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Farewell, King!
Staging the Middle Ages in Nineteenth-century
London Performances of Shakespeare's *Richard II*

Leiden/Florianópolis
2023

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O presente trabalho em nível de Doutorado foi avaliado e aprovado, em 21 de junho de 2023, pela banca examinadora composta pelos seguintes membros:

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Florianópolis, 2023.

Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them unto thy soul with hoops of steel,
[...]

This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

(Hamlet, Act I, Scene 3)

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Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Ye all which it inherit, shall dissolve.
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff,
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

(The Tempest, 4.1.146-158)

RESUMO

Esta tese de doutorado explora como três produções da peça *Ricardo II* de William Shakespeare recriam a Idade Média, elucidando as complexidades de negociar várias camadas de passado na arte.

Edmund Kean encenou a deposição de Ricardo II no Teatro Drury Lane em 1815, após a deposição e exílio de Napoleão Bonaparte na Ilha de Elba. A deposição de Napoleão é, desta forma, espelhada no palco do Drury Lane, e a personificação de Napoleão por Kean evoca simultaneamente uma decepção com o fracasso do radicalismo e uma celebração da monarquia sobre a revolução.

Em 1850, William Charles Macready encenou a peça no Teatro Haymarket. Ao contrário da apreciação romântica do *pathos* do personagem, os vitorianos reavaliaram Ricardo II como um personagem moralmente falho. Sua punição é assim justificada por sua deslealdade tanto para com Deus, que o ungiu rei, quanto para com seus súditos. Macready usou Shakespeare para legitimar seu projeto de elevar o status do meio teatral, usando a história como pano de fundo para representar Shakespeare.

Finalmente, em 1857, no Princess's Theatre, Charles Kean combinou o antiquarianismo vitoriano com a cultura popular extravagante para oferecer instrução e entretenimento ao público. Kean usa encenação e imaginação embasadas em extensa pesquisa histórica para oferecer ao espectador uma experiência de ver e viver o passado.

Palavras-chave: Medievalismos; William Shakespeare; Ricardo II; Historiografia do Teatro; Londres do século XIX.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores how three productions of Shakespeare's Richard II recreate the Middle Ages, elucidating the complexities of negotiating several layers of past in art.

Edmund Kean staged the deposition of Richard II at Drury Lane in 1815 in the aftermath of Napoléon Bonaparte's deposition and exile from Elba. Napoléon's deposition is thus mirrored on the Drury Lane stage, and the embodiment of Napoléon by Kean evokes simultaneously a disappointment at the failure of radicalism and a celebration of monarchy over revolution.

In 1850 William Charles Macready staged the play at the Haymarket. Contrary to the Romantic appreciation of the character's pathos, Victorians reassessed Richard II as a morally flawed character. His punishment is thus justified by his disloyalty both to God, who anointed him king, and to his subjects. Macready used Shakespeare to legitimize his project to elevate the status of the theatrical business, using history as a background to represent Shakespeare.

Finally, in 1857 at the Princess's Theatre, Charles Kean combined Victorian antiquarianism and popular extravagant culture to offer instruction and entertainment to the public. Kean uses stagecraft and imagination grounded on extensive historical research to offer the spectator an experience of seeing and living the past.

Keywords: Medievalisms; William Shakespeare; Richard II; Theatre Historiography; 19th-century London.

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INTRODUÇÃO

Richard II was absent from the London stages for nearly eighty years before Edmund Kean's production at Drury Lane in 1815. In the aftermath of Napoléon Bonaparte's deposition and exile, Kean revived the Shakespearean play that stages the overthrow of a king. Thirty-five years after that, William Charles Macready selected the same play to be part of his farewell season's repertoire at Haymarket Theatre in a one-night-only representation. Shakespeare was a key name in Macready's efforts to increase the respectability of the theatrical business in the mid-nineteenth century. And, seven years later, Charles Kean revived the same play in a sumptuous production at the Princess's Theatre, offering the public a mixture of spectacle and historical authenticity. This dissertation explores these three productions of Shakespeare's *Richard II* on the London stage in the first half of the nineteenth century, analysing them in relation to their different contexts of production within their historical and cultural moments.

Richard II is an intriguing play in the Shakespearean canon, because it explicitly stages the deposition of a king.¹ In a daunting scene in Act IV, the protagonist performs a reversed coronation ritual, unkinging himself and yielding the crown to his cousin Bolingbroke, the future Henry IV. The possibility of drawing political associations with the context of production of the play is the reason why *Richard II* takes centre stage in this dissertation. Furthermore, when investigating the performance history of the play in the London theatrical scene, I have noticed that, despite being a popular play at the time of its conception (it was published in 6 quartos), its popularity decreased after the Restoration. Following a production at Covent Garden in 1738, *Richard II* was not performed at all on London stages until 1815. The question that naturally follows is *why* the play remained absent from the theatres and whether the reason was connected with the political potential of the play.

The guiding research question in this dissertation regards what prompted a revival of interest in the Middle Ages and in Shakespeare's *Richard II* during the

¹ Royal deposition is also present in *Henry VI, Part 3*, however it does not happen explicitly on stage as it happens in *Richard II*. The third part of *Henry VI* has rarely been performed in its entirety. J. H. Marivale included scenes of parts 1 and 2 for his *Richard, Duke of York*, acted by Edmund Kean in 1817. The goal was to increase Kean's part. According to the editor Randall Martin in *The Oxford Shakespeare*, "Marivale cut out more or less everything not directly involving York, and rewrote his story as a determined but increasingly isolated and doomed hero" (12).

period between 1815 and 1857, when Edmund Kean's, Macready's and Charles Kean's productions premiered on the London stages. How did these theatre managers adapt Shakespeare's political play for their contemporary audiences? And what can the analysis of these productions tell us about nineteenth-century understandings of the medieval past? Although the core of this research lies in the first half of the nineteenth century, I return to Shakespeare's creation of *Richard II* in c. 1595 as a window for understanding Early Modern conceptions of the Middle Ages. The reconstruction of a past age is never objective but includes echoes of previous interpretations of that past. For example, modern reconstructions of the medieval past are inevitably affected by nineteenth-century impressions of the Middle Ages. In their time, Edmund Kean, Macready and Charles Kean looked at the medieval past through Shakespeare's Early Modern lens, and adapted the sixteenth-century text according to their needs and beliefs. This study, therefore, investigates the connections between three layers of time: the Middle Ages, the Early Modern period and the first half of the nineteenth century.

Every time a play is staged, it creates new connections with the public and within the historical, political and cultural contexts of the time. When analysing theatrical productions from the past, it is therefore essential to explore these connections, as performance should be understood as part of a cultural moment. A play is not a stable product. Its potential meanings change according to its time of representation. In the case of a history play such as *Richard II*, that instability increases. That is because understandings of what the Middle Ages represented and looked like have also altered through time. When Shakespeare first created the play, there was not yet a clear definition of the medieval past. The Italian humanist Petrarch (1304-1374) had made a distinction between the 'lightness' of Classical Antiquity and the 'darkness' of ignorance that followed the fall of Rome. With a supposed rebirth of enlightenment during the Italian Renaissance, Petrarch's humanist view referred to this 'middle' period before modernity as the Dark Ages. The consolidation of that moment in the past as the Middle Ages took place in England in the course of the eighteenth century, although the first occurrence of the word medieval in English language occurs only in 1817. Therefore, in England, a clear understanding of the medieval past as culturally and politically distinct from other periods of time postdates Shakespeare's lifetime. By means of theatrical, visual and textual adaptations of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, it is possible to trace an overview of

