Guendoline returns to Brutus and the heritage he left his sons. After disposing of Estrild and Sabren, she turns to the question of her husband's body:

Because he was a son of mighty Brute,  
 To whom we owe our country, lives and goods,  
 He shall be buried in a stately tomb,  
 Close by his aged father Brutus's bones (V.iv.183–6).

She identifies Brutus and his actions as the source of anything good in the nation, and transfers that responsibility and credit to his son. Descent from Brutus somehow rehabilitates Lochrine, in spite of the poor actions and judgments he exhibited in being king. Brutus looms large as an integral part of the new British, and specifically English, identity, and his kingly virtues remain accessible to those who follow him.

As if to drive this point home, Ate's final words in the epilogue direct the audience's attention back to Elizabeth as the current monarch. He summarizes the causes behind the preceding tragedy as "lawless treachery," "usurpation," "ambitious pride," and "private amours," all motives that, by definition, benefit only the actor

involved at the expense of those around them (V.iv.195–7). A ruler’s situation forces them to choose constantly between what he or she wants personally and what proves best for the good of the country, and as such, the chorus asks that they “be warned by these premises”(V.iv.199). For this reason, Ate implores the audience,

So let us pray for that renowned maid,

That eight and thirty years the scepter swayed

In quiet peace and sweet felicity (V.iv.202–4).

He both praises Elizabeth as, and hopes she will remain, a ruler who embraces her true British heritage in Brutus’s diligence rather than the rash actions of his sons.

*Lochrine*, as a whole, serves as warning. It links Britain, through Brutus, to the noble qualities of *pietas* that earned renown for Aeneas, but it also shows the disastrous outcome when someone forgets the obligations of that duty.

Connections between the monarch and Brutus’s legacy, and between London and Troy, show themselves especially clearly in several civic pageants at the beginning of James I’s reign. On first glance, these may seem outside the scope of the current examination, as they belong to the reign of a later monarch more than a decade after Shakespeare’s histories, and occupy a different genre from the history plays in question. However, these very differences allow them to provide insight into popular understanding of the Troy myth during the last decade of the sixteenth century. The royal entry pageant for James in 1604 and Anthony Munday’s 1605 Lord Mayor’s Show, *The Triumphs of Reunited Britainia* both come within the first two years of James’s reign and rely heavily on pre-existing public perceptions of

British history and identity. While these performances may work consciously to portray the king, or the city itself, according to a specific set of ideals, they must do so in terms already in circulation throughout public discourse. The assumptions they make about the audience can help us define the larger public intellectual milieu at the moment.

The genre question likewise defines these works as objects of particular interest. The authors active in writing material for civic performances also function as major names in the realm of the public theater: Jonson, Dekker, Middleton, and Munday, among others. This suggests that pageants did not sit apart from theater as another animal altogether, but represented a specific form within the larger project of dramatic performance. Likewise, the audience for these pageants, being a cross-section of London's citizens, heavily overlapped, if it did not exactly replicate, the audience accustomed to seeing plays in the public theaters. Moreover, the specific function of these performances in celebrating a monarch or a mayor dictates the audience's expectations and the modes of portrayal open to the writers. They focus on the role of a specific person or institution and link them to the location of performance, its history, and identity. David Bergeron describes how

pageants set out to connect with the honored person and to stake out the community's claim and desire. In a word the pageant needs the guest, and the guest needs the pageant. These entertainments can ratify a sovereign or mayor's claim, and their presence ratifies the political life of the city.<sup>51</sup>

These civic performances create a unique interaction among the subject matter, the person honored, and the audience at large. Although they contain highly stylized emblematic and allegorical figures, they lack the mimetic suspension of disbelief characteristic of a narrative performance, in that they do not ask the audience to imagine the figures and setting divorced from the current place and time.<sup>52</sup> Instead, they engage in a quasi-ceremonial celebration that acknowledges the audience's presence as an important element in conferring honor on a person or place in the immediate present.<sup>53</sup>

In so doing, pageants unapologetically direct the audience to contemplate the ideals that define them collectively. Gail Kern Paster compares this effect to identities portrayed in court masques: "Just as the masque tells us not what the king was but how he liked to see and understand himself, so the civic pageant tells us how London likes to see and understand itself."<sup>54</sup> These pageants provide an overt self-reflexivity seldom found in the plays of the public theater. More important, this self-reflection focuses not on the city's true nature, but on its idealized cultural identity grounded in its history, what it should be, and what it hopes to attain.

In *The Magnificent Entertainment*, written by Jonson and Dekker, presented on James's entry into London on 15 March, 1604, the city's mythic identity as Troynovant plays a prominent role in how the writers present the city. In Thomas Dekker's first pageant, written but not performed for an arch at Bishopsgate, London's *genius loci* presents the first words to the audience and to the king.<sup>55</sup> London's embodiment addresses St. George and St. Andrew, identifying herself first



simply as “Troy,” bridging several thousand years of mythic history, and then more properly as “Troynovant”(114, 157). The naming and description in this scene establish London’s centrality and primacy in several ways. First of all, the kingdoms of England and Scotland, under the guises of their Christian saints, approach London for reconciliation. London, however, uses a title from the classical world, focusing on her more ancient origins and underscoring her cultural authority. Using their early modern identities, England and Scotland return to their original capital to reunite as one peaceful nation, designating the distant past as the origin for such unity. Britain as a reborn Troy suggests peaceful solidarity in contrast to the violent divisiveness of its recent history. Additionally, London’s *genius loci* places its own citizens, and by extension all of Britain, above other great empires, calling the London aldermen “these senators (on whom Virtue builds more than those of antique Rome)”(150–1). These opening descriptions characterize James’s new capital and empire as both more ancient and more perfected than ancient Rome itself.

Paster sees this moment as both an affirmation for London’s citizens of their cultural identity and as way to educate the new king about the legacy he inherits. She says, “Jonson’s efforts to bring the Roman past to bear on the present moment are clearly crucial to London’s sense of self-importance in welcoming the new monarch. As James succeeds Elizabeth, so London succeeds Rome ... [a]nd the king should know it.”<sup>56</sup> Dekker’s own pageant at the arch at Soper-Lane End makes James and his unique position an active part of this relationship. Amid the Graces, the Five Senses,

and Fame all rejoicing at the king's presence, a chorister from St. Paul's, representing Circumspection, addresses James as

Great Monarch of the West, whose glorious stem,

Doth now support a triple diadem,

Weighing more than that of thy grand grandsire Brutus (959–60).

James's accession marks two noteworthy, symbolic, political changes here. It reunites Brutus's kingdom into one realm for the first time since the founder's death, but it does so as an empire rather than as a single state. The "triple-crown" James wears brings three separate kingdoms together as a single entity, and in doing so it also completes Britain's mirroring of Rome; both start as cities for Trojan exiles in foreign lands and develop into powerful influential empires. Adding to the achievements of his ancestors, reuniting "the rose-red and the white" and claiming "the rich flower of France," James brings about the crowning moment for Britain, making it an empire truly worthy of Brutus's name and its capital Troynovant. In celebration of this event, two more choristers of St. Paul's next present a song, "Troynovant is now no more a city" (996), describing the city's response in metaphors of celebration. Dekker cautions the reader not to understand that Troynovant has ceased to exist, but rather that it "becomes a reveler and a courtier" to celebrate its new king and united kingdoms (1040). The name "Troynovant" in these pageants constructs London's identity as one of constancy and stability during the political divisions that have defined Britain's history since Brutus's death. Preserving the name suggests that it remains connected to the mythical past and allows the present audience access to it.

The city is the center and origin which holds the empire together. St. George's and St. Andrew's countries must return to the symbol of their ancient past for reconciliation, and a new Brutus literally comes to the city to unite his ancestor's kingdoms.

Jonson's final arch and pageant at Temple Bar ends the royal entry with a particularly visual connection between London and its distinctly Virgilian Trojan heritage. In Book I of the *Aeneid*, Jove makes a prophecy about Aeneas's descendants and what one king, in particular, will accomplish:

nascetur pulchra Troianus origine Caesar,  
 imperium Oceano, famam qui terminet astris,  
 Iulius, a mango demissum nomen Iulo.

...

aspera tum positis mitescent saecula bellis:  
 cana Fides et Vesta, Remo cum fratre Quirinus  
 iura dabunt; dirae ferro et compagibus artis  
 claudentur Belli portae; Furor impius inctus  
 saeva sedens super arma et centum uinctus aenis  
 post tergum nodis fremet horridus ore cruento (I.285–94).

(From that comely line

The Trojan Caesar comes, to circumscribe  
 Empire with Ocean, fame with heaven's stars.  
 Iulius his name, from Iulus handed down:

...

Wars at an end, harsh centuries then will soften,  
 Ancient Fides and Vesta, Quirinus  
 With Brother Remus, will be lawgivers,  
 And grim with iron frames, the Gates of War  
 Will then be shut: inside, unholy Furor,  
 Squatting on his cruel weapons, hands enchained  
 Behind him by a hundred links of bronze,  
 Will grind his teeth and howl with bloodied mouth) (I.384–98).

The “Gates of War” in this passage refer to doors on the temple of Janus in Rome, which would remain open as long as the empire was at war. The prophecy suggests that Augustus, Virgil’s patron and a member of the Julian family, will bring peace and close the doors at last.

Jonson appropriates these terms for James, mythically also descended from Iulus through Brutus. His final pageant takes place around a Temple of Janus, which begins with the doors open. Ranged around the temple, Jonson places allegorical virtues triumphing over particular adversaries, but the main action comes when the Genius Urbis banishes a Flamen Martialis, come to perform the rites of Mars at the temple. The Genius rededicates the altar to peace in honor of James, and finally gives an order about the temple: “but see, these brazen gates / Make haste to close, as urgèd by thy fates” (2505–6).<sup>57</sup> Lest any doubt remain about the significance of the Temple of Janus, Jonson includes this inscription on the doors:

IMP. IACOBUS MAX.

CAESAR AVG. P. P.

PACE POPVLO BRITANNICO

TERRA MARIQUE PARTA

IANUM CLVSIT. S. C. (2540–4)

(James the greatest emperor, Caesar Augustus Father of his Country. Because peace has been brought forth for the British people on land and sea, a decree of the senate closes this gate).<sup>58</sup>

Jonson allows the audience to witness personally the fulfillment of Jove's prophecy, and in doing so, he not only aligns James with Augustus, but actually supplants the Roman emperor with the new British king as inheritor to Aeneas's legacy. As the final moment in the King's entry, this leaves the audience with a powerful image of their own cultural identity.

Another public performance of the Brutus myth comes in Anthony Munday's *The Triumphs of Re-United Britainia*, which is the earliest extant text of a Lord Mayor's show from James's reign. The Drapers' Guild presented the pageant in October 1605 in honor of the newly elected mayor. Munday, himself a member of the Drapers' Guild, looked to the new king for inspiration, creating a pageant that focuses entirely on London's ancient Trojan roots and on James's role as a new Brutus. The figures in this pageant specifically laud him as a "second Brute" on six separate

occasions in the text.<sup>59</sup> This performance describes the current historical moment as a blessed golden age, legitimizing James's greatness through the city's history.<sup>60</sup>

The printed text of the pageant opens with an account of Britain's ancient past, which Munday glosses in the margins as coming largely from Annius de Viterbus and John Bale. In this section, he traces Brutus's descent from Noah, and establishes the historical context for his arrival in Britain, placing it specifically in "the yeare of the world, 2850. after the destruction of *Troy*, 66. before the buiding of *Rome* 368. and 1116. before Christs nativity" (49–58). Such a list places Britain's origin as one of the five greatest moments in ancient history, roughly equal to creation, the fall of Troy, Rome's foundation, and the advent of the messiah. Furthermore, it gives London an ancient pedigree and primacy over Rome; since Brutus constructs it two years into his reign, it predates Romulus and Remus by 366 years (64). While Munday deems this information important for those reading a description of the pageant, the account functions only as a headnote to the pageant's text itself. In performance, the audience must already have some knowledge about the Trojan foundation myth in order to follow the conversations between Brutus, his sons, and the various regions and representations of Britain.

In this pageant, Brutus functions as a foil for James. He presents both a model of idealized leadership and a set of mistakes that James can set right. Initially, Brutus pacifies the island, defeating the monsters and changing it from Albion's dominion to civilized Britain. He proudly recounts how he established a city and installed government:

Then built I my *New Troy*, in memorie  
 Of whence I came, by *Thamesis* faire side,  
 And nature giving me posterity,  
 Three worthy sonnes, not long before I died,  
 My kingdome to them three did devide.

And as in three parts I had set it downe,  
 Each namde his seat, and each did weare a Crowne(228–34).

Although it sounds systematic and deliberate, other voices challenge Brutus and describe the chaos that ensues. The three ancient kingdoms, Loegria, Cambria, and Albania, all accuse Brutus of acting unwisely and causing them great hardship. His decision to split the kingdom, rather than appoint a single heir, led to division, quarrelling, and untold bloodshed. Albania finally lays it all at his feet, saying, “Of all which heavy haps there had bin none, / Had *Brute* left me one governor alone”(254–5).

Feeling the weight of his actions, Brutus can finally only turn to James and find solace in future prospects:

And what fierce war by no meanes could effect,  
 To re-unite those sundred lands in one,  
 The hand of heaven did peacefully elect  
 By mildest grace, to seat on *Britaines* throne  
 This second Brute, then whom else was none.

*Wales, England, Scotland*, severed first by me:

To knit again in blessed unity.

This stanza takes the sentiments expressed in the *Magnificent Entertainment* a step farther with regards to Britain's Trojan heritage. The *Triumphs of Re-United Britainia* transfers the blame for the fractured kingdoms to Brutus himself, rather than leaving the guilt on his sons. Thus, James functions as more than a reborn Brutus, but more properly as a perfected Brutus. The lines above show this in two ways. First, they depict James as uniting the three kingdoms peacefully, doing what thousands of years of warring could not accomplish. This places him as superior to all other descendents of Brutus, and possibly even to the Romans who expanded their empire through conquest. Secondly, "the hand of heaven" guides James. From the noble legacy he inherits from the greatest pagan nation in the ancient world, James completes Brutus's work through divine Christian providence. For London and its king, the Trojan heritage is not only open and accessible for reclamation, it demands continuation, completion, and perfection as an ongoing project.

With this idea of cultural continuity in mind, we might look at a final example from one of Shakespeare's earliest tragedies. In the final act of *Titus Andronicus*, when the main players in the central plot have met their various bloody ends, the Roman noble Aemilius asks Lucius to explain to those who still survive what he knows about the sordid events. He says:

Speak, Rome's dear friend, as erst our ancestor,  
 When with solemn tongue he did discourse  
 To lovesick Dido's sad-attending ear



The story of the baleful burning night  
 When subtle Greeks surprised King Priam's Troy.  
 Tell us what Sinon hath bewitched our ears,  
 Or who hath brought the fatal engine in  
 That give our Troy, our Rome, the civil wound (V.iii.80–7).

While this might appear simply as inflated rhetoric on the surface, Aemilius conveys an important understanding about the continuation of history for Shakespeare's audience. Not only does he compare the current situation to the devastation of Troy through the person of Aeneas who transferred one empire to another, but he also makes it clear that Troy's fate is inextricably part of Rome's fate. In considering this moment in the play, Robert Miola points out that Aemilius's description is not only a look backwards, "not merely a return to old ways, but a new beginning."<sup>61</sup> The connection suggests a continuity between the greatness and power of Troy, and Rome as its direct descendent. Heather James discusses this idea of the *translatio imperii*, or "translation of empire," as Shakespeare's audience would have understood it. She defines it as the "literary-political tradition dedicated to the transfer of authority from Troy to imperial Rome to London (Troy Novant)."<sup>62</sup> Here we see that ever-building, ongoing project that posits Britain as a direct descendent of Trojan heritage and the third successive state in a continuing transfer of cultural and political authority. It takes a very small stretch of the imagination to think that many members of the audience would extrapolate a third name into Aemilius's line, understanding it as "Our Troy, our Rome, *our Britain*."

While these plays and pageants share little in common in their central plots, characters, and concerns, as a group they all say something about the identity of ancient Troy, the ideals of early modern England, and the relationship between the two. London's desire to fashion itself according to an ancient model speaks to a longing for history, pedigree, and longevity, but it also defines the qualities that the culture believed necessary for continued greatness and future glory. Simply in the role of ancestors to the kings and queens of England, Brutus, Aeneas, and Priam have little more significance than names on a family tree. As figures defined by their ability to lead and found great nations, however, they function to define a code of conduct and an idealized standard for good kingship. A popular cultural foundation myth that incorporates Aeneas and his offspring gives a nation access to his greatness, allowing the monarch and citizens to participate in his accomplishments. More important, it suggests that such great deeds constitute a birthright, and as such, they bear repeating. Images of Troy on the London stages at the end of Elizabeth's reign show that this connection held importance for the audience and deserved attention. These allusions carry important baggage in mythic cultural weight, and as such, they necessarily bring England's present and past into conversation with its mythic identity.

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<sup>1</sup>Clifford Ronan, in his book “*Antike Roman*”: *Power Symbology and the Roman play in Early Modern England, 1585–1635* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), includes among the tables in his appendix a complete listing of titles, both lost and extant, of plays dealing directly with Roman characters and events between 1550 and 1650.

<sup>2</sup>Robert S. Miola discusses Shakespeare’s narrative poem *The Rape of Lucrece* as a defining early look at *pietas* in *Shakespeare’s Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). The association between the ekphrasis of the Trojan tapestry and Lucrece’s devotion to various institutions, beginning with her household and moving outward to the Roman state, situates her suicide as a dutiful action to protect these institutions.

<sup>3</sup>Ronan 89. He takes this line from Horatio as particularly emblematic of the Tudor/Stuart view of ancient Roman culture. Ronan argues primarily for *constantia*, the core Stoic virtue, as synonymous with “Roman.”

<sup>4</sup>Geoffrey Miles, *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>5</sup>Miola, *Shakespeare’s Rome* 40.

<sup>6</sup>Miola, *Shakespeare’s Rome* 16.

<sup>7</sup>All references to the Latin text of the *Aeneid*, come from Vergil, *Opera*, ed. R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969). Unless otherwise indicated, all English translations come from Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981). Book and line number citations will follow quotes parenthetically, referring to these two sources respectively.

<sup>8</sup>Using these terms interchangeably seems inappropriate here, especially since subsequent parts of the argument will deal with the distinction between *pietas* and Christian piety. For this reason, I will use *pietas* and *pious* to refer to the complex Roman notion of obligation, and “piety” and “pious” for the modern, Christianized sense of the words.

<sup>9</sup>Miola, *Shakespeare’s Rome* 39.

<sup>10</sup>Lisa Hopkins, *The Cultural Uses of the Caesars on the Renaissance Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>11</sup>In *A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare: 1599* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), James Shapiro also links the two plays in terms of their content. Framed by the building of the Globe theater in the first half of 1599, Shapiro argues that Shakespeare wrote *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet* in a fairly short amount of time to provide two new and spectacular plays to capitalize on the newly-redesigned venue. In terms of the subject matter itself, Shapiro also suggests that these two plays continue to deal with issues of leadership and statecraft central to the recent *Henry V*.

<sup>12</sup>Hopkins conjectures that the actor playing Polonius may very well have been the same that performed the role of Caesar in the previous play, creating an additional inside joke with the contemporary audience in addition to the standard modern interpretation of this line that casts Polonius as pompous and self-involved.

<sup>13</sup>Harry Levin, “An explication of the Player’s Speech in *Hamlet*.” *Kenyon Review* 12 (1950): 271–96.

<sup>14</sup>Arthur Johnston, “The Player’s Speech in *Hamlet*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 13.1 (Winter 1962): 21–30.

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<sup>15</sup>Barry N. Nass, "The Troy Legend in Shakespearean Drama," Diss. Princeton University, 1978 (UMI: Ann Arbor, 1978, 7905637) 109.

<sup>16</sup>Joseph Westlund, "Ambivalence in the Player's Speech in *Hamlet*" *SEL: Studies in English Literature* 18.2 (1978): 245–56.

<sup>17</sup>Westlund, 246.

<sup>18</sup>Jason Gleckman, Arthur Johnston and Joseph Westlund all mention this largely in passing as a note of interest with only minor discussion. Jason Gleckman, "Shakespeare as Poet or Playwright: The Player's Speech in *Hamlet*." *Early Modern Literary Studies* 11.3 (2006): 1–13.

<sup>19</sup> See particularly the chapter on "The Player's Speech in *Hamlet*" 108–60. Nass's dissertation represents one of the only attempts to assess Shakespeare's use of the Troy legend throughout the corpus of non-classical plays. Nass argues that, taken as a whole, Shakespeare's plays primarily use Troy as a symbol for loss, betrayal, and downfall.

<sup>20</sup>For a good discussion of early modern texts and commentaries, see Margaret Tudeau-Clayton, *Jonson, Shakespeare and Early Modern Virgil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). In the first two chapters in particular, Tudeau-Clayton establishes the commentary tradition of Virgil that sixteenth-century writers inherited. Moving backwards a step farther, Christopher Baswell explores the commentaries and cultural position of the epic in the late Middle Ages in *Virgil in Medieval England: Figuring the Aeneid from the Twelfth Century to Chaucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>21</sup>Roger Ascham, *The Schoolmaster*, ed. Lawrence V. Ryan (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967). Ascham takes the *Aeneid* both as an example of *imitatio* from the ancient world, in the way it recalls the *Odyssey*, and as an ideal text for sixteenth-century students to imitate. Ascham suggests having students first translate Virgil into English and then translate their own passages blind back into Latin until they internalize Virgil's style. On the issue of *imitatio* as a literary device and educational tool, see Thomas M. Greene's now classic study *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

<sup>22</sup>Colin Burrow provides a solid overview of early English translations at the beginning of his essay "Virgil in English Translation," *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil*, ed. Charles Martindale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 21–37. Burrow argues at large that Virgil's works attract translators anxious about their own cultural position at moments when social norms are in upheaval. For sixteenth-century translators, Virgil offered an anchor for cultural identity and a way to legitimize the vernacular language. William S. Anderson also provides a comprehensive look at English translations in "Five Hundred Years of Rendering the *Aeneid* in English," *Reading Virgil's Aeneid: An Interpretive Guide*, ed. Christine Perkell (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999) 285–302. Anderson's essay is less chronologically organized, but looks at the larger desire on the part of translators to produce a translation that seems at home in the English language. Finally, William Frost looks at the first two centuries of English Virgil translations in "Translating Virgil, Douglas to Dryden: Some General Considerations," *Poetic Traditions of the English Renaissance*, ed. Maynard Mack and George de Forest Lord (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982) 271–86. Frost takes Dryden's translation as his primary concern, examining how he used pre-existing translations in constructing his own. Of particular interest is Frost's second appendix to the article, which provides a comprehensive list of all full, partial and fragmentary translations of Virgil's works done in English during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

<sup>23</sup>Quoted in Burrow 23.

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<sup>24</sup>W. H., *The True Picture and Relation of Prince Henry* (Leyden, 1634) 11.

<sup>25</sup>Ronan and Miles, as mentioned above, both argue for Stoic *constantia* as the defining Roman virtue for an Elizabethan audience. Charles Wells, by contrast, argues that the heroic *virtus* was central to understanding Rome in *The Wide Arch: Roman Values in Shakespeare* (New York: St. Martin's, 1993). An argument for *pietas* resolves this question nicely, as both sides use their chosen values to define the ideal citizen. *Pietas* nullifies neither of the other terms, but defines the moral system that desires to understand ideal citizenship.

<sup>26</sup>Although the British historians were one of the groups most invested in a Trojan foundation myth, the trend certainly extended beyond England. Paul Cohen gives a good overview of a similar French Troy myth in "In Search of the Trojan Origins of French: The Uses of History in the Elevation of the Vernacular in Early Modern France," *Fantasies of Troy: Classical Tales and the Social Imaginary in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Alan Shepard and Stephen D. Powell (Toronto: Center for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2004): 63–80. Although later in origin than the British counterpart, the French story has the city of Paris founded by Francion, son of Hector, who fled Troy after the war. Cohen traces sixteenth-century attempts to show that the French language descended from Trojan Greek, rather than Roman Latin, or in one extreme case, that Trojan and Greek descended from the French language. Sylvia Federico, likewise, places the English obsession with Trojan origins during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries into a larger European context of various nations seeking connections to ancient Troy. *New Troy: Fantasies of Empire in the Late Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

<sup>27</sup>Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (New York: Penguin, 1966) 51.

<sup>28</sup>Geoffrey 72.

<sup>29</sup>Geoffrey 73.

<sup>30</sup>Geoffrey 74.

<sup>31</sup>John Stow, *Summarie of the Chronicles of England* (London, 1579) 15.

<sup>32</sup>Stow 20.

<sup>33</sup>For two basic, but solidly informative, overviews of how Elizabethan culture understood the Trojan foundation myth, see A. E. Parsons, "The Trojan Legend in England: Some Instances of its Application to the Politics of the Times" *Modern Language Review* 24.3(1929): 253–64; and S. K. Heninger, "The Tudor Myth of Troy-novant." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 61(1962):378–87.

<sup>34</sup>F. J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1967).

<sup>35</sup>Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>36</sup>Helgerson 3.

<sup>37</sup>Levy 202.

<sup>38</sup>Dating the play proves continually problematic, as very little concrete evidence exists for its time of composition beyond the general agreement that it existed by 1590. William Godshalk claimed one could only date the play through expertise in "literary connoisseurship" in "Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of*

*Carthage*,” *ELH* 38.1 (1971): 1–18. Thomas Merriam takes a more scientific, though still inconclusive, approach by quantifying the use of function words and comparing them to instances in Marlowe’s other plays in “Marlowe and Nashe in *Dido, Queen of Carthage*” *Notes and Queries* 47 (2000): 425–28. Others try to identify the cultural or political moment in which the play takes part. Margo Hendricks, for example, dates the play between 1588 and 1590 in the aftermath of the Spanish Armada in “Managing the Barbarian: *The Tragedy of Dido, Queen of Carthage*,” *Renaissance Drama* 23 (1992): 165–88. Donald Stump dates the play to the mid 1580s during Elizabeth’s marriage negotiations with the Duke of Anjou in “Marlowe’s Travesty of Virgil: Dido and Elizabethan Dreams of Empire,” *Comparative Drama* 34 (2000): 79–101. David Riggs sets the date specifically in 1584–5, as a piece written for the boys company, The Chapel Children, who functioned during that time in *The World of Christopher Marlowe* (London: Faber and Faber, 2004) 113–14.

<sup>39</sup>Richard A. Martin, “Fate, Seneca, and Marlowe’s *Dido Queen of Carthage*,” *Renaissance Drama* 11 (1980): 45–66.

<sup>40</sup>Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

<sup>41</sup>See, for example, Judith Weil, *Christopher Marlowe: Merlin’s Prophet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) 16–19; and Riggs, *The World of Christopher Marlowe* 119–25.

<sup>42</sup>Martin 57.

<sup>43</sup>Irving Singer, “Erotic Transformations in the Legend of Dido and Aeneas,” *MLN* 90 (Dec 1975): 767–83.

<sup>44</sup>All references to the play come from Christopher Marlowe, *Dido, Queen of Carthage* in *The Complete Plays*, ed. Mark Thornton Burnett (London: Everyman, 2000) 242–93.

<sup>45</sup>Among them, Rick Bowers calls the speech an “inflated series of swearings” that “represents overly stated pillow talk” in “Hysterics, High Camp and *Dido, Queen of Carthage*,” *Marlowe’s Empery: Expanding his Contexts*, ed. Sara Munson Deats (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2002) 95–106 at 101. In “Marlowe’s Travesty of Virgil: Dido and Elizabethan Dreams of Empire,” *Comparative Drama* 34 (Spring 2000): 79–101, Donald Stump describes the vows as absurdly “overly legalistic” (102). Most recently, Timothy D. Crowley has argued that the entire play produces a dark farce of the *Aeneid*, which presents all of the characters as comically flawed in “Arms and the Boy: Marlowe’s Aeneas and the Parody of Imitation in *Dido, Queen of Carthage*” *English Literary Renaissance* (2008): 408–38. While this is certainly true with much of the play, especially elements like the peevishness of the gods, I argue that the marriage scene and separation at the end maintain a high level of sincerity and pathos.

<sup>46</sup>Clare R. Kinney, “Epic Transgression and the Framing of Allegory in *Dido Queen of Carthage*,” *SEL: Studies in Literature, 1500–1900* 40 (2000): 261–76 at 266.

<sup>47</sup>Dido pleads with Aeneas using IV.317–19: “*Si bene quid de te merui, fuit aut tibi quidquam / Dule meum, miserere domus labentis, et istam / Oro, si quis adhuc precipus locus, exue mentem.*” Aeneas expresses helplessness and lack of agency through IV.360–1: “*Desine meque tuis incende teque querelis / Italiam non sponte sequor.*”

<sup>48</sup>Deanne Williams, “Dido Queen of England,” *ELH* 73 (2006): 31–59. At times, Williams tends to stretch her evidence and overstate direct connections between the characters and the figure of Elizabeth in her essay. However, her central point, that Elizabeth always remains just below the surface in a play about the lost love of a powerful queen involving a figure regarded as Elizabeth’s ancestor, certainly remains valid.

<sup>49</sup>The only indication of *Lochrine*'s author is a note on the title page that reads, "Newly set fourth, overseen and corrected, by W. S." Peter Berek in "Lochrine Revised, *Selimus*, and Early Responses to *Tamburlaine*," *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 23 (1980): 33–54 states, "These initials were found irresistible by the printers of the Shakespeare Third Folio, who included it in their volume. No one now takes seriously the possibility of Shakespearean authorship" (33). Richard Finklestein, in "The Politics of Gender, Puritanism and Shakespeare's Third Folio," *Philological Quarterly* 79 (2000): 315–41, tempers the assumed motivations by suggesting that the inclusion had less to do with concerns of accurate authorial attribution than with a desire to reassemble pieces of English culture fractured by the Civil Wars.

<sup>50</sup>This and all following quotations from *Lochrine* come from Jane Lytton Gooch, *The Lamentable Tragedy of Lochrine: A Critical Edition* (New York: Garland, 1981).

<sup>51</sup>David M. Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry 1558–1642*, 2nd ed. (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Arizona State University, 2003), 5–6.

<sup>52</sup>David Bevington, in discussing early medieval liturgical drama, makes a useful distinction between purely dramatic performances, which mimetically represent characters and actions at some distance, and liturgical acts, which combine representation with ceremonial acts grounded in the congregation's present moment and intended to bring about a real effect. See, in particular, the introductory essay, "Dramatic Elements in the Liturgy of the Church," *Medieval Drama* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975) 3–9.

<sup>53</sup>For a good overview of major recurring emblematic images and their uses in civic pageantry, see Glynn Wickham, *Early English Stages: 1300–1660* (London: Routledge, 2002) 2:209–36.

<sup>54</sup>Gail Kern Paster, "The Idea of London in Mask and Pageant," *Pageantry in the Shakespearean Theater*, ed. David M. Bergeron (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985) 49.

<sup>55</sup>Thomas Dekker, *The Magnificent Entertainment in Renaissance Drama*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999) 328–56. Dekker uses both *domesticum numen* and *genius loci* separately to describe the speaker; either translates to "spirit of the place or house."

<sup>56</sup>Paster 56.

<sup>57</sup>Thomas Dekker, Stephen Harrison, Ben Jonson, and Thomas Middleton, *The Whole Royal and Magnificent Entertainment of King James through the City of London, 15 March 1504, with the Arches of Triumph*, ed. R. Malcolm Smuts, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 224–79.

<sup>58</sup>R. Malcolm Smuts provides this translation as a note to his edition of the text (273).