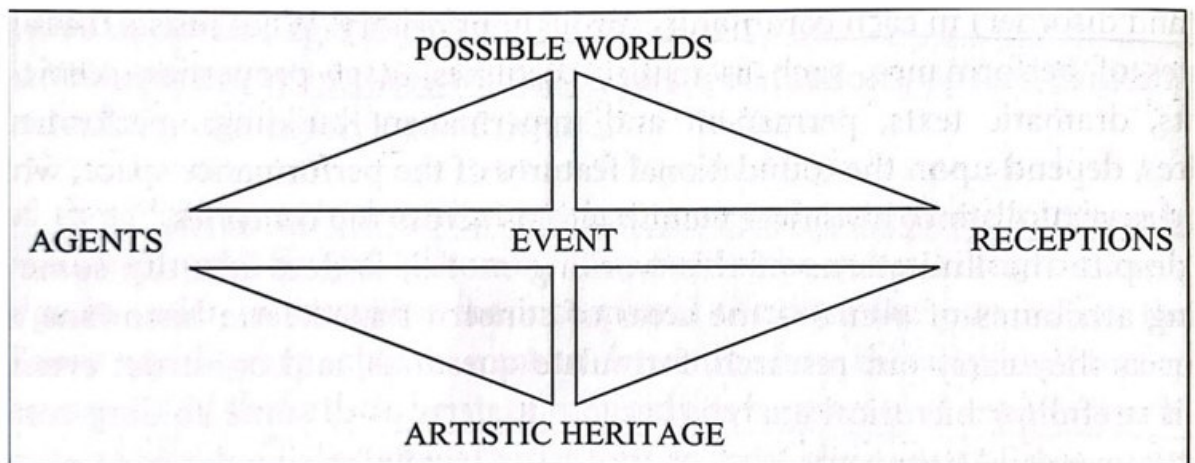
this change in perceptions of the medieval past, recognising it as a broader cultural process that transcends the stage. By means of the analysis of the Shakespearean dramatic text, illustrated editions of the play and the three productions that make up the corpus of this research, this dissertation investigates and explains this change in cultural perceptions of the Middle Ages in the English tradition from the turn of the nineteenth century until 1857. Theoretical Framework and Method

This dissertation combines cultural and theoretical approaches to investigate Shakespeare's *Richard II* in performance in London in the first half of the nineteenth century specifically regarding engagements with the medieval past through art. The cultural analysis in this dissertation is inserted within the areas of theatre historiography and medievalism. It is based on a close reading of the dramatic text in relation to its contexts of production and adaptation. According to Thomas Postlewait, "because of our temporal consciousness, our historical understanding has become as crucial to the study of the natural world as to the study of the human world" (5). A comprehensive understanding of history and humans' role within the historiographical processes allow for a deeper comprehension of society.

The theatre historian reconstructs the past by perusing historical records of the theatrical event within its contexts of production. This relationship between theatre and contexts is not one of opposition, but is, in fact, a web of interrelationships, as Postlewait explains. The problem in failing to understand the interrelationship of theatre with its contexts is placing an overall focus on external factors, which leaves little or no agency to the energies within the theatrical space. As Postlewait puts it, "this idea of a [single] determining context makes the [theatrical] event a mere effect of whatever external factors the historian identifies. Human motives, intentions, and acts become negligible" (11). Conversely, accepting the interdependence of theatre and contexts, and acknowledging that the forces in play in this cultural process are not one-directional but multiple, complicating the reductive binary of text-context, paves the way for a more comprehensive analysis of the whole.

Postlewait proposes a model which combines four factors that affect the theatrical event: agents, possible worlds, reception, and artistic heritage. The first explores the exchanges between the production and its agents, "specifically the relationship that operates between the event and those who created it: the playwright, the director, the performer, the designers. These people who plan,

organize, and realize the event are all agents” (Postlewait 12). The second refers to the relationship between the production and the world(s) in which it is situated, “so part of what we find in the event is the artist’s personal relation to the world: biographical factors, linguistic codes, sociopolitical conditions, values, beliefs, and views, national experiences and identities, ideologies, and possible understanding” (Postlewait 13). The third factor investigates the reception of the play. According to Postlewait, “spectators, in the process of viewing a production, draw upon not only their experiences with and ideas about the world but also their experiences with and ideas about the artistic heritage”, therefore, “the reception network completes the event – sometimes in accord with the motives and aims of the agents, but sometimes in accord with the quite different agendas of the spectators” (18). And, finally, the fourth factor analyses the interaction between the present theatrical work and previous artistic productions: “each artist, when creating any artistic work, operate[s] within and against the artistic heritage – the aesthetic traditions, influences, canons, stylistic codes, mentors, institutions, and cultural semiotics” (Postlewait 18). All these four factors affect the theatrical event to different degrees, just as the event affects the world, agents, reception and artistic heritage. Furthermore, the four factors may also influence one another (See figure 1). My analysis of the three productions of



Shakespeare’s *Richard II* in this dissertation follows Postlewait’s understanding of the practice of theatre historiography, indicating the interconnections between the theatrical events with the four aspects of contexts.

Figura 1 - Thomas Postlewait's model for theatrical analysis (Postlewait 18)

Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson place creativity and reflexivity as the core aspects of research methods in theatre and performance. They invoke three triads of disciplinary terms that offer the theoretical basis for any performance analysis. The first 'drama / theatre / performance' dates back to Raymond Williams' *Drama in Performance* (1954), and is related to the places and conditions of performance. In other words, the physical space of the stage and playhouse, but also the contextual variants that affect the theatrical production. The second triad 'cultural / organisational / technological' is based on John McKenzie's ideas on paradigms of performance in *Perform or Else* (2001). As McKenzie explains, "these performance paradigms are themselves composed of movements of generalization, by which diverse activities are gathered together and conceptualized as performance" (29). McKenzie understands not only stage entertainment, tragedies, comedies, dances, operas, etc., as cultural performances, but also bodily cultural expressions, such as rituals, social interactions, nonverbal communication, and the workings of gender, race and sexual politics (8). McKenzie thus comprehends performance in a broader sense of the word, taking into account not only the rehearsed action for the stage, but what he sees as the theatricality and performativity of human relations. Finally, the third triumvirate put forward by Kershaw and Nicholson is 'multi- / inter- / trans-(disciplinary)'. Kershaw and Nicholson affirm that the cultural practices in performance analysis involve a myriad of skill-sets and knowledge domains that transition between drama and theatre. Therefore they consist of a multidisciplinary approach. These practices are also interdisciplinary, combining knowledge from other disciplines "to create the in-between (or liminal) qualities of performance"; and transdisciplinary, because they challenge prior disciplinary boundaries, "destabilising the binaries of existing as/is and epistemology/ontology configurations" (Kershaw and Nicholson 7). The authors stress that these three sets of words do not follow any specific order or hierarchical organization. What they emphasise is the reflexivity inherent to the practice of cultural analysis. According to the authors, this reflexivity is

Essential to understanding how and why theatre and performance research – alongside other creative practices – can both be defined as disciplines that encompass more or less specific subject skill-sets – say, playwriting, scenography, performer training of various kinds – and by their cultural, organisational and technological capacities to reach beyond disciplinarity as such. (Kershaw and Nicholson 7).

The cultural approach proposed by Kershaw and Nicholson emphasises a broad understanding of culture and performance. It allows agency not only to the direct performers of the dramatic text (playwrights, actors, designers, adaptors, etc.) but also to the external variants that affect the theatrical production. Additionally, and very importantly, this model highlights the need of combining knowledge and approaches from different disciplines to enrich the theoretical framework available for the scholar, multiplying the interpretative possibilities, and to study the effects of theatre in society beyond the stage.

Postlewait's and Kershaw and Nicholson's approaches to theatrical analysis have laid the foundation for this dissertation. In addition, as set out above, my theatrical analysis is enriched by the investigation of other visual practices of representation of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, including book illustrations, engravings and paintings. In this way, I expand Postlewait's understanding of artistic heritage, agents and reception, including artistic practices beyond the stage, and exploring the possibilities of multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research.

My notion of culture situates people and, consequently, all texts in the broadest sense of the word, as intrinsically connected to and affected by a web of social practices. In this perspective, a text is not an autonomous creation of a single author. Instead, the text is enriched by different voices that add different layers of interpretation and topicality to it. As this study demonstrates, the meanings elicited by the play *Richard II* have been multiplied throughout the centuries with recreations, adaptations, representations and illustrations of the text. It is possible to find in the text aspects that shed light on our understanding of culture, and simultaneously there are aspects of culture that elucidate our understanding of the text. In similar dynamics, the understanding of the past has also shifted with time, given the unstable nature of history.

History and culture are not static. Quite the contrary, they are in constant change and, at times, contradiction, as the case studies in this dissertation demonstrate. The interconnections of stage, page and picture – the scope of this study – allow for a multifaceted cultural exchange, in which different voices engage and produce new meanings. There is no one stable culture, as there is no one history. This research follows a postmodern understanding of history, which rejects the idea of a unifying or totalising narrative of social history. Instead, I understand history as multi-voiced, multiple and fragmented. In this sense, historiographical

writing, as well as historical fiction, is never disinterested or objective, hence the task of the cultural historian to explore the possible correlations between the text and the contexts around it, proposing interpretations regarding how and why a certain period of time has sparked the interest of another period of time. Historical events are adapted, transformed and reinterpreted for contemporary purposes. According to the theorist Linda Hutcheon, “this [the act of making stories out of history] does not in any way deny the existence of the past real, but it focuses attention on the act of imposing order on that past, of encoding strategies of meaning-making through representation” (66–67). In this sense, representations of the past, although inevitably subjective and imaginative, do not deny the existence of a real past. However, in an attempt to reconstruct the past, historiography or historical fiction do not necessarily impose an order on the past, but, rather, offer a contemporary audience possibilities of engaging with that past.

Postmodern theory argues that historical meaning is “unstable, contextual, relational, and provisional, ” and, “in fact, it has always been so” (Hutcheon 67). In her study of neo-historical fiction, Elodie Rousselot writes about the present’s engagement with the past. She suggests that neo-historical fiction either turns nostalgically to the past, “motivated by the reclamation of traditional values – and the rejection of modern ones”, or as a way to hide the instability and pessimism of the present time, offering “an apparent safe means of negotiating the sense of loss caused by [...] traumatic events” and “alleviating the anxiety resulting from” such political events (Rousselot 5). In other words, the past is evoked either as a means to change the present, or to escape from it. Although Rousselot’s argument concerns specifically neo-historical fiction, the same applies for earlier reconstructions of the past on the stage, page and picture.

Rousselot refers to the cultural process of “exoticizing” the past, of turning it into the “other”, different from the present time. Although this cultural practice has different implications in neo-historical fiction, this term is relevant to this study as a way to investigate the changes in artistic representations of Shakespeare’s Richard II’s medieval past in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Especially after analysing the illustrated editions of Shakespeare’s plays during this period (see Chapter 4), I noticed that there was a clear shift in how the medieval past was understood: it became increasingly different from the present. I have pinpointed this change in the mid-eighteenth century, when illustrations of Shakespeare’s Richard II

abandoned contemporary eighteenth-century clothing and incorporated a more accurate depiction of the Middle Ages. For example, the illustrated characters no longer wore eighteenth-century wigs and breeches. Instead, there was a growing awareness of a specific setting, clothing and architectural style. This shift was, of course, fuelled by the developments in the historiography of the period, which provided a better understanding of how people lived in the past. Consequently, the past became more interesting, or it was increasingly understood as different from the present. In addition, parallel to an exoticization of the past, there was an increasing desire to connect with it, especially with the people that had lived and died so long ago. Art was a way through which a bridge to the past could be created, offering a temporary illusion of seeing or participating in the past. Despite the difference in habits, beliefs, and ways of living, art demonstrated that people in any given time shared fundamental feelings of love, fear, or sadness. In this sense, the stage, page and picture recreated the past to evoke emotions, connecting past and present. Therefore, in the first half of the nineteenth century, there was a simultaneous feeling of rupture as well as continuity with the past; it became paradoxically distant and familiar.

MEDIEVALISMS

In the English tradition, a new interest in understanding and connecting with the Middle Ages arose in the 1760s (Alexander x). Since then, people have engaged with the medieval past in different ways, reinterpreting it according to contemporary beliefs. The study of such re-conceptions of the Middle Ages is what constitutes the field of medievalism. Louise D’Arcens defines it “as the reception, interpretation or recreation of the European Middle Ages in post-medieval cultures”, a phenomenon that “embraces a range of cultural practices, discourses, and material artefacts with a daunting breadth of scope, temporally, geographically, and culturally” (1–2). It is, therefore, a cultural process, which is expressed in different areas, such as art, literature, theatre, philosophy, politics, amongst others.

As Michael Alexander explains, “medievalism is the offspring of two impulses: the recovery by antiquarians of materials for the study of the Middle Ages; and the imaginative adoption of medieval ideas and forms” (xx). It is a combination of the scholarly pursuit to understand the past through archival research with the

imaginative drive to reinterpret it for modern ideals. D'Arcens makes a distinction between these two types of medievalisms: one "of the 'found' Middle Ages", and one "of the 'made' Middle Ages":

The first kind has emerged through contact with, and interpretation of, the 'found' or material remains of the medieval past surviving into the post-medieval era, while the second encompasses texts, objects, performances, and practices that are not only post-medieval in their provenance but imaginative in their impulse and founded on ideas of 'the medieval' as a conceptual rather than a historical category. (D'Arcens 2).

While the first is factual, the other is imagined. My interest lies in the points of intersection between these two medievalisms, in which the "real" Middle Ages meets the created past in a double-voiced historicism. This difference, however, is not clear-cut. D'Arcens admits that "looked at more closely, [...] the distinction between 'found' and 'made' medievalism does not hold" (3). And it is so precisely because the element of imaginative reconstruction is at the core of both and all approaches to the past. As D'Arcens puts it, "distinguishing between the medievalism of the 'found' and 'made' Middle Ages is also problematised by the fact that the creative responses to medieval remnants and artefacts have existed abidingly alongside scholarly responses" (3). The Middle Ages were explored and reconstructed not only by historians, but also by artists, intermingling fact and fiction. The result is an intricate combination of the factual with the mythical medieval past, as illustrated by the artistic productions of the period.

The Middle Ages have maintained an appeal ever since the medieval period reached its end, although that interest has fluctuated in intensity. In England, this fascination with the past brought about renewed attention to Britain's roots and its Middle Ages, an interest that spans from the Early Modern period up to our days, but reached its peak during the nineteenth century. Alice Chandler calls this phenomenon the "Medieval Revival", which found expression in diverse areas, such as art, architecture, literature, economics, politics and religion. The extent of this cultural movement was such that "at the height of the revival scarcely an aspect of life remained untouched by medievalist influence" (Chandler 1). Especially in times of social change and modernisation, looking back at a pastoral medieval past offered an idealised contraposition to the chaotic modern time.

Double-voiced Medievalism

Engagements with the past and the way people feel about looking back at the past change constantly. Ideas of humanity, weakness, power, chivalry, honour, monarchy, emotion, and so on, are invariably dynamic. These conceptions are intrinsically intertwined with the main themes in *Richard II*, as well as with interpretations of the Middle Ages. I argue that reconstructions of the medieval past in art tend to fluctuate within a spectrum of two poles. On the one side, the Middle Ages are recreated as ‘gothic’, cruel and grotesque; and, on the other, as romantic, heroic and idealised. These two main voices affecting reconstructions of the medieval past constitute what I call a double-voiced medievalism. It is a cultural process that inevitably affected Shakespeare’s writing of *Richard II*; Edmund Kean’s, Macready’s and Charles Kean’s adaptations of the play; and any other interpretation of the Shakespearean text since then. That is because double-voiced medievalism is connected at its core with the broader cultural contexts of the time in which the artistic event takes place.

I have derived this concept from Richard Schoch’s idea of “double-voiced historicism” in *Shakespeare’s Victorian Stage: Performing History in the Theatre of Charles Kean* (1998). Schoch explains it as the historical doubling present in historical representations in the theatre. For instance, in a Victorian production of Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, the medieval past of King Richard’s reign is reconstructed by a Renaissance playwright at the end of the sixteenth century, which is in turn reconstructed by the Victorian artist on stage. It is, therefore, a reconstruction of the reconstruction, dealing with different layers of historicism, hence double-voiced historicism. As Schoch puts it, “there can be no pure or unsullied recovery of the past because all historical representations are mediated by yet other representations. A Shakespearean past thus inevitably ghosts or haunts theatrical representations of the medieval past” (*Shakespeare’s Victorian Stage* 10). In other words, when looking at the continuum of the past as composed of several layers, a layer of one past has an effect on previous ones, and so forth. In my position as a twenty-first theatre historian looking back at nineteenth-century productions of Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, the layers multiply: a medieval past reconstructed by a Renaissance playwright, which in turn is reconstructed by a nineteenth-century artist, which is then reconstructed by me.