<sup>59</sup>Anthony Munday, *The Triumphs of Re-United Britania. Pageants and Entertainments of Anthony Munday*, ed. David M. Bergeron (New York: Garland, 1985). These references occur throughout Munday's texts at lines 185, 281, 321, 328, 336 and 443.

<sup>60</sup>Although it takes King James as the central figure, the pageant's purpose is to honor the new mayor. David Bergeron argues that there is an implicit connection between the two, saying "the Lord Mayor's Shows reinforce the position of the Lord Mayor of London as the king's 'substitute'" in "Pageants, Politics and Patrons," *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* 6 (1993): 139–52 at 139. This particular pageant places the mayor as leader of the ancient, reunited empire's greatest city.

<sup>61</sup>Miola, *Shakespeare's Rome* 71.

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<sup>62</sup>Heather James, *Shakespeare's Troy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 1.



## Chapter 2

### The “Head Whose Churchlike Humors Fits Not for a Crown”: Henry’s *Pius*

#### Foils in *1* and *2 Henry VI*

In the introduction to the most recent Oxford edition of *1 Henry VI* (2003), Michael Taylor contemplates the wide range of sources that inform Shakespeare’s history plays, tying them to a variety of texts in common circulation at the end of the sixteenth century. We should make ourselves aware of this complexity, he says, because “one of the ways to grasp Shakespeare’s artistry is to monitor his dealings with [his sources] as he trims and embellishes the information they supply him.”<sup>1</sup> Through studying sources, teasing out references and the texts from which they come, we can see the elusive master at work and catch a glimpse of genius in action. Certainly, it is tempting to hunt through Shakespeare’s plays, finding the obscure allusion and filling in another small blank in an author about whom we know so little. But of course, these allusions also bring elements from their source texts into the plays, playing a very real part in creating meaning for the audience. In addition to understanding which texts specifically contributed to a play’s construction, we need to be aware of how such references work within the context of the sixteenth-century mindset and the audience’s understanding of those terms. This chapter focuses on *1* and *2 Henry VI* and will argue that Shakespeare utilizes the commonplace notions associated with England’s Trojan heritage to characterize the principal characters in the plays.

Percy Simpson opens his book *Studies in Elizabethan Drama* (1955), with a chapter titled “Shakespeare’s Use of Latin Authors.” In the first sentence of this first chapter, Simpson focuses the reader’s attention on his topic: “‘How far did Shakespeare know Latin?’ is a question which has often been discussed.”<sup>2</sup> He contextualizes this with Ben Jonson’s famous quotation that Shakespeare had “small Latin and lesse Greeke,” and briefly traces the early debate about Shakespeare’s classical learning. That Simpson begins this way demonstrates a good deal about his priorities and the concerns inherent in his subsequent examination of the references to Latin literature in the plays. He uses the texts as evidence to be able to say something about Shakespeare the man and Shakespeare the author in terms of his contact with classical training. Simpson builds upon T. W. Baldwin’s mammoth undertaking, completed a decade before, which painstakingly brings together records and accounts of English grammar school education in the sixteenth century in order to demonstrate exactly what kind of training and education Shakespeare would have received at his specific moment in history.<sup>3</sup> Simpson focuses on the individual passages that provide evidence that Shakespeare had intimate familiarity with recognizable Roman texts, either in their original Latin or in an identifiable sixteenth-century translation.<sup>4</sup> After some opening comments on common, recurring classical images in the play texts, Simpson organizes his examination under headings of the Latin authors widely available in the late sixteenth century. Beginning with Plautus and continuing through Ovid and Virgil, among others, he catalogues specific passages in the plays that have a direct connection to a classical source, either in terms of specific language or

recognizable imagery. Along with each passage, he supplies the analogue from the source text to demonstrate an obvious connection. Certainly, Simpson's study provides a fascinating look at the intersections between commonly read texts and Shakespeare's dramatic compositions, but he makes little, if any, attempt to create meaning out of these connections. He seems satisfied to conclude simply that Shakespeare must have had a background in reading classical authors in order to be able to incorporate them into his plays.

More recently, Charles Martindale has provided an intensive look at how Shakespeare used specific language, details, and structures gleaned from classical authors in constructing his plays.<sup>5</sup> Written with Michelle Martindale, the book *Shakespeare and the Uses of Antiquity* suggests that the plays constitute extended *imitatio* exercises in various ways, showing them as products of the grammar school education system.<sup>6</sup> The plays imitate specific passages, poetic styles, plots and even the cultural expectations presented in standard grammar readings. Like others, the Martindales begin by looking at how elements from classical texts, particularly those of Ovid, present themselves in various ways throughout the plays. Shakespeare's writing shows much influence from Ovid, indicating that the playwright read him extensively, both in the original language and in translation. However, the authors push their examination past simply identifying corollaries to classical texts, by also evaluating the writing style and received ideas that Shakespeare appears to borrow and retain from his exposure to these works. The Martindales' book demonstrates how integral classical material was to Shakespeare's writing and how important

classical education was to his formation as a writer. Yet, like Simpson before them, they do little to evaluate how this knowledge affects our understanding of the plays. They produce a study of process and influence rather than one of reference and signification. Likewise, when Charles Martindale revisits the topic with an essay specifically on Virgil's presence in the plays, he focuses primarily on questions of style and influence.<sup>7</sup> He states his main argument as such: "I thus remain of the view that Shakespeare is not usefully to be described as a Virgilian poet," explaining that "his reading of Virgil did not result in a profound modification of his sensibility and imagination."<sup>8</sup> Although Shakespeare deals with specifically Virgilian subject matter in *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*, Martindale situates him as a poet artistically distanced from the Virgilian tradition, who does not imitate Virgil's writing in a way that demonstrates holistic influence.

The work of these scholars, separated by almost fifty years, shares a certain fundamental approach in common. Both Percy Simpson and Charles Martindale contribute to our understanding of the intertextuality and the processes of influence at work in Shakespeare's plays, but both also use these dramatic texts to discover something of the man behind the writing. Both take the plays' contents, and their relationship to other material, as an intermediary and a means to achieve the ultimate goal of saying something about a specific individual writing at the end of the sixteenth century. At best, these contribute to Taylor's desire to observe Shakespeare's artistry through source study. While this may prove a legitimate goal

in its own right, it tells us almost nothing about the plays themselves, and very little about the culture in which Shakespeare wrote.

Likewise, both share certain assumptions about the reading practices of Shakespeare and his audience. Martindale, in particular, seems to limit his examinations to the texts he can recognize as largely internalized and influential, weeding out less important texts by the logic that “if Shakespeare had read all that is proposed for him, he would not have found time to write many plays.”<sup>9</sup> This allows the focus to remain on writers like Ovid, while minimizing the influence of less observable authors. Robert Miola cautions against just such a view, insisting that the seemingly alienated *sententiae* or commonplaces pulled from classical literature actually formed the foundation of Elizabethan education:

Students memorized hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Latin lines and constructions. The extensive cultivation of memory created a literary culture of quotation and allusion, wherein the classics and the Bible serve as a common repository of significant reference. Niobe stood as an example of grief, Hercules as a type of courage and strength.<sup>10</sup>

While students may not have read entire texts in depth, but rather divorced individual episodes, lines, and characters from their original contexts, these selections proved useful in familiarizing readers with a wide array of content. Students recorded these selections in commonplace books as a way to both organize and make meaning of their knowledge of the classical world.<sup>11</sup> While potentially reductive and fragmentary in nature, these practices allowed readers to commit a great deal to memory, which, in

turn, “added depth and scope to writing and enabled readers to perceive significant connections with the past.”<sup>12</sup> These commonplace representations functioned as a semi-universal vocabulary of imagery and reference. Readers and play-going audience members knew that references to figures like Hercules, Caesar, or Sinon carried with them a whole set of associations and a significance beyond the immediate, literal reference to their stories.

Understanding this practice of learning through commonplaces provides a way to begin making sense of the classical references in plays such as Shakespeare’s histories, which are not overtly classical in content. Percy Simpson notes that the early history plays in particular have some of the most frequent references to Latin authors and classical mythology,<sup>13</sup> and it is tempting see these simply as showy examples used by a young author to prove his erudition and make a name for himself. However, if we remember that these references not only function as well-known images, but well-known images with commonplace meanings attached to them, it seems reasonable to investigate how these meanings contribute to the English history they ornament. If Heather James explores English politics and history as significant for Shakespeare’s depiction of Troy, and Alexander Leggatt does the same for the Roman plays,<sup>14</sup> we might turn the investigation around to understand how Troy and Rome contribute to the English history plays.

*1 and 2 Henry VI* both repeatedly include references to Aeneas, as well as other images of Troy and Rome, in presenting the English characters. Building on the associations with Aeneas and Troy discussed in the previous chapter, I argue that

these allusions keep ideas about England's Roman/Trojan heritage always just under the surface in these plays, particularly ideas about strong, ideal leadership. In these first two plays in the first tetralogy where we see the young King Henry VI trying to understand his role as king, Shakespeare provides two characters as examples of true *pietas* who act as foils to the developing monarch. In *Part 1*, Talbot represents military strength and chivalric honor. The heritage of Henry V that looms large in this play connects Talbot to the glorious achievements of the previous king. As the play shows his valorous deeds on behalf of England, and eventually his tragic downfall, it becomes evident how unlike his father Henry VI is in his inability to protect the kingdom. Likewise, Humphrey Duke of Gloucester in *Part 2* presents another image of good leadership. Always willing to act selflessly for the good of his country, he creates a stark contrast, not only with the conniving nobles who act on their own behalf, but with Henry, who refuses to act at all. The plays construct both of these men, in part, through classical comparisons that highlight their strengths and connect them to a heritage of *pius* leadership. At the same time, these constructions set *pietas* alongside Henry's Christian piety, creating two codes of morality in competition for England's soul.

*1 Henry VI* opens shortly after the death of Henry V with Bedford's now well-known lines:

Hung be the heavens with black! Day Yield to night!

Comets, importing change of times and states,

Brandish your crystal tresses in the sky,

And with them scourge the bad revolting stars  
 That have consented unto Henry's death—  
 King Henry the Fifth, too famous to live long.  
 England ne'er lost a king of so much worth (I.i.1–7).

Gloucester immediately echoes the sentiment, saying, “England ne'er had a king until his time. / Virtue he had, deserving to command” (I.i.8–9). Clearly, in the minds of these two lords, Henry V represented the best of English kingship and earned the right to rule through his actions and disposition. As they continue to talk, they define the dead king according to his “deeds that exceed all speech” (I.i.15). The Bishop of Winchester also describes his role as a Christian king:

He was a king blest of the King of Kings.  
 Unto the French, the dreadful judgment day  
 So dreadful will not be as was his sight.  
 The battles of the Lord of Hosts he fought.  
 The Church's prayers made him so prosperous (I.i.28–32).

While the corrupt bishop's own piety comes immediately into question, no one offers dissent to his description of Henry V, whose motivations and judgment both on the battlefield and on the throne were those of a truly Christian king. Although Winchester tries to claim that the Church has some responsibility for Henry's success, he cannot take away the king's agency in fighting for right and holy causes. The dead king's Christian piety seems beyond question, and in fact, remains central to how his nobles remember his greatest deeds.



Likewise, the opening conversation establishes Henry's true Englishness. In addition to the distinction Bedford and Gloucester give him as England's greatest king, Bedford calls on him as a protector of England:

Henry the Fifth, thy ghost I invoke:

Prosper this realm; keep it from civil broils;

Combat with adverse planets in the heavens (I.i.50–2).

Like the Christian and classical imagery that mixes throughout the play, these lines give an ambiguous description of the supernatural. Bedford calls on Henry's "ghost" and worries about astrological forces in the unspecified "heavens," but he also employs the language of prayer to a saint, casting the recently departed Henry as England's new patron. Indeed, the play seems to embrace this idea as Talbot invokes the name of Henry V almost as often as that of St. George when he goes into battle. Henry's devotion to, and protection of, his country's wellbeing were so strong during his life that his "ghost," his saintly soul, and even the talismanic power of his name possess the potential to keep protecting it after his death.

Bedford finally links these other traits to an ancient world comparison, saying about Henry V, "A far more glorious star thy soul will make, / Than Julius Caesar, or bright—" (I.i.53–4). Most obviously, this connects Henry to a similarly popular ruler, a founder of a great empire, and a brilliant military leader cut down in his prime. However, if we consider that most educated Elizabethans would have first encountered Caesar by reading parts of his *Gallic Wars* during their basic Latin education, referencing his name contains specific historical and geographical

relevance to England's wars with France under Henries V and VI.<sup>15</sup> In the rather lengthy address "To the Reader" in both the 1565 and 1590 editions of his translation of the *Gallic Wars*, Arthur Golding provides a detailed account of how ancient Gallia maps onto the geography of sixteenth-century Europe. Golding first makes clear that the geography covered by Caesar's conquests corresponds to the modern country of France. He then lays out a history of the Gauls and people of France, beginning with the Gauls as a people renowned "chieflye for the valiantenesse in armes and practise in Chevalry."<sup>16</sup> This warlike people "not onelye troubled their neighbours, but also vexed and disquietted even the victorious Romanes, untyll suche time as Julius Cesar through his greate prowesse & good fortune, brought theym in subjection to the Romane Empyer."<sup>17</sup> Golding first establishes the Gauls as worthy opponents, known for their martial skill and conduct, in order to reinforce Caesar's greatness as someone able to overcome them. The historical overview continues, outlining the various groups that possessed part or all of France, until Golding concludes with the English claim to the region:

But no one Nation since their firste comynge thither, hath so often and so sore afflicted them as our Englishe Nation hath done: whose kinges diverse times before, but specially from the time of king Edward the thyrd have contended with them, not so much for anye one part or Province of the country, as for the substance of the crowne & possession of the whole Realme, descended to our kinges by ryghte of inheritance.<sup>18</sup>

Golding places Caesar's conquest in a context which, along with the English possessions and struggles, bookends France's history with two dominant powers that seek to hold it as a territory. In this schema, France itself hardly exists in its own right, but rather functions as an inheritance (albeit a disputed one) within an imperial structure. Julius Caesar serves as the first step that leads unavoidably to the transfer of France from the old Roman rule to the new British rule. Bedford's claim that Henry exceeds Caesar layers this meaning into the play, bringing with it all the history of the conflict and laying claim to a Roman/Trojan heritage through the repeated conquest of France. As if to reinforce this, the characters in *1 Henry VI* give France the name "Gallia" on two separate occasions. In Act IV, the Bastard of Orleans refers to the warring sides as the forces of England and Gallia (IV.vii.48), and in Act V, Charles refers to his disputed right to rule the "Gallian territories" (V.vi.139). In using the ancient name for France, the French nobles hearken back to their own prestigious heritage, but they also cast their current enemy, England, as the opponent of ancient Gallia, Caesar's Rome. Pistol will, of course, use no subtlety when he returns to the subject, referring to the French campaigns as Henry's "Gallia wars" in the later play, *Henry V*.

The first scene of the play produces a Henry V that perfectly embodies an ideal notion of kingly *pietas*. His kingdom's territory expanded during his time on the throne; his nobles remember him as a fair ruler; he observed and followed his religious obligations; and, as we find out in the first scene, he has left his son a seemingly prosperous kingdom and a dutiful protector. Unfortunately, as the play

begins with such a perfect ideal, the plot's trajectory only has one direction to go. David Riggs sees the entire tetralogy from *I Henry VI* to *Richard III* as a study in decline, as the codes of chivalry and heroic action prized under Henry V progressively decay over the course of the four plays.<sup>19</sup> At this specific moment in particular, Donald Watson sees the audience "introduced to a fallen world, fallen heroically and historically—and as they soon learn, morally and theologically as well."<sup>20</sup> The desire to look back to the dead king's perfection in this way suggests anxiety about the future and anxiety about whether anything of his defining characteristics remains in England.

This opening conversation in Act I sets the descriptors of Henry V (English, Christian, and Roman/Trojan) as a unified set that produces associations in various ways throughout the rest of the play. Suffolk's final lines in the play, describing his return to England with Margaret, bookend the action nicely, showing how far the plot has moved, and leaving the audience with an unsettling image of England's identity:

Thus Suffolk hath prevailed, and thus he goes  
 As did the youthful Paris once to Greece,  
 With hope to find the like event in love,  
 But prosper better than the Trojan did (V.vii.103–6).

Suffolk casts himself as a legendary lover and Margaret as a legendary beauty, but he also inserts himself into an extremely loaded narrative. Paris's actions in stealing Helen and bringing her home to Troy led directly to the city's downfall and utter destruction. Suffolk's description reminds the audience of his personal, selfish

motives and the consequences that may accompany his actions. Furthermore, since Suffolk acts only as Henry's proxy in negotiating the marriage, he can only pursue his "love" through deception, stealing her away from her true husband. While this comparison only suggests future problems without producing a straightforward allegory of the current English-French conflict, Suffolk does align England with its cultural ancestor, Troy, France with Troy's fatal enemy, Greece, and Margaret with the Greek woman whose presence caused internal conflict, war, and finally destruction. Although Suffolk hopes to "prosper better than the Trojan did," an allusion to the rape of Helen makes an audience acutely aware of the price associated with his paltry self-gain.

Within this schema, the first two acts of the play construct Talbot on the English side and Joan of Arc on the French through a myriad of both modern and classical descriptors. Talbot's first mention in the play comes in the words of a messenger from France who describes how "valiant Talbot beyond human thought / Enacted wonders with his sword and lance" (I.i.121-2). Talbot represents the core of England's military strength in France, both as a leader and as an individual soldier. The fame of his deeds becomes a weapon in itself, prompting one English soldier to claim "The cry of 'Talbot' serves me as a sword, / For I have loaden me with many spoils, / Using no other weapon but that name" (II.ii.81-3). This moment presents an example of national myth in the making. In the same way that names like Hector, Aeneas, Brutus, and Arthur all become shorthand for the histories, actions, and ideologies that they represent, "Talbot" suggests an idea—in this case an imminent

mortal threat—separate from its function to indicate an actual person. Here, however, this mythic effect takes place on a much smaller scale. While the names belonging to Trojan heroes and mythic British founders have had millennia to accumulate associated meanings, we see the kernel of Talbot's myth in the process of formation. This soldier's use of his name for intimidation in pillaging demonstrates its power within the sphere of the battlefield. The story retold, along with discussions about Talbot by nobles on both sides of the conflict, shows his name growing in significance to connote English military strength and martial valor.

For Shakespeare's audience, this myth had grown considerably in the 150 years since Talbot's death to make him a household name as a patriotic hero. When Thomas Nashe needs an example to explain the legitimacy and relevance of the contemporary history play in his *Pierce Pennilisse*, he turns to Talbot as a figure pulled from the history books and vivified on stage:

How would it have joyed brave Talbot (the terror of the French) to think that after he had lyne two hundred yeares in his Tombe, hee should triumph again on the Stage, and have his bones newe embalmed with the teares of ten thousand spectators at least (at several times), who, in the Tragedian that represents his person, imagine they behold him fresh bleeding.<sup>21</sup>

This stage portrayal initially breaks down Talbot's status as a cultural symbol by causing the audience to see him as a dynamic individual rather than as a cumulative set of traits and actions. Ultimately, however, the play strengthens the original

popular perception of him; audience members have now “witnessed” his deeds firsthand and add that experience to their previous understanding of the legendary figure. Through Talbot, the play creates multiple levels of mythic encoding. A fairly recent national figure and symbol of chivalric prowess enacts his famous deeds on stage and reinforces the cultural meaning attached to his name. Additionally, this recent national figure fits into a larger matrix of signifying references to reinforce a British identity.

Talbot receives treatment, through overt comparisons, as a link to Britain’s heroic past and ultimately to its classical roots and origins. When captured by the Countess of Auvergne, Talbot claims, “I am but a shadow of myself” since the true extent of his strength lies in his fame and in the soldiers who follow him. On repeated occasions, the troops use his name as a rallying cry, often pairing it with England’s patron saint: “Saint George! A Talbot!” (II.i.39). Matched with this, Talbot garners several classical names as well. Both the English and the French describe him by reputation at various times as “Hercules” (II.iii.18), “Hector” (II.iii.19), and “Alcides” (IV.vii.60). These references pair a fierce English patriotic devotion with the heroic ethos of Hercules’s mythical deeds and with Troy’s greatest warrior prince. Furthermore, they connect the English military accomplishments of Henry V,<sup>22</sup> as continued by Talbot, to the Roman value *virtus*, or heroic honor, which Charles Wells has argued many Elizabethans saw as a core pillar of Roman identity.<sup>23</sup>

Even when Talbot’s words and actions suggest other foreign connections, his descriptions remain resolutely Roman. His self-description as “the scourge of France”

cannot help but bring to mind Tamburlaine, “The Scourge of God,” both for modern scholars and for Elizabethan theater-goers. Indeed, that Marlowe’s two-part *Tamburlaine* exerted a major influence on Shakespeare’s *Henry VI* plays enjoys the status of commonly accepted fact. In describing the early evolution of the Elizabethan history play, Irving Ribner states that there could hardly have been an author or play more influential for Shakespeare’s early attempts.<sup>24</sup> Riggs takes Tamburlaine as a character type modified by many later writers,<sup>25</sup> and Clifford Leech calls *Henry VI* “a direct result of *Tamberlaine*.”<sup>26</sup> Harold Brooks points out that the “Scourge of God” idea, a character who enacts God’s justice on an unrighteous people, occurs variously elsewhere besides Marlowe’s play, but he also concludes that making such a reference to Talbot in the play would make *Tamburlaine* hard to ignore.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, Talbot’s language in threatening the towns of France recalls Tamburlaine’s threats before the walls of Damascus in Act IV of *I Tamburlaine*. Like Tamburlaine who offers a choice between complete surrender or utter destruction, Talbot says:

I will—like thee, Nero,

Play on the lute, beholding the towns burn.

Wretched France shall be only in my name (I.vi.73–5)

In a similarly Marlovian moment in the next act, speaking of himself in the heroic third person, he describes his soldiers as the

substance, sinews, arms and strength,

With which he yoketh your rebellious necks,



Razeth your cities and subverts your towns,  
 And in a moment makes them desolate (II.iii.64–6).

Even in these moments, where direct references to the well-known Scythian warrior seem most obvious, Talbot chooses to compare himself to the Roman emperor Nero, instead. One possible explanation for this choice might derive from cultural identity. The great warrior who stands for everything admirable and English gains problematic associations when compared to Tamburlaine, who accomplishes Herculean feats but lacks all sense of ethical guidance.<sup>28</sup> Donald Watson argues that Shakespeare distances Talbot, as a man of chivalric action, from Tamburlaine by depriving him of “the Marlovian propensity for mythic proportions,” and leaving “the gaudy rhetoric of the Marlovian conqueror to the French.”<sup>29</sup> Talbot performs noteworthy military deeds that bear comparison to those of Tamburlaine recently seen on stage, but he avoids association with Tamburlaine’s depravity. The negative connotations get transferred with the Scythian label to the Countess of Auvergne, who identifies herself as “Scythian Tomyris” (II.iii.6). The play transfers Scythia’s identity, its foreignness, its shepherd-turned-conqueror, and the questionable morality of his campaigns, to the French. Talbot, by contrast, retains his Roman association, and therefore, his alignment with England. As a reciprocal move, he even rehabilitates Nero to some extent, taking his worst atrocities against the Roman people and turning them outward against England’s enemies.<sup>30</sup> Talbot’s accomplishments on behalf of his country enact a key element of *pietas*. Through the actions, words, and descriptions that present him as valorous in battle, Roman by

heritage and English by allegiance, he functions as the last bastion of the virtues perfected by Henry V.

Joan, by contrast, takes on a very different image as the champion of the French. Even before Joan and her associations with witchcraft enter the play, Exeter looks to blame the French for Henry's death:

[S]hall we think the subtle-witted French  
 Conjurers and sorcerers that, afraid of him,  
 By magic verses have contrived his end? (I.i.25–27)

In the same exchange that posits Henry V as a great, holy warrior king, we see the polar opposite assigned to the French as a whole. At this point, no single suspect comes into view; rather, the French as a people show themselves “subtle-witted” and a nation of “conjurers and sorcerers.” This lays the foundations for Talbot to call Joan (among other things) “devil or devil’s dam” (I.vii.5), for Bedford to call her “the help of hell” (II.i.18), and for both to label her bluntly as a “witch.” Act V, Scene iii only confirms these descriptions as Joan summons and confers with demons in a final, desperate attempt to aid France.

As a woman, a warrior, and a potential saint, Joan presents the English with a discomfiting emblem of Frenchness. She matches the valiant Talbot in martial exploits and claims to derive her influence from the same divine power that Gloucester and Bedford credit for Henry V’s victories. Yet, in her counter-gendered employment as a woman in a warrior’s role, she mystifies the English troops and leaves Talbot searching for a solution and asking:

Where is my strength, my valor, and my force?

Our English troops retire; I cannot stay them.

A woman in armor chaseth men (I.vii.1–3).

Joan's presence takes the recognizable elements of Talbot's battlefield world and twists them into something alien where "strength," "valor," and "force" prove inadequate against a foe that defies the seemingly natural rules governing a military leader's gender. Geraldo de Sousa argues quite convincingly that this gender transgression sits at the heart of Joan's portrayal in the play, citing her historical trial where much of the debate focused on her "unnatural" desire to appear, act, and dress as a man.<sup>31</sup> This, in turn, provides a defining feature, delineating the French and English identities, as Sousa notes:

In the historic phenomenon of Joan's transvestism and military career, Shakespeare found a gender reconfiguration and a cultural remapping that epitomized the English-French cultural confrontation and dynastic disputes.<sup>32</sup>

While functioning as an obvious and highly visible distinction between herself and Talbot, Joan's gender also provides a metaphorical distinction between the cultural identities of England and France. They are as close as man and woman, but as different as the sexes. A self and Other relationship exists between the two closely intertwined kingdoms. Everything English has a recognizable, though inverted or shifted, counterpart in French identity.

The play explores these distinctions by layering in further levels of imagery to construct Joan's character. If Talbot gains associations with Troy's greatest hero and Rome's heroic virtue, then Joan becomes aligned (in both positive and negative descriptions) with allusions to foreign powers and enemies of both Troy and Rome. She bears description as "an Amazon" (I.iii.83), as "Hannibal" (I.vii.21), "Rhodope of Memphis" (I.viii.22), "Astraea's daughter" (I.viii.4), "Hecate" (III.v.24), and "Circe" (V.iv.6). In their specifics, these descriptions carry a wide variety of connotations from the martial strength of Carthage's unstoppable war machine and a nation of sexually transgressive female warriors, to the obvious witch references in Circe and Hecate, to the allure, status, beauty, and even justice of Greek goddesses and queens. However, from a Romacentric point of view, these all share in common a status as foreign and exotic. They may be attractive, to some extent, but a great danger lies in that allure. As the play establishes Englishness as stably Roman, Trojan, and heroic, it simultaneously uses Joan as means to distance France in its cultural alignment to a status of exotic difference.

Additionally, Charles connects Joan more indirectly with Alexander through Darius (II.i.25) and compares her directly to Muhammad (I.iii.119–20), raising the question of religious heterodoxy in addition to foreign otherness. The Dauphin, in particular, employs religious imagery to praise Joan, but through his tendency toward hyperbole the descriptions that cast Joan as holy or biblical do so in terms that quickly turn to idolatry and blasphemy. These comparisons start benignly enough. The Dauphin tells Joan, "Thou ... fightest with the sword of Deborah" (I.iii.84),

likening her to the admirable female Jewish judge and Old Testament military commander.<sup>33</sup> Only a few lines later, however, he strays into dangerous territory:

Helen, the great mother of Constantine,  
 Nor yet Saint Philip's daughters were like thee.  
 Bright star of Venus, fall'n down on the earth,  
 How may I reverently worship thee enough? (I.iii.121–4)

This string of allusions creates a building escalation of praise that quickly crosses the line from piety to blasphemy. The first allusion puts Joan in the company of another holy woman, St. Helen. While her name may also suggest the earlier Helen who started the Trojan war, tradition held that Helen, Constantine's mother, converted her son to Christianity and, by extension, spread the faith to the entire Roman empire. Her legend claims that she also journeyed to the Holy Land and located the true cross, fragments of which became revered relics throughout Europe. The second allusion seems to refer to Acts 21:8–9, where Paul “stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.”<sup>34</sup> These comparisons initially suggest that Joan belongs to a group of strong, revered women who prophesy and function as God's instruments in carrying out his will and strengthening the Church. The Dauphin, however, makes it clear that he sets Joan above these other women, making her holier and more powerful than those who came before her. This, in itself, might not cause a problem if not for his conclusion. Having set her above her Christian forebears, he aligns her with Venus, Roman goddess of love and beauty, placing her beauty above her status as a powerful prophetess. When

this all culminates in his question, “How may I reverently worship thee enough?”, the Dauphin’s language makes her into an unholy object of idolatry. He moves her from prophetess to goddess, making her the recipient of worship in place of the God she claims to represent.

Charles repeatedly shows this tendency to allot Joan a higher status than the traditional symbols of the church, giving her the praise and allegiance he owes to his religious obligations. Naomi Liebler and Lisa Scandella Shea point to Joan’s combination of sexuality and holiness as a dangerous combination that for an English audience sets her apart as exotic.<sup>35</sup> The Dauphin’s response in idolizing her validates this judgment, and the play leaves Joan quite literally demonized by the end. At the end of Act I, Charles declares, “No longer on St. Denis will we cry, / But Joan la Pucelle shall be France’s saint” (I.viii.28–9). If, in the long run, Joan became a true savior of France, this move might prove legitimate. But having only recaptured one city, the Dauphin’s plans become subversive, undercutting France’s combined national and religious identity. He casts aside Denis, acknowledged saint, protector, and intercessor on behalf of the nation’s well-being, for the new commander of the hour. Even more damning, Charles begins that same speech by stating, “’Tis Joan, not we, by whom this day is won” (I.viii.17), giving her credit for the French victory and possibly rewriting a liturgical hymn of praise, the “Non nobis.” Shakespeare’s audience presumably recognized the “Non nobis,” or Psalm 115, by name, because he refers to it without explanation in *Henry V*. After the battle of Agincourt, Henry V instructs his men, “Do we all holy rites. / Let there be sung ‘Non nobis’ and ‘Te

Deum” to remind them of God’s hand in their victory (*HV* IV.viii.120–1). The Dauphin’s praises seem a perversion of the opening line, “Non nobis, Domine, non nobis sed nomini tuo da gloriam,”<sup>36</sup> or in the translation of the 1588 *Book of Common Prayer*, “Not unto us, O Lorde, not unto us but unto thy name give the praise.”<sup>37</sup> The psalm meditates on humility, praising God’s strength and transferring to God all credit for human accomplishments and victories. Charles, by contrast, glorifies a single human individual, giving her all the credit for the French victory in Orleans. If the audience connects this line to the psalm, they see the crown prince of France willfully supplanting the Catholic God, as well as the praise due to him, with Joan of Arc.

Charles, of course, cements this desire when he makes Joan the explicit object of universal worship, saying, “all the priests and friars in my realm / Shall in procession sing her endless praise” (I.viii.19–20). The priestly vocation carries real significance here, since it places this new focus on Joan in a particular cultural sphere. The Dauphin does not suggest that Joan will become a folk hero and inspire songs from the general population of France; he intends to repurpose the church itself, setting Joan up as a golden calf that saved France from the plague of English rule. As Joan functions to represent the face of French nationality, these blasphemies and perversions of recognizable Christianity add to her associations with the foreign and exotic to define the French in relation to the English. In contrast to the English descriptors of Christian and Roman/Trojan established through Henry V and Talbot,

France gains association with foreign otherness and overt heresy through Joan and the Dauphin, Charles.