Based on Schoch's concept of double-voiced historicism I propose the term double-voiced medievalism, which refers specifically to the ways in which the Middle Ages have been reconstructed in art in different periods of time, and how these representations gravitate towards an idealised or a grotesque conception of the medieval past. The tension between a romanticised and a grotesque interpretation of the Middle Ages is thus the core of double-voiced medievalism. I argue that artistic representations of the medieval past inevitably combine these two approaches (although to different degrees), which is reminiscent of the echoes of medievalist imagination since the Early Modern period. In order to understand why such oscillations occur, the cultural historian must look at the broader context of production of the artistic text, including the political scenario at the time and contemporaneous interpretations of the Middle Ages in other media. That is why I have incorporated in my research other visual reconfigurations of Richard II's medieval past on stage, page and picture (including book illustrations, paintings and photographs) to better understand how the three theatrical productions of Richard II reconstructed the medieval past in the theatre, and how they engaged in dialogue with the broader medievalist tradition. The analysis of book illustrations is an area of pictorial materialisation that has been largely ignored in studies of theatrical historiography, which in my view enriches the inquiry put forth in this dissertation.

CORPUS

The heart of this study is the presence of the Middle Ages on the London stage in the first half of the nineteenth century as mediated by Shakespeare's Richard II. For this reason, I analyse the following performances in their contexts of production: Edmund Kean's at Drury Lane in 1815; William Charles Macready's at Haymarket in 1850; and Charles Kean's at the Princess's Theatre in 1857. In order to fully understand those, it is important to look back at Shakespeare's conception of the play in c. 1595, and to investigate how the playwright recreated the medieval world of late-fourteenth-century England in his own time.

In addition, in order to contrast Shakespeare's textual medievalism with a pictorial tradition that would culminate in the nineteenth century, I also explore the interpretations of Richard II's medieval past in illustrations of the play. I start with Nicholas Rowe's (1674-1718) in 1709, the first illustrated edition of Shakespeare's

works in England, and trace the way Richard II has been visually represented in the most significant illustrated publications prior and concomitant to Edmund Kean's, Macready's and Charles Kean's theatrical productions: Lewis Theobald in 1740; Thomas Hanmer in 1744; John Bell in 1774 and 1788; Edward Harding in 1798-1800; Alexander Chalmer in 1805; Thomas Tegg in 1815-1815; Charles Knight in 1838-1843; Barry Cornwall in 1838-1840; and James Halliwell in 1850. I also look at the two paintings produced for the Boydell Gallery in 1789, one by Mather Brown (1761-1831) and the other by James Northcote (1746-1831). In this manner, I explore the broader context of relationships between different layers of time, and different media in (re)interpretations of Shakespeare's Richard II.

As I have explained in the previous section, an important component in Postlewait's model for theatrical analysis is the analysis of the artistic heritage, which includes the stage history of the play. In *The Haunted Stage* (2003), Marvin Carlson writes about the uncanny experience the theatre provides, impressing on the spectator of a sense of repetition, of seeing something already seen before. In this sense, the physical theatre is "among the most haunted of human cultural structures", filled with ghosts of productions past (Carlson 2). Carlson adds that the theatre works as "a simulacrum of the cultural and historical process itself" (2), shedding light on how people have made sense of historical events throughout time. Theatre has become an archive of cultural memory, which is in constant change as new layers of context are added to it. The case is even more significant when referring to history plays, such as Richard II. It involves a re-construction of representations of the past, which are inevitably linked to the cultural contexts of the time of production, elucidating the concerns and aspirations of that specific moment. Why did Shakespeare look back at Richard II's reign? Why did other producers feel the need to retell this story decades and centuries later? These questions must guide the theatre historian's task in analysing a past performance; and they have also directed my investigation of the corpus of this research.

STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

When exploring artistic engagements with the medieval past by means of Shakespeare's Richard II, this thesis looks at different layers of pasts: Richard's fourteenth-century past; Shakespeare's Early Modern period; and the different

moments in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in which the theatrical productions, illustrated editions, paintings and textual adaptations that make up the corpus of this research were produced. Instead of understanding this cultural phenomenon as a chronological linear sequence, I look at it as a web of interrelations; all these layers of medievalisms affect how the Middle Ages have been reinterpreted in British culture.

In Chapter 1, I analyse the theatre as a public space of private individuals, which offers a site for political awareness and debate, granting the spectators authority to assess the actions performed on stage – especially if such characters are embodiments of political subjects, for instance, the monarch. I explore how the playhouse stood as a locale for political protest against the elitism of art. Taking Richard Sennett's *The Fall of the Public Man* (1977) as a guide, I examine the increase in public social places in the nineteenth century, especially in the cultural capitals London and Paris, taking the theatre as an expressive example of this bourgeoning. In contrast to the theatrical scene of the patent theatres Drury Lane and Covent Garden, there emerged in London a counter-culture, localised in the minor theatres beyond the fashionable West End. Although their repertoire was restricted by the censure of the Theatre Licensing Act of 1737, the minor theatres adapted Shakespeare, combining tradition with spectacle and sensation in order to avoid suppression. With the rise of History as an academic subject, as well as topic of interest for the enthusiast population, the theatre in nineteenth-century London made use of the illusionistic characteristics of the theatre to create a bridge between past and present, offering the spectator the experience of seeing and hearing history.

In Chapter 2, I explore scholarly definitions of medievalisms. In order to understand post-medieval reconstructions of the Middle Ages in culture, I first investigate the periodisation regarding the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of modernity. Furthermore, I explore how Early Modern playwrights, including Shakespeare, recreated the past for dramatic purposes, and how they imagined the period we now call the Middle Ages. Subsequently, I investigate how artists evoked the medieval past in the nineteenth century: in literature, Walter Scott's (1771-1832) works of historical fiction and poems; in architecture, Horace Walpole's (1717-1797) pseudo-medieval mansion Strawberry Hill and Augustus Pugin's (1812-1852) attempt to "construct" medieval buildings in the nineteenth century during the Gothic Revival;

and in painting, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's focus on detail and realism, prioritising imagination and emotion.

Chapter 3 explores Shakespeare's contribution to the circulation of certain representations of the past, especially regarding British history. Christy Desmet uses the term rhetor-historian to refer to Shakespeare, an author who combines his perception of the world with scholarly historical knowledge (11). I include Walter Scott in the same category, affirming that both writers dive into the "well of history" to create stories that captivate spectators and readers alike. This chapter interprets literary and theatrical texts as "fields of force" (Greenblatt 6). As such, their interpretation is not fixed, but reshaped along the years and centuries, with new layers of meanings added by readers, adapters, performers, etc. When analysing Shakespeare's *Richard II* and its reconstruction of the Middle Ages in this chapter, I consider three main aspects that are crucial to understanding Shakespeare's 'medievalism': ritual and pageantry; the arbitrary power of kings; and nostalgia. For the first, I analyse the tournament at Coventry, the de-coronation scene, and the (lack of) funeral rites. For the second, I explore the medieval political theology concerning the king's two bodies, and the medieval understanding of history as developing under God's divine control. Finally, for the last, I explore Isabel Karremann's concept of nostalgia as a "historical emotion", a selective retrieval of the past as a way to oblivate the present. For this, I take into account Gaunt's "scepter'd island" speech and the gardeners' scene.

In Chapter 4, I discuss Shakespeare's presence in print in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in order to explore how the medieval world of *Richard II* has been visually represented in illustrated editions of the play, drawing parallels between the page and the stage. A wider variety of editions of Shakespeare's works became available in addition to the voluminous scholarly tomes, such as pocketbooks, facsimile copies of the Folio of 1623, and illustrated editions. I examine how *Richard II* has been illustrated in the most significant editions of the period, from Rowe's in 1709 to Halliwell's in 1850, exploring how these editions affected the visual representations of the Middle Ages and Shakespeare's characters. I trace how the illustrations change from a contemporary depiction of eighteenth-century clothes, anachronistic to both Shakespeare's lifetime and the time *Richard II* is set, into visual representations concerned with historical accuracy. I notice a change of focus from the victorious Bolingbroke towards the victimised Richard, as well as a rejection of

the didacticism of art in favour of a creative fusion with imagination. In this chapter I argue that the Middle Ages are not visually represented merely for the sake of historical reconstruction, but mainly as a means (and place) to evoke emotion. Finally, I also reveal the interconnection of the stage and print, especially in Bell's Acting edition of 1774 and Halliwell's of 1850, which added portraits of actors to illustrate the Shakespearean dramatic text.

In Chapter 5, I look at Edmund Kean's reimagination of Shakespeare's Richard II during his second season at Drury Lane in 1815. I refer to William Hazlitt's (1778-1830) critical appraisal both of Shakespeare's play and of Kean's production in order to investigate the period's engagement with the nature of character and the medieval setting. Hazlitt affirms that Shakespeare's Richard is a character of pathos, that is, of feeling combined with weakness, but that Kean presents a heroic Richard on stage, combining feeling with energy. I interpret the clash between a heroic and a weak representation of Shakespeare's Richard II in relation to the aesthetic and political context of the age. 1815 was a year of political unrest, following the failed idealism of the French Revolution, the establishment of the Regency in England in 1811 due to George III's unfitness to rule, and Napoléon Bonaparte's deposition in 1814. I explore the contradictory representations of Napoléon in the English cultural scene, especially as expressed by Lord Byron (1788-1824). I argue that Byron creates an illusion based on the mythification of Napoléon as an embodiment of radicalism. Given the associations between Bonaparte and Kean circulating at the time, I draw parallels between Richard II's deposition on the Drury Lane stage in 1815 and Napoléon's deposition in 1814 and subsequent escape from exile weeks before the opening of Kean's Richard II. Based on evidence found in the theatrical criticism of the time, I argue that Kean embodies a new version of Richard II, one that rejects the pathos previously found in this Shakespearean character. Furthermore, I look into Richard Wroughton's (1748-1822) textual adaptation of the play, as well as Kean's annotations and alterations for performance at Drury Lane. Wroughton's text alters the balance of the Shakespearean original, omitting instances of Richard's fickleness, borrowing extracts from other Shakespearean plays that would convey feeling, and making Bolingbroke's plan to usurp the crown explicit. It ends with a repentant Bolingbroke and the death of the queen on stage. In this context, I analyse how the Middle Ages were reconstructed in this specific production of Richard II. My argument is that Kean's Richard II was not concerned with reconstructing the

medieval past on stage. Rather, the past functions as a mirror of contemporary politics, as well as a source to evoke an emotional reaction in the spectator.

In Chapter 6, I turn my attention to William Charles Macready's one-night staging of *Richard II* as part of his farewell season at Haymarket Theatre in December 1850. I argue that this production provides evidence of a different approach to *Richard II* in the mid-nineteenth century. Rejecting the Romantic admiration of Richard's poetic pathos, early-Victorian critics emphasise the flaws of Shakespeare's character and his immoral conduct as a sovereign. I analyse Macready's adaptation of *Richard II* based on Hermann Ulrici's (1806-1884) criticism of the play. Ulrici reads *Richard II* as a moral lesson and a cautionary tale against ambition and corruption. According to the German philosopher, the legal right of kings has validity only as long as it is founded upon morality. In this chapter I also investigate the London theatrical scene on the brink of the Theatre Regulation Act of 1843 that dissolved the 1737 Theatre Licensing Act. Prior to the dissolution, legitimate spoken drama was exclusive to the patent theatres Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Despite being in favour of the monopoly in the beginning of his career, by 1843 Macready had changed his position. He was not satisfied with the state of the theatre at the time, and he recognised the harmful effect of the theatrical monopoly on the quality of Shakespearean performances in London. He became advocate of a National Theatre, which would elevate the theatrical business and the people involved, especially the actors. He leaned on Shakespeare as a legitimising voice for his enterprise, rejecting previous stage adaptations and restoring Shakespeare's original text. In his productions of Shakespeare's history plays, his focus remains on the Shakespearean text and its poetic qualities, incorporating historical setting as an ornament to the text, as a means of instruction and as a way to increase the respectability and seriousness of theatrical activity by associating it with scholarly pursuit.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I analyse arguably the most iconic production of *Richard II* in the nineteenth century, the one staged by Charles Kean at the Princess's Theatre. The Shakespearean revivals during his management at the Princess's Theatre from 1850 to 1859 aimed at bringing history back to life on stage. The original Shakespearean text was given less attention, and the spectacular stage effects, sets and costumes took the spotlight. I investigate the contexts of productions of Kean's history plays, associating them with Victorian antiquarianism

and popular extravagant entertainment. I argue that Kean did not reject the conventions of popular extravaganzas completely, but appropriated them in order to convey historical knowledge to a broader audience and to elevate the theatrical business. For this purpose, I briefly discuss the counter-culture of the minor theatres in the period prior to 1843 (Theatre Regulation Act) and the criticism of the formulaic plots and unnatural acting style of the pantomimes and harlequinades. I also explore the pictorial inclination of mid-century England, which demonstrates a deeper engagement and fascination with material vestiges from the past. There was a turn to realism, also manifested in the art of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Finally, I analyse Kean's production of *Richard II* in 1857 and the available photographs of the actors in costume. In the mid-nineteenth century, photography was still a fairly recent technology, but more readily available. While the Pre-Raphaelites rejected photography's objective realism, Kean's photographic records appropriate the new technology to perform the medieval past in a visual juxtaposition of the Middle Ages and modernity. The photographer Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879), working a decade after the end of Kean's management at the Princess's Theatre, further explores the new medium of photography to depict the past, challenging the notion of the lens' impartiality and objectiveness, and offering a creative and artistic approach to photographic practice.

With these chapters I demonstrate that the recreation of the past on stage, page or picture is merely an illusion. As information and new technology became available at the turn to the nineteenth century, such as illustrated and cheaper editions of the plays, a wider availability of historical information, the development of stage effects, and new inventions such as the daguerreotype and photography, the present made use of the possibilities allowed by modernity to enhance the feeling of being transported back to the past, and of seeing the Middle Ages. In my analysis of the reception of the history plays, illustrated editions of Shakespeare's works, visual interpretations of Shakespearean characters and sets on canvas, and Edmund Kean's, Macready's and Charles Kean's adaptations of *Richard II*, I have pinpointed a change in how the past was understood. Especially towards the middle of the eighteenth century, the Middle Ages were increasingly understood as different from the present. This resulted in at least two direct consequences: the desire to know more about the past in order to understand it and compare it with the present, and, simultaneously, a desire to reconnect with it through art. Although the representation

of the medieval past became increasingly more 'accurate', based on historical research, the artistic reconstructions of the past I have investigated here demonstrate a growing interest in an imaginative engagement with the people from the past by means of emotions. Illustrations of Richard II increasingly depicted the meditations of the King in prison and the contrast between Richard's humiliation and Bolingbroke's victory. Acting loses the exaggerated declamatory style in favour of a more naturalistic representation of feeling, and the spectacle of stagecraft appeals to the spectator's senses for a bodily experience of interacting with the past.

Although the illusion of the reincarnation of the past is eventually lost (the reader closes the book, the viewer looks away from the picture, and the theatre spectator goes home), the feelings stirred during these moments of connection with the past remain. When the present becomes hard to endure, human imagination has the power to reignite the memories of engaging with the past by means of page, print or picture, and create a temporary mythical home in the past. The theatrical adaptations of Shakespeare's Richard II point to a close relationship between aesthetics and politics, demonstrating how an imaginative engagement with the past also has the capability of prompting political associations and discussions. As the corpus of this research has exemplified, each production of Richard II has their own agenda, either knowingly or not, testifying to the multiplicity of representations of the Shakespearean text.

THE POSSIBILITIES OF STUDYING INTERACTIONS WITH THE PAST

This dissertation navigates through different areas of study, including cultural history, theatre historiography, medievalisms, and literary studies. It explores the reasons why people return to the medieval past in different periods of time. I demonstrate that creating a "home" in the past, albeit mythical, is especially attractive when the present time proves to be too demanding – disappointment after a failed revolution, anxiety concerning the future of a professional milieu, or intense industrialisation, for example. In such circumstances, the Middle Ages can be evoked as a period of relative simplicity, bravery, belief, honour and heroic adventure. This would mean an idealised/romanticised understanding of the medieval past, which does not – and does not have to – correspond with reality. On the other hand, the medieval past can also be summoned as a vantage point from which to reflect on the

advancements of modernity, science and technology. A grotesque perception of the Middle Ages recreates a wild and uncivilised medieval past, which does not have to be equivalent to reality either. For instance, Shakespeare's history plays also depict violence, war, rebellion, murder and poverty.