For the first two acts, this fabric of allusion constructs identities for the two nations at war, both in terms of Christian moral rectitude and as participants in a larger myth-making structure. Intriguingly, the play's allusive language stops abruptly, and almost entirely, when Henry VI first appears at the beginning of Act III.<sup>38</sup> The king's extended absence from the play that bears his name leaves him as an unknown variable in the negotiations and confrontations that fill the first two acts. As Janet Lull observes, "The *Henry VI* plays represent their title character as an uncertainty at the heart of the drama rather than a central figure."<sup>39</sup> After the praise heaped upon his father and the accolades for Talbot's valiant battlefield conduct, the audience must wonder how this young, new king will measure up to the ideal "English" identity.

Michael Manheim addresses the question of what kinds of kings and kingship Shakespeare's history plays contain.<sup>40</sup> He argues that Shakespeare uses these plays as a way to explore political realities in early modern Europe and understand competing philosophies of leadership. He examines the two Shakespearean tetralogies, as well as other contemporary history plays, in an effort to understand what separates a good and effective king from a weak and failed king. The common failings that he finds in the many examples of weak kings stem from a lack of Machiavellianism, which he defines as a willingness to act decisively to keep power without regard for limiting morals. He builds his study on what initially seems an appealing simplification,



creating a binary between Machiavellian, strong kings, and non-Machiavellian, weak kings. For Manheim, Henry VI represents the definitive “meek king” whose religious piety undermines his ability to rule because it prevents him from embracing Machiavellian opportunism.

Yet Manheim’s underlying assumption about politics in the 1590s creates some serious problems for reading the play. Early on he claims: “The political truth the playgoing public of Elizabethan England was coming to accept was the same truth that which has been dominant in the political thinking since: that a successful king (or leader) had to be devious and ruthless.”<sup>41</sup> This results in a “perverse moral code”<sup>42</sup> in which only a morally corrupt monarch has the capacity for success. Furthermore, a good Christian king, by definition, cannot adhere to the Machiavellian methods necessary for holding onto power. Such a pessimistic view of the social climate encounters real trouble with the figure of Henry V always looming large in the background of *1 Henry VI*. The nobles describe him as a strong, effective, and well-loved ruler whose Christian piety only increased his stature as an ideal king. Moreover, Phyllis Rackin demonstrates that, far from existing as mutually exclusive options, Machiavellian action, Christian virtue, and providential design all seek to balance one another throughout Shakespeare’s history plays.<sup>43</sup> This creates a logical situation in which we cannot simply discredit Henry VI’s Christianity as a flaw and a liability. Instead, we must shift our attention from what he has to what he lacks in order to understand what separates him from his father’s success.

The play's first mention of the young Prince Henry proves problematic in defining his character. Gloucester accuses the Bishop of Winchester of unduly influencing the boy, saying, "None do you like but an effeminate prince / Whom like a schoolboy you can overawe" (I.i.35–6). In a backhanded way, this acknowledges the prince's connection to the church, potentially likening him to his father as "a king blest of the King of Kings." However, the more pointed accusation in this statement casts young Henry as lacking the fortitude and independence that made his father worthy of comparisons to Caesar. Henry's first spoken lines come during an argument between the Bishop of Winchester and the Duke of Gloucester about which of the two men has done greater abuse to his power. Rather than assert himself as an authority and resolve the issue, Henry "prevails" on both men through "prayer" that they might "unite [their] hearts in love and amity" (III.i.69). Images of religious devotion mark much of Henry's language throughout the rest of the play, especially in the conflict between Winchester and Gloucester, and later in the dispute between the two rose factions. When pressed for a judgment, Henry tells his court, "Discord doth afflict my soul" (III.i.109) and begs the two sides to be reconciled through good will. He also rebukes his uncles for quarrelling, saying "malice is a grievous sin" (III.i.131), appealing to their own Christian piety in order to resolve the conflict between them. While this draws obligatory words of good intent from Winchester and Gloucester, both indicate in asides that they have no faith in this truce nor intention to keep it. Henry's approach further shows itself on a national level near the end of the

play when Gloucester presents a proposed truce with France. The young king responds,

I always thought  
It was both impious and unnatural  
That such immanity and bloody strife  
Should reign among professors of one faith (V.i.11–14).

While he exhibits a personal Christian piety that connects him to the values of ideal Englishness established at the beginning of the play, he demonstrates no practical knowledge about matters of state. His total investment in moral conduct leaves him blind to the military and political necessities that maintained his father's kingdom.

In this context, the sudden lack of classical references takes on some real significance. The first two acts of the play define Henry V's ethos, which balanced Christian piety with a patriotic heroism devoted to the greater good of the nation. While Gloucester functions as lord protector, the country follows the status quo with Talbot continuing the heroic code prized by Henry V. The language of the play uses classical references to define the terms of the war with France according to Britain's mythic history. This ideology dominates England's policies, and the imagery within the play, until Henry VI comes to the throne. The abrupt halt in classical heroic imagery at the beginning of Act III underscores the new king's priorities. Whatever the unknowns about Henry VI's fitness to rule, it quickly becomes clear that he does not engage in terms of national myth. He attempts to look past these distinctions to a vision of a reconciled, unified Christian Europe. However, the final moment of the

play makes clear for the audience that simply ignoring these mythic structures and nationalistic investments will not make them go away. When Suffolk compares himself to Paris and offers the most overt and sustained reference to the Trojan War, he provides a reminder of the potency and urgency these concerns contain. By the end of *1 Henry VI*, the title character remains something of an unknown, but demonstrates a significant break from the policies and legacy of his father. The final image of a classical Helen brought to England creates an uneasy moment that forecasts disastrous consequences in the plays to follow.

Suffolk's Trojan allusion comes at the end of a scene that also produces troubling suggestions about the next play. In considering Suffolk's suggestion that the king should marry Margaret, Henry faces a choice between two brides that appeal to very different motivations. Gloucester reminds Henry that he has already agreed to marry the Earl of Armagnac's daughter, and apparently Henry stands to gain much for his political position and his country through this marriage. Exeter and Gloucester both make clear that she is a "lady of esteem" (V.vii.27) with an influential father who plans to contribute a large dowry to the crown. The Earl of Armagnac provides a potentially strong ally whose close relation to Charles, the Dauphin of France could resolve the current disputes and stabilize Henry's government. Finally, Henry's honor is also at stake, because any course of action that ignores his betrothal to the nobility of Armagnac would break a royal oath and constitute unfaithfulness to his subjects. Margaret of Anjou, by contrast appeals to Henry's personal desires through her beauty—which Suffolk, as intermediary, has taken great lengths to ensure. Henry

opens the scene by saying that Suffolk's description of "Her virtues graced with gifts / Do breed love's settled passions in my heart" (V.vii.2–3). Although he takes little part in the debate about the merits of each bride, he says his feelings for Margaret take the form of "passion of inflaming love," and "such fierce alarums of both hope and fear / As I am sick with workings of my thoughts" (V.vii.82, 85–6).

While never alluded to overtly, Henry presents something of an Aeneas figure in this scene. In deciding to leave Carthage in Book IV of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas must similarly decide between Lavinia, the wife who the gods have promised awaits him in Italy, and Dido, the queen who urges him to settle in Carthage as her husband. Similar to Henry's situation, Aeneas's choice boils down to the will of the gods, the future of Troy, and the security of his offspring on the one hand, and his own happiness and desire to stay on the other. If, as I argued in the last chapter, a theater-going audience in the 1590s would see this as a moment of truth and a test of kingly virtue and *pietas*, Aeneas functions as the ideal monarch who passes muster. He chooses to honor his external obligations at the expense of his personal happiness, immediate comfort, and an offer of wealth. Henry, in an analogous situation, fails miserably, and without the preponderance of added incentives that Aeneas had to turn down. He chooses Margaret, sight unseen, based on a secondhand description with the knowledge that his choice also entails great cost to his personal treasury.

Certainly, the audience cannot fault Henry for agreeing to marry Margaret without having seen her; since royal marriages were negotiated at a distance for political reasons, we can only assume he has not seen Armagnac's daughter, either.

His fault lies, instead, in letting Suffolk sway him with a description of Margaret's beauty against his politically advantageous match. Henry attempts to excuse his decision by saying to Gloucester:

And you good uncle, banish all offense.

If you censure me by what you were,

Not by what you are, I know it will excuse

This sudden execution of my will (V.vii.96–9).

This explanation presents a damning insight into his motivations that only clarifies his priorities for the audience. We can assume Henry means that Gloucester should judge the situation as the young man he once was, not as the old man he now is. However, this question of roles remains the very crux of Henry's problem: he makes the decision as a young man, rather than as a king. Gloucester can never judge the situation as king, but he does so aptly as Lord Protector. For all the personal piety Henry displays earlier in the play, he fails in the Aenean measure of his kingly *pietas*.

This scene makes an apt transition between the two plays because it introduces Henry's marriage to Margaret as a major plot point which will drive the conflicts and political issues in *2 Henry VI*. The Virgilian imagery also works well in establishing some useful character terms for the second play. Henry fails in an initial comparison to Aeneas, raising questions about his ability to embrace a classical heritage and function as a good English king subsequently. Margaret as Dido also presents some meaningful possibilities, forecasting a powerful, independent, foreign queen whose allure threatens to derail a king's ability to act responsibly. In fact,

Margaret's political position proves more dangerous to Henry than Dido to Aeneas. Since her father is a king in name only, she can offer no alternative kingdom to Henry. The imagery in *2 Henry VI* seems to embrace the associations produced at the end of *Part I*, because it makes repeated references to Aeneas that provide opportunities for evaluating the characters.

*2 Henry VI* contains various references to classical figures and names that define characters and situations in much the same way as *1 Henry VI*. At an early moment in the play "The time of night when Troy was set on fire" describes the night's darkest hour, appropriate to witchcraft (I.iv.17). Lord Saye appeals to Caesar's *Commentaries* or *Gallic Wars* as an authority on English geography in order to appease Cade's rebels (IV.vii.59–63). The boat captain in Act IV compares Suffolk to Sulla for his ruthlessness (IV.i.84), and Suffolk tries to play the martyr, comparing himself to Cicero, Caesar, and Pompey (IV.i.138–40). Richard, Duke of York, describes himself as Meleager, Prince of Calydon (I.i.234–5), and later as "Ajax Telamonius" (V.i.26). In addition to these relatively brief and passing allusions in *Part 2*, four fairly specific and extended references occur to Aeneas's actions in the first four books of the *Aeneid*. As a group, these allusions ask the audience to consider Henry, Duke Humphrey, Margaret, and Young Clifford in the context of England's mythical progenitor. This trend, in turn, provides a framework in which to evaluate the political failings that cause England's government to begin its descent into chaos by the end of the play.

The scene most closely related to the imagery used at the end of *I Henry VI* comes in Act III when Margaret hears Henry bemoan Gloucester's death. She launches into a 50-line lament that Henry cares more for his aged uncle than for his wife, and she accuses him of casting her love aside. Crowning her speech, Margaret ends with the following image:

How often have I tempted Suffolk's tongue—  
 The agent of thy foul inconstancy—  
 To sit with me, as Ascanius did,  
 When he to madding Dido would unfold  
 His father's acts, commenced in burning Troy!

Am I not witched like her? Or thou not false like him? (III.ii.114–19)

As at the end of the previous play, Henry takes the role of Aeneas while Margaret plays Dido. However, Margaret's description of the situation inverts the perspective for the audience. Previously we saw Henry as Aeneas, wrestling with a conflict between his personal and national interests; now Margaret presents a Dido shunned and abandoned by the man she loves. She asks Henry to ignore momentarily the typical Virgilian reading that focuses on Aeneas as the hero and to consider a different point of view with different needs and priorities.

Phyllis Rackin has argued that Shakespeare fills his history plays with such moments where alternate perspectives, especially those of women, interrupt traditional historical narratives to force the audience to reconsider the situation:



As soon as Shakespeare attempts to incorporate those feminine forces, marrying words and things, spirit and matter, historiography itself becomes problematic, no longer speaking with the clear, univocal voice of unquestioned tradition, but re-presented as a dubious construct, always provisional, always subject to erasure and reconstruction, and never adequate to recover the past in full presence.<sup>44</sup>

For Rackin, Margaret remains one of the most problematic figures for constructing a unified and univocal history. Over the course of four plays, her presence repeatedly complicates the history of royal succession by asserting the position of those not immediately involved in the linear progression of kings. In her self-identification as the queen of Carthage, Margaret reminds both Henry and the audience that Aeneas's future in Rome has little importance if the story focuses on Dido as the central character.<sup>45</sup> Roger Savage argues that in Shakespeare's ten direct references to Dido throughout all of his plays, he shows an awareness that the Dido story had a long history involving a variety of interpretations.<sup>46</sup> Various authors had written of Dido as a dangerous temptress, pitiful victim, conquering ruler, or even as a chaste, widowed queen. This range of possibilities allows Margaret to choose the image that best suits her needs and, consequently, turn Aenean imagery against Henry.

Moreover, Margaret does not limit herself to Dido. Earlier in the same speech that ends with the imagery discussed above, she makes a more oblique allusion to herself as Aeneas. In describing the crossing from her father's house in France to her

new home in England, she utilizes epic language that echoes lines 81–123 in the first book of the *Aeneid*, where a storm scatters the Trojan fleet. She says:

What boded this, but well forewarning winds  
 Did seem to say, “Seek not a scorpion’s nest,  
 Nor set no footing on this unkind shore.”  
 What did I then, but cursed the gentle gusts  
 And he that loosed them forth from their brazen caves,  
 And bid them blow toward England’s blessed shore,  
 Or turn our stern upon a dreadful rock.  
 Yet Aeolus would not be a murderer (III.ii.85–92).

Although J. A. K. Thomson would like to dismiss this passage as having no direct classical connection because “neither [Virgil nor Ovid] calls his cave ‘brazen,’ which is an absurd name for a cave,”<sup>47</sup> the similarities to Virgil’s storm remain difficult to ignore.

When Juno pleads with Aeolus to release a storm to blow Aeneas off course, the lengthy description begins with the following lines:

Spearshaft reversed  
 [Aeolus] gave the hollow mountainside a stroke,  
 And where a portal opened, winds in ranks,  
 As though drawn up for battle, hurtled through,  
 To blow across the earth in a hurricane (114–18).

The storm smashes several ships against the rocks, stopping only when Neptune intervenes and calms the seas. In both passages, Aeolus unleashes the winds from the confines of his caves (brazen or otherwise),<sup>48</sup> directing them at a royal traveler, crossing the sea to a promised throne in a foreign land. Margaret inserts herself into a story that casts her as an epic hero, subjected to the wrath of the gods, putting herself roughly on par with Aeneas and Odysseus.

In her complaint to Henry, Margaret aligns herself with both Aeneas and Dido, and she picks moments in their stories where they function most as victims of mythic proportions. Both figures suffer punishment and injustice in spite of their best intentions and honest endeavors. Juno plagues Aeneas simply because of his race, and Dido suffers desertion because she encounters a hero at the wrong moment in his epic quest. Margaret seems to want it both ways: she wants to be the virtuous hero, and she wants the part of the piteous lover. By using these allusions to rebuke Henry, she casts him as both the wrathful Juno, bent unjustly on her destruction, and as unfaithful Aeneas, the hero in his worst manifestation and at his lowest point. This approach produces a rather farcical effect, coming from Margaret at this point in the play. Having witnessed her unfaithfulness to Henry with Suffolk and her work as one of the central plotters in contriving Gloucester's death, it becomes difficult for the audience to accept her status as pious victim. Her crocodile tears may produce a positive effect on Henry, but for someone viewing or reading the play with an outside perspective, her long speech provokes the opposite effect. Her self-descriptions stand at complete odds with her character thus far in the play. In trying to align herself as a victim with

virtuous Aeneas and faithful Dido, she highlights her role as manipulator as well as the degree to which she is unfaithful and anything but virtuous.

In contrast, when Gloucester directly quotes the *Aeneid* as a commentary on his own situation, he produces a much more apt comparison. In response to the Bishop of Winchester, who accuses him of abusing his power, Duke Humphrey responds with a counter accusation, including a quotation from Virgil:

What, cardinal? Is your priesthood grown so preemptory?

*Tantaene animis caelestibus irae?*

Churchmen so hot? Good uncle hide such malice

With some holiness—can you do it? (II.i.23–6)

Robert Fitzgerald translates this line from Book I as “Can anger / Black as this prey on the minds of heaven?” (I.18–19), referring to Juno’s grudge. In isolation, this question pulled from Virgil points to the pettiness and baseness of Winchester’s motivations. In the same way that Juno, queen of the gods, acts out of something as trivial as jealousy, the Cardinal likewise acts out of jealousy and ambition. Although a man in his position should be a paragon of Christian virtue, devoting his life to theological matters and the spiritual well-being of the churches under his authority, the Cardinal involves himself in a secular power grab. The pointed comment from Gloucester not only compares this clergyman (a member of the College of Cardinals, no less) to a pagan goddess, but connects him to one of her most notorious injustices.

If we place Gloucester’s quoted line back into its context within the *Aeneid*, it produces even more significant results. This question comes at the end of the famous

invocation of the muse in the poem's opening lines. Virgil asks for assistance in understanding divine ways that he claims puzzle him as a mere mortal:

Musa mihi causas memora, quo numine laeso  
 quidue dolens regina deum tot uoluerit casus  
 insignem pietate virum, tot adire labores  
 impulerit. taentane animis caelestibus irae? (I.8–11)

(Tell me the causes now, O Muse, how galled  
 In her divine pride, and how sore at heart  
 From her old wound, the queen of the gods compelled him—  
 A man apart, devoted to his mission—  
 To undergo so many perilous days  
 And enter on so many trials. Can anger  
 Black as this prey on the minds of heaven?) (I.13–19)

If Winchester's wild accusations mark him as Juno, Gloucester becomes Aeneas, unjustly suffering the effects of "heavenly" fury. Moreover, the real question at the heart of Virgil's invocation concerns how Juno can direct her anger at such an *insignem pietate virum*, or a "man marked by *pietas*."<sup>49</sup> If we see Gloucester as aligning himself with the Aeneas introduced at the beginning of Virgil's poem, he asserts innocence in the face of the accusations levied against him, and he lays claim to the *pietas* that marks the epic hero.

Interestingly, Henry's response to the argument defines his own code of values in the context of Gloucester's quotation. When Margaret jumps into the fray, he pleads with her, "Good queen ... whet not these furious peers— / For blessed are the peacemakers on earth" (II.i.33–4). The play juxtaposes the *Aeneid*'s opening question about *pietas* with the list of Christian spiritual virtues found in the Beatitudes.<sup>50</sup> Likewise, this scene situates Gloucester as a man bound to the duties of a *pius* man and a good ruler, while Henry governs according Christ's Sermon on the Mount. An Elizabethan audience would surely recognize Henry's biblical allusion and be able to supply some of the other qualities from the list: "Blessed are the meek," "Blessed are the merciful," "Blessed are the pure of heart" (Matt. 5:5, 7–8). Interestingly, the statement that immediately follows the virtue of peacemakers may also apply to Gloucester in this case: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:10). Henry appeals to an admirable set of personal qualities, certainly, but such passive piety proves completely inappropriate to confront the increasingly divisive nature of the English court. Throughout the play, Gloucester tries to enact his role as a *pius* protector, while Henry abdicates his role and tries to passively make peace by appealing to the will of divine providence.

With the exception of those whose personal ambition he blocks, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, earns the respect of nearly everyone in the play. The Cardinal of Winchester tells us early on that the common people know him as "Humphrey, the good Duke of Gloucester" and wish him prosperity and health wherever he goes

(I.i.157–60). Even the Yorkists who dismiss all the Lancastrians as those who “do labor for their own preferment,” exempt Gloucester from this, calling him “good Duke Humphrey” (I.i.179, 191, also at II.iii.74). After describing the political dangers posed by Somerset, Winchester, and others, Salisbury singles out the one good man among them: “I never saw but Humphrey Duke of Gloucester / Did bear him like a noble gentleman” (I.i.181–2). Thus, he says, they must “do what we can to bridle and suppress / The pride of Suffolk and the cardinal,” but “we may cherish Duke Humphrey’s deeds / While they do tend the profit of the land” (I.i.200–1, 203–2). In the language that the York faction uses in the first act of the play, they describe themselves as working for all of England, while they cast the Lancastrians as personally ambitious and self-serving. Gloucester sits outside this system, and in their estimation, may be the person most devoted to helping England without a personal agenda.

Humphrey himself expresses this repeatedly throughout the play. When Margaret accuses him of abusing power and overstepping his bounds as “Protector of his excellence,” Gloucester corrects her, saying, “Madam, I am Protector of the realm, and at [Henry’s] pleasure will resign my place” (I.iii.122–4). He seems to make a subtle distinction, but the difference speaks volumes about how each views Gloucester’s responsibility and the nature of court life in general. Margaret conceives of the “Protector” in personal terms. As his job to protect the person of the king rests on a personal relationship, Gloucester could exploit this arrangement to benefit Henry and himself at everyone else’s expense. As “Protector of the realm,” however,

Gloucester acknowledges that his responsibility extends beyond the interests of the king, his own, or those of any other single individual. He must work to preserve Henry's kingdom in the best shape possible until the king feels ready to govern it himself. Just as Salisbury looks past factional lines to praise Gloucester, Gloucester, in turn, ignores such division and nominates Richard, Duke of York as royal representative in France. Whatever political agendas the various groups have in selecting individuals to exercise England's power, Gloucester seems sincere in nominating Richard simply because "York is the meetest man / To be your regent in France" (I.iii.163–4).

That Salisbury and Warrick as Yorkists recognize "good Duke Humphrey" for his merits and dedication to England's benefit helps resolve any potential questions about his motives. Men who resent his brother's kingship and actively seek to remove his nephew from the throne recognize him as an important asset to the kingdom. If Gloucester's noble intentions appear obvious even to those who should want him dead for political reasons, we then take seriously his protestations when accused of treason in Act III. When York accuses him of losing France through bribes and withheld pay, Gloucester denies any such actions and exclaims:

So help me God, as I have watched the night,  
 Ay, night after night in studying good for England,  
 That doit that e'er I wrested away from the king  
 Or any groat I hoarded for my own use  
 Be brought against me on my trial day! (III.i.110–14).



The language in this speech certainly echoes the outrage he expresses in I.i at the thought of losing Henry V's hard-won territories in France. In both cases, the thought that personal gain, whether it be a bribe or an ill-bartered queen, should come at the expense of England's benefit draws a strong and angry reaction from Gloucester. Indeed, only a few lines later he champions the opposite course of action, offering his own life, if necessary: "If my death might make this island happy ... I would expend it with all willingness" (III.i.148, 150). From the beginning of the play through the moment of his death in III.ii, the play presents Gloucester as a *pius* man, uninterested in personal political gain, who acts out of concern for his country. The Second Murderer only confirms this when he expresses his horror and remorse that they have killed "a man so penitent" (III.ii.4).

In the midst of personal ambitions and warring political factions, Duke Humphrey presents a solid image of the *pius* ruler—possibly the only one at the English court. His Aenean connection, no matter how oblique, functions as an external touchstone to provide context for his actions and values. Although not a literal translation of *insignem pietate virum*, one can hardly find a better phrase than Robert Fitzgerald's "a man apart, devoted to his mission" to describe Gloucester. In the face of political machinations all around him, he seeks dutifully to preserve his late brother's kingdom so that it may pass, stable and whole, to its rightful heir.

Gloucester's image as an ideally devoted nobleman through the first three acts of the play provides an ongoing contrast to Henry's actions as king. This same king who tries to reconcile his nobles through the Beatitudes enters the play praying. After

a brief comment of welcome to his new queen, Henry launches into a prayer of thanksgiving that begins, “O Lord that lends me life, / Lend me a heart replete with thankfulness!” (I.i.19–20). A good king can certainly display Christian virtue, as evidenced by the descriptions of Henry V at the beginning of *1 Henry VI*, but as in that first play, prayer and appeals to heaven dominate Henry’s language in *2 Henry VI*. Upon observing his hawk in flight at the beginning of Act II, he exclaims, “To see how God in all his creatures works! / Yea, man and birds are fain of climbing high” (II.i.7–8). Seeing God at work in everything may prove an admirable attribute in its own right, and throughout the play Henry constantly comments and calls upon God’s presence in his court’s affairs. He declares “God shall be my hope” (II.iii.24), asks that “God defend the right” (II.iii.55), resolves himself that “God’s will be done” (III.i.85), and takes comfort that “God, our hope, will succor us” (IV.iv.54). If balanced with strong leadership, this outlook has the power to provide a moral compass and create a good ruler in Henry’s world. Henry, however, uses divine providence as a crutch and repeatedly abdicates his power to a concept of God’s will.

We first see this most clearly at the end of the duel set between Peter and Horner. Unwilling to make a decision about the accusation of treason himself, Henry embraces Gloucester’s suggestion that the two men fight to settle the question as a matter of honor. When Henry sees Horner killed, he takes it as a sign:

Go, take hence that traitor from our sight,  
 For by his death we do perceive his guilt.  
 And God in justice hath revealed to us

The truth and innocence of this poor fellow,

Which he had thought to have murdered wrongfully (II.iv.4–7)

Henry takes no decisive action on his own, waiting for a divine signal to decide the question for him. In this instance we see a petty case, whose outcome derives more from liquor than from justice, declared and accepted as divine providence. This first trial establishes a precedent for a much more serious matter that arises later in the play. When Margaret, Suffolk, and York bring formal accusations of treason against Gloucester, Henry satisfies himself by saying, “My dear lord of Gloucester, ‘tis my special hope / That you will clear yourself from all suspense” (III.i.139–40).

Although he repeatedly asserts his surety about Duke Humphrey’s innocence, he makes no move to clear the charges from him. Instead, he relies on some element of providence to prove what he already knows. Winchester uses this belief against him, deeming Gloucester’s death “God’s secret judgment” (III.ii.31), which causes Henry to fall to the ground in despair. By the logic he has used so far, death can only prove Humphrey guilty and divinely punished. Even as he begins to suspect the truth, considering the possibility that the good Duke was murdered, he prays, “If my suspect be false, forgive me God, / For judgment belongs only to thee” (III.ii.139–40). E. M. W. Tillyard suggests that in this moment “we are in fact invited to watch out for the judgment of God on the murder of Duke Humphrey.”<sup>51</sup> While we may certainly understand the ill fortune of the murderers in this way, the more salient point lies in Henry’s relinquishing his kingly power. Under the notion of the king’s divine right, Henry is one of the few people able to administer God’s judgment. In

choosing not to do so, he neglects his kingly duties and fails to fulfill the role allotted to him as ruler.

Other characters point to Henry's Christian piety as the quality that contributes most to his weakness. In stating his reasons for seeking to take the throne by force, York describes Henry as the "proud Lancaster . . . Whose churchlike humors fits not for a crown," and blames his "bookish rule" for the decline in England's status. Margaret provides a more detailed list of Henry's failures:

All his mind is bent to holiness,  
 To number Ave Marias on his beads  
 His champions are the prophets and apostles,  
 His weapons holy saws of sacred writ,  
 His study is his tiltyard, and his loves  
 Are brazen images of canonized saints (I.iii.58–63).

For Margaret in particular, Henry's fault lies in replacing kingly concerns (champions, weapons, and tiltyards) with spiritual ones (prophets, apostles, and sacred writ). With good Duke Humphrey always as an example and benchmark, the play shows Henry's shortcomings as sins of omission. He does good and shows himself a pious man, but he leaves his kingly duties undone, and the kingdom unsatisfied.

The social breakdown and chaos that ensue throughout the rest of the play show the consequences that result from Henry's neglected obligations. The nobles rebel, the commoners rise up, and good men inevitably die. The play uses one final

image of Aeneas to show the gravity of these outcomes. Finding his father slain, Young Clifford picks up the body with these words:

As did Aeneas old Anchises bear,  
 So bear I thee upon my shoulders.  
 But then Aeneas bare a living load,  
 Nothing so heavy as mine (V.iv.62–5).

Young Clifford, now the only Clifford, invokes the classic image of ideal *pietas*, but he does so with an ironic tone.<sup>52</sup> As he points out, he can no longer fulfill the familial obligations to his progenitor; he has already failed and now can only carry away the body. In the carnage at the end of *2 Henry VI*, the allusion to Aeneas highlights the degree to which kingly *pietas* has utterly vanished. While Aeneas flees his burning city with noble intentions to preserve Trojan culture, Clifford knows his own culture's core has already crumbled. Without rulers who embrace the defining values of their forebears, England can produce only mere shadows of its ancient heritage—distorted shadows, for the “substance is not here.”

The commonplace references to the classical world, and the sustained references to Virgil's Aeneas in particular, function to import ideologically important notions about history, national identity, and kingly conduct into *1* and *2 Henry VI*. Ironically, however, the plays embrace these external images and their associated meanings to highlight absences in England's king. By loading Talbot with signifiers of classical heroism, English patriotism, and martial valor, Shakespeare makes an audience acutely aware that Henry, the country's titular head, lacks all of these

qualities. Likewise, the more we see Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, work selflessly for England's best interests, the more it becomes apparent that King Henry has none of the wisdom or dedication necessary to guide his country. As *2 Henry VI* concludes, the king's deficiencies prove symptomatic for the nation as a whole; we watch Henry V's legacy crumble. English valor died with Talbot in France, the victim of cowardice and self-interest. Gloucester's benevolent wisdom in working for the common good died with him in the interest of political factions and personal agendas. Only Henry's Christian piety remains, but without the practical means to employ it embodied in those two older men, it has no power to guide the realm. In Clifford's analogy to Aeneas, we recognize the emblem of *pietas* that he invokes, but fixate on the stark differences that render *pietas* impossible. Old Clifford's lifeless body makes following Aeneas's example a futile endeavor. Likewise, in *Henry VI*, we understand the true nature of ideal kingship, but only by recognizing what he lacks. He is no Aeneas.

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Taylor, "Introduction," *Henry VI, Part I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 17.

<sup>2</sup>Percy Simpson, "Shakespeare's Use of Latin Authors," *Studies in Elizabethan Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955) 2.

<sup>3</sup>T. W. Baldwin, *Shakespeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke* 2 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944). See also the opening chapter in Emrys Jones, *The Origins of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977). Jones explores expectations that Shakespeare would have encountered as a schoolboy at a moment when England was embracing continental humanist education through Erasmus. Robert Miola also gives a good overview of Elizabethan educational curriculum in *Shakespeare's Reading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Miola's book functions primarily as a brief introduction for students, covering the texts in wide circulation in Shakespeare's day that greatly inform the plays. His opening chapter on Elizabethan reading practices provides a good insight into ways of reading and remembering that are very different from modern day practices.

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<sup>4</sup>In addition to Baldwin, Simpson's chapter also bears resemblance to Robert Kilburn Root's 1903 study *Classical Mythology in Shakespeare*, Yale Studies in English XIX (New York: Henry Holt, 1903). Root compiles a dictionary of classical names and places referenced throughout Shakespeare's plays, giving a list of occurrences and a synoptic description for each entry. He then applies this data to questions of authorship, evaluating each play by how well its pattern of classical allusions fits with that of the entire corpus as a whole. Closer in time to Simpson's essay, J. A. K. Thomson surveyed classical references in *Shakespeare and the Classics* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1952). This book moves systematically through each play, quoting each allusion and listing its likely origin. Thomson's point in this exercise is to prove that Shakespeare's (indeed all of Elizabethan culture's) classical learning was extremely limited, and, more problematic, that any seeming reference to a classical author that does not have an immediately recognizable source is a coincidence resulting from Shakespeare's natural genius. John Velz provides a solid bibliographic overview of the responses to this topic for the first 300 years in the introduction to *Shakespeare and the Classical Tradition: A Critical Guide to the Commentary 1660–1960* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1968).