Idealised and grotesque are the two opposing poles of artistic reconstructions of the medieval past, which are inevitably linked to the cultural, historical and political contexts of the time of production. As I have explained, all recreations of the Middle Ages combine both approaches to different degrees, resulting in a double-voiced medievalism. The study of Edmund Kean's, Macready's and Charles Kean's adaptations of Shakespeare's medieval past in *Richard II* has allowed me to explore the different ways in which these theatre-managers engaged with Early Modern conceptions of the Middle Ages, and adapted them according to their own time's concerns and aspirations. This field of study – analysing the different layers of historical reconstruction – encourages the analysis of art and its relation to society. My choice of looking at nineteenth-century adaptations of an Early Modern recreation of the medieval past is but one of endless possibilities. It contributes to discussions in medievalisms, Early Modern studies, Romantic and Victorian studies, demonstrating the fruitfulness of interdisciplinary and transhistorical research.

CHAPTER 1: THE BRIGHTEST HEAVEN OF INVENTION: THE THEATRE AS A POLITICAL SPACE FOR HISTORICAL RECONSTRUCTION

*O for a muse of fire, that would ascend
The brightest heaven of invention,
A kingdom for a stage, princes to act,
And monarchs to behold the swelling scene!*

(Henry V, Prologue, 1-4)

The Chorus in William Shakespeare's *Henry V* invited the audience's "imaginary forces" to work for the first time in 1599, the year that Robert Devereux (1565-1601), the 2nd Earl of Essex, returned from his failed enterprise in Ireland, and also the year when The Lord Chamberlain's Men moved to the new Globe Theatre (Craik 3–5). The Earl has an intrinsic connection to the performance history of *Richard II*, granting notoriety to the play's political capability. The powerful prologue draws attention to the act of historical reconstruction happening on stage and invites the audience to reflect on their own role in this interpretative and creative process.

In the Chorus's own words, delivered directly to the audience, "'tis your [the audience's] thoughts that now must deck our kings, / Carry them here and there, jumping o'er times, / Turning th'accomplishment of many years / Into an hour-glass" (*Henry V*, Prologue, 28-31), and "gently to hear, kindly to judge our play" (*Henry V*, Prologue, 34). Shakespeare invites the audience to use their imagination, transforming the actors on stage in embodiments of historical figures and understanding the few hours of theatrical production as the condensation of many years. The Chorus becomes a threshold between the contemporary world of the theatre and the historical world performed on stage (Bruster and Weimann 2).

The need for the spectator's participation in the process of historical reconstruction on stage illustrates the power of the dramatic text as *theatre*: it

reaches full potentiality when acted *by actors to* an audience. However, that is not exclusive to Shakespeare's *Henry V*, since all historical plays require it. In the Shakespearean canon, at least eight history plays reached the stage before *Henry V*², including *Richard II*.

In analysing the political potency of *Richard II*, Jeffrey Dotty writes how "Shakespeare invites his audience not to wield 'opinion' themselves, but to understand, reflect upon, or resist how – as a collective of private people – they are positioned by elites through emotional appeals and the occasional public airing of political controversies" (185). The development of the theatrical spectatorship's consciousness of being a group of private individuals who collectively form a public circle of influence, and who realise their role as critical observers of local politics, is essential to understanding the power of Shakespeare's play in its origins in Early Modern London, as well as its repercussions and adaptations in the nineteenth century.

I brought *Henry V*'s prologue to open my discussion on historical reconstruction in the theatre because it makes explicit the audience's role in recreating the past in their minds aided by the dramatic text performed by actors. Around four years before the Chorus in *Henry V* spoke on the Globe stage, Shakespeare's *Richard II* already engaged the audience with a developing sense of historical awareness. The play dramatises Henry Bolingbroke's challenge of Richard's power as the anointed representative of God on Earth. The historical Richard was eventually forced to renounce the crown and was officially deposed. Bolingbroke, a figure also adapted by Shakespeare, was crowned King Henry IV on 13 October 1399.

² *King John* (c.1590-1595), *Henry VI Part 1* (c. 1590-1595), *Henry VI Part 2* (c. 1591), *King Henry VI Part 3* (c. 1592), *Richard III* (c. 1593), *Richard II* (c. 1595), *Henry IV Part 1* (c. 1596), and *Henry IV Part 2* (c. 1597).

Outside the theatre, ordinary people would normally be isolated from the discussion of political matters, and even liable to be sentenced for treason for challenging the authority of the ruling monarch. However, when within the four walls of the theatre, they could feel free to “kindly judge” the play, along with the historical figures and acts there portrayed. It was a political freedom justified by the apparent ‘fictionality’ of the stage.

In the next section of the chapter I discuss the stage history of Shakespeare’s *Richard II* until Edmund Kean staged it in 1815. I also examine the theatre as a place for political debate in nineteenth-century London and its reverberations in the productions analysed in this dissertation. A public sphere emerged in London at the end of the sixteenth century, fostered by the role of the theatre as providing the space for political awareness and discussion. This informal environment included an illiterate population, who could not read but could watch politics on stage. With the fast urbanisation, industrialisation and population growth in the nineteenth century, the number of theatres increased, enlarging the theatrical public sphere. Minor theatres expanded beyond the West End, offering an alternative to the patent theatres Drury Lane and Covent Garden, and allowing a wider audience to participate in the public sphere.

1.1.1 *Thou art a traitor: Off with his head!* – The Early Stage History of *Richard II* c.1595-1815

Going back to the first production of Shakespeare’s *Richard II* is no easy task; that is because there is no consensus as to when exactly the play was first staged. Chris Fitter (2005) forcibly argues that it was performed between October 1594 (when Samuel Daniel’s *The First Fowre Bookes of the Civile Warres* was registered, which Fitter regards as one of the play’s sources) and August 1597 (when the First Quarto of the play was published). Fitter affirms that the first performance could have been some time after the Accession Day tournaments in November 1595, since the spectacular appearance of the Earl of Essex then bears parallels to Bolingbroke’s appearance in the first scene of *Richard II*’s Act 1 (Fitter, paras 5–8).³

³ The Accession Day tilts were annual festivities celebrated on Elizabeth I’s Accession Day, November 17th.

In her overview of *Richard II's* textual and theatrical transformations, Margarida Gandara Rauen explains that the play was published in six Quarto editions: the first in 1597, two in 1598, one in 1608, the fifth in 1615, and the latest in 1634 – eleven years after the publication of Shakespeare's complete works in the Folio of 1623, in which *Richard II* is of course also included (Rauen 11). This set of quartos suggests that the play was rather popular with Shakespeare's contemporaries. In comparison with the other history plays, only *Richard III* and *Henry IV – Part 1* were more popular, each with eight Quarto publications. *Henry VI – Part 2* and *Henry V* had three Quarto publications each, *Henry VI – Part 3* two Quarto and one Octavo publications, *Henry IV – Part 2* had one Quarto, and *King John* and *Henry VI – Part 1* were only published in the Folio in 1623.

One of the crucial differences in the early editions of the play is the presence (or absence) of the so-called “deposition scene” in Act IV,⁴ in which Richard is forced to ‘de-crown’ himself and to pass the throne to Henry Bolingbroke, the future Henry IV. This is undoubtedly the most politically charged scene in the play, since it stages the forced abdication of an anointed monarch. This discussion consequently raises an enticing question: was the play originally performed *with* the deposition scene, which was not printed due to censorship; or, was the scene only created and added in Q4? In other words, was the scene first staged or printed?

The first time the deposition scene was printed was in Q4 (1608), not coincidentally five years after Queen Elizabeth I's death. Q2 and Q3 were both published in 1598, when the queen and the Earl of Essex were still alive, and all mentions – direct or indirect – to the old age of the childless queen or to Essex's suitability as an alternative king were considered acts of high treason.⁵ In fact, Shakespeare's play draws attention to the issue regarding who was more suitable to govern: the anointed monarch who has divine sanction to rule but abuses his/her power and therefore fails to care for his/her subjects, or a usurper who claims to be a better and more effective ruler but who has challenged the divine hereditaryness of the crown?