<sup>5</sup>Martindale's work focuses specifically on references, quotations and elements of classical texts occurring within the texts of the plays. Much excellent scholarship has been done on Shakespeare's adaptation of Roman history and myth into the plots of his plays, especially the Roman and classical plays. See, for example, Paul F. Cantor, *Shakespeare's Rome: Republic and Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976).

<sup>6</sup>Charles and Michelle Martindale, *Shakespeare and the Uses of Antiquity: An Introductory Essay* (London: Routledge, 1990).

<sup>7</sup>Charles Martindale, "Shakespeare and Virgil," *Shakespeare and the Classics*, ed. Charles Martindale and A. B. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 89–106.

<sup>8</sup>Martindale 89–90.

<sup>9</sup>Martindale and Martindale 10.

<sup>10</sup>Miola, *Shakespeare's Reading* 3.

<sup>11</sup>These notebooks started with blank sections headed by topical category titles or commonplaces. As students encountered noteworthy examples in their reading of ideas like "justice," "duty," "courage," et cetera, they would record the passage in the appropriate section as a way to remember its significance. Commonplace books also provided an expanding resource for composition, creating a catalog of relevant authoritative examples of important ideas. Ann Moss provides an excellent overview of the origin and practice of keeping commonplace books in the first chapter of her book *Printed Commonplace Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>12</sup>Miola, *Shakespeare's Reading* 4.

<sup>13</sup>Simpson 6.

<sup>14</sup>Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Political Drama: The History Plays and the Roman Plays* (London: Routledge, 1988).

<sup>15</sup>The classic, comprehensive study of grammar school education in the sixteenth century is T. W. Baldwin's 2 volume *Shakespeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*. Citing Wolsey's 1528 curriculum and the repeated mentions of the *Commentaries* in school documents, Baldwin claims, "We may regard Sallust and Caesar as universal" (II.564). See especially his discussion of the uses of classical

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history, II.562–72. More recently, Peter Mack has focused specifically on the teaching of rhetoric in *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Mack situates Caesar as an important reading for students as they moved from basic grammar education into composition because *The Gallic Wars* lays out clear cases of cause and effect as well as provides examples of great speeches. Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine treat the subject in a larger European context, examining the progression from rhetoric to fully-developed humanistic education in *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and Liberal Arts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986).

<sup>16</sup>Arthur Golding, “To the Reader,” *The Eycht Bookes of Caius Julius Caesar Conteyning his Martiall Exploites...* (London, 1565) \*.iii<sup>f</sup>–\*.iii<sup>f</sup>, \*.vii<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>17</sup>Golding \*.viii<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>18</sup>Golding \*\*.ii.

<sup>19</sup>David Riggs, *Shakespeare’s Heroical Histories: Henry VI and Its Literary Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971). This functions as the central argument to Riggs’s book as he first establishes the heroic stage tradition and then tracks the downfalls of the various heroic characters in the first tetralogy.

<sup>20</sup>Donald G. Watson, *Shakespeare’s Early History Plays: Politics at Play on the Elizabethan Stage* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990) 35.

<sup>21</sup>Thomas Nashe, *Pierce Pennilisse: His Supplication to the Divell* (London: 1592).

<sup>22</sup>Even when Talbot sounds like Tamburlaine, he identifies himself as Nero (cf. Lisa Hopkins).

<sup>23</sup>Charles Wells, *The Wide Arch: Roman Values in Shakespeare* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1993).

<sup>24</sup>Irving Ribner, *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), see esp. 99–101.

<sup>25</sup>Riggs, chapter 2 in *Shakespeare’s Heroical Histories*.

<sup>26</sup>Clifford Leech, “The Dramatist’s Independence,” *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, 10 (1967) 19.

<sup>27</sup>Harold F. Brooks, “Marlowe and Early Shakespeare,” *Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Brian Morris (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968) 90–2.

<sup>28</sup>David Riggs suggests that “Shakespeare’s initial achievement in the *Henry VI* plays, then, lay in preserving the theatrically viable stage business and rhetoric of the heroical-historical drama while placing it in a richer context of ethical and political values,” thus presenting “a complex image of personal worth that continually recalls the social meaning of heroic greatness,” *Shakespeare’s Heroical Histories* 84–5.

<sup>29</sup>Watson, 54.

<sup>30</sup>Nero reportedly set fire to his own city, burning central Rome in order to clear the area for his new luxury palace. Lisa Hopkins argues that Nero was the quintessential bad ruler and a commonplace stand-in for abused power by Elizabethan standards. Talbot’s statement seems to make sense only if



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we see him applying the ruthlessness Nero showed his own people as a strategy of war, directed at his enemies. See the discussion of *Hamlet* above, at the beginning of Chapter 1.

<sup>31</sup>Geraldo U. de Sousa, *Shakespeare's Cross-Cultural Encounters* (New York: Palgrave, 1999).

<sup>32</sup>Sousa 41.

<sup>33</sup>An indication that the audience would likely regard Deborah as a positive comparison comes from her appearance in Elizabeth's royal entry into London in 1559. The pageant presents Deborah as an admirable model for Elizabeth because she was victorious in war, ruled fairly in peace and listened to the advice of her counselors. See James M. Osborn's modern facsimile of the 1559 account, *The Queenes Maiesties Passage through the Citie of London to Westminster the Day before her Coronation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960) 55–7.

<sup>34</sup>NIV translation.

<sup>35</sup>Naomi C. Liebler and Lisa Scancellia Shea, "Shakespeare's Queen Margaret: Unruly or Unruled?" *Henry VI: Critical Essays*, ed. Thomas A. Pendleton (New York: Routledge, 2001) 79–96. Liebler and Shea present Joan as one of three foils for Margaret over the course of the *Henry VI* plays. In this case both Joan and Margaret are French women attempting to gain positions of power through sensuality and appeals to a higher authority. Joan overplays her hand in promising a French victory she cannot deliver, while Margaret better manages her situation and attains a throne in England.

<sup>36</sup>Vulgate, Psalm 113:9

<sup>37</sup>*The Psalter or Psalmes of David...* (London, 1549) P.vi<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>38</sup>This sort of discontinuity has also reinforced theories about the play's joint authorship, and possibly about its non-chronological composition. Michael Taylor gives a good overview of this debate in the introduction to the 2003 Oxford edition of the play.

<sup>39</sup>Janet Lull, "Introduction," *Henry VI, Part I*, ed. William Montgomery (New York: Pelican, 2000) 1.

<sup>40</sup>Michael Manheim, *The Weak King Dilemma in the Shakespearean History Play* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1973).

<sup>41</sup>Manheim 2.

<sup>42</sup>Manheim 81.

<sup>43</sup>Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History: Shakespeare's English History Chronicles* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). See especially chapter 2, "Ideological Conflict, Alternative Plots, and the Problem of Historical Causation."

<sup>44</sup>Rackin 148.

<sup>45</sup>In fact, Margaret seems to invoke an image of a truly victimized Dido much closer to Chaucer's in *The Legend of Good Women* than anything in Virgil. See the discussion of Chaucer's Dido in Chapter 1.

<sup>46</sup>Roger Savage, "Dido Dies Again," *A Woman Scorn'd: Responses to the Dido Myth*, ed. Michael Burden (London: Faber and Faber, 1998) 3–39. Savage charts the various forms of the Dido myth that preceded and competed with Virgil's in the ancient world. He suggests that in sixteenth-century England, Shakespeare and his audience would have had access to many of these alternate versions of

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the story, although Virgil's account, and Ovid's derivation thereof, certainly dominated the common understanding.

<sup>47</sup>Thomson 88–9.

<sup>48</sup>If we really must seek a Virgilian explanation for the term “brazen” in Shakespeare's language, I might suggest Jove's famous description 200 lines later in which Furor is restrained in the temple of Janus with *vinctus aenis* or “brazen bands” (I.295).

<sup>49</sup>My translation.

<sup>50</sup>See Matthew 5:1–11.

<sup>51</sup>E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1944) 182. This, of course, fits with Tillyard's larger argument that the history plays of both tetralogies support a notion of divine intervention that ends inevitably with the Tudor dynasty.

<sup>52</sup>We might note that, in addition to his self-description as Aeneas, Clifford presents a striking visual reminder of the familiar image of Aeneas and Anchises. Miola briefly discusses the use of such an image by the popular, sixteenth-century emblematisers, Andrea Alciati and Geoffrey Whitney (Miola, *Shakespeare's Rome* 83–4). I will discuss emblems in greater depth in the next chapter.

### Chapter 3

#### **Emblems and Emptiness: The Decline of *Pietas* in *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III***

“Look here on this picture, and on this,” Hamlet instructs Gertrude in the third act of Shakespeare’s play, “the counterfeit presentment of two brothers” (III.iv.54–5).

Of the first man, Hamlet begins:

See what a grace was seated on this brow:

Hyperion’s curls, the front of Jove himself,

An eye like Mars, to threaten and command (III.iv.56–8).

The portrait he holds at this moment, of course, depicts his own late father, the former king of Denmark and Gertrude’s first husband. He urges her to observe the immediate contrast as he sets this image beside that of Claudius: “Look now what follows. Here is your husband, / Like a mildewed ear / Blasting his wholesome brother” (III.iv.65–6). This comparison of virtue in which he finds the new king seriously deficient according to the standards set by Old Hamlet seems to drive Hamlet throughout the play. In the first act, before he has had any chance to hear the ghost’s tale and learn of this father’s murder, Hamlet already expresses disgust in the change he perceives from one king to the next. The contrast of Old Hamlet to Claudius creates an analogy of “Hyperion to a satyr” (I.ii.140). While this phrase clearly betrays the derision Hamlet feels toward his uncle, his following terms of comparison create something murkier: “My father’s brother, but no more like my father / Than I to Hercules” (I.ii.152–3). Likening the king to a debauched, subhuman woodland being certainly carries the sting of insult in its own right, but to compare the object of his scorn to

himself seems rhetorically questionable. We must recognize here that the strength of Hamlet's imagery lies not in the metaphorical signifiers themselves, but in the relative distance between them. The king of a now bygone era proved himself heroic, noble, and god-like in his demeanor, while the current king shows only evidence of the animal, the mortal, and of disease. This creates a trajectory of decay in which the king, and thereby, the kingdom, move away from an idealized moment. Certainly this fits with Hamlet's description of the world as "an unweeded garden that grows to seed" (I.ii.135–6). As it becomes unweeded, and goes from a tended garden to one possessed by things "rank and gross in nature," it moves from a beautiful, ordered ideal to a fallen and ruinous state. *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III* present England as a kingdom in an accelerating state of decline. As the characters trapped within this political moment become aware of their situation, they increasingly, like Hamlet, look back to the former glory that England has lost, comparing their present to fallen Troy and, eventually, to the emptiness of hell.

In her examination of *Hamlet*, Janet Adelman identifies the garden imagery as central to Hamlet's understanding of the royal family's situation in the play.<sup>1</sup> According to her reading, Hamlet's perception of the fallen world originates in the changes he sees in Gertrude's status. No longer able to see his mother as an idealized manifestation of virginal purity and queenly virtue, Hamlet focuses on the contamination he associates with his mother's sexuality. Gertrude becomes a microcosm of all creation, forcing Hamlet to face the baseness of nature and the fleshly desires that ultimately result in both bodily and spiritual death. In focusing on

Hamlet's obsession with corruption, however, we often overlook the issue of change so crucial to his logic. "The world," writes Adelman, "has been transformed into an unweeded garden, possessed by things rank and gross, because his mother has remarried."<sup>2</sup> A specific, crucial event has transformed the world from one thing into another in Hamlet's mind. He sees his father's death and his mother's subsequent remarriage as defining moments that mark a sea change in the moral standing of his family, Denmark, and all of creation. This fallen state and "rank corruption" (III.iv.150) become all-consuming for Hamlet throughout the play and destroy his trust in those around him, especially Gertrude, Ophelia, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Hamlet's perception of a past golden age under his father, however, looms in the background and creates an ever-present contrast to the world which causes him despair. Hamlet's fixation on corrupt Denmark constantly implies its opposite, describing what it is not. We must remain aware that when he describes "an enclosed garden newly breached, it implies the presence of a formerly unbreached garden."<sup>3</sup>

Maynard Mack, likewise, focuses on this garden imagery as the key to understanding Hamlet's perceptions in the play. In particular, he notes Hamlet's repeated use of rose imagery to describe persons fallen from grace. Gertrude, Ophelia, and even Hamlet's own status as heir-apparent to the Danish throne all merit comparison to roses that have withered or been cut. Mack also makes clear just what this decayed garden means for Hamlet as he looks back to the past. He says:

For Denmark was a garden then, when his father ruled. There had been something heroic about his father—a king who met the threats to Denmark in open battle, fought with Norway, smote the sledded Polacks on the ice, slew the elder Fortinbras in an honorable trial of strength.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to the personal issues of family relationships that Adelman describes as so central to Hamlet's reaction, Mack's evaluation reminds us about the magnitude of the stakes involved. Beyond sexual purity and even idealized family roles, the uncorrupted garden represents an idealized time and state of being for all of Denmark in Hamlet's mind. It was an era of chivalry, heroism, strength, honesty, and greatness. For characters looking back from a moment when rumors fill the court, enemies threaten the borders, and the king manipulates and deceives his subjects with only minimal attempts to hide his actions, Old Hamlet's reign takes on the nostalgic glow of a lost golden age.

John Wilders casts Shakespeare's history plays as engaged in the same view, but on a different scale. Tragedies, he argues, deal with the problems and downfall of a specific individual, while the histories show repeated patterns of tragedy resulting from the conditions of a given moment in the nation's past.<sup>5</sup> As such, these plays focus on moments of crisis and dissolution in which "Shakespeare portrays history as a struggle by succeeding generations of men to establish ideal worlds which are beyond their powers to create."<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, the characters often base their vision of the perfect world on an identifiable period in England's history. The first tetralogy opens on this note with Gloucester's description of Henry V as "too famous to live

long,” and Exeter’s assessment that the king’s death equates to “our glory’s overthrow” (*IHV* I.i.6, 24). The first lines spoken in the histories establish a perspective that looks constantly backwards.

As the title of Wilders’s book suggests, he sees the image of a lost, Edenic garden as a controlling metaphor for the English history plays. Such a comparison stresses the sharp contrasts that the characters and the plays present. Not only do we see a present situation that shows itself worse than a previous time, but the plays suggest a truly pre- and post-lapsarian historical relationship. In the minds of characters like Gloucester and Talbot, England has moved to a truly fallen state of humanity and history under Henry VI, while the past reigns of Henry V and Edward III increasingly become idealized as perfect golden ages. Moreover, as the moral distance between these two increases, it defines the necessary trajectory of history as one that turns back on itself to return to the past. Rather than look to new prospects for a better future, the ideal movement of history seeks to regain a lost paradise. Milton encapsulates this worldview some fifty years later when he defines the ultimate goal of education as “to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright.”<sup>7</sup> Milton envisions humanity’s quest for knowledge not as a move forward into the unknown and undiscovered, but backward into the lost and forgotten. A fallen state necessarily implies a moment of perfection from which to fall, and consequently a projected circular historical path in attempting a return to that past perfection. History in Shakespeare’s first tetralogy attempts something similar to

education for Milton. Instead of repairing “the ruins of our first parents,” however, it seeks to repair the ruins of English kingship.

This pattern becomes increasingly evident in the final two plays of the tetralogy, *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III*. Both of these plays deal with England’s continued loss of the characteristics that made it great. With the deaths of Talbot and Humphrey of Gloucester, the country loses the men who embodied and supported the princely virtues of military heroism and wise governance, leaving Henry to represent the sole remaining virtue, religious piety. However, without the other two men to guide him, the *pietas* of the English monarch erodes to little more than a memory. As such, the Roman and Trojan descriptions in *3 Henry VI* echo this change. Deprived of immediate terms of comparison, the classical images become hollow emblems that harken back to times and places in the distant past. With Henry VI’s death, England loses all connection to the classical code embodied by Henry V. Conspicuous absences mark Richard III’s reign as one devoid of kingly virtue. Allusions to Troy and Rome disappear almost entirely from the fabric of the play,<sup>8</sup> as do references to Christian virtue except in instances where they emphasize distance. In their place, images of loss, emptiness, and especially of hell, fill the play. These two plays contemplate the final decay and destruction of classical *pietas* in anticipation of its resurrection through Henry Richmond in the closing moments of *Richard III*.

In the opening scene of *3 Henry VI*, John, Lord Clifford, who recently inherited his title from his murdered father at the end of *2 Henry VI*, reminds the audience of the greater loss that looms large behind the political dissention and



unrest. Upon entering the room of state and finding Richard, Duke of York sitting in the royal chair, Henry counsels his entourage to exercise patience in deciding how to address the situation. Clifford responds, rather pointedly, “Patience is for poltroons such as he. / He durst not sit there had your father lived” (I.i.62–3). Henry V provided a stable government and knew how to balance wise governance of his country with the chivalric strength necessary to maintain his own position. Clifford tacitly compares Henry VI to his father, pointing out the personal virtues that the current king lacks, but he also highlights the ideological change that has taken place. Despite what his comment about Henry V initially suggests, the scene contains very little discussion about who might best hold the throne through personal merit or strength. Instead, Richard, Duke of York begins by announcing to his nobles, “I mean to take possession of my right” (I.i.44). His suitability to take the role of king rests not with his ability, but in his right, to do so. The confrontation with Henry quickly comes to a head when Henry orders, “Kneel for grace and mercy at my feet. I am thy sovereign,” and York replies, “I am thine” (I.i.75–7). Both claim the throne as their rightful inheritance, and their supporting nobles argue heatedly about which man holds the kingly title.

As the scene progresses, the two factions apply various terms to both contenders: “sturdy rebel” (50), “usurper” (114), “traitor” (79, 80, 104), “natural king” (82), “factious Duke of York” (74), and “usurping Henry” (81). These labels show a fluidity that allows each side to assign them according to their own perspective. Arguably, we might apply Clifford’s observation to this entire situation;

had Henry V not died when he did, such confusion could not exist. Henry V inherited the throne rightfully from his father and supported his sanctioned place by fulfilling his kingly duties—the younger Henry reminds us of this when he presents the conquest of France as proof of his father’s royal legitimacy (I.i.108–9). Henry V combined right with conduct to produce an ideal kingship which only comes into question through the reigns of his father and his son. His death means a loss of this ideal combination and leaves unstable absences on the throne. This opening scene in *3 Henry VI* comes as a result of lost kingly virtue, creating chaos in which “king” and “rebel” lose their concrete definitions.

Likewise, the fabric of classical allusions, so prevalent in the tetralogy’s first two plays, starts to break down and lose its immediate applicability to the events of the plays. Much like Young Clifford’s comparison of himself to Aeneas in the final scene of *2 Henry VI*,<sup>9</sup> the substantive allusions in *3 Henry VI* highlight absences by drawing the audience’s attention to virtues and ideas missing from the play. Certainly, *3 Henry VI* contains a handful of classical names used in passing for brief comparisons, and several of these even recall England’s connections to the ancient world. In negotiations with France, the characters twice use the term “Albion” to refer to England (III.iii.7, 49) and “Gallia” to indicate France (V.iii.8), setting England as Rome’s sibling descendant of Troy against France as Rome’s conquered territory in Gaul. Similarly, Henry aligns England with Rome, lamenting “No bending knee will call thee Caesar now” (III.i.18), and with Troy, calling Warwick “my Hector, and my Troy’s true hope” (IV.ix.25). Such nationalistic comparisons become increasingly

rare, however, and stand out as conspicuous exceptions rather than as a core component of the vocabulary of images.

Clifford mockingly calls Richard, Duke of York a fallen Phaeton (I.iv.34), presumably referring to the sun in Richard's heraldry and his failed attempt to assume a role beyond his control. Clifford returns to this image shortly before his death; when seeing the damage caused by York's fall, he laments:

O Phoebus, hadst thou never given consent

That Phaeton should check thy fiery steeds,

Thy burning car should never have scorched the earth (II.vi.11–13).

Aligning the York faction with the sun provides Henry with another allusive moment near the end of the play, as well. When Richard, Duke of Gloucester suggests that Henry resembles Daedalus in his failed attempt to save his son, Henry expands the image into a complex metaphor:

I, Daedalus; my poor boy, Icarus;

Thy father, Minos, that denied our course;

The sun that seared the wings of my sweet boy,

Thy brother Edward; and thyself, the sea,

Whose envious gulf did swallow up his life (V.vi.21–5).

Henry makes another reference here to the house of York as the sun, which connects his description to Clifford's two earlier comments. Caroline Spurgeon uses such repeated images as a way to define larger ideological arcs within a given play: "The iterative imagery which runs, not only through a passage, but all through a play,

is a kind of extension ... acting on our imaginations with proportionately greater cumulative force and effect.”<sup>10</sup> In this case, Clifford’s and Henry’s comparisons provide an interpretation of the Yorks’ sun emblem. Rather than provide nourishing light and heat, the Yorks scorch and destroy the things they touch. At this moment in the saga, Henry’s words recall the actions of the former Duke of York, connect them to his son, Edward IV, and even anticipate the devastating effects that the audience knows will come from Richard’s eventual rule.

We must note, however, that Henry’s sun metaphor comes in the middle of a more complex image. In five brief lines, Henry paints a picture of the Daedalus and Icarus story that would be immediately recognizable to Shakespeare’s audience. He does this in a diachronic way that collapses the entire narrative into a single moment, suggesting a mental image that incorporates all the elements into an emblem-like device. Verbally pointing to each “item,” Henry glosses their correlative counterparts in the play’s political world to show Richard how apt a comparison Henry and his son truly make to Daedalus and Icarus. The language of the play utilizes the familiar concept of interpreting visual emblems in the sixteenth century. Roelof van Straten suggests that ideal emblems created a tension between an image composed from recognizable religious or classical images and the text, an explanation and sometimes a motto, that accompanied the image.<sup>11</sup> By using the text to interpret the composed image, a viewer gains a clearer understanding of whatever subject the emblem addresses.

Geffrey Whitney's *A Choice of Emblems, and Other Devises* (1586) contains such an image of Icarus. Whitney gives the title "In Astrologos" (On Astrologers)<sup>12</sup> to the image, which shows Icarus in mid fall, surrounded by the feathers that used to be his wings, while the sun looks on from above, and the sea awaits below. The initial combination of motto and image creates an analogy which the text goes on to explain. After describing the cause of Icarus's fall in the first of two stanzas, Whitney gives this warning at the beginning of the second: "Let suche beware, which paste their reache do mounte, / Whoe seeke the thinges, to mortall men deny'de."<sup>13</sup> Whitney's emblem seeks to explain foolish pride, and so it focuses on Icarus as the primary element. Henry, by contrast, uses the same basic story, but manipulates the reference to Daedalus to address the subject he wants it to elucidate. He provides an expanded view of the narrative to include both the grieving father and the manipulative king. Richard's initial jibe at Henry focuses on the foolishness of his actions:

Why, what a peevish fool was that of Crete,

That taught his son the office of a foul!

And yet, for all his wings, the fool was drowned (V.iv.18–20).

Rather than recognize the mistakes of Daedalus, and therefore himself, Henry takes Richard's seemingly offhanded allusion and turns it into a contemplation of loss. He assembles the other defining elements of the story into an emblematic description, and casts himself as a tragically bereaved Daedalus.

Most of the references to Troy and Rome in *3 Henry VI* occur in just such emblematic moments. Rather than create passing associations in the audience's minds

between the characters or situations and classical counterparts, each allusion gives an extended description that places a name within its recognizable context. These comparisons happen at moments of great loss, and the explanations that the various characters give these images create a sense of epic destruction as the political structure of England crumbles throughout the play.

The first such emblematic allusion comes in reference to the death of Richard, Duke of York in Act II. When the messenger enters and announces to Richard's sons that their father was murdered, the younger Richard responds, "Say how he died, for I will hear it all" (II.i.49). Considering the request for specific details, the messenger begins in a rather unexpected way. As a way to frame the events, he asks the brothers to situate their father in a classical scene:

Environèd he was with many foes,  
 And stood against them as the hope of Troy  
 Against the Greeks that would have entered Troy.  
 But Hercules himself must yield to the odds;  
 And many strokes, though with a little ax,  
 Hews down and fells the hardest-timbered oak (II.i.50–5).

He begins by calling forth a recognizable scene from the Trojan War: Hector, Troy's greatest and noblest warrior, stands alone in defense of the city against a multitude of invading Greeks. To clarify the content of this scene, the messenger sets it alongside an allusion to Hercules, suggesting all his heroic deeds, as well as the image of an oak tree with its strength and solidarity. In each of these comparisons, he pits a strong,

heroic, solitary figure against the multitudinous forces that can eventually overcome it. In true emblematic fashion, he then explains to the brothers that the several central figures represent their father, and the amassed adversaries stand in for the Lancastrians, especially Queen Margaret and Clifford. In so doing, he provides an effective illustration to communicate to the brothers that Richard's seemingly meaningless death does not diminish his greatness.

More important, however, the terms the messenger chooses for his comparison allow this scene to participate in much larger narratives. The structure itself resembles an epic simile, which inserts Richard, Duke of York's death into a genre concerned by definition with heroic figures. Moreover, the terms of comparison tacitly imply that nothing within English culture, with the possible exception of an ancient oak, provides an adequate point of reference for describing this event. To find something which approximates the gravity of this situation, one must look to the fall of Troy and the labors of Hercules. York's murder ranks at the same level as these epic downfalls, and gains status, to those hearing the tale, as England's greatest loss. In this move, the comparison drawn by the messenger carefully directs the audience's thoughts from the monumental to the tragic. In each of the three successive metaphors, the messenger chooses figures that stand as commonplaces for strength and turns them to images of loss. Over the course of a few lines, Hector's valor crumbles in bloodshed, Hercules's strength finds its limit, and nature's noblest tree succumbs to the woodcutter. The comparative terms in this emblematic description define the loss of heroic virtue from the point of view of the Yorkists: both the loss of

the heroic Duke of York, and the loss of any English heroism sufficient to describe him.

Warwick provides a similar epic comparison in Act IV that also equates the Yorks with the Trojans, and their overthrow to the fall of Troy. He frames the plot to capture Edward and place Henry back on the throne in these terms:

That, as Ulysses and stout Diomed  
 With sleight and manhood stole to Rhesus' tents  
 And brought from thence the Thracian Fatal steeds,  
 So we, well covered with night's black mantle,  
 At unawares may beat down Edward's guard  
 And seize himself (IV.ii.19–24).

As in the messenger's lines above, Warwick provides an extended description of characters and an episode from classical epic, and then explains the corollaries to their present situation. Unlike the messenger's use of Hector and Hercules, however, Warwick's allusion cannot function in a strictly emblematic quality. He describes ongoing actions that take place over a period of time and record an episode of sequential events, rather than composing a structured image of related elements to create meaning. Yet his description takes part in a literary tradition with the same function as the visual/textual emblem. His "just as ... so" structure recalls a true epic simile as a poetic device, describing his actions through an elaborate analogy.

Whereas the earlier comparison asked the hearers, both within the play and in the audience, to triangulate a meaning from the three images the messenger describes,



Warwick provides a direct illustration. Rather than ask his men to solve a puzzle involved in the relationship of images, he asks them to see themselves as the Greeks who stole the Thracian horses to topple Troy.

The general, larger effect of Warwick's imagery is the same, however. He inserts himself and his men into an ancient epic dealing with the deeds of heroes. He looks outside of his own time and place to a long-lost historical moment that foundationally affects everything that comes after it. He switches sides from what we might initially expect, aligning himself with the Greeks and his enemies with the ancestral Trojans, but he still chooses an admirable, semi-divine hero. Ulysses's reputation as a cunning hero who could outsmart an enemy serves as an apt comparison for the sort of surprise attack that Warwick proposes. Moreover, Warwick's own tendency to switch sides and factions based on what he perceives as best for England complicates any clear dichotomy that aligns either side as Troy in opposition to an enemy Greece. This moment in the play simultaneously brings the tragic fall of Troy to the audience's minds as an analog to the crumbling England on stage, and reminds them that even Greece had its heroes.

The play also contains another thread of particularly Trojan images in emblem form, which build upon each other to move the situation in England beyond the status of the Trojan War. Each of these contains a somewhat extended comparison of a character to a figure from the Trojan story; but rather than posit a simple equation, each one shows that the current moment is worse than its ancient counterpart. Certainly here in *3 Henry VI*, Barry Nass's reading of Trojan references in

Shakespeare holds true. Discussing the *Henry VI* plays as a whole, he sees these repeated references to Troy as a meditation on the state of political unrest:

In depicting this disorder, Shakespeare uses the Troy legend to emphasize the tragedy, deceit and destruction of civil war. Recurring portraits of Troy, desolate and in ashes, offer a terrifying prospect of devastation to a land already torn by rebellion.<sup>14</sup>

While, as discussed in an earlier chapter, Nass's argument proves problematic as a totalizing theory, even across the entire first tetralogy, *3 Henry VI* uses repeated and extended allusions to Troy to provide a sense of scale to England's own impending fall. The scope of the political disaster proves so great that only the destruction of Troy can provide an adequate comparison, and even that proves insufficient over the course of the play.

When Richard and Edward confront Margaret about murdering their father, they also blame her as the cause of the country's larger problems. In doing so, Edward assesses where Margaret stands in relation to the woman who started the Trojan War:

Helen of Greece was fairer than thou,  
 Although thy husband may be Menelaus;  
 And ne'er was Agamemnon's brother wronged  
 By that false woman, as this king by thee (II.ii.146–9).

In much the same way that the messenger's description of Hector quickly turns from heroism to defeat, Edward starts with Helen's beauty and quickly redirects the image

to infidelity and destruction. This is not Marlowe's Helen with the "face that launched a thousand ships and burnt the topless towers of Ilium" (TLN 1357–8),<sup>15</sup> or more to Edward's point, Margaret lacks the face to launch a thousand ships but still set fire to Ilium's topless towers. He goes on to detail Henry V's accomplishments in making England great and shows how Margaret has undone all of them. He casts her as the epitome of unfaithful wives (ironically casting Suffolk as the Paris he wished to be at the end of *I Henry VI*) and blames her for the nation's instability. Perhaps most important, however, Edward emphasizes that Margaret is actually worse than Helen. The legendary infidelity which sent an entire nation to war and destroyed England's cultural ancestor pales in comparison to the destruction that Margaret has brought upon England.

Here, as in the rest of the play, a reference to the Troy legend serves to measure the nature and degree of the present moment. In seeking a comparison for Margaret that combines infidelity and the destructive outcomes of heedless love, Edward naturally lights on Helen of Troy. His description creates an emblematic summary of Helen's story from her commonplace associations; he begins with her beauty, mentions her love to Paris and infidelity to Menalaus, and suggests the larger chain of events resulting from Agamemnon's call to war. In so doing, Edward reminds the audience of everything they know about the war that Helen started, and he transfers these associations to Margaret.

In his 1635 book, *A Collection of Emblems*, George Wither includes an image of Helen as a warning about the causes of war. To this illustration, which depicts a

woman looking out from an upper window while two men cross swords in the street below, Wither attaches both an English couplet and a Latin motto to explain the meaning.<sup>16</sup> His illustrative verses, as he calls them, comment mostly on the English couplet: “Where Hellen is, there will be Warre; / For, Death and Lust, Companions are.”<sup>17</sup> The following verses then expound on how desires of the flesh overrule reason and end in bloody conflict. The Latin motto, however, makes a much more succinct and damning point: “Ubi Helena ibi Troia (Where there is a Helen, there is a Troy).”<sup>18</sup> Edward’s allusion certainly follows this logic; if Margaret is like Helen, only a fall like Troy’s can follow. His final evaluation builds on the phrase “And ne’er was” to stress the scope of Margaret’s crimes. Where the Yorks find someone worse than Helen, they can only expect a fate worse than Troy’s. Edward must reach into a distant past and mythic history to find anything comparable to how the Yorks see Margaret, yet his comparison still fails to provide an adequate corollary.