⁴ Lines 162-318 in Act IV, Scene 1.

⁵ The 1571 Act of Parliament also known as the Treason Act of 1571 “declared, among other things, that anyone who pretended to the crown was a traitor. Furthermore, anyone who denied the right of the Queen and Parliament, jointly, to name her successor would be held a traitor” (Regnier 51).

Q4 included significant new information on its title-page: “With new additions of the Parliament Scene, and the deposing of King Richard, As it hath been lately acted by the King’s Majesty’s Servants, at the Globe” (Dawson and Yachnin 11). This information might suggest that the added scene was new and had only recently been performed. However, Dawson and Yachnin disagree. They believe that the text of *Richard II* as originally conceived included the deposition scene, which was performed on stage but censored from print until after Queen Elizabeth’s death. They affirm, and I concur, that it would be extremely unlikely for the play to have been revised and extended ten years after its creation (Dawson and Yachnin 9–11). Furthermore, “an important factor is the style of the sequence, which is entirely consonant with the rest of the play, and with the style of other plays written in the mid-1590s” (Dawson and Yachnin 11). Another important piece of evidence presented by Dawson and Yachnin in favour of the performance of the deposition scene prior to Q4 is its role in the Essex Rising in 1601 (15), “one of the most famous, even notorious, events in the long reign of Queen Elizabeth I” (Hammer 3).

Richard II was arguably commissioned by Essex’s supporters and staged at the Globe on 7 February 1601. For their purpose, the acting of the king’s deposition would have been crucial. Paul Hammer explains that “on the morning of Sunday, 8 February, Essex and about one hundred gentleman followers marched out of Essex House and tried to rally the people of London to protect the earl from his private enemies” (Hammer 3). Hammer states that Essex’s followers aimed at protecting the earl from his enemies’ accusations, especially Robert Cecil (1563-1612), the Queen’s Secretary of State. However, the public conviction was that Essex had gathered supporters to seize the castle and force the queen’s deposition. Given the special production of *Richard II* the day before, such an assumption gained credibility, leading the queen to proclaim Essex and his followers traitors to the crown. Essex was executed in the Tower of London on 25 February of the same year.⁶

Several scholars have explored the links between the Essex Rising and political matters within *Richard II*. Essex had several parallels with Henry Bolingbroke: a military man bound to codes of chivalry and honour. Moreover, Essex was a highly popular man before his failures in Ireland. Bate and Rasmussen point out that Shakespeare’s Bolingbroke is also portrayed as extremely popular within the

⁶ It is not clear if the deposition scene was indeed staged in the 1601 production at the Globe, since, as we have seen, it was only printed in Q4, thus seven years later.

play, the opposite of Richard at the end of his reign. Significantly, Bolingbroke's popularity is not mentioned in Shakespeare's sources of the play, which suggests that it was the playwright's own addition (Bate and Rasmussen 5–6). Another possibility is that Essex appropriated the image of Shakespeare's Bolingbroke to foster his own.

Fitter adds that “the parallels between elements of the Accession Day of 1595 must, given their number, surely have been evident to Shakespeare: and to almost anyone who knew of the November tilts” (Fitter, para.10). As we have seen, the exact date of the first production of the play is unknown. However, if it was indeed staged after November 1595, the audience might associate Bolingbroke's challenge to Thomas Mowbray in *Richard II* with Essex's knightly extravaganza at the Accession Day tournaments; on the other hand, if the play had been premiered before that month in 1595, the November tilts would have added new topicality to the play, adding to the parallels between Bolingbroke and Essex. Additionally, these associations would strengthen the vision of Essex as a threat to Elizabeth, giving credibility to the belief that Essex indeed intended to steal the crown. However, “as Leeds Barroll warned, some of these claims have been wildly exaggerated and reflect a severely distorted understanding of the events of 7 and 8 February 1601” (Hammer 3). Hammer believes Essex's supposed *coup d'état* was created by the Earl's enemies in court as a means to strain him from the select group of the queen's favourites for good.

The Essex Rising added new topicality to the play, creating a resonance that did not yet exist when the play was written some years earlier. A powerful aspect of Shakespeare's history plays is that they collect new possibilities of meaning as they are performed throughout the years in different contexts. After the iconic production in 1601, the play was staged at the Globe by the Lord Chamberlain's Men for a benefit production for Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels, on 12 June 1631 (Dawson and Yachnin 79). After that, the play went through a period of unpopularity – possibly, it became even more contentious during the period of civil wars. The only attempt to produce it was carried out by Nahum Tate (1652-1715) in December 1680, after the monarchy had been restored. As Bate and Rasmussen explain, Tate tried to avoid censorship by moving the plot to Sicily and by naming the adaptation *The Usurper of Sicily*. The production was banned only two days after its premiere, and banned again the following month when Tate tried to bring it back to stage under the

new title *The Tyrant of Sicily* (Bate and Rasmussen 128). Dawson and Yachnin add that Tate “complained in a Preface to the published version (1681) that his innocent attempt to portray a ‘dissolute’ and ‘ignorant’ age was unjustifiably suppressed as a ‘libel’ upon the present” (Dawson and Yachnin 80). The topical power of the play was still too latent for seventeenth-century theatre play-goers, who had witnessed the execution of Charles I in 1649 and the restoration of the monarchy with his son Charles II in 1660.

Tate’s adaptation, as Yachnin puts it, started a trend that would go on into the eighteenth century: “a tendency to want to fill in what they [the adaptors] see as explanatory gaps in Shakespeare” (124). For instance, York’s abrupt change of sides from Richard to Bolingbroke and his condemnation of his own son for staying true to Richard is explained in Tate’s adaptation: “Tate re-conceives York as a plain-talker, an opponent of Bullingbrook [sic], who, upon reflection, decides to support the new king because he has risen to the throne by due process of law” (Yachnin 132). Yachnin calls this process “rational characterization”, an attempt “to make transparent and graspable what Shakespeare seems to prefer to leave obscure or indeterminate” (123). What ensues is a simplification of the interpretative layers in the Shakespearean text.

Tate made significant changes not only to *Richard II*, but also in other Shakespearean adaptations. For instance, he famously rewrote the tragedy *King Lear* in 1681 with a happy ending. Michael Dobson explains that Tate adds a love interest between Cordelia and Edgar, along with a different denouement to the story in order to “conclude in a Success to the innocent distrest Persons”, as Tate explains in the preface to the printed edition (Dobson 81). Samuel Johnson writes that the observation of justice – Cordelia finding victory and felicity in the end – does not make a play worse (Johnson, *Johnson on Shakespeare* 161). Dobson, however, sees Tate’s explanation as “a patent *non sequitur*” (81); it was, in fact, a way to misdirect the attention from the play’s political power.

After Tate’s censored effort to bring *Richard II* back to the London stage, there was another gap in productions until 1719, when Lewis Theobald (1688-1744) staged the first *Richard II* of the eighteenth century at Lincoln’s Inn Fields. Theobald followed the trend initiated by Tate of heavily altering the Shakespearean text. It was a period when the commercial potential of the play was favoured over reverencing the original Shakespearean text. According to Dawson and Yachnin, Theobald cut

the first two acts of *Richard II* entirely, erasing much of Richard's reproachable behaviour, and included a tragic love story between Lady Percy, an invented daughter for Lord Northumberland, and Aumerle. When Aumerle is executed for treason, the broken-hearted young girl commits suicide (Dawson and Yachnin 81). In the preface, Theobald "excuses the many changes he made by declaring that what Shakespeare's play needed was a way to incorporate its 'many scatter'd Beauties' into a 'regular Fable' – i.e. one ordered according to eighteenth-century principle of dramatic unity" (Dawson and Yachnin 81). As the editors affirm, the production was extremely popular; it was staged seven times in that season and three more in the following two (81).