Henry overhears a similar comparison only a few scenes later that deals with the direct effects of civil war on his subjects. Banished from the battle by his wife and Clifford, Henry stands alone near the battlefield and contemplates his role as king and his wish for a simpler life. When two men enter from the battlefield, each dragging an enemy he has just killed, the king witnesses something very much like a pageant that comments on England’s state of unrest. David Bergeron describes this as “in a sense a dumb show with words,” focusing on the anonymous symbolic nature of the scene.<sup>19</sup> From the audience’s point of view, Henry functions as an engaged royal audience that watches the soldiers, who function as anonymous but representative examples of the

tragic stories of civil war. The first soldier removes the helmet of his slain opponent and discovers his father, while the second encounters his son behind a dead man's visor. Beyond some generic explanations of their conscripted allegiances, neither man establishes anything specific about his identity. Each speaks only in general terms that describe family roles: father, son, wife, and mother. Their anonymity allows them to act out the grief and confusion of an entire nation, one voicing the grief of all fathers who have lost sons in war, the other lamenting all lost fathers, and both graphically illustrating the unnatural breaches politics cause in family relationships.

This emblematic language becomes so consuming that Henry himself cannot keep from participating. As each man describes his plight, Henry adds his own description:

LANCASTRIAN SOLDIER: Was ever a son so rued for a father's death?

SECOND SOLDIER: Was ever father so bemoaned his son?

KING HENRY: Was ever king so grieved for subjects woe? (II.v.109–11).

The soldiers' language prompts Henry to describe himself, like them, according to the title of his role.<sup>20</sup> For Janis Lull, the allegorical quality in this scene makes it difficult to read literally: "It seems possible to interpret the two soldiers who drag the bodies of their kinfolk on stage as projections of the king's own imagination. A lifetime of experience as a merely symbolic ruler has trained him to focus on emblematic parallels."<sup>21</sup> Such a reading, however, denies the gravity of the soldiers' situations. However representative these two men may be, England's devastation takes place on the battlefield and in towns and villages all over the country, not in Henry's head.

Moreover, Henry's attempt to function symbolically in this exchange only makes the audience more aware of his singularly individual identity. The difference lies in the culpability of each individual on stage. The two soldiers fight someone else's war for someone else's interests, and become victims of the bickering between political factions. They have stories identical to countless other men on the battle field, their tragic discoveries show England's condition on a minute scale, and they truly are the embodiments of every soldier on both sides. As such, they and their actions become a microcosm in which Henry and the audience see the essence of civil war acted out. Henry, by contrast, stands for no one but himself. He has a very specific identity, and an identity that places him as the center and cause of the chaos he sees around him.

The scene's portrayal of grief and loss in this scenario sharply contrasts the two soldiers' anonymity with the individuality of what each man experiences. After hearing the first soldier's story, Henry exclaims, "O piteous spectacle! O bloody times!" (II.v.73), while the addition of the second man's plight moves him to "Woe above woe! Grief more than common grief!" (II.v.94). Henry recoils in horror as he realizes that each man experiences extraordinary pain, but his vocabulary lacks terms adequate to describe it as anything but "Woe beyond woe." The Second Soldier, however, takes a different approach, describing his grief in the context of epic loss. Picking up the body of his son, he says:

My breast shall be thy funeral bell,  
 And so obsequious will thy father be,  
 E'en for the loss of thee, having no more,

As Priam was for all his valiant sons (II.v.117–20).

Once again, we see that the destruction of Troy, in this case its fallen princes, functions as the epitome of loss. The soldier can find no greater emblem of fatherly grief than Priam mourning his many slaughtered sons, yet he insists that his own grief in losing a single son equals that of the Trojan king. Considering this soldier's anonymous status, his comparison has important implications for describing England's civil war. While Priam arguably suffered the worst losses of anyone in the sacking of Troy, the war between the Lancasters and Yorks turns every surviving soldier into a Priam. The Trojan tragedy replays itself countless times in the lives of these "poor harmless lambs" (II.v.79), multiplying the loss and grief to unimaginable proportions.

Richard, Duke of Gloucester, of course, gives the crowning Trojan comparison that forecasts utter ruin in the play. In the long soliloquy at the end of III.ii, in which he expresses his desire to make himself king no matter what the cost, he concludes with a list of the means he plans to use:

I'll drown more sailors than the mermaid shall;

I'll slay more gazers than the basilisk;

I'll play the orator as well as Nestor;

Deceive more slyly than Ulysses could,

And like a Sinon take another Troy.

I can add colors to the cameleon,

Change shapes with Proteus for advantages,

And set the murtherous Machiavel to school (III.ii.186–93).

Mere equation cannot satisfy Richard's view of himself. Rather, he lists all the evils he will exceed, making the words "more than" the driving logic of his self-definition. He piles on reference after reference, using mythological creatures to increase the scope of his planned destruction. Even Machiavelli himself, an anachronistic figure for Richard, will have something to learn from Richard's ruthlessness in acquiring the crown.<sup>22</sup> At the center of this hyperbole, Richard most powerfully invokes an image of Troy undone by deception. In spite of the noble deeds and clashes between heroes, he reminds us that the Greeks finally achieved victory through misdirection. Powerful rhetoric, underhanded tactics, and outright deception finally allowed the Greek armies inside the city; but Richard claims that his own performances will prove more powerful. In promising to "take another Troy," borrowing tactics from Sinon and outperforming even Ulysses, Richard supplies powerful imagery through commonplace knowledge of the Trojan War. An Elizabethan audience would surely recognize that once Sinon helped the Greeks take Troy, there was nothing worth taking, and certainly nothing left worth ruling.

Taken together, these emblematic comparisons to Troy and to Trojan figures paint a bleak picture of England. Edward I. Berry argues that the first tetralogy, as a whole, defines one continuous narrative arc that shows the constant decay of England's social order.<sup>23</sup> In Berry's reading, each consecutive play explores the decay and corruption of a major pillar of the country's strength. *1 Henry VI* shows the breakdown of heroic chivalry and the traditional ceremonies that supported it; 2



*Henry VI* presents law and order repeatedly undermined and corrupted by Henry's inaction; and the fall of family allegiance marks the descent into total chaos in 3 *Henry VI*. Berry uses this structure to move the reader to see Richard III as the only possible outcome, "the final product of the anarchic tendencies of civil dissention and civil war."<sup>24</sup> Certainly, Berry's outline of the constantly decaying social structure parallels our own look at the decline of the tenets of *pietas* across the plays. Along with the loss of Chivalry in Talbot's death, we lose the means of military valor with which a ruler must protect his state from outside threats. The fall of law and order when Humphrey dies removes the last bastion of wisdom in maintaining the kingdom's internal order, but Humphrey also represents the only figure also protecting the inheritance and interests of his family in relation to the nation's good. Finally, in 3 *Henry VI*, as the basic bonds between family members break down, we also see Henry, as the embodiment of specifically Christian religious concerns, pushed increasingly away from the central group of people governing the country.

While Berry's social order and the concerns of *pietas* are clearly interrelated, this parallelism also suggests that many elements exist in a declining state over the course of the four plays.<sup>25</sup> It consequently provides us with a useful model for understanding the changing use of Trojan/Roman imagery over the course of the first tetralogy. In the first play, references to Troy and Rome show up frequently, both in the use of overt comparisons and as an integral part of the imagery and language of the play. This pervasive presence reminds the audience of Henry V's recent legacy and establishes important terms of national identity. In the second play, deprived of

the patriotic heroism that defined Talbot, the allusions become more focused, evaluating individual characters according to the ethos defined by Rome's founding Trojan refugee. As England moves farther away from Henry V's ideal kingship and *pietas*, so too its relationship to Troy becomes increasingly distant. Here in *3 Henry VI* the emblematic descriptions situate Troy as something far away, in a distant epic past, accessible only as the supreme example of national loss. Moreover, this loss itself becomes a defining feature of Troy in the third play. Deprived of Hector's heroism and Aeneas's well-balanced governance, references to Troy present only the city's final moments as a burning conquest, allowing it to function solely as a hollow emblem for destruction and grief.

Ironically, Margaret provides the one notable exception to this trend through several oblique references that may connect her to Dido. In Book I of the *Aeneid*, before Aeneas arrives in Carthage, his mother, Venus, appears to him and tells him the story of Dido's history and origins. She recounts how Dido's brother killed her husband, Sychaeus, in order to take his wealth, and how Dido fled with a group of followers:

conuenient quibus aut odium crudele tyranni  
aut metus acer erat; nauis, quae foret paratae,  
corripiunt onerantque auro, portantur auari  
Pygmalionis opes pelago; dux femina facti (I.361–4)

(All who hated the tyrant, all in fear

As bitter as her own, now came together,  
 And ships in port already fitted out,  
 They commandeered, to fill with gold: the riches  
 Pygmalion itched for went to sea,  
 And captaining the venture was a woman) (I.493–9).

The phrase *dux femina facti*, literally “a woman was leader of the deed,” defines much of the significance for this passage. Grammatically, it presents something unusual, pairing the masculine noun *dux* with the deliberately feminine adjective *femina*. On the one hand, such a linguistic contradiction stresses the inherent uniqueness of situation to the reader; but on the other hand, it makes us aware of Dido’s character. Faced with an unjust ruler, widowed and left seemingly helpless, she rallies supporters, assumes the commander’s role and founds a new city. In the context of Virgil’s epic, Venus describes Dido as a strong ruler who presents either a formidable adversary or powerful ally to Aeneas. In discussing the many ways Queen Elizabeth fostered a connection between herself and Dido, Heather James describes a “celebratory medal,” minted and circulated after the Spanish Armada, that bore the image of a burning ship and the inscription *Dux Foemina Facti*. This, James argues, consciously connects the queen to a moment when “Vergil both praises Dido’s heroism in escaping her tyrannical brother and establishing her own city, and dwells, with astonishment, on the incongruity of the leader ... being a woman.”<sup>26</sup> Beyond common familiarity with the first four books of the *Aeneid*, such a use suggests that

the Latin phrase had public currency in denoting a strong queen who protects her people from a major threat.

Several descriptions of Margaret in *3 Henry VI* suggest possible translations for *femina dux*. After she takes command of the Lancastrian forces and banishes Henry from the battlefield, Richard dismisses the “woman’s general” (I.iii.68) because he doesn’t see much danger, and George, likewise, mockingly calls her “Captain Margaret” (II.vi.75). Warwick, however, acknowledges the threat Margaret poses, describing the “warlike queen, / That robbed my soldiers of their heated spleen” (II.i.123–4). Certainly, this recalls Talbot’s complaint about Joan la Pucelle: “A woman in armor chaseth men” (I.vii.3); but for an audience familiar with the opening of the *Aeneid*, it may also suggest Dido at her most heroic. Both Dido and Margaret provide a last hope, commanding their people in the face of a merciless tyrant. If this language suggests Margaret, even momentarily, as a pre-Aenean Dido, it casts her as one of the only characters with an active, heroic ethos.

Even this comparison falls down, however. Virgil’s Dido does not last beyond the first third of the *Aeneid*, and, as discussed in the previous two chapters, emblematically represents loss in various ways. Any success Dido had in founding Carthage quickly drains from the comparison to Margaret as both her husband and son die, and Edward solidifies his place on the throne. Before he dies, Richard, Duke of York even turns Dido’s words against Margaret to describe her ruthlessness. When Aeneas tells Dido that he must leave her and follow the gods’ will to Italy, she accuses him of lacking anything resembling human mercy, saying, “duris genuit te

cautibus horrens / Caucasus Hyrcanaeaeque admoneunt ubera tigres (Some rough  
Caucasian cliff / Begot you on flint. Hyrcanian tigresses / Tendered their teats to  
you)” (IV.366–7/505–7). Richard takes this Virgilian description, and works it into a  
comparison to measure Margaret’s ruthlessness in killing Rutland:

That face of his, the hungry cannibals  
Would not have touched, would not have stained with blood—  
But you are more inhuman, more inexorable  
O ten times more than tigers of Hyrcania (I.iv.153–6).

Richard, Duke of York undermines any later heroic, or mock-heroic, associations  
between Dido and Margaret by aligning her with Aeneas at his most heartless  
moment. In keeping with the other corresponding comparisons in the play, moreover,  
he labels her actions as “ten times more [heartless]” than those which drove Dido to  
suicide.

The deaths of Henry and his son, Edward, represent the final losses in  
connecting England to the reign of Henry V. With both of them dead, no line of direct  
descent exists any longer, and the house of York moves relatively unimpeded onto the  
throne. With Henry’s death, the English crown also loses religious piety, the final  
element of Henry V’s *pietas*. This religious piety comes to define Henry VI entirely  
over the course of the play, pushing him farther and farther from the role of king.  
Warwick uses the distinction between kingly duty and religious duty as his  
justification for supporting the Yorkists. He laments that Henry cannot make a proper  
king, since this could only happen “Where he as famous and bold in war / As he is

famed for mildness, peace, and prayer” (II.i.155–6). He pits Henry’s religious love for peace against the need for a strong military ruler. Defining these two elements as contradictory, at least as evidenced in Henry, may explain the bargain he makes to disinherit his son in favor of the house of York. While the other characters accuse Henry of selfishly thinking only of himself and protecting his position, this seems markedly out of place for the king who has habitually avoided any action on his own behalf. Instead, we might see this as a peaceful compromise. His offer comes at the end of an argument over right, which once again turns to violence to resolve the issue. Clifford vows to fight for Henry, “Be thy title right or wrong,” and Warwick threatens to bring in armed men to fight for Richard, Duke of York and “Write up his title with usurping blood” (I.i.160, 170). When Henry offers royal inheritance to Richard and his sons, the arrangement suggests an attempt to meet in the middle. He appeals to his own supporters by staying on the throne and appeases the Yorks by giving them future rights, thereby obviating a need for war.

The plan backfires completely, however, giving the Lancastrians greater resolve to fight for young Prince Edward’s rights to inherit the throne. As the conflict progresses, Henry functions less and less as king, and embraces a life of Christian meditation. When Margaret and Clifford banish him from his own battlefield, his thoughts look to a life free of his crown, and he resigns the battle to divine providence: “To whom God will, there be the victory” (II.v.15).<sup>27</sup> He removes himself from the situation, more concerned with God’s will than the question of rightful succession. The clearest example of his choice between kingship and piety

comes in Act IV, after his supporters have succeeded in placing him back on the throne. He recognizes his inability to rule, and, unable even to decide on a Lord Protector for his son, excuses himself from royal office:

Warwick and Clarence, give me both your hands.

Now join your hands, and with your hands your hearts,

That no dissention hinder government.

I make you both Protectors of this land,

While I myself will lead a private life

And in devotion spend my latter days,

To sin's rebuke and my creator's praise (IV.vii.38–44).

Henry can only approach government by attempting to promote peace and reconciliation. These being impossible in a land plagued by civil war, he resigns his office so that his duties will not interfere with his personal devotion.

When Richard kills Henry in the play's final act, the language focuses almost entirely on Henry's Christian goodness. Richard's line, "Die, prophet, in thy speech," casts Henry as a holy man, and with his final line, Henry seeks absolution for both of their souls: "God forgive my sins and pardon thee" (V.vi.57, 60). The scene makes no mention of Henry's nobility or valor at the moment of his death, for Henry has none. Instead, it shows a man, virtuous to a fault, praying and seeking reconciliation, even for his murderer. At this point, Richard distances himself from the allegiances that connect him to those around him, culminating in his disturbing statement, "I am

myself alone” (V.vii.84). In describing his anticipated rise, however, he makes an important statement about the role of Henry’s piety:

Henry and his son are gone; thou, Clarence, art next;  
 And one by one I will dispatch the rest,  
 Counting myself bad but till I be best (V.vii.90–2).

Richard acknowledges his own evil, but understands it as a relative label based on a continuum of moral standing rather than as an absolute judgment. The goodness of those above him on this scale completely defines his own evil nature, while eliminating those persons will place him at the top, thereby marking him as good. His progression from Henry to his son and then to Clarence suggests that Richard has started at the top and plans to work his way down. Thus Henry represents the pinnacle, even the embodiment, of Christian goodness that has fallen, thereby opening Richard’s path to the throne.

Henry’s murder marks both the culmination of England’s downfall, as well as a major turning point for the house of York. When Richard, Duke of York first declares his intentions to claim Henry’s throne in *2 Henry VI*, he mainly expresses outrage and concern for what Henry has done to the country in signing away the territories in France. The final two lines of his soliloquy at the end of I.i define the core of his grievances: “And force perforce I’ll make him yield the crown, / Whose bookish rule has pulled fair England down”(I.i.258–9). Certainly he wants to take back the crown he sees as his rightful inheritance, but the stronger motivation comes from the damage that Henry’s mismanagement has done to England. Richard claims



that he must take the crown by force for the good of the nation. His tactics make him a difficult character to define in terms of *pietas* and moral standing. His constant deception and manipulation of those around him draws this description from E. M. W. Tillyard: “He is hardly human, and is more the simple embodiment of personal ambition. But the concentration of purpose in him is tremendous.”<sup>28</sup> As Tillyard acknowledges, the Duke of York presents a complex question of priorities. On the one hand, he proves ruthless in forwarding his own agenda, but on the other, he manages to keep an eye on the big picture. Restricting our description to “personal ambition” proves problematic, moreover, when he abandons his own hopes for the crown in favor of transferring the right to his sons in *3 Henry VI*. He exhibits, instead, a certain “family ambition” that proves fiercely loyal to his sons, but destructive to everyone else. As the sons of York die off, and the plays shift focus from Rutland, to George, to Edward, to Richard, we see a steady decline in the moral standing of the House of York. Richard, as the final step in this progression, shows none of his father’s family loyalty, being personally responsible for two of his brothers’ deaths.

As the historical narrative moves to the play that bears Richard’s name, the references to Troy and Rome, with only a single notable exception,<sup>29</sup> cease almost completely. In their place, permutations of the words “hell,” “devil,” and “damned” occur 41 times throughout the play. In large part, this language refers directly to Richard or the state of England under his rule, often in contrast to images of heaven. Various characters compare their situations to hell, while the play labels Richard simply as “devil” on six occasions,<sup>30</sup> as well as referring to him specifically as “foul

devil” (I.ii.50), “hell-governed” (I.ii.67), “devilish slave” (I.ii.90), and “son of hell” (I.iii.230). Margaret’s description in IV.iv provides an extended and representative example of how the play employs these terms in relationship to one another:

Richard yet lives, hell’s black intelligencer,  
 Only reserved their factor to buy souls  
 And send them thither. But at hand, at hand,  
 Ensues his piteous and unpitied end.  
 Earth gapes, hell burns, fiends roar, saints pray,  
 To have him suddenly convey from hence.  
 Cancel his bond of life, dear God, I pray,  
 That I may live and say “The dog is dead” (IV.iv.71–8).

Margaret contrasts the hellish existence under Richard, hell’s “factor,” with a hope of divine retribution in which the powers of heaven allow her to see a time when Richard no longer holds sway.

Phyllis Rackin sees this moment as key to understanding the ideological crux of the play. She argues, quite persuasively, that *Richard III* pits the Machiavellian worldview against divine providence in competition for power over England. Rackin stresses that the play’s concept of “Machiavellianism” may or may not align specifically with the text from which it derives its name, Nicolo Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, but rather constitutes a loosely defined ethos of opportunism and self-advancement on the English stage.<sup>31</sup> Rackin resists drawing a strict moral dichotomy between Machiavellianism and Providence, and defines “Machiavellian” rather

neutrally as a code of conduct that prizes “change, mobility, and individual initiative,” as well as “force, fortune, and practical politics.”<sup>32</sup> While various characters throughout the two tetralogies exhibit evidence of these characteristics, Richard III embodies them entirely in defiance of any divine force outside of himself. Although Renaissance historiography moved generally from seeing historical events taking part in a larger, divinely-orchestrated scheme to viewing each moment as independent and controlled by individual actions, Rackin argues that Shakespeare’s history plays move in the opposite direction. From the splintered, individual factions and persons in *1 Henry VI*, the plays move toward *Richard III* where personal motivation and action, as well as Richard, the “apotheosis of Machiavellian forces,”<sup>33</sup> come constantly into conflict with providential forces greater than themselves.

In this reading, Margaret’s description above demonstrates the nature of such a conflict. In spite of Richard’s claim, “I am myself alone” (*3HVI* V.vii.84), he cannot avoid participating in structures larger than himself. He functions,

like the devil himself, as an unwitting instrument for the fulfillment of a providential plan. Killing off all the characters stained by the lingering guilt of the Wars of the Roses, Richard purges the kingdom to make it ready for Richmond’s accession ... Richard is a “factor,” a purchasing agent acting for a superior power, even though he denies the authority of that power and supposes he acts on his own behalf.<sup>34</sup>

As such, the recurrent references to hell define Richard according to the play’s ideological schema. Rather than allow him to function on his own terms,

championing individual action against the idea of God's will, the play subsumes him into a providential arrangement in which he quite literally becomes Satan, God's adversary.

Building on Rackin's understanding of the play, we can add another layer of meaning to the pervasive hell imagery. In response to Faustus's inquiries on the nature of hell in Act II of Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, Mephistopheles gives this description:

Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscribed  
 In one self place, for where we are is hell,  
 And where hell is, there must we ever be.

...

All places shall be hell that is not heaven (TLN 565–72).

Faustus assumes that Mephistopheles enters from a specific location, hell, but Mephistopheles makes clear that hell constitutes a state of being, not any particular place; in fact, he specifically defines hell as a place “that is not.”<sup>35</sup> Adrian Street connects this description to a particularly Calvinist understanding of hell that had a good deal of currency in England at the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>36</sup> For Calvin, the biblical passages that describe hell as a place with physical torments only serve to approximate spiritual anguish for the human senses. Hell's fundamental nature rests on an absence that tortures the soul.<sup>37</sup> Earlier in the play, Mephistopheles asks Faustus,

Thinkst thou that I, who saw the face of God

And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,  
 Am not tormented with ten thousand hells  
 In being deprived of everlasting bliss? (TLN 322–25).

Here, again, he defines hell not as a delineated place, but as a distinct state of separation that defines his existence. Any place, including Faustus's Wittenberg, where Mephistopheles remains separated from God and the power of heaven forces him to continue experiencing hell.<sup>38</sup>

Marlowe's source text for *Dr. Faustus, The Historie of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus*, likewise deals with the nature of hell at great length; explanations about the nature of hell fill several chapters early on in the book. After describing the structure and government of hell in detail, Mephistopheles sums up hell's essence:

Therefore, is hell called the everlasting pain, in which is neither hope nor mercy; so it is called utter darkness, in which we see neither the light of sun, moon, nor star: and were our darkness like the darkness of the night, yet there were hope of mercy, but ours is perpetual darkness, clean exempt from the face of God (613–17).<sup>39</sup>

Once again, we see hell as a state of absence, defined by what it lacks. It has no hope, no mercy, no light; and most important, it remains eternally separated from God.

If we transport this definition of hell as absence into *Richard III*, the recurrent references to hell suggest some kind of emptiness to the audience. In the same way that God's absence, and the absence of all good things associated with him, creates

hell, some fundamental absence must stand behind an England so often described as hell. Certainly, coming after the three *Henry VI* plays, we can identify a series of importance ideological vacancies. Each of the three plays has shown the decline and death of one of Henry V's kingly virtues in the persons of Talbot, Gloucester, and Henry VI. By the beginning of the fourth play, the casualties of political factions and civil war have emptied the kingly office of all kingly virtues. When Richard tries to swear by the emblems of his royal position, "By my George, my garter, and my crown" (IV.iv.366), the widowed Queen Elizabeth reminds him that he has robbed these of any significance they once held:

Profaned, dishonored, and the third usurped.

...

By nothing, for this is no oath:

Thy George, profaned, hath lost his holy honor;

Thy garter, blemished, pawned his knightly virtue;

Thy crown, usurped, disgraced his kingly glory (IV.367, 368–71).

Each of these items represents a duty or honor that Richard has betrayed. In ruling with only his personal benefit in mind, he has neglected the duties to his nation, emblemized by its patron St. George. By manipulating and using his nobles, Richard transgresses the chivalric code associated with the Order of the Garter. Finally, the process by which he murdered rightful heirs to put himself on the throne seriously undermines his claim to authority. Richard displays and utilizes the outward symbols of his position as king, but his actions deprive them of the meanings which originally

gave them significance. Where these emblems once represented the kingly virtues that define a good ruler, they now point only to conspicuous absences.

Nearly everything that Richard does, displays, or says throughout the play functions as empty signifiers, devoid of the true meanings they convey to the other characters. When Richard tells the audience, “thus I clothe my naked villainy / With odd old ends stol’n forth of holy writ, / And seem a saint when most I play the devil” (I.iii.336–8), he most obviously outlines a program of conscious deception; but in doing so, he also makes an important statement about the tactics he uses. In this case, the “holy writ” he quotes conveys reasons and justifications to others for his actions, but it shows nothing of his real motivations. He produces outward representations of a princely nature, but these have no real connection to his inner nature or motivations. Richard’s England becomes a hell of absences, of words and actions emptied of their meanings.

Most significant, over the course of the play Richard produces empty representations of the three core obligations of *pietas*: family, nation, and religion. In *Richard III* Shakespeare creates a king who outwardly enacts the ideal code of kingly piety, but constantly undermines this code by showing that his true intentions and goals run counter to it. The opening scene of the play makes the audience immediately aware that Richard’s speech to the other characters throughout the play has no meaning beyond its immediate effect in the present moment. In his opening soliloquy, Richard outlines his plans to enact as much villainy as possible, and specifically describes the hate he has fostered between his brothers. When Clarence

enters on his way to the tower, a one-way journey instigated by Richard's lies to Edward, Richard addresses him with a tone of brotherly concern. Suggesting that Clarence needs to win the queen's favor to clear his name, Richard makes this promise:

I will unto the king;  
 And whatsoever you will employ me in—  
 Were it to call King Edward's widow sister—  
 I will perform it to enfranchise you.  
 Meantime, this deep disgrace in brotherhood  
 Touches me deeper than you can imagine.  
 ...  
 Your imprisonment shall not be long:  
 I will deliver you or else lie for you (I.i.107–12, 114–15).

This vow encapsulates all the fundamental elements of the family obligations demanded by *pietas*. Richard appeals to brotherly solidarity, a shared sense of shame; he offers to intercede at his own expense, and ultimately implies he will even take his brother's place (although this proves to be a "lie"). In short, Richard vows to set aside his own interests and desires in order to fulfill a duty defined by a familial bond.

These words prove empty, however, when only moments later Clarence exits the scene; and Richard, alone, voices very different intentions:

Go, tread the path that thou shalt ne'er return.  
 Simple plain Clarence, I do love thee so



That I will shortly send thy soul to heaven (I.i.117–19).

At this moment, the play juxtaposes the nature of what Richard says to the other characters and what he addresses only to himself and the audience. These moments seemingly allow the audience to understand Richard's true motivations as they describe the actions he takes. The words he speaks to the other characters, by contrast, remain almost entirely disconnected from action. He shows no intention of carrying out the promises he spoke to Clarence, but he does follow through on his plot to have Clarence killed, which he describes to the audience.

An outside observer in the audience thus witnesses both sides of Richard's deceptions, which become increasingly problematic for the other characters in the play. For Clarence, Richard's promises and his actions create such a disjunction in his mind that he cannot comprehend this breach of family alliance. When the murderers insist that Richard has paid them for the murder, Clarence protests:

It cannot be, for he bewept my fortune,  
 And hugged me in his arms, and swore with sobs  
 That he would labor my delivery (I.iv.244–6).

He expects that Richard's outward expressions accurately represent his inward state, his intentions, and the course of action he will follow. Significantly, Clarence has just awoken from a dream in which he died and went to hell to face all those he had wronged in life. The dream seemed so real, he says, that he could not at first distinguish it from reality: "I trembling waked, and for a season after / Could not believe but that I was in hell" (I.iv.62–3). In fact, the world to which he wakes is a

sort of hell. He has continued under the belief that Richard's outward expressions point to brotherly virtue on which he can depend for support. Yet Clarence finds himself instead in a personal hell, damned by separation from human goodness through Richard's empty words.

The brief speech by the scrivener in III.vi demonstrates a similarly emptied representation of *pius* statecraft. The scrivener reports that he has just completed Hastings's indictment, which he reckons at 11 hours work of copying in addition to another 11 hours necessary for drafting the original legal language. He tells us specifically that Catesby delivered it to him the previous evening so that the final copy would be ready in time for the public reading soon to take place at St. Paul's Cathedral. In one respect, this involved process represents an appropriately complex legal system. In a case of treason like the one at hand we see due process in action, where experts carefully draft the indictment, a professional scribe produces a fair copy, and the sentence gets a formal public pronouncement to reinforce its legitimacy. The scrivener contrasts all the time necessary for these formal legal proceedings, however, with the mere five hours that have passed since Hastings's arrest. Furthermore, the audience has just witnessed the scene in which Richard summarily orders Hastings killed for a passing remark, and vows not to dine until he sees the order carried out. Richard takes care to produce the outward appearances of justice and fair government, constructing the kingly image of a ruler who strives to fulfill his obligations to the state. While he does this to reinforce his legitimacy with

his subjects, it makes the audience more acutely aware of the carefully executed injustices in Richard's court.

Moreover, the scrivener makes it clear that no one believes that this display of due process has validity. Contemplating the discrepancy that his work will help to support, he asks,

Who is so gross  
 That cannot see this palpable device?  
 Yet who so bold but says he sees it not?  
 Bad is the world, and all will come to naught

When such ill dealing must be seen in thought (III.vi.10–14).

Richard's subjects clearly recognize his machinations, but they lack any power or moral strength to voice their concerns or redress the injustices publicly. The concept of fair government loses all meaning for the English people. They still see the offices and structures that traditionally denote justice, but they also recognize that these no longer represent any truly just acts. As such, the homonymic nature of "naught" in the scrivener's final couplet becomes significant. In Richard's England, all will come to naught, and all will come to nought. As Richard empties traditional virtues of their connections to anything truly good, thus reducing them to nothing, he creates a state of evil. England becomes a hell where no good thing survives.

Act III, Scene v gives insight into this process by providing juxtaposed views of Richard's manipulative planning and his public performance. The scene opens with Richard and Buckingham on the walls, calmly discussing their abilities to seem

frightened, paranoid, and under attack. When the mayor enters the stage a few lines later, we see the two men act out their fear, using it to justify Hastings's execution for "the peace of England, and our person's safety" (III.v.45). As soon as the mayor again leaves the stage, apparently convinced that Hastings died as a dangerous traitor to the crown, Richard and Buckingham immediately resume planning their manipulation of public opinion. These instantaneous changes in rhetoric highlight the artificiality of Richard's public image. The rational evaluation of Buckingham's ability to act "As if thou were distraught and mad with terror" (III.v.3–4) undermines any apparent sincerity in the action that follows. Furthermore, this scene allows us to see how readily Richard betrays his family to achieve the crown. He sends Buckingham to the guildhall, telling him first to "Infer the bastardy of Edward's children" (III.v.75), and then expands that project a few lines later:

Nay, for a need, thus far come near my person:

Tell them, when my mother went with child

Of that insatiate Edward, noble York,

My princely father, then had wars in France,

And by true computation of the time

Found that the issue was not his begot (III.v.85–90).

The audience has seen that Richard has no compunction about arranging the deaths of his family members, and here he demonstrates that he has no regard for his family's honor, either. He demonstrates a total absence of familial duty, disowning whatever family members he cannot conveniently kill. Moreover, this scene provides a striking

image on the stage. The opening stage directions state that Richard and Buckingham enter “in rotten armor, marvelous ill-favored.” Certainly, we may regard this as part of the performance they stage for the mayor: the two men appear hastily dressed in the closest armor at hand in order to defend against the imminent threat of insurrection. Yet, for the audience, this intended illusion may overreach its intent, showing the true state of things, rather than an artful disguise. Richard and his closest advisor appear stripped of any outward façade of royalty or nobility, in “rotten armor,” in a scene that depicts the rotten core of Richard’s England.

The play builds on this bleak vision, following the scrivener’s speech with what Ramie Targoff calls “surely the most cynical scene of ‘election’ in Shakespeare’s works, a scene whose cynicism depends upon the absolute intertwining of devotional and political fraudulence.”<sup>40</sup> Like the farce of justice that came before it, this scene shows Richard and Buckingham manufacturing the outward semblance of political process. When the mayor of London comes officially to offer Richard the crown, Buckingham urges the would-be king to appear lost in his devotions and removed from the political world. By initially refusing to see the mayor, he assumes “the theatrical role of resistant heir, piously dismissing Buckingham’s offers of the throne.”<sup>41</sup> Richard manipulates the elective process, and moreover, he performs a reaction to it that fosters the outward image of a man who piously agrees to accept the crown only because English tradition and his patriotic duty demand it.

Equally important for our current discussion, however, he also capitalizes on representations of religious piety, thereby emptying *pietas*’ final obligation of

meaning in the play. When Richard enters on a balcony accompanied by two bishops, the mayor first observes, “See where his grace stands, ‘tween two clergymen” (III.vii.95). Buckingham immediately pushes this farther, making sure the mayor cannot overlook the intended effect:

Two props of virtue for a Christian prince,  
 To stay him from the fall of vanity;  
 And see a book of prayer in his hand—  
 True ornaments to know a holy man (III.vii.96–9).

Richard and Buckingham carefully construct an emblem of princely Christian piety, and Buckingham provides the interpretational text for the mayor’s benefit. He highlights the bishops and the prayer book as ornaments and as “props,” suggesting both spiritual and physical support. Buckingham emphasizes their role as symbols and encourages the mayor to understand them according to their traditional meanings, representing “devotion and right Christian zeal” (III.vii.103). Of course, for an audience that has just witnessed the two men orchestrating this scene, these symbols do nothing to construct Richard as a pious man. Rather, the immense distance between his appearance and his privately declared intentions only emphasize how meaningless such Christian markers are for Richard. His use of the bishops, the prayer book, and the general attitude of pious devotion for self-serving political ends drive home how little regard he has for anything devout. Likewise, we can assume that this has no more profound effect on the general population, based on the scrivener’s question, “Who is so gross that cannot see this palpable device?” Earlier

in the play, one of the citizens declares without qualification, “full of danger is the Duke of Gloucester” (II.iii.27), and Buckingham recounts that when he first tried to declare Richard as king, only the men he planted in the crowd shouted their assent (III.vii.34–6). For a population apparently so aware of Richard’s true character, his staged piety can only reinforce their knowledge that he lacks this kingly virtue.

By the time Richard officially becomes king, he has actively transgressed all the major obligations demanded by *pietas*. In each case, he makes the audience aware of a duty he should fulfill by displaying its outward manifestations, but he simultaneously undermines it by acting contrary to what it requires. As such, the usual kingly virtues become perfunctory displays that do little more than serve as reminders of kings long past. Such displays highlight absences in the king’s character, the ruling class’s ethos, and the nation’s identity. It makes sense that references to England’s ancient heritage disappear from the tetralogy when it reaches *Richard III*, since Richard allows no place in his government for the ideals they represent. Instead, the play focuses on absences. Act IV, which immediately follows Richard’s coronation, contains almost half of the direct references to hell in the play, including his own mother’s lament, “Thou cam’st on earth to make the earth my hell” (IV.iv.167). Much like Mephistopheles’s description of hell, England is a place almost without light, without mercy, and without hope. We must agree with Hastings’s final realization: “O bloody Richard! O miserable England” (III.iv.103).

The play’s final act, however, provides a contrast to this emptiness and an alternative to Richard. Henry Richmond enters the play as a popular leader who

exhibits kingly virtues and has a legitimate claim to the throne. In his first appearance on stage he also directly counters the hell imagery of Richard's England. When Richmond's noblemen tell him they expect a great deal of popular support for his cause, he responds, "True hope is swift and flies with swallow's wings; / Kings it makes gods, and meaner creatures kings" (V.ii.23-4). He represents hope to a people trapped in a sort of moral nothingness, and he looks to their true support for his legitimacy as king.

"Hell is terrifying," Adriane Streete writes, "because it is an existence of utter solipsism."<sup>42</sup> Richard embodies this state late in the play through his defining line, "Richard loves Richard; that is, I [am] I" (V.iii.184).<sup>43</sup> Richard inhabits a world where only he matters, yet one where self-contemplation yields a terrifying result:

I shall despair. There is no creature loves me;  
 And if I die, no soul will pity me.  
 And wherefore should they, since that I myself  
 Find in myself no pity to myself (V.iii.201-4).

In its most extreme manifestation, self-centered interest destroys even the love of the self, thus robbing a solipsistic universe of its meaning. The battlefield speeches in V.iii contrast this closed-off selfhood with *pietas*, which always turns outward. In addressing his soldiers, Richard asks each of them to turn inward to their own wants in order to find the motivation to fight off Richmond's forces. After slandering Richmond's men as "vagabonds, rascals, and runaways," Richard describes the threat to each soldier's private interests:



You sleeping safe, they bring you to unrest;

You having lands and blessed with beauteous wives,

They would restrain the one and disdain the other (V.iii.321–3).

After further expounding the baseness of the enemy, he concludes, “Shall these enjoy our lands? lie with our wives? Ravish our daughters?” (V.iii.337–8). Richard projects his own motivations onto his soldiers, asking each man to fight for selfish reasons and defend what is his.

Richmond, by contrast, turns his men’s attention outward. Although he appeals to some of the same aspects of life that Richard tells his men to protect, Richmond reminds them of the obligations they have to persons, institutions and concerns outside of themselves:

Then if you fight against God’s enemy,

God will in justice ward you as his soldiers;

If you sweat to put a tyrant down,

You sleep in peace, the tyrant being slain;

If you fight against your country’s foes,

Your country’s fat shall pay your pains the hire;

If you fight in safeguard of your wives,

Your wives shall welcome home the conquerors;

If you do free your children from the sword,

Your children’s children quits it in your age (V.iii.254–63).

While Richmond does encourage his men by describing the rewards they will receive,

he frames them as the byproducts of fulfilling *pious* obligations. He asks them to fight, not for themselves, but for God, for the good of the state, and for the safety of their families. Any benefits they receive from fighting will come as a result of protecting and safeguarding the larger concerns of these institutions.

Richmond recalls the attributes that Gloucester and Bedford used back at the beginning of *1 Henry VI* to define Henry V's perfect kingship, but he expands their importance by asking the entire nation to participate in the moral code they define. He invokes the nearly lost Aenean virtues and reinstitutes them as the core of English heritage and identity. Moreover, he establishes them as something new and distinctly English in the way he organizes them. If, as Miola and others suggest, classical *pietas* often privileged family above all other concerns, Richmond perfects the code into a new Christian hierarchy. His men owe their allegiance first to God, next to the state's welfare, and finally to their families. He structures these concerns in such a way that the highest concerns, those most outside the individual self, receive the greatest priority. *Pietas* combines with the priorities of a Christian state to define Englishness at the moment Henry VII establishes the Tudor dynasty.

As the first tetralogy depicts a decline in ideal kingly virtue over the course of four plays, the references to ancient Troy and Rome, which define this virtue according to England's mythic history, also reflect this decline. In the last two plays, in particular, the imagery points to the decayed presence of England's epic heritage. The emblematic descriptions of Troy in *1 Henry VI* depict it as something distant, a symbol of loss that can only mourn for former greatness. Likewise, Henry V's

memory continues to fade, and the qualities that made him great also recede to memory with the deaths of those who embody them. In the first four acts of *Richard III*, England has forgotten its ancient heritage, and expressions of the *pius* virtues serve only as empty reminders of a dead tradition. At the lowest point on this trajectory of decline and decay, Richmond's victory as symbol of perfect kingship shines as a glorious contrast to the long darkness of civil war that it succeeds. Interestingly, although the ethos he proclaims comes from Aeneas, the final image in the play does not come from the ancient world:

Proclaim a pardon to the soldiers fled  
 That in submission will return to us,  
 And then, as we have ta'en the sacrament,  
 We will unite the White Rose and the Red (V.v.17–19).

As a conclusion to this four-play narrative, Richmond compares the unification of the white and red of York and Lancaster, not to an epic or classical victory, but to the bread and wine of the Christian Eucharist. These four lines refer most literally to his planned marriage to Princess Elizabeth, but he describes the unification in sacramental terms that involve promise, pardon, peace, and even sanctification. For an Elizabethan audience, this may make sense in terms of ideal kingship, as well. As the immediate ancestor of Elizabeth, protector of the one true faith, Richmond reorganizes the ethos of *pietas*, recombining and perfecting it according to specifically Christian concerns. At the final historical moment of the tetralogy, as Richmond marks the end of the past and the beginning of the present for

Shakespeare's audience, his sacramental description may not make the classical images obsolete, but it certainly supersedes them.

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<sup>1</sup>Janet Adelman, "Man and Wife is One Flesh: *Hamlet* and the Confrontation of the Maternal Body," *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, From Hamlet to The Tempest* (New York: Routledge, 1991) 11–37.

<sup>2</sup>Adelman 17.

<sup>3</sup>Adelman 19.

<sup>4</sup>Maynard Mack, "The World of Hamlet," *Tragic Themes in Western Literature*, ed. Cleanth Brooks (New Haven: Yale, 1955) 50.

<sup>5</sup>John Wilders, *The Lost Garden: A View of Shakespeare's English and Roman History Plays* (London: Macmillan, 1978); see especially chapter 1, "History and Tragedy." Robert Ornstein also sees such patterns in the history plays looking ahead to the later tragedies in *A Kingdom for a Stage: The Achievement of Shakespeare's History Plays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972).

<sup>6</sup>Wilders 9.

<sup>7</sup>John Milton, "Of Education," *The Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Hughes (Indianapolis: Odyssey Press, 1957) 631.

<sup>8</sup>We must acknowledge, however, that *Richard III* takes part in the Roman tradition of Senecan drama, which saw something of a revival at the end of the sixteenth century. In addition to the standard tropes of supernatural influence, revenge, and a self-dramatized hero/villain, the play certainly deals with what Gordon Braden calls a "deeply Roman" concern, that being "an awareness of how power brought to imperial completeness changes all the rules." Gordon Braden, *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition: Anger's Privilege* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985) 31. See also Charles and Michelle Martindale, *Shakespeare's Uses of Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1990); Robert S. Miola, *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy: The Influence of Seneca* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); and Brian Arkins, "Heavy Seneca: His Influence on Shakespeare's Tragedies," *Classics Ireland* 2 (1995): 1–16. Michael Ullyot also notes the Senecan features in two works that greatly inform Shakespeare's *Richard III*, Thomas Legge's play *Richardus Tertius* and Sir Thomas More's *The History of King Richard III*. See Michael Ullyot, "Seneca and the Early Elizabethan History Play," *English Historical Drama 1500–1660: Forms Outside the Canon*, ed. Teresa Grant and Barbara Ravelhofer (New York: Palgrave, 2008) 98–124.

<sup>9</sup>See pages 129–31 above.

<sup>10</sup>Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What it Tells Us* (New York: Macmillan, 1935) 215. Although Spurgeon's approach is rather dated in attempting to map patterns of imagery in Shakespeare's plays to establish a quantifiable definition of his style as a playwright, she does provide some useful insights into the ways that such imagery patterns function as an important tools to highlight specific issues under consideration in an individual play.

<sup>11</sup>Roelof van Straten, *An Introduction to Iconography*, trans. Patricia de Man (Australia: Gordon and Beach Science Publishers, 1994) 57–62. Van Straten argues that the ideal emblem perfectly balances

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these two or three elements to cause the viewer to come to a new understanding about a topic by combining them. However, he admits, “in practice, the text often solves the ‘problem’ or riddle conveyed by the motto and image” (57). For further discussion of the emblem tradition, see also Rosemary Freeman, *English Emblem Books* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1948); and Michael Bath and Daniel Russell, eds., *Deviceful Settings: The English Renaissance Emblem and its Contexts* (New York: AMS Press, 1999).

<sup>12</sup>Translation from John Manning, “Introduction,” *A Choice of Emblems* (Aldershot: Scolar’s Press, 1989). Whitney’s emblems and titles are heavily indebted to the work of the popular Italian emblemist, Andrea Alciati. However, Whitney’s *A Choice of Emblems and Other Devises* was the first, distinctly English emblem book.

<sup>13</sup>Geffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblems, and Other Devises* (Leyden, 1586), 27.

<sup>14</sup>Barry N. Nass, *The Troy Legend in Shakespearean Drama*, Diss. Princeton University, 1978 (UMI: Ann Arbor, 1978, 7905637) 59.

<sup>15</sup>All references to Christopher Marlowe’s *Dr. Faustus* come from David Wooton’s edition of the “A text,” (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2005).

<sup>16</sup>Michael Bath argues that Wither thus expands on the traditional three-part emblematic construction to a more complex four-part arrangement incorporating the image, epigram, motto, and explanatory verses. Michael Bath, “Introduction,” *A Collection of Emblems* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1989) 4–5.

<sup>17</sup>George Wither, *A Collection of Emblems, Ancient and Moderne* (London, 1635) 27.

<sup>18</sup>My translation.

<sup>19</sup>David M. Bergeron, “The Play-Within-the-Play in *3 Henry VI*,” *Tennessee Studies in Literature* 22 (1977) 42.

<sup>20</sup>We might also note the ascending order of titles, from “son” to “father” to “king” in this passage. When Henry joins the lament, his language reminds the audience that his role as king makes him father to the nation, which provides definition for the *pius* role he fails to fulfill.

<sup>21</sup>Janis Lull, “Introduction,” *3 Henry VI* (New York: Penguin, 2000) xxx.

<sup>22</sup>For a good look at what “Machiavel” might have meant at this moment for an Elizabethan audience, see Katherine Maus, “Myself Alone: Richard III as Stage Machiavel,” *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) 34–55. See also Felix Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli: A Changing Interpretation 1500–1700* (London: Routledge, 1964). Raab explores the ways in which political writers and polemicists understood and used Machiavelli’s *Il Principe* from the time of Henry VIII through the Restoration. For his discussion of the Elizabethan popular response to Machiavelli (usually horror), and the stereotyped stage Machiavel at the end of the sixteenth century, see especially 51–62.

<sup>23</sup>Edward I. Berry, *Patterns of Decay: Shakespeare’s Early History Plays* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1975).

<sup>24</sup>Berry 76.

<sup>25</sup>David Riggs also sees a similar decline in heroic chivalry, not only in *I Henry VI*, but across all three *Henry VI* plays in *Shakespeare's Heroical Histories: Henry VI and Its Literary Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).

<sup>26</sup>Heather James, *Shakespeare's Troy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 18. Leah S. Marcus links the medal's image of a burning ship, specifically Spanish Catholic ships named after saints and the virgin Mary, to the hyper-protestant trend of burning idolatrous images in London at the time of the Armada. Thus she adds a distinctly anti-Catholic component to ancient Roman and patriotic English elements present in the image and the motto. *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and its Discontents* (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1988) 87.

<sup>27</sup>Robert Fletcher's book *The Nine English Worthies: or Famous Worthy Princess of England all Being of One Name* (London, 1606) actually casts this as one of Henry's greatest kingly virtues: "What losses soever did happen to him, he neuer esteemed nor made account thereof: but if any thing were done which seemed to offend the Almighty, that hee lamented with sorrowfull repentance" (29). If we wish to see Henry as an admirable, but doomed, example of kingly piety, Fletcher assures us, "his patience, integrity, godly life and good workes were no lesse commendable, then the acts of his father were famous, and honorable" (28). Likewise, in Munday's *Triumphs of Re-United Britania*, Agnites (Purity) describes Henry VI, commending him for his gentle demeanor, and concluding, "For Princes loose no part of dignity, / In being affable, it addes to Majesty" (396–7).

<sup>28</sup>Tillyard 186.

<sup>29</sup>This occurs when young Prince Edward asks about Julius Caesar in III.i. Even this scene raises questions about the validity of England's ancient heritage, and sets up its obliteration when Prince Edward, the only enthusiastic supporter "the ancient right in France" (III.i.92) through Caesar, dies a few scenes later.

<sup>30</sup>I.ii.73, I.iii.118, I.iii.298, I.iii.338, IV.iv.418, and IV.iv.419.

<sup>31</sup>Michael Manheim makes a similar argument in the first chapter of *The Weak King Dilemma*. In particular, Manheim defines the stage Machiavel as particular type of vice character essentially divorced from all but a very few of Machiavelli's fundamental principles. See also Bernard Spivack, *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil: The History of a Metaphor in Relation to his Major Villains* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958). See also note 22 above.

<sup>32</sup>*Stages of History: Shakespeare's English Chronicles* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1990) 43.

<sup>33</sup>Rackin 71.

<sup>34</sup>Rackin 64–5.

<sup>35</sup>For an excellent discussion of staging hell, see James J. Mainard O'Connell's recent essay "Hell is Discovered," *Renaissance Papers* (2008): 65–89. O'Connell examines evidence for the trapdoors and mechanical apparatus connected to the "hell" space in each of the major Elizabethan and Jacobean theaters, as well as how various authors wrote with the equipment of specific theaters in mind.

<sup>36</sup>Adrian Streete, "Calvinist Conceptions of Hell in Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*," *Notes and Queries* 47 (2000): 430–2. Significantly, Streete demonstrates that Mephistopheles's description comes almost directly from Calvin's commentary on 1 John 1:9, which is the verse that Faustus quotes only in part when he rejects theology in the opening soliloquy. Thus, *Dr. Faustus* truly becomes an exploration of the "wages of sin."

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<sup>37</sup>Peter Marshall provides a look at the contrasting view in *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). As a whole, Marshall's book charts the changing beliefs about the dead and the afterlife as English culture became distanced from the Catholic Church. In particular, he discusses the resistant popular understanding, rooted in medieval Catholicism, of heaven and hell as physical places built into the physical cosmos. See especially 192–7.

<sup>38</sup>Christopher Ricks suggests that an Elizabethan audience would see Faustus's choice between two kinds of hell in "Dr. Faustus and Hell on Earth," *Essays in Criticism* 35 (1985): 101–20. By bargaining for 24 years on earth, Ricks argues, Faustus has escaped an earthly hell defined by a fear of death in the plague conditions which the play's language constantly suggests. Because an audience would associate the horrors of the plague with God's absence, Faustus only trades one hell for another. Barbara Howard Traister argues that God's absence is a defining feature of Faustus's plight, since he continually damns himself by rejecting heaven, not by accepting hell; *Heavenly Necromancers: The Magician in the English Renaissance* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1984), see especially pages 100–02.

<sup>39</sup>John Henry Jones, *The English Faust Book: A Critical Edition based on the Text of 1592* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>40</sup>Ramie Targoff, "'Dirty' Amens: Devotion, Applause, and Consent in *Richard III*," *Renaissance Drama* 31 (2002): 61–84 at 70. Targoff's essay explores the understanding of speech acts, specifically prayer and the use of "amen," in sixteenth-century England. While he acknowledges that Richard's tactics throughout the play rely heavily on abused speech acts, he argues specifically that questions of election and popular assent prove problematic both in III.vii and when Richmond is declared king in the final moments of the play.

<sup>41</sup>Targoff 71.

<sup>42</sup>Streete 431.

<sup>43</sup>I depart here from Peter Holland's Pelican edition of the text which reads "I and I" from Q1 in favor of the more common emendation from Q2 "I am I."

## Chapter 4

### **“The Mirror of All Christian Kings”: Henry V as a Corrective to the First Tetralogy**

Near the end of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, Lewis Carroll presents a farcical trial in which the characters attempt to reconstruct events surrounding the theft of the Queen of Hearts’ tarts. During this scene the White Rabbit, acting as bailiff, receives evidence pertinent to the case, which the king instructs him to present to the court. When the White Rabbit asks, “Where shall I begin, please your majesty?”, the King of Hearts gives him these seemingly straightforward instructions: “Begin at the beginning, go on till you come to the end: then stop.”<sup>1</sup> While Carroll’s scene clearly aims at parodying the officiousness of legal process in the face of common sense, these lines highlight a great deal about our notions of constructing narratives—especially historical narratives. We tend to see chronology as imposing a natural order to events, surely structuring them according to the laws of cause and effect. If we can just start at the beginning, recount everything until we reach the end and then stop, it must all make sense. Of course, the simplicity implied by the King of Hearts’ instructions points to the true complexity inherent in the historical project. How do we define the beginning? Where is the end? Which events constitute all the matter that goes in between? We become all too aware that we cannot simply read historical events in the same way the White Rabbit must present his prepared evidence in the courtroom.



The Chorus in Shakespeare's *Henry V* directly engages the audience on the subject of representing past events. The Prologue and Epilogue that frame the action, in particular, position the play as an artificial construct and contemplate the difficulties in both dramatic and historical representation. These passages not only directly confront the processes of historical reconstruction; but also, in keeping with sixteenth-century ideas about history and poetry, they embrace the malleability of history and place Henry V at the end of a narrative that begins with his son. As the last of the fifteenth-century English history plays, *Henry V* revisits and examines the ideal king whose legacy loomed so large throughout the first tetralogy. Not only does this provide earlier parts of the history and clarify the conditions under which the early plays started, but the figure of Henry V, as presented in this play, directly answers and perfects the deficiencies of the flawed rulers in *1–3 Henry VI* and *Richard III*.

In the very first lines of the play, the Chorus contemplates the disparity between the greatness of the events that the actors will soon represent and the paucity of their means to do so. Only with “a kingdom for a stage” and “princes to act,” that is, only in viewing the actual events as they occur, could the audience see “the warlike Harry, like himself, assume the port of Mars” (I.Pro.3–6). This is, of course, impossible. The events themselves sit far in the past, beyond the reach of immediate experience. The actors must rely on the principles of signification to let one thing represent another, such that they serve as “ciphers to this great account” and present only a small recreation that suggests the importance of the true events (I.Pro.17). The

Chorus also makes clear that the audience must participate in this process, asking them to “Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts” (I.Pro.23). This system only works if the audience members can recognize the actions, individuals, and persons signified by the objects and persons on the stage. While this sits implicitly at the core of any dramatic experience, or any narrative for that matter, the Chorus in *Henry V* draws attention to the process repeatedly. Nearly all the content in the six Chorus sections takes the form of a request or an imperative. In the Chorus preceding Act III, the speaker instructs the audience to “Play with your fancies” (7), “behold the threaden sails” (10), “do but think” (13), “Grapple your minds” (18), “behold” (26), and “suppose” (28), among others. Similarly, the Chorus section before Act IV begins with the command to “entertain the conjecture of a time,” followed by all the hypothetical conditions of the scene. Before the start of Act V, he asks the audience to “solemnly see [Henry] set on to London” and “imagine him on Blackheath” (V.Cho.14, 16). While we may regard this as a mock-apology for the dramatic medium, it seems reasonable to take this at face value as a frank and honest statement of the interaction between audience and performers. The Chorus lays out this particular historical project in his prologue:

For ‘tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,  
 Carry them here and there, jumping o’er times,  
 Turning the accomplishment of many years  
 Into an hourglass—for the which supply,  
 Admit me as Chorus to this history (I.Pro.28–32).

The creation of a historical narrative here depends upon the cooperation of two components: the Chorus's (and by extension the actors') ability to represent historical details, and the audience's ability to understand these details and supply their own understanding.

This problematic intersection of fact and imagination has led Dermot Cavanaugh to suggest that *Henry V* better fits the modern genre of the "memory play" than it does the traditional history play. The narrative becomes intentionally unreliable, he says, because "Shakespeare explores the relationship between memory and history: the play considers how rival traditions of memory are subsumed by a far-reaching, if still far from inclusive, conception of 'history.'"<sup>2</sup> With this idea in mind, the play becomes at least as much about the collective ideas and memories of Henry V as about the historical events themselves. This makes particularly good sense if we compare the nature of the narrative in the Chorus with that in the action of the play. The Chorus constantly asks the audience to remember and participate in the vivification of Henry, while consistently extolling his greatness and virtue. The action of the scenes, while still depicting a noble king, takes dramatic interaction for granted and presents a somewhat more complex view of the characters and situations.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to drawing on this collective, cultural memory of the historical figures in the play, *Henry V* assumes audience memory of the particular historical narrative in Shakespeare's own plays.<sup>4</sup> Lisa Hopkins's suggestion, for example, that the audience would remember an earlier play when Polonius mentions playing Julius Caesar certainly has significance for an audience's intertextual understanding of the

play, as I have discussed above.<sup>5</sup> Plays like *Hamlet* ask the audience to remember what they know about classical figures through the references in the plays, and may even ask them to remember figures from ancient Rome as personal memories.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, however, this gives us insight into how a playwright expected his audience to experience a play. In this case, as Hopkins points out, *Julius Caesar* most likely immediately preceded *Hamlet* in the performance chronology, and the actor playing Polonius may very well have played Julius Caesar on the same stage. Polonius's lines ask the audience to remember not only historical facts about Julius Caesar, but also a previous theater experience in which they saw the same company, and possibly the same actor, portray Caesar's story. Peter Holland sees the phenomenon as absolutely fundamental to the theater, defining it as a space "in which the memory of other memories is present with a particular intensity for those of us who can trace our long histories of watching productions."<sup>7</sup> As a play functions to create individual memories of the staged events for each audience member, each successive performance or play, in turn, produces an experience of compounded memories of the theater. For both the individual and, by extension, the collective whole, each staged performance exists within the context of performances that have come before it, utilizing those memories to make meaning on the stage.

*Henry V*, as well as the other English history plays, certainly contains moments when we can see such an idea of theater memory at work. At these times, the narrative depends on, or at least acknowledges, the audience's potential familiarity with plays from previous performances. One of the most obvious such

moments in *Henry V* occurs at the beginning of Act II when Bardolph, Pistol, and company reprise their roles from parts 1 and 2 of *Henry IV*. The references to Falstaff, in particular, ground the play, but they also remain cryptic for an audience with insular knowledge of *Henry V* alone. His serving boy refers to him simply as “my master,” and Hostess Quickly provides only slight clarification by giving him the name “Sir John” (II.i.79, 113). They keep the exact nature of his condition equally unclear, avoiding the subject among themselves and saying only that “he’s very ill” because “the king has killed his heart,” and “The king hath run bad humors on the knight” (II.i.82, 85, 116). In the context of the scene, the characters’ avoidance makes sense; their friend lies dying due to the personal betrayal of someone they consider a good king and a good man. However, the play assumes a familiarity with the final scene of 2 *Henry IV*, where the newly-crowned Henry disowns and dismisses Falstaff. The audience must remember something of that previous dramatic performance in order for the current scene fully to make sense.

Similarly, Henry’s assumption that the Dauphin “comes o’er us with our wilder days, not measuring what use we made of them” remains rooted in the two plays that preceded this one (I.ii.268–9). Certainly, the audience may also be familiar with the exploits of young Prince Hal from chronicle sources or from the anonymous play *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*, but the play does assume, rather than provide, this knowledge. Other than this, we have only the opening words of praise for Henry’s greatness and Ely’s observation that on the death of his father, Henry’s “wildness, mortified in him, seemed to die too” (26–7). Ely and Canterbury might

easily elaborate on this wildness, providing fuller exposition and details, but what more need be said about Henry's past after the two-part *Henry IV*? Nicholas Grene argues that, however we understand the order of composition, the history plays as revised for the Folio represent texts intended for serial performance. Within the first tetralogy, in particular, "no one play was complete in itself, each part required a narrative sequel."<sup>8</sup> While the plays in the second tetralogy may be capable of standing alone to some extent, they still rely heavily on a continuous narrative and the development of characters over the course of several plays.<sup>9</sup> Each grouping of plays represents, to one extent or another, a single narrative whole, serialized and presented in episodic fashion.

With this idea in mind, the Chorus's Epilogue to *Henry V* suggests some interesting possibilities. It begins by acknowledging the somewhat arbitrary nature of the end of the play's action:

Thus far, with rough and unable pen,

Our bending author hath pursued the story,

In a little room confining mighty men,

Mangling by starts the full course of their glory (V.Epi.1–4).

"Thus far" suggests that much remains untold about events that follow the story, as is the case with any historical narrative. For one reason or another, the author has chosen this moment as a fitting end to the story or history at hand. A few lines later, the Chorus goes on to clarify why this makes a logical break:

Henry the Sixth, in infant bands crowned king

Of France and England, did this king succeed;  
 Whose state so many had the managing  
 That they lost France and made his England bleed:  
 Which oft our stage hath shown; and for their sake,  
 In your fair minds let this acceptance take (V.Epi.9–14).

Andrew Gurr points out that “‘Their sake’ for which we are begged to approve *Henry V* refers not to the English lords who lost France but to the early plays.”<sup>10</sup> This statement highlights a subtle difference, but grammatically and logically the Chorus asks the audience to understand the current play in the context of the previous plays they have seen, not just the history they know is to follow. If we read this back into the beginning of the speech, “Thus far . . . our bending author hath pursued the story” may refer not only to the end of *Henry V*, or even his story in the second tetralogy, but to the entire set of eight plays. The Epilogue defines a convenient stopping point for the play by joining it to other material, but defines a much larger dramatic narrative arc that begins with historical material that follows it. By the end of *Henry V*, these plays do less to define a set of historical happenings by cause and effect than they do to examine the nature of English kingship, as manifest in the fifteenth-century monarchs.

Edmund Spenser’s 1590 letter to Raleigh, introducing his project in *The Faerie Queene*, provides a useful model for understanding this narrative structure. In explaining the ordering and structuring of the poem, Spenser distinguishes the “Poet historical” from the “Historiographer,” saying,

an Historiographer discourseth of affayres oderly as they were donne, accounting as well the times as the actions, but a Poet thrusteth into the middest, even where it most concerneth him and there recouring to the thinges forepaste, and diuining of things to come, maketh a pleasing Analysis of all.<sup>11</sup>

Although Spenser presents a clearly allegorical narrative rather than anything resembling history, his ideas about structuring narratives certainly hold some relevance for Shakespeare's history plays. If we look at the plays as a continuous narrative that begins with Henry VI and ends with his father, the author certainly "thrustest into the middest, even where it most concerneth him." Spenser's language makes clear that a topical logic governs such a structure, focusing on the weight of a particular issue rather than on a simple causal chain of events. The sequence in the plays both begins and ends with the transition from Henry V to Henry VI, contemplating how, in one of Bedford's first lines, "England ne'er lost so great a king" (*IHV* I.i.7). Certainly, the eight plays concern themselves with nothing if not the loss, turmoil, and upheaval created by constant changes in power. With the Chorus's final speech in mind, beginning and ending at this moment frames the sequence as a progressive study of these problems rather than as a sequential progression from Richard II to the founding Tudor, Henry VII.

Norman Rabkin has argued that *Henry V* offers the audience a choice.<sup>12</sup> Rather than presenting either a patriotic paean or a portrait of a successful Machiavellian king, the play presents both simultaneously, asking each viewer



actively to choose one interpretation or the other.<sup>13</sup> The key to this decision, Rabkin says, lies in which of the two previous plays an individual viewer remembers most clearly. If *Henry V* functions primarily as a sequel to *1 Henry IV*, we have a comic vision of Hal's successful political strategies. He uses the Eastcheap tavern as a way to educate himself for his role as king, allowing him to be both a strong ruler like his father and a grounded man who understands his people. If, however, the audience most clearly remembers *2 Henry IV*, *Henry V* comes laden with tragic overtones. As king, Hal can no longer balance the two worlds of tavern and court, and so he abandons Falstaff and company in order to be a successful king. Yet we know that this betrayal ultimately comes to naught, since Henry's son will quickly lose all that he has gained. Rabkin's argument excellently demonstrates how memories of previous plays, and the interaction between Shakespeare's works, directs our interpretation of a play like *Henry V*. However, the scope of his application remains limited by its narrow focus. In addition to the conquest of France, the Chorus clearly directs our attention, not to the recent exploits of young Prince Hal, but back to the plays about Henry VI. Based on these instructions, we need to see the play as more than the final installment in one man's life story, but rather as the final piece in a much larger series of plays.

If *Henry V* is not Shakespeare's final thought on English history, it is his final comment on the troubles and civil wars of the fifteenth century. The Chorus asks us to "let this acceptance take" on the merit and, we can assume, the content of the three *Henry VI* plays. It seems fitting, then, that Bishops Ely and Canterbury begin the play

by talking about Henry V's accession in terms of "the means how things are perfected" (I.i.68–9). For an audience seeing the play with the theatrical memory of the previous seven plays in mind, "perfecting" becomes a central concern for the play. After Henry VI's various weaknesses and his inability to successfully keep his throne, after Richard III's Machiavellian machinations, and after the questions of legitimacy surrounding Richard II and Henry IV, *Henry V* finally presents a charismatic, fair-minded, pious, and strong king with a clear claim to the throne.<sup>14</sup> In short, if viewed against the backdrop of the first tetralogy, the play finally shows "This star of England" (*HV* V.Epi.6), which lost, prompted Bedford to say, "Hung be the heavens with black!" (*IHVI* I.i.1) at the story's beginning.

At first glance, *Henry V* seems to have relatively few instances of the overt references to the Trojan War so prevalent in those three plays about Henry VI. Pistol uses the phrase "lazar kite of Cressid's kind" to describe Doll Tearsheet as a particularly predatory prostitute in Act II (II.i.74). Fluellen describes the Duke of Exeter as "magnanimous as Agamemnon" (III.vi.6–7), and Pistol twice uses the term "base Trojan" (V.i.18, 29) to insult Fluellen and characterize him as underhanded. Individually, these carry minimal significance and rank with other descriptive classical images, such as Henry's passing references to Phoebus and Hyperion (IV.i.266, 8), the Dauphin's description of his horse as Pegasus and himself as Perseus, (III.vii.14, 20), or the reference to Mark Antony as a valiant man (III.vi.14). However, taken together with the content of the play, such allusions help to establish a language of heroic images in a play about a heroic king.

Moreover, Gary Taylor has suggested that one scene, in particular, subtly participates in the Trojan myth.<sup>15</sup> In the language of the Chorus's speech before Act IV and that of Henry's conversations the night before Agincourt in IV.i, Taylor finds many parallels to Book X of George Chapman's *Seven Books of the Iliad of Homer* (1598).<sup>16</sup> At the moment contained in this portion of the poem, both the Greek and Trojan armies have camped on the plains before Troy and spend the night in close proximity to one another. Unable to sleep, Agamemnon consults his generals and wanders from fire to fire. This scene supplies much of the language used by the Chorus to describe the two armies, as well as Henry's conversations with Exeter and Erpingham, and possibly even his solitary prayer.<sup>17</sup> If the actions and language contained in the first part of Act IV bear recognizable similarities to the *Iliad* for members of the audience, they would certainly contribute to the portrayal of Henry as a mythic figure. While not comparing him to one of the ancestral Trojans, this scene aligns Henry with one of the truly admirable Greek leaders at a highly crucial moment for the war's outcome. It suggests that Henry's campaign against the French will produce history-changing results roughly on par with those of the Trojan War. Even if the audience did not recognize Henry as an English Agamemnon, however, the connections to Chapman's *Iliad* say something about the register of the scene. If Shakespeare borrows language from a new English translation of one of the major classical epics, this casts the battle of Agincourt in specifically heroic and mythic terms.

The Chorus's description of Henry's triumphant return to England provides a much more explicit use of heroic terms from the classical world:

The mayor and all his brethren in the best sort,  
 Like to the senators of th' antique Rome,  
 With plebeians swarming at their heels,  
 Go forth and fetch their conquering Caesar in;  
 As by lower but by loving likelihood,  
 Were now 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! Much more, and much more cause,  
 Did they this Harry (V.Pro.25–35).

Although many scholars focus on this passage solely for the nearly explicit reference to Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex and his Irish campaigns under Elizabeth, we must not overlook the two-part epic simile the Chorus uses to describe Henry's reception. Essex's return gives the contemporary audience an immediate example to understand the situation, but it does so as a gloss for Caesar's reception in ancient Rome. In fact, the true epic simile, the "just as ... so" construction, applies to Essex in this case. Henry provides a third value, which builds on the first two to create a second, escalating simile. This results in the statement, "Just as Caesar was received in ancient Rome, so would Essex be received in London, but much more was Harry's

reception.” In this way, Henry provides a positive answer to the superlatives of loss expressed in *3 Henry VI*.<sup>18</sup> Whereas Margaret causes more destruction than Helen, Henry VI experiences more sorrow than Priam, and Richard deceives on a larger scale than Sinon, Henry V plays a more celebrated conquering hero than Caesar himself.

This image of Henry as Caesar, in addition to recalling Gloucester’s line from the opening moments of *1 Henry VI*,<sup>19</sup> has immediate relevance for the war in France. When the Archbishop of Canterbury encourages the young king to take his armies into France to “make all Gallia shake” (I.ii.217), he expresses the romantic notion that Henry will reclaim his own inheritance and England’s heritage by re-conquering Caesar’s Gallic territories. Likewise, in the aftermath of the war, Pistol describes how he will now swindle to make his living: “patches will I get unto these cudgel scars, / And swear I got them in the Gallia wars” (V.i.84–5). Pistol’s ignoble intentions aside, his statement says a great deal about how England will regard this victory. Referring simply to “the Gallia wars,” he uses the familiar title of Caesar’s campaigns and usurps it to label the most recent incursion. In effect, he simultaneously invokes and erases Caesar and his conquest, replacing them with Henry and Agincourt. Furthermore, the credibility he implies that the scars will earn for him indicates how the nation regards the events. Equal truth resides in claims that his scars come from fighting in Caesar’s Gallic wars or in Henry’s Gallia wars, but those he meets will regard them as one and the same. Henry, at least for the moment, perfects Caesar’s victory by regaining what Rome lost. Similarly, for an audience watching the play,

Henry claims and unites the same lands that the three parts of *Henry VI* have shown fractured, crumbling, and forfeit.

The Welsh officer Fluellen, one of the most vocal commentators on war in the play, regularly judges what he sees by the standards of ancient warfare. In III.ii, he insists that any good officer must be versed in the “Roman disciplines” (III.ii.74), which he clarifies to mean “the disciplines of the pristine wars of the Romans” (III.ii.82). The night before Agincourt, he appeals to the “wars of Pompey the Great” as exemplifying proper conduct in camp and on the battlefield (V.i.69). This reference to Pompey situates the great Roman general as a standard for ancient military leadership, but also brings to mind his eventual downfall at the hands of the greater general, Julius Caesar. For Fluellen, the appeal of Roman warfare comes from its “discipline” and its “pristine” quality. He further praises Pompey’s camp for the “ceremony,” the “sobriety,” and the “modesty” it afforded to war (IV.i.72–3). This high regard for stoic restraint on the battlefield, and his eclectic taste in ancient generals, eventually lead Fluellen to draw a direct comparison between Henry and Alexander the Great, but he uses this as an opportunity to show how Henry exceeds all others at perfecting military leadership. In a comic, self-aggrandizing way, he credits his own homeland, Wales, as the kernel of Henry’s success.<sup>20</sup> Wales, which he assures us mirrors Alexander’s Macedonia exactly, could not help but produce such a strong ruler. The difference between the two men, however, lies in their conduct: “I speak but in the figures and comparisons of it. As Alexander killed his friend Cleitus, being in his ales and his cups, so also Harry Monmouth, being in his right wits and

good judgments, turned away the fat knight with the great pelly doublet” (IV.vii.).

Fluellen finds an analog between one of Alexander’s worst displays of character and one of Henry’s defining moments as a good ruler. While Alexander killed Cleitus out of selfish wounded pride for hearing his friend speak well of Philip, Henry banished his own friend because Falstaff’s presence inhibited his ability to function as a good king.

Falstaff’s banishment, which several characters refer to throughout the play, provides one of the ways that Henry corrects the unwise marriage his son makes at the end of *1 Henry VI*. Certainly, Henry V’s marriage to Katherine provides an advantageous, if temporary, union between England and France, but we never see any suggestion that this comes in conflict with the king’s personal desires. The play shows quite the opposite, in fact, as Henry enthusiastically woos Katherine throughout the last act. His companionship with Falstaff, however, presents a very different set of circumstances. Whatever Henry’s true feelings about Falstaff, V.iii in *2 Henry IV* shows Falstaff earnestly believing that their friendship will guarantee him a place at court and the favor of the king. The final interchange between the two men shows the difficult choice that Henry must make as king, however. He tells Falstaff,

Presume not that I am the thing I was,

For God doth know, so shall the world perceive,

That I have turned away from my former self.

So will I those that kept me company (V.iv.56–9).

In taking on the role of leadership, Henry now has an obligation in *pietas* to sacrifice the personal desires that interfere with his office. His language in this passage even makes a subtle distinction about his own definition; he has abandoned aspects of his “self” in order to become a new “thing.” The person of Hal gives way to the role of King Henry V, and Falstaff only has a place with the former.

Hostess Quickly tells the tavern company in *Henry V* that Falstaff lies dying because “The king has killed his heart” (II.i.85) and later recounts his final moments, leading John Wain to claim, “The death of Falstaff takes on the same kind of lofty pathos as the death of Dido in the *Aeneid*.”<sup>21</sup> Indeed, Mistress Quickly waxes eloquent about Falstaff’s deathbed, but the similarities to Dido extend beyond the quasi-epic language of loss. Like Dido to Aeneas, Falstaff provides a kind of support, albeit morally perverse, to Hal as he journeys toward promised kingship. Also like Dido, he assumes he has a place in the hero’s endeavors, but instead finds himself abandoned in the end for the good of the kingdom. The young Prince Hal gives some indication of this early on in *1 Henry IV*. When he and Falstaff hold a mock inquiry over Hal’s conduct, Henry takes on the role of his father, and Falstaff, for his part, plays Henry. In the assumed role of king, Henry asks about Falstaff’s notorious faults; and Falstaff, in the voice of Henry, tries to defend his own worth:

But for sweet Jack Falstaff, kind Jack Falstaff, true Jack Falstaff, valiant Jack Falstaff, and therefore more valiant being, as he is, old Jack Falstaff, Banish him not thy Harry’s company, banish him not thy Harry’s company.



Banish plump Jack, and banish all the world (II.iv.460–4).

Henry simply replies, “I do, I will” (II.iv.465).

While this scene produces a mock royal court, it also echoes the final conversation between Dido and Aeneas where Dido begs Aeneas not to leave. In many ways, Henry’s “I do, I will” fulfills the same function as Aeneas’s *Italiam non sponte sequor*. In speaking with his father’s voice, Henry appeals to a higher authority which demands his separation from Falstaff as part of his duty. He banishes Falstaff not according to his own wishes, but according to those of a greater power. Conversely, however, he voices the banishment as a speech act in the first person, taking some of the agency upon himself. While Aeneas will never become one of the gods and make these demands himself, Henry does become king and must enact this decision that he originally credited to his father’s office. The tragic, lamented Falstaff at the beginning of *Henry V* might bear a resemblance to Marlowe’s sympathetic Dido, in particular; but Henry, as confident and successful king, resembles Virgil’s resolute Aeneas.

The mythic qualities that Henry displays in the play cause Wain to dub him an “English Aeneas” and describe *Henry V* as a defining work “which does for English literature what Virgil’s *Aeneid* did for Roman, or *The Lusads* of Camoens for Portuguese.”<sup>22</sup> While this might seem an overly enthusiastic and patriotic reading, much of the play’s language casts Henry as a specifically English king within the context of Shakespeare’s history plays. After all the flawed and troubled rulers that the previous seven plays have portrayed, the Chorus promises to show us “the mirror

of all Christian kings” (II.Pro.6). Irving Ribner takes this phrase as the governing idea for the entire play and its portrayal of Henry V. Specifically, Ribner sees this mirror reflecting the key lessons Hal learned in the *Henry IV* plays, “both the military virtues he had learned in *1 Henry IV* and the civil virtues he had learned in *2 Henry IV*.”<sup>23</sup>

Much like Rabkin’s argument above, this provides a useful lens through which to view the play, but it ignores the content of the first tetralogy which weighs heavily on *Henry V*.

When Canterbury provides the first, sustained description of Henry’s virtues, he includes many elements that seem to have little direct bearing on the two previous plays:

Hear him but reason in divinity,  
 And, all admiring, with an inward wish  
 You would wish the king were made a prelate;  
 Hear him debate of commonwealth affairs,  
 You would say it hath been all in all his study;  
 List his discourse of war, and you shall hear  
 A fearful battle rendered you in music;  
 Turn him to a cause of policy,  
 The Gordian knot of it he will unloose,  
 Familiar as his garter; that when he speaks,  
 The air, a chartered libertine, is still,  
 And the mute wonder lurketh in men’s ears

To steal his sweet and honeyed sentences;  
 So that the art and practice part of life  
 Must be the mistress of his rhetoric (I.i.38–52).

Certainly, as the two bishops go on to note, this contrasts sharply with the king's conduct as a young man. More important, however, Canterbury praises him for having all of the kingly virtues which we see fractured and scattered throughout the first tetralogy. Moreover, he describes them in an order which establishes a hierarchy, much as Richmond's battlefield speech in V.iii of *Richard III* established his men's allegiance to God first, then to country, and finally to family. Here, the definition of ideal Englishness turns back to the king, to prioritize the princely virtues as Christian piety, *pious* government, military valor, legal expertise, and finally rhetorical prowess. Shakespeare provides a list of attributes by which to evaluate Henry as the play progresses, thereby producing the ideal standard for princes.<sup>24</sup>

In another familiar literary "mirror" from the end of the sixteenth century, William Baldwin's *Mirror for Magistrates*, the author-editor describes his purpose in these terms in an epistle addressed "To all the Nobility": "For here, as in a mirror or a looking glasse, you shal se if vice be found how the lyke hath bene punished in other heretofore, wherby I trust it wil be a good occasion to move men to the soner amendment."<sup>25</sup> In an additional letter to the reader, Baldwin expands the scope of his intent, calling the book "a myrrour for al men as well noble as others, to shewe the slippery deceytes of the wauering lady, and the due rewarde of all kinde of vices."<sup>26</sup> Baldwin provides examples of flawed kings, rulers, and nobles, who come to tragic

ends through their poor judgments and uncorrected vices. The book allows those in power, as well as readers in general, the opportunity to examine themselves to see if they too walk the road to ruin. Henry, as a “mirror of all Christian princes” performs a related, but distinctly different function. Brian Vickers notes similarities in the language used by Shakespeare’s Chorus in *Henry V* and by Baldwin as the unifying narrator in the *Mirror for Magistrates*. In particular, he argues that both figures use phrases like “imagine the king” and “suppose you see” to introduce their subjects in a way that holds them up as imaginary examples. Just as Baldwin narrates and joins the various stories in his book to create a composite warning about poor rulership, so the Chorus assembles the various episodes in *Henry V* to construct an image of England’s ideal king. Moreover, Baldwin makes his book a specifically English warning by employing solely English content.<sup>27</sup> If *Henry V* presents a figure who reflects the ideal Christian virtues in one of England’s most famous kings, we can see the play as an answer, both to the examples in Baldwin’s *Mirror* and to Shakespeare’s own portrayal of some of those same figures in the first tetralogy.

After the Chorus’s praise for Henry’s historical victories, and after the bishops’ marveling at the changes he has undergone since his youth, the first scene in which we see the king onstage focuses on the question, “May I with right and conscience make this claim?” (I.ii.96), referring to Henry’s legitimacy as heir to the French crown. Before he takes any decisive military action, Henry wants to know for sure that he has a just cause. He urges Canterbury to speak frankly, reminding him, and by extension the audience, of the stakes at hand:

For God doth know how many now in health

Shall drop their blood in approbation

Of what your reverence shall incite us to (I.ii.18–20).

He acknowledges the human cost involved in pursuing a campaign against the French, and therefore moves the cause away from self-interest in order to make it a legal affair of state.

Most notably, we might compare this consideration with Richard III's intent to "drown more sailors than the mermaid" and "slay more gazers than the basilisk" (3 *Henry VI* III.iii.187–8). Whereas Richard's drive for personal advancement causes him blatantly to disregard casualties as insignificant, Henry situates loss of life as a primary concern. The proposed outcome of military action must prove right, legal, and beneficial before he will commit to risking the lives of his countrymen. In his first moments on stage, Henry provides an answer to the chaos, uncertainty, and meaningless bloodshed involved in the War of the Roses. In the face of Henry V's insistence on surety, Norfolk's vow to fight for Henry VI, "be thy title right or wrong" (3 *Henry VI* I.i.160) seems dangerous and ludicrous, if well-intentioned. Henry V will never find himself horrified on the battlefield, like his son, shocked to realize suddenly that "While lions war and battle for their dens, / The poor innocent lambs abide their enmity" (3 *Henry VI* II.v.74–5). Unlike his son, this Henry knows the cost of war, and knows too that his soldiers should pay it only if it truly benefits their nation. Ultimately, he acknowledges that unjust war would turn the fault back on him, as the one "whose wrongs gives edge unto the swords / That makes such waste

in brief mortality” (I.ii.27–8). This opening scene shows a man capable and eager to balance his rights and obligations as king. He ambitiously plans to enlarge his kingdom and the extent of his power, but knows that he must have a kingdom left to rule, and the right to rule it, afterwards.

As the foray into France develops throughout the first four acts of the play, we continue to see Henry’s strengths as an ideal ruler. Like Talbot in *1 Henry VI*, he becomes the “scourge of France,” who moves seemingly unstoppable through France, conquering as he goes. The French king admonishes his nobles for losing their glory to “Harry England, that sweeps through our land With pennons painted in the blood of Harfleur” (III.v.48–9). Henry, however, proves to be more than simply a great general with unstoppable strength; the play also presents him as a wise and just ruler with the discretion to know how to avoid bloodshed. During the siege of Harfleur, Henry delivers an ultimatum of surrender to the city’s governor. In a threat worthy of Tamburlaine, he offers the city one last chance to surrender and describes in lurid detail the horrors of war that his men will unleash if the governor refuses. He describes the slaughter and rape of mothers, young maidens, children, infants, and old men at the hands of soldiers “rough and hard of heart, / In the liberty of bloody hand” (III.iii.11–12), as well as “heady murder, spoil and villainy” (III.iii.32) of every kind. He appeals to the pathos felt for every kind of family relationship and social duty, describing their violation as the consequence for failing to surrender. At first glance we may find this speech absolutely repulsive coming from a heroic character. How can the “mirror of all Christian kings” so bluntly consider allowing his men to engage

in gross acts of “impious war”? The outcome of this scene ultimately provides the most satisfactory answer, however: Henry’s men do not commit these atrocities, the governor peacefully hands over control of the city, and the siege ends with no additional lives lost. “The question of what this Henry would have done,” C. G. Thayer reminds us, “had the city not surrendered does not arise: his oration made it surrender.”<sup>28</sup>

More important, Henry’s candid instructions to Exeter afterward suggest his true intentions and attitudes toward the situation. Accepting the governor’s surrender, he turns and says,

Come uncle Exeter,  
Go you and enter Harfleur; their remain  
And fortify it strongly ‘gainst the French.  
Use mercy to them all (III.iii.51–4).

Coequal with defending the newly-taken city, Henry prioritizes the wellbeing of Harfleur’s citizens as a primary concern, suggesting that his public speech moments earlier functioned only as a rhetorical weapon to simultaneously conquer and protect the city. Such a reversal echoes *Richard III*, most notably when Richard and Buckingham stage Richard’s piety with bishops and prayerbook on the balcony in III.vii. The scene provides a sharp contrast between Richard’s publicly stated intentions and his candid conversations with Buckingham, much as this scene contrasts Henry’s stated threats with the magnanimous instructions he gives his nobles.

Henry's mercy toward the French citizens shows up on numerous occasions, most notably shortly after the scenes at Harfleur. Hearing that Exeter had Bardolph executed for robbing a church, the king responds:

We would have all such offenders so cut off. And  
 we give express charge that in our marches through the  
 country there be nothing compelled from the villages,  
 nothing taken but paid for; none of the French upbraided  
 or abused in disdainful language; for when  
 lenity and cruelty play for a kingdom, the gentler  
 gamester is soonest the winner (III.vi.104–10).

We may attribute his initial approval of the punishment to Ely's assessment of Henry as "a true lover of the holy Church" (I.i.23), yet the remainder of his instructions indicates that his concern extends beyond protecting ecclesiastical objects. He proves a savvy ruler who knows he must win the hearts of a conquered people to rule them effectively, but he also treats the villagers as though they already have the rights of citizens of his kingdom and therefore deserve protection. His orders eliminate the usual lawlessness of war, so vividly described to citizens of Harfleur, and hold his soldiers to the same conduct they would exhibit in passing through their own English villages. While Henry and his men prove particularly deadly to France's military forces, he acknowledges that the common citizens have no responsibility for their rulers' conflicts and require mercy at the hands of a just king.



In addition to the soldiers and various others who hear such statements, we must remember that Henry's closest nobles and advisors make up the primary audience for his instructive policies, particularly his uncle, Exeter, and his two brothers, Bedford and Gloucester. These men carry out his orders and become extensions of the king's authority. This holds special relevance for Gloucester who will later become "the good Duke Humphrey," who "watched the night / Ay, night by night in studying good for England" (*2 Henry VI* III.i.110–11). The stage directions specifically put him on stage for Henry's instructions about the French villages; and if we assume that "King and all his train" at the beginning of III.iii includes Gloucester, he hears the instructions for Harfleur as well. The play puts him at the king's side, witness to all his decisions, councils, and reasons. At these moments we see that the lord protector that *2 Henry VI* presents as the paragon of wise, magnanimous, domestic rule begins his lifelong pursuit of England's good by serving as apprentice to his brother in *Henry V*. The play claims Gloucester's Aenean goodness from the first tetralogy and, without undermining it, grounds it in Henry V's policies as the ultimate source.

Finally, Henry displays a perfect balance of active kingship and Christian piety, which contrasts with the weaknesses of his son. Certainly, Henry V deals decisively with domestic threats to his position as embodied by Cambridge, Scroop, and Grey at the beginning of Act II. He inspires his men in battle, produces victory against staggering odds, and ultimately reclaims a rightful inheritance that Canterbury's extensive exegesis of Salic law justifies in the opening Act. Moreover,

in accomplishing these things he defies Richard, Duke of York's statement that "churchlike humors fits not for a crown" (2 *Henry VI* I.i.247). Quite to the contrary, Canterbury says of this warlike king, "Hear him but reason in divinity, / And ... / You would desire the king were made a prelate" (I.i.38–40). Henry V's combination of military valor and Christian piety refute the notion, possibly suggested by Henry VI's rule, that effective kingship and moral Christian goodness exist as mutually exclusive options. The "Mirror of all Christian kings" demonstrates that an ideal ruler must have both.

Before the Battle of Agincourt, King Henry makes several appeals to divine providence. "God's will" (IV.iii.24), he tells his men, set the odds against them that they might win the greater glory. In dismissing his generals to the field, he correspondingly wishes them, "God be with you all" (IV.iii.79). When he refuses ransom to the messenger, Montjoy, he describes how his men will survive the battle victorious, "As, if God please, they shall" (IV.iii.121). In form, these appeals to divine authority recall Henry VI's refrain, "God's will be done," which he repeats numerous times throughout 2 *Henry VI*,<sup>29</sup> yet the two kings understand this sentiment in different ways. For Henry VI, God's will provides an excuse to abdicate the decisions he must make and actions he must take as king, because providence means he cannot affect any outcome. He displays an excellent example of this attitude in 3 *Henry VI* with his words before the battle in II.v:

Now one the better, then another best—  
Both tugging to be victors, breast to breast,

Yet neither conqueror nor conquerèd.

So is the equal poise of this fell war.

Here on this molehill will I sit me down.

To whom God will, there be the victory (II.v.10–15).

Faced with the impossibility of knowing which side stands in the right, Henry turns the matter over to God to make the decision. Moreover, he utterly gives up and takes the role of a passive spectator. Whatever God has planned, God will accomplish, and nothing Henry decides to do on his own can alter it.

Henry V, by contrast, uses the idea of God's will as a motivation for greater deeds. He begins the speech before Agincourt with a brief contemplation of what God may have planned for them in battle:

If we are marked to die, we are enow

To do our country loss; and if to live,

The fewer men, the greater share of honor.

God's will! (IV.iii.21–4)

Yet for King Henry, God's favor and will do not negate the meaning of his men's actions. For any soldier who fights valiantly and survives to old age, "he'll remember, with advantages, / What feats he did that day" (IV.iii.51–2). "Feats" suggests a very active participation in this endeavor. While God's will may dictate that the English emerge victorious at Agincourt, the soldiers bring it about through their dedicated actions on behalf of their country.

C. G. Thayer and Timothy Rosendale both see such moments defining Henry V as a unique type of monarch, with regard to the question of divine authority. Thayer argues that the second tetralogy moves from Richard II, who represents divinely protected kingship to Henry V who perfects “man-centered kingship.” In his view, Henry derives his initial legitimacy as king from God, but becomes a good king through his own actions.<sup>30</sup> Rosendale further links this transition to core tenets of Protestant theology at the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>31</sup> As the English church moved away from Catholic practices, so, too, it moved away from common Catholic beliefs about holy objects and relics imbued with real divine power. Instead, theologians increasingly saw such objects as physical representations that indicate and approximate a divine presence.<sup>32</sup> The difference between Richard II and Henry V, Rosenthal argues, also reflects such a change. He labels Richard II as “sacral monarch,” who presents himself as an infallible extension of God’s power on earth. Henry V, by contrast, functions as a “sacramental king,” who symbolically represents a divine relationship, and whose power “is sustained through the interpretive cooperation of [his] subjects.”<sup>33</sup> In a way, Henry VI sees himself as a variation on the divine sacral model of kingship. While he does not claim infallible authority through divine right, he does assume that he functions as part of an infallible divine system. By passively resigning all personal agency in his decisions, he assumes that God’s all-powerful design will work through him as king without any need for active intervention on his part.

In Henry V, we see Henry VI's mistakes corrected. The elder Henry presents a very proactive king, who takes upon himself the responsibility for acting on behalf of his kingdom. He credits divine providence with the ultimate control over human affairs, but he lets it guide his actions rather than justify his inaction. After the battle of Agincourt, Henry serves as interpreter for his men, reminding them that their deeds take part in a larger design. When Monjoy first tells him that the English have won the battle, he immediately exclaims, "Praisèd be God and not our strength for it!" (IV.vii.86). This line becomes Henry's theme for the remainder of Act IV. When he receives the lists of those killed in the battle, he offers this prayer in the presence of his nobles and officers:

O God, thy arm was here!  
 And not to us, but to thy arm alone,  
 Ascribe we all! When, without stratagem,  
 But in plain shock and even play of battle,  
 Was ever known so great and little loss  
 On one part and on th' other? Take it God,  
 For it is none but thine! (IV.viii.104–10).

Like the Dauphin's words in praise of Joan in *1 Henry VI*, Henry's prayer echoes the "Non nobis" of Psalm 115, but Henry corrects Charles's corrupt and blasphemous prayer back to its true sense. Whereas the Dauphin credited God's instrument with the glory due to God, Henry displaces praise off of himself as the instrument and redirects it to the proper source. Moreover, Henry makes this explicit and asks his

men to internalize it, ordering that they sing both the “Non nobis” and the “Te Deum,” the traditional liturgical hymn of praise, in the battle’s aftermath.

Act IV, Scene viii never lets the audience forget the scope of England’s accomplishment, however. Henry’s insistence on God’s glory always sits in immediate juxtaposition to moments of potential human credit. His “Non nobis” prayer follows the impressive list of French nobles that his forces killed at Agincourt. Henry also acknowledges the potential for soldiers to want credit for the victory, telling Exeter, “be it death proclaimed through our host / To Boast of this or take that praise from God / Which is his only” (IV.viii.113–15). Finally, in the Prologue between Acts IV and V, the Chorus tells us,

His lords desire him to have borne  
 His bruised helmet and his bended sword  
 Before him through the city. He forbids it,  
 Being free from vainness and self-glorious pride;  
 Giving full trophy, signal and ostent  
 Quite from himself to God (V.Pro.17–22).

In each instance, the play suggests that all those who witnessed the battle want to ascribe the English victory to heroic human deeds alone. No one, it seems, regards Henry as passive or inactive in favor of God’s intervention; quite the opposite, in fact, as the nobles wish to display the physical proof of Henry’s personal involvement in the battle. The Chorus uses a very important verb at the end of this passage, stressing that Henry *gives* the credit that he himself might normally deserve to God, instead.

After portraying a strong, fair, and just king who actively works for the good of his subjects and kingdom, this scene also establishes him as a humble and pious ruler. As Act IV comes to a close, Henry has demonstrated that he possesses all the various qualities of a good king, whose absences have plagued rulers over the course of the history plays. The first tetralogy, in particular, wrestles with fractured leadership undertaken by individuals who possess only isolated qualities of the classical *pietas* necessary for a good king. Furthermore, the early plays pit these qualities against Henry VI's Christian piety, causing them to work for opposite goals and undermine one another's success. Functioning as a mirror, not of vice and tragedy like Baldwin's examples, but rather of the virtues of "all Christian princes," Henry V corrects this fractured state by unifying military valor, wise statecraft, merciful justice, and Christian piety in one ideal English ruler. Here, in one last look, we get a full portrait of "King Henry the Fifth, too famous to live long" (*1 Henry VI* I.i.6), a "king blest of the King of Kings" (*1 Henry VI* I.i.28), "Henry the Fifth, that made all France to shake" (*2 Henry VI* IV.vii.169), "made the Dauphin and the French to stoop" (*3 Henry VI* I.i.108), and left his son a kingdom "famously enriched" (*Richard III* III.iii.19). It is little wonder that the first tetralogy often looks to "This Star of England" (*Henry V* V.Epi.6) as a model and a corrective during the turmoil of the War of the Roses.

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in *The Annotated Alice*, ed. Martin Gardner (New York: Norton, 2000) 121.

<sup>2</sup>Dermot Cavanaugh, "History, Mourning and Memory in *Henry V*," *Shakespeare's Histories and Counter Histories*, ed. Dermot Cavanaugh, Stuart Hampton-Reeves and Stephen Longstaffe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

<sup>3</sup>Partly on this basis, Ivo Kamps refers to *Henry V* as a particularly “disruptive moment in historiographical discourse” in *Historiography and Ideology in Stuart Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). For Kamps, *Henry V* represents an early move to the Stuart model of the history play, which explores the disparity between the traditional historical accounts and the overlooked complications. Phyllis Rackin presents a similar argument about cultural complexity in the history plays as a whole in *Stages of History: Shakespeare’s English Chronicles* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

<sup>4</sup>David M. Bergeron comments on this trend in *2 Henry IV*, in particular in “Shakespeare Makes History: *2 Henry IV*,” *SEL* 31(1991): 231–45. On the self-referential quality of the larger historical narrative within the second tetralogy, Bergeron says, “the dramatist works into his historical fiction recollections of his own writing; he makes history in part out of his own artistic history, providing thereby an intertextual construct” (237).

<sup>5</sup>See the brief discussion on Hopkins in Chapter 1, page 38.

<sup>6</sup>Lisa Hopkins, *Cultural Uses of the Caesars on the Renaissance Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>7</sup>Peter Holland, “On the Gravy Train: Shakespeare, Memory and Forgetting,” *Shakespeare, Memory and Performance*, ed. Peter Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 208. While Holland’s discussion focuses primarily on the acts of memory and strategies for remembering that the actors employ during a performance, the opening pages of the essay deal with the Elizabethan Theater as a site of memory for members of the audience.

<sup>8</sup>Nicholas Grene, *Shakespeare’s Serial History Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 21.

<sup>9</sup>In chapter 7 of his book, Grene provides an excellent look at how the repeated characters (especially the comic characters) develop and evolve in this structure.

<sup>10</sup>Andrew Gurr, “Introduction,” *King Henry V* in *The New Cambridge Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>11</sup>Edmund Spenser, “Letter to Raleigh,” *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A.C. Hamilton et al. (New York: Longman, 2006) 716–17.

<sup>12</sup>Norman Rabkin, “Either/Or: Responding to *Henry V*,” *Shakespeare and the Problem of Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981). An earlier version of this essay was originally published as “Rabbits, Ducks, and *Henry V*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 28 (1977): 279–96.

<sup>13</sup>This article has been reprinted numerous times and contains Rabkin’s, now familiar, duck/rabbit dichotomy. In this explanation, Rabkin compares the play to a silhouette shape that the viewer can interpret either as a duck or a rabbit, depending on the perspective. While the potential legitimately exists to see the shape as either animal, choosing to see it as one or the other at a given moment necessarily excludes the possibility of the other shape. *Henry V*, likewise, presents us with two potential views of the king, each of which excludes the other. See also Claire McEachern, “Speaking in Common: *Henry V* and the Paradox of the Body Politic,” *The Poetics of English Nationhood, 1590–1612* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 83–137. McEachern argues that this phenomenon results less from an ambivalence toward the state’s power on the part of Shakespeare or his text, and more from “the anamorphic nature of state power itself as imagined by Elizabethan terminologies of fellowship” (86).



<sup>14</sup>Within the big picture of all eight plays, Henry's claim is, of course, anything but clear; the conflicts of the entire first tetralogy center on the question of his son's legitimacy. In *Henry V*, however, no one raises objections about his right to the throne, and the opening scenes actively demonstrate England's general satisfaction with Henry as king.

<sup>15</sup>Gary Taylor, "Introduction," *Henry V* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) 1–86. For Taylor's argument concerning the influence of Chapman's *Seven Books of the Illiad of Homer*, see 52–8.

<sup>16</sup>Taylor notes that the seven books included are not I–VII, but I, II, and VII–XI (52).

<sup>17</sup>Additionally, Taylor notes that Grandpre's trip to the English camp in III.vii may come from the two spy expeditions in Book X of the *Illiad*, since there is no precedent for this in the chronicle sources.

<sup>18</sup>In terms of the larger narrative, Richard F. Hardin notes that the tragedy of Caesar's downfall begins with the memory these triumphs, much as Henry VI's decline starts with memories of Henry V's triumphant return from France. *Civil Idolatry: Desacralizing and Monarchy in Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992) 153.

<sup>19</sup>"A far more glorious star thy soul will make / Than Julius Caesar or bright—" (*1 Henry VI* i.i.55–6).

<sup>20</sup>For an excellent discussion on the representations of the four British kingdoms in *Henry V*, see Florian Kläger, *Forgone Nations: Constructions of National Identity in Elizabethan Historiography and Literature: Stanihurst, Spenser, Shakespeare* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2006) esp. 230–58. Kläger resists seeing the play as either "a piece of patriotic propaganda or a subversive exposition of imperialistic cynicism" with regards to the Welsh, Irish, and Scottish characters. "Instead, it can be seen as a complex portrayal of the enthusiasm, but also the moral growing pains, of a proposed English nation becoming aware of itself" (247).

<sup>21</sup>John Wain, *The Living World of Shakespeare* (London: Macmillan, 1964) 64.

<sup>22</sup>Wain 64, 29. This description appears to be quite separate from his comment about the description of Falstaff's death as similar to Dido's, which seems to be a passing observation meant to establish the epic mode of the play. Wain primarily evaluates Henry's character and actions according to "Sonnet 94," which, he says, defines the qualities of a perfect monarch.

<sup>23</sup>Ribner 182. For his full discussion of the exemplary qualities of Henry V, see esp. 182–92.

<sup>24</sup>In his introduction to the 1954 Arden edition of the play, J. H. Walter provides a somewhat extended analysis of Henry's character as the composite ideal prince according to the criteria outlined in a wide range of works dealing with the subject in fifteenth-century England. J. H. Walter, "Introduction," *King Henry V* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1954).

<sup>25</sup>William Baldwin, *A Myrroure for Magistrates* (London, 1571) iii.

<sup>26</sup>This epistle does not exist in later editions of the text. I quote here from Lily B. Campbel's modern edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), which reproduces this from the 1559 edition.

<sup>27</sup>"I neede not go eyther to the Romaines or Grekes for proofe hereof ... Our country stories (yf we reade and marke them) will show us examples ynow, would God we had not sene more than ynow" (Baldwin ii<sup>v</sup>).

<sup>28</sup>C. G. Thayer, *Shakespearean Politics: Government and Misgovernment in the Great Histories* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1983) 158. He also points out that Henry does indeed sack Harfleur in

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Holinshed's account, which Thayer argues highlights the power of Henry's speech in *Henry V* to accomplish more than brute strength can.

<sup>29</sup>This exact phrase occurs at III.i.86, but Henry gives many variations on this theme, including, "God defend the right" (II.iii.5), and "God's good pleasure be" (IV.i.26), as well as references to God's exclusive ability to make judgments, such as "God shall be my hope" (II.iii.23), "God in justice that revealed to us The truth" (II.iv.104–5), and "God's secret judgment" (III.ii.31).

<sup>30</sup>This comprises the core of Thayer's argument for his entire book, but for the discussion of Henry V, in particular, see the chapter, "The Mirror of all Christian Kings" (143–68).

<sup>31</sup>Timothy Rosendale, "Sacral and Sacramental Kingship in the Lancastrian Tetralogy," *Shakespeare and the Culture of Christianity in Early Modern England*, ed. Dennis Taylor and David Beauregard (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003) 121–40. Paul A. Cantor also sees a fundamental shift from a Catholic to a Protestant monarch across the tetralogy in "Shakespeare's *Henry V*: From the Medieval to the Modern World," *Perspectives on Politics in Shakespeare*, ed. John A. Murley and Sean D. Sutton (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006) 11–32. For Cantor, the plays represent a move from a medieval monarchy that oversaw an unstable feudal structure and answered to the Church as a prominent authority, to the Tudor model in which all authority, both political and ecclesiastical, becomes centralized in the monarch as head of state.

<sup>32</sup>A central example for Rosendale's argument is the treatment of the Eucharist in the *Book of Common Prayer*. In contrast to the Catholic doctrines of transubstantiation and real presence, the *BCP* put a text into everyone's hands that presented the Eucharist strictly in terms of representation and remembrance.

<sup>33</sup>Rosendale 124. It is also worth noting that Rosendale, using a particularly protestant definition of "sacramental," reverses the normal trend of labeling Henry's style of kingship. Richard F. Hardin, in his study of the role of ceremony in the play, for example, sets Cranmer's view that royal anointment is "but a ceremony" as the direct opposite of "sacramental" (Hardin 142).

**Epilogue**  
**“All the Argument is a Whore and a Cuckold”:** **Troy Outside of History in**  
*Troilus and Cressida*

As a final step in our discussion of Shakespeare’s use of the Troy story, and especially Aeneas, to represent a mythic past and the classical code of *pietas* in the English history plays, we must acknowledge *Troilus and Cressida* as the proverbial elephant in the room. Only a few years after finishing *Henry V*,<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare writes a play set during the Trojan War in which Aeneas himself comes on stage as a character. Yet, far from providing an extended look at this *pius* and heroic figure, or embracing the rich heritage of ideals and meaning grounded in the Trojan War, *Troilus and Cressida* creates a much more troubling picture that seems to undermine the Troy myth at every turn.

Within the first few lines, the Prologue strips the conflict down to its bare essentials, saying: “The ravished Helen, Menelaus’s queen, / With wanton Paris sleeps, and that’s the quarrel” (I.Pro.9–10). When Thersites, likewise, later makes his jaded statement, “All the argument is a whore and a cuckold” (II.iii.71–2), the play provides the audience with little reason to argue. Instead of valorous actions and larger-than-life epic warriors, the play shows men and women, exhausted and mired down in an unwinnable war whose purpose remains constantly open to question. Yet this apparently deflated epic provides a poignant counterpoint, through its cynicism, to the English history plays. Following *Henry V*, which dealt with England’s own national hero in near epic terms, *Troilus and Cressida* removes epic material from the historical narrative that gives it meaning, and treats it as a confused, static moment in

time. Divorced from the actions and consequences they set in motion, Achilles's anger and Hector's death carry little cultural significance for those who experience them first-hand.

“For Shakespeare, unlike his contemporary George Chapman, who translated Homer into English, the legacy of the *Iliad* appears to have been more dubious than inspiring,” Jonathan Crewe writes in his introduction to *Troilus and Cressida*.<sup>2</sup> Certainly, the play often “selects the least reputable versions of [the] characters and events,” and presents them in a way that “heightens their unsavory aspects,”<sup>3</sup> which many critics take as unmistakable proof that Shakespeare meant to discredit England's Trojan heritage. Matthew Greenfield, for example, argues that the play “undercuts the genealogical narratives of literary history and nationalism,”<sup>4</sup> and Heather James suggests that it “cast[s] in epistemological doubt the ideological ground on which the Tudors had based their myths of political origin.”<sup>5</sup> As an isolated play, *Troilus and Cressida* provides much support for these claims; yet, taken in the context of the author's larger corpus of works, we encounter a problematic contradiction. As we have seen, Shakespeare uses allusions to Troy to evoke ideas of *pietas*, kingship, and heroism throughout the history plays; and he does the same in many other plays throughout his career. Furthermore, in *Hamlet*, a play fairly close to *Troilus and Cressida* in composition, Shakespeare embraces the power and beauty contained in the fall of Troy at a prominent moment in the play. As discussed in Chapter 1, the Player's recitation of the death of Priam provides Hamlet, and the audience, with a familiar and meaningful image to give sense and perspective to

Hamlet's own situation.<sup>6</sup> Placed side by side with such a serious and sincere use of Virgil's account of Troy, it seems unlikely that *Troilus and Cressida* simply provides a scathing look at England's cultural origins.

Marjorie Garber actually links *Troilus and Cressida* to *Hamlet*, specifically, calling it "a play that might almost have been written by Hamlet."<sup>7</sup> Garber cites the cynicism, the "internal debate" between pragmatism and idealism, and its resistance to action until the very end as qualities that would suit the Danish prince's personality. Indeed, Hamlet's disillusionment, both with politics and with the fidelity of women, might very well change the content of the Player's speech into something that looks like *Troilus*. While Garber's description functions primarily as an amusing description of the play, approaching it as a possible response to *Hamlet* provides a useful lens for examining *Troilus and Cressida*. Lewis Walker, likewise, sees the play as a response to *Henry V* and the epic qualities it uses to portray a national hero. *Troilus and Cressida* explores the "instability of history," which comes out of the "impasse created by the resistance of history to idealizing form at the end of *Henry V*."<sup>8</sup> Walker sees the Epilogue in *Henry V* as a frustrated attempt to establish a national epic, because Henry VI's failures intrude upon Henry V's success. As a response, *Troilus and Cressida* explores the narrative contradictions that plague the epic genre as a whole.

I follow Garber and Walker in approaching *Troilus and Cressida* as a response to *Hamlet* and *Henry V*, but I would like to take a slightly different approach. The connection to these two earlier plays comes through specific scenes

that actively make meaning out of events. In *Hamlet*, the Player tells a narrative loaded with cultural meaning and baggage, and Hamlet and the audience share the tasks of sorting out the details and making relevant connections to the prince's dilemma. *Henry V*, especially in the Chorus's speeches, creates an English epic hero, transforming Hal into King Henry into "Warlike Henry," and finally, into "this star of England." Although neither play questions the elevated status of its subject, both involve overt actions of interpretation. The plays show figures in a present moment making sense of actions that took place in the past. *Troilus and Cressida*, by contrast, reverses the narrative process of the Player's speech and the Chorus's commentary. Rather than bring persons and events from the past into the present through epic narration, it begins with the most recognizable epic material available and strips it of all historical overlay that tries to give it meaning. Whereas historical narration depends on a sequential chain of events whose apparent causality links one moment to the next, Shakespeare here isolates one event from its context. *Troilus and Cressida* presents a narrow and focused look at a small part of the Trojan War, a view of the characters locked in their own present moment without any access to the audience's larger historical perspective.

The Prologue's opening lines immediately define the scope of the play's action for the audience. Setting the scene and giving the history of the conflict, he says:

In Troy there lies the scene. From isles of Greece  
The princes orgulous, their high blood chafed,

Have to the port of Athens sent their ships  
 Fraught with the ministers and instruments  
 Of cruel war. Sixty and nine, that wore  
 Their crownets regal, from th' Athenian bay  
 Put forth toward Phrygia, and their vow is made  
 To ransack Troy, within whose strong immures  
 The ravished Helen, Menelaus queen,  
 With wanton Paris sleeps, and that's the quarrel (Pro.1–10).

The highly-wrought language certainly suggests the epic quality of the subject, and the background narration allows the play to engage a typical *in medias res* beginning to the action. However, this opening does very little “recoursing to the things forepaste” to make a “pleasing Analysis of all,”<sup>9</sup> but more accurately, in the Prologue’s own words, “Leaps o’er the vaunt and firstlings of those broils, / Beginning in the middle” (Pro.27–8). Spenser’s ideal for the “poet historical” allows for starting in the middle as a way to control information and present events in the order and structure that best makes sense. The Prologue in *Troilus and Cressida*, by contrast, simply eliminates information rather than attempting to control it. Nine short lines explain the beginnings of the Trojan War, and the phrase “that’s the quarrel” closes the matter for good, summarily dismissing it from the audience’s attention and the play’s concern. This play takes place in Troy, with the war fully underway, and anything that came before is, quite literally, ancient history.

Moreover, the Prologue situates us in a conspicuously present moment, using the word “now” three separate times in the opening speech. Lewis Walker notes that this trend echoes the Chorus before Act II of *Henry V*, where the Chorus describes the mood in England as the king prepares for war with France.<sup>10</sup> “Now all the youth in England are on fire,” he tells the audience (II.Cho.1). “Now thrive the armorers,” “They sell the pasture now to buy the horse,” and “now sits Expectation in the air” (II.Cho.3, 5, 8). In *Henry V*, this “now” implies a comparison with a former state, contrasting excited preparation with the waiting and wondering that came before. In *Troilus and Cressida*, the “nows” perform a different function. After the abbreviated history of the war’s origins, the Prologue describes the Greeks “Now on Dardan plains” (Pro.13). “Now expectation,” he says, “sets all on hazard,” and “Now good or bad, ‘tis but the chance of war” (Pro.20, 22, 31). Whereas the Chorus’s use of “now” in *Henry V* bridges a gap between acts, dwelling only momentarily on preparation before the action that follows it, the Prologue of *Troilus and Cressida* uses “now” to establish the present conditions. He describes static circumstances that set the scene for the entire play, during which little, if anything, will happen to alter the situation in Troy. The opening speech describes only the speaker’s moment, with no attempt to look beyond it to the outcomes that may follow.

The figure of the Prologue himself only reinforces the degree to which the play grounds its action in a present moment. While a Prologue or Chorus figure normally stands outside the play’s action, providing useful commentary, this one enters the stage dressed as a participant of the on-going war. He describes himself as



“A Prologue armed, but not in confidence / Of author’s pen or actor’s voice, but suited / In like conditions as our argument” (Pro.23–5). Robert Weimann, most notably, focuses on these lines to frame his discussion of the competing authorities represented by printed text and by the stage. The Prologue’s reservations about his authority “inflect the absence of confidence in the play’s nexus of word and action,” in a play that so centrally deals with both.<sup>11</sup> As narrator of a historical narrative, however, the Prologue’s self-description may have a much simpler explanation. If we understand this figure as a member of one of the warring armies, he has no real capacity to interpret the significance of the war. He cannot arm himself with the authority of a writer of history nor of an actor who portrays it on the stage. He can only offer “like conditions as our argument,” providing the audience with what he knows and understands at this moment in the Trojan War.

The Prologue opens the play by denying the audience any opportunity to contextualize the action within the larger, familiar, mythic view. Likewise, the play ends by similarly disabling the larger narrative structure. Although Hector lies dead, Priam, Hecuba, and the rest of Troy have yet to hear about it. Troilus leaves the stage, vowing to fight Achilles and telling Aeneas that Troy should comfort itself in the “Hope of revenge” (V.x.31). While the audience “knows” what will happen next, nothing in the play’s resolution (or lack thereof) acknowledges the events that Aeneas will recount to Dido in the relatively near future. Although the audience may recognize that Hector’s death represents the beginning of the end for Troy, the play refuses any moment of tragic recognition beyond Troilus’s “Let him that will a

screech owl aye be called / Go in to Troy, and say there Hector's dead" (V.x.16–17). Since the characters, with the possible exception of Cassandra, cannot predict Troy's fall, Shakespeare shows us a Troy where the eventual fall remains irrelevant. Even when Cassandra makes her prophecy that Troy will burn if they do not return Helen, she cannot function as the authoritative voice of history. Trapped within the present moment, she remains only "our mad sister" (II.ii.99), just another voice competing for influence on the Trojan council.

Such a historically localized viewpoint may constitute the most extreme example of the perspectivism that Paola Pugliati sees at work in Shakespeare's history plays. Shakespeare's greatest innovation in writing history, Pugliati says, lay in his ability to abandon the overt moralizing typical of early Tudor chronicles and to cross-examine a subject from multiple points of view.<sup>12</sup> In doing so, he showed "an awareness of how the past, apparently crystallized in unchanging documents and monuments, may turn out, from the distant vantage-point of the historian, to be unstable and multiform."<sup>13</sup> Within the English history play, she argues, Shakespeare presents elements from both sides of the disputes, ostensibly allowing the historical material itself to shape the moral outcome. This idea of internal perspective might help us sort out the seeming contradictions at the heart of *Troilus and Cressida* and its presentation of the Troy legend. Rather than looking back from the present moment to evaluate what Troy or Helen means, the play presents the central conflicts of the Trojan War as the Greeks and Trojans may have seen them.<sup>14</sup> The only evaluation of events can come from within the incomplete Troy story itself.

The play shows a concern with such questions of evaluation and definition early in Act I when Cressida and Pandarus watch the warriors returning from battle into Troy. Pandarus's question, "Do you know a man if you see him?" (I.ii.63.) establishes the theme for the rest of the scene. While Pandarus clearly asks about the qualities of manhood, and Cressida turns it into an issue of identity when she responds, "Ay, if I ever saw him before and knew him" (I.ii.64), both questions prove absolutely crucial to examining the major players in the Trojan War. Pandarus wants to make a favorable comparison between Troilus and his brothers, and in doing so, he brings the issue of heroic valor to the forefront. Cressida's interpretation, likewise, asks the audience to consider what defines each familiar character. Does the audience know an Aeneas or a Hector if they see him? Yet the crux of the problem rests in a matter of self identity. Pandarus tries to convince Cressida of Troilus's merit, by comparing him first to Hector and then to Paris, but Cressida constantly resists any authority that tries to interpret their relative worth for her. "Troilus is Troilus," Pandarus tells her and "Hector is not Troilus in some degrees" (I.ii.65, 68). Cressida responds, "'Tis just to each of them; he is himself" (I.ii.70). The unique qualities that define each man resist Pandarus's attempts to compare them for Cressida. Whatever Pandarus can say for each remains irrelevant to the other, because, truly, "there's no comparison" (I.ii.61).

The playful banter that fills the rest of the scene constantly tries to grapple with this problem. When Pandarus next appeals to Helen as an authority, claiming that she values Troilus above her own Paris, Cressida dismisses Helen's judgment,

saying, “Then she’s a merry Greek indeed” (I.ii.107).<sup>15</sup> Cressida only trusts her own evaluations, based on what she sees of the Trojan heroes. Alone on stage at the end of the scene, she makes a distinction between the descriptions she gets from Pandarus and from her own perceptions:

Words, vows, gifts, tears, and love’s full sacrifice

He offers in another’s enterprise;

But more in Troilus thousandfold I see

Than in the glass of Pandar’s praise may be (I.ii.275–8).

Although Pandarus’s description seeks to elevate Troilus in Cressida’s estimation, it does more to distort the virtues that she can see with her own eyes. Pandarus inadvertently supports this idea earlier in the scene when the warriors pass by on their way through the gate. After all his hyperbolic claims about Hector and Troilus, he resorts to ocular proof to prove Hector’s valor: “Look you what hacks are on his helmet. Look you yonder, do you see? Look you there. There’s no jesting; there’s laying on, take’t off who will, as they say. There be hacks!” (I.ii.199–202). Whatever Cressida does to refute both Pandarus and Helen as authorities to define which of Priam’s sons is the greatest, Pandarus knows that she can evaluate Hector based on the physical proof of his deeds.

Up to this point, Pandarus relies on epic language and metaphor to try to construct heroic identities for both Troilus and Hector. At this moment, however, he acknowledges in plain language the real criteria that mark Hector as a hero. The epic hero in this scene, and throughout the rest of the play, is not a figure we see perform

great deeds on the battlefield, but the tired man who comes home with hacks on his helmet. Epic descriptions arise from interpreters like Pandarus, who, the scene suggests, make dubious authorities at best. The play undermines traditional epic authorities and their interpretations to present the characters behind the Troy legend, unfinished in this static moment.

This limited moment in time, removed from linear history and therefore cut off from traditional historical interpretation, dictates what we see of Aeneas, the most English of Trojans. Aeneas's defining moment, where he carries his father and leads his son from burning Troy, will not occur until some time after the play ends. As such, the play deprives us of the epic content we most often use to describe the founder of Rome. Moreover, only two characters comment directly on Aeneas as a figure in the play. As he returns from battle, Pandarus describes him as a "brave man" and "one of the flowers of Troy" (I.ii.182–3). This singles Aeneas out as a person worth noting, unlike the "Asses, fools, dolts; chaff and bran" (I.ii.236) that follow the great heroes; but Pandarus never expands on what virtues he possesses that earn him merit. In the next scene, Aeneas's inflated and ornate language causes Agamemnon to observe, "This Trojan scorns us, or the men of Troy / Are ceremonious courtiers" (I.iii.232–2). While the Greek general's jibe is fairly innocuous, it reminds us that the play does not contain Virgil's "*pius* Aeneas," a man defined by his unflagging dedication to his family, state, and gods.

Aeneas remains largely undistinguished in *Troilus and Cressida*. He often serves as a functionary or intermediary, fetching Troilus to battle, carrying Hector's

challenge to the Greek camp, acting as Cressida's Trojan escort in the trade of prisoners, and refereeing the duel between Hector and Ajax. Certainly, he presents a fairly admirable figure as Priam's son-in-law who carries out royal business, but he does not tower over the play as the founder of Western civilization. Quite simply, he is not yet the founder of Western civilization within the limited scope of the play. Troy has not fallen, he has not rescued his son and father, he has not lost his wife in the process, and he has not carried his culture with him onto the Mediterranean Sea. Further, he has not encountered Dido, has not proven his *pietas*, has not slain Turnus, and has not laid the cultural foundations of Rome. While these seem like ludicrously obvious statements, they highlight an important point about the nature of Aeneas's identity. Shakespeare's audience defined Aeneas largely by his actions, actions that take place after the fall of Troy. The Aeneas we see in *Troilus and Cressida*, contextualized in his own present, lives a respectable life among Troy's royalty, has a loving wife and son, and provides a comfortable home for his aged father.

Setting this image of Aeneas next to their mythic Trojan forbear, or even this view of Troy next to its epic counterpart, Shakespeare's audience may have felt the same frustration that Troilus experiences on seeing Cressida enter Diomedes's tent. He suddenly confronts a paradox of identities that causes him drastically to redefine his relationship to Cressida:

This is she? No, this is Diomed's Cressida.

If beauty have a soul, this is not she;

If souls guide vows, if vows be sanctimonies,

If sanctimony be gods' delight,  
 If there be rule in unity itself,  
 This was not she. O madness of discourse,  
 That cause sets up with and against itself;  
 Bifold authority, where reason can revolt  
 Without perdition, and loss assume all reason  
 Without revolt. This is and is not Cressid (V.iii.140–9).

Troilus cannot but admit that the woman who just gave away his love token and entered another man's tent is the same Cressida whom he wooed in Troy. Yet, she is not the Cressida that Troilus defines by her love, her vows, and her fidelity to him. The real person and the set of traits composing her ideal identity do not coincide, so Troilus separates them into two people of the same name. "Diomed's Cressida" may be inconstant and subject to the influences of her shifting political position, but Troilus's Cressida exists in an idealized past, though only a few hours old, where she remains perfectly loved, loving, and faithful.

Likewise, for Shakespeare's audience, *Troilus and Cressida* presents something that is and is not Troy. Agamemnon, Achilles, Ulysses, and all the Greeks fight the Trojan Princes and their soldiers over Menelaus's kidnapped wife; but without the war's outcome or the work of intervening epic narrators, this conflict consists of nothing more than a fight over "a whore and a cuckold." The Troy of Homer and Virgil, the Troy that Shakespeare references as a symbol of virtue in the English history plays, resembles Troilus's ideal Cressida. Locked safely in an

idealized past, this Troy allows a viewer in the present moment to make sense of it and impose order on it. Like Troilus, hidden in the darkness outside Diomedes's tent, the audience of *Troilus and Cressida* sees its epic ideal brought into conflict with the nastiness of real life. Yet, for Troilus, the real Cressida's actions do not diminish the traits he prizes in his ideal Cressida—in fact, Cressida's actions throw his ideals into sharp relief. He vows revenge on Diomedes on behalf of his enduring love for Cressida (V.iii.170–9), and we can only assume that he means his ideal Cressida. So, too, *Troilus and Cressida* makes an audience hyper-aware of its accepted understanding of the Trojan War, its heroes, and its consequences. By showing a conflict that contains nothing but “lechery, lechery, still wars and lechery” (V.ii.197–8), the play highlights all the epic interpretations and associations that cast the Troy legend in higher terms.

Furthermore, we need not see this as subversive to England's Trojan foundation myth, or its associated code of *pietas*, at the end of the sixteenth century. The play leaves intact the grand narrative that informs kingly images in the English history plays and defines James's new capital city as *Troy Novant*. Connections between England and Troy through Brutus and Aeneas remain powerful images through the first two decades of the seventeenth century, and certainly throughout Shakespeare's later plays. *Troilus and Cressida* does, however, highlight the overtly constructed nature of the meanings associated with Britain's Trojan heritage. It suggests that the commonplace associations connected with the names and figures of Troy can only gain relevance after the fact, as they have little meaning in the present



of a past moment. The story of Troy contains meaning only when it participates in the larger mythic project, a narrative that includes the Roman Empire, the foundation of Britain, the War of the Roses, and London as a shining New Troy.

For Shakespeare's audience, this constructed, epic Troy played a crucial role in history's most important task, negotiating "the rupture that is constantly debated between past and present."<sup>16</sup> Functioning as a touchstone of heroic ethos and *pious* leadership, it provides ready terms of comparison for Talbot's heroism, Henry VI's inaction, and Gloucester's benevolent statecraft, casting them as constituent parts of the same narrative. As the pinnacle of epic loss and downfall, it creates scale and perspective for England's decline during its civil war. Finally, for *Henry V*, like the civic pageants that would celebrate James's accession, this vision of Troy provides the noblest of heritages on which to build an empire. The *pietas* passed down from Troy to Rome and Britain functions as the core of an emerging British identity, perfected by Christian piety, the one true faith, and political unity.

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<sup>1</sup>Dating *Troilus and Cressida* proves consistently problematic, since it was entered into the Stationer's Register in 1603, but not printed until 1609, in two versions with conflicting accounts about whether or not it was ever performed by the Chamberlain's Men. 1601 provides a likely date, based on topical allusions in the text, specifically the Prologue, which seems a direct response to Jonson's *Poetaster*. For two strong defenses of this date, see E. A. J. Honigman, "The Date and Revision of *Troilus and Cressida*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48 (1997): 295–313; and Anthony Dawson, "Introduction," *Troilus and Cressida* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 1–73.

<sup>2</sup>Jonathan Crewe, "Introduction," *Troilus and Cressida* (New York: Penguin, 2002) xxiii.

<sup>3</sup>Heather James, *Shakespeare's Troy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 93.

<sup>4</sup>Matthew Greenfield, "Fragments of Nationalism in *Troilus and Cressida*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51 (2000) 187.

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<sup>5</sup>James 33.

<sup>6</sup>See the opening pages of Chapter 1.

<sup>7</sup>Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All* (New York: Pantheon, 2004) 538.

<sup>8</sup>Lewis Walker, "Troilus and Cressida: An Epitaph for the History Play," *Renaissance Papers* (2008) 156. Walker focuses on the play's *in medias res* beginning as both its most epic convention and its most troubling feature since it serves to destabilize the plot rather than to control it. In doing so, the play "embodies the cyclical, unstable nature of secularized history" (138).

<sup>9</sup>Edmund Spenser, "Letter to Raleigh," *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A.C. Hamilton et al. (New York: Longman, 2006) 716–17.

<sup>10</sup>Walker 152.

<sup>11</sup>Robert Weimann, *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice: Playgoing and Writing in Shakespeare's Theater* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 62.

<sup>12</sup>Robert Kimbrough sees this lack of moralizing as a defining feature for *Troilus and Cressida*, claiming that "Shakespeare made no attempt to shape his material so that it would carry thematic reverberations outside the play." *Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida and its Setting* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964) 73. Heather James builds on this, taking a step farther: "Shakespeare not only refuses to shape his material, but systematically subverts the narrative shapes into which the Troy legend had been cast" (90).

<sup>13</sup>Paola Pugliati, *Shakespeare the Historian* (New York: St. Martin's, 1996) 54.

<sup>14</sup>David Hillman takes a similar view of the play in "The Gastric Epic: *Troilus and Cressida*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48 (1997): 295–313. Hillman argues that the play focuses on the mundane, and especially bodily elements, as an experiment in "recorporalizing the epic of the Trojan War" (296). Hillman sees an attempt to humanize a telling of the Trojan War, though he eventually goes on to claim that this aims at undercutting English idealism of their Trojan heritage.

<sup>15</sup>For a good discussion of what "merry Greek" would mean for a Shakespearean audience, see T. J. B. Spencer, "'Greeks' and 'Merrygreeks': A Background to *Timon of Athens* and *Troilus and Cressida*," *Essays on Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama in Honor of Hardin Craig*, ed. Richard Hosley (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1962) 223–33.

<sup>16</sup>Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) 44.

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