Theobald's alterations reflect the period's Classicist influence, which revived the theatre's classic Greek roots for inspiration and models. According to Forker, "generally speaking, Restoration and eighteenth-century critics objected to the play's quibbling and rhyming style, to its unclassical structure and violations of decorum (such as onstage murder), to its paucity of stage action and to the unheroic weakness of its protagonist" ('Introduction' 92). Therefore, Theobald took it upon himself to rearrange the Shakespearean material according to the standards of his time, focusing rather on *pathos* than on political drama, and unifying it into a "regular Fable". Dawson and Yachnin explain that Theobald concentrated the action in the period between Richard's return from Ireland and his death, and within the physical space of the Tower of London (81), challenging the Shakespearean neglect of the unities of time, space and action.

The political potency of the play was nonetheless still an issue, and new layers of meaning could be added to the interpretative spectrum of the play. Theobald's *Richard II* was performed during a period of political unrest in 1719, four years after the death of the heirless Queen Anne (1665-1714) who passed the English crown to the German House of Hanover. Another Jacobite Rising attempted to restore to the throne the exiled James Francis Edward Stuart (1688-1766), James II's son, but failed. The parallel between Richard's and George I's threatened royal positions could easily be drawn. In order to avoid censorship, Theobald made it clear in the added prologue to the play that: "The Muse presumes no Parallels to Draw" (Dawson and Yachnin 81), neutralizing any possible political associations with his present time, although simultaneously encouraging the audience to draw such parallels.

The only other production of *Richard II* in the eighteenth century was staged by John Rich (1692-1761) at Covent Garden by request of the Shakespeare's Ladies Club, a group of upper-class women who wished to revive Shakespeare's plays. According to Emmett Avery, the club was organised in 1736 and "set about promptly to persuade London's theatrical managers to give Shakespeare a greater share in their repertoire" (153). And the ladies were quite successful; they "restored many of Shakespeare's neglected plays to the boards, increased the frequency with which many of the familiar ones were presented, brought his works a great deal of publicity in an exceedingly short time, and became a model to later groups which similarly wished to improve the stage" (Avery 153). *Richard II* was one of the plays chosen by these ladies, and, according to McManaway, this was the first time that Shakespeare's original text was performed instead of Tate's or Theobald's adaptations in over a hundred years (163).

Fiona Ritchie writes about the group's influence on the revival of Shakespeare's history plays. According to the author, the Ladies condemned pantomimes, the popular entertainment of the time. An anonymous letter signed by "Shakespear, Johnson, Dryden, Rowe", published in the *Grub Street Journal* on 3 March 1737, praised the Ladies' encouragement of "Common Sense". The authors criticised the fact that the contemporary English stage was filled with "several French Vagrants, called HARLEQUIN, PIERROT, and COLOMBINE", who "have had the impudence to appear on the British Stage, to the great discouragement of good Sense, true Humour, and Morality" (Ritchie 149–50). One way to replace French pantomimes with British nationalism was by means of Shakespeare's history plays. Ritchie lists the plays requested by the Shakespeare's Ladies Club during the seasons 1736-7 and 1737-8 in the two theatres, demonstrating the group's interest in the historical chronicles: in the first season, out of the thirteen Shakespearean plays, three were history plays (*1 Henry IV*, performed twice, *2 Henry IV*, and *Henry VIII*); and in the second season, out of the twelve Shakespearean plays, seven were history plays (*2 Henry IV*, performed three times, *Richard III*, performed twice, *Richard II*, performed four times,⁷ *Henry V*, performed three times, *King John*, *1 Henry VI*, and *1 Henry IV*) (Ritchie 151–52).

⁷ The four productions of *Richard II* were staged at Covent Garden during the season 1737-8 under the management of John Rich.

I must emphasise that 1738, the year in which Rich revived *Richard II* at Covent Garden, was one year after the imposition of the Theatre Licensing Act. This Act conceded the monopoly of legitimate spoken drama to two playhouses only, Drury Lane and Covent Garden, and determined that all new plays should be approved by the Lord Chamberlain. As Russell Jackson explains, the other playhouses had to adapt their repertoire, “transforming popular dramas into legally permitted ‘burlettas’ by adding a token musical accompaniment” (Jackson 3). In this context, Shakespeare’s plays grew in production and popularity at Drury Lane and Covent Garden, since as classic works they were considered “safer” from censorship. However, Ritchie points out that there was already an increase in Shakespearean drama in the 1736-7 season at Drury Lane, before the Licensing Act, where 27% of the repertory was Shakespeare’s. The Shakespearean success was thus prior to the June 1737 legislation, which is another confirmation of the Ladies Club’s role in the mid-eighteenth-century Shakespearean revival.

With the establishment of the 1737 Licensing Act, there was intense censorship in the London theatrical scene. McManaway refers to a letter written by one ‘C. C. P. L.’ published in *The Craftsman* in July 1737 that reinforced the Licensing Bill and the Lord Chamberlain’s power to censor the stage. The unidentified writer of the letter gave extracts of Shakespeare’s *King John* and *Richard II* as examples of what should be banned from stage. This letter caused a stir and prompted responses from different sides of the debate regarding the freedom of the press and stage. Interestingly, all the lines quoted in the letter appeared in Rich’s production months later, which leads McManaway to infer that the manager’s choice of staging *Richard II* was not accidental, but wished to attract the public to the theatre to see for themselves what C. C. P. L. considered so dangerous (McManaway 167–69). In 1737, the publication of the letter in *The Craftsman* and the effort of the Shakespeare’s Ladies Club revived interest in *Richard II*. However, after this popular production, the play was not staged again until the first decades of the following century. The political intensity of the play as well as the Theatre Licensing Act may have caused the play’s silence. It was only with the Theatre Regulation Act of 1843 that the censorship power of the Lord Chamberlain was restricted. The gap between Rich’s *Richard II* and the subsequent staging in London was almost eighty years, until Edmund Kean revived it at Drury Lane.

1.1.2 The Nineteenth-Century Theatrical Scene and the Public Sphere

The first half of the nineteenth century was a period of intense change and productivity in London's theatrical scene. Katherine Newey explains that "in these decades, the material practices of the London theatre industry collided spectacularly with broader movements in British culture and politics in a series of skirmishes over the place of theatre in the reformed constitution" ('Shakespeare and the Wars of the Playbills' 13). In 1832, the Great Reform Act changed the electoral system in the United Kingdom, broadening the right to vote to less-favoured citizens, although women were not yet included in the reform. The rise of the middle class and the urban population brought about changes in the composition of London society and fed the need for political renovation. According to John Randle, not only the size of the middle class increased, but its spending power as well, which doubled between 1815 and 1830, and again in between 1830 and 1850 (110).

Following the Reform Act, an active political debate on the stage mirrored the increasing political freedom in Parliament. In her study of the London theatrical scene up to the First Reform Bill, Newey explores the commercial rivalries in the two main London theatres of the time, Covent Garden and Drury Lane, and the parallels between the political agitation of the period with the choices made by the competing theatre managers. As Newey explains, certain characteristics of the Victorian theatre were already manifest in the first decades of the century, such as the oppositions between 'high' and 'low' culture, and between 'legitimate' and 'popular' theatre. One of the main names in this cultural struggle was Shakespeare, who "was invoked and reified as the national poet and dramatist, with a clear sense of the cultural capital and, even more obviously, the commercial value connected with his name" (Newey, 'Shakespeare and the Wars of the Playbills' 13). Shakespeare's body of dramatic work was a constant presence on nineteenth-century London stages, and the revival of specific plays can be associated with national political debates. That is especially the case with history plays such as *Richard II*, since they dramatise Britain's political past.

Although Shakespeare was essentially a popular dramatist during his lifetime, pre-Victorian theatre attempted "to remove Shakespeare from the popular theatre, and annex him to *élite* literary culture. This division between literature and theatre, and between commercial success and aesthetic credibility, endured

throughout the nineteenth century, expressed in the terms of ‘the National Drama’ of whom Shakespeare was the iconic representative” (Newey, ‘Shakespeare and the Wars of the Playbills’ 14). The theatrical monopoly in London held by Drury Lane (erected in 1663) and Covent Garden (1732) is a consequence of this chasm.

There were certainly other theatres in London at the time, such as the Haymarket Theatre (granted licence in 1720 to perform “legitimate” drama during the summer) and the other “minor theatres”, for instance the Sans Pareil (renamed the Adelphi in 1819), the Olympic (created in 1806) and the Lyceum (licensed in 1809). What changed for these theatres in relation to the patent playhouses was that until 1843 they were not allowed to stage spoken drama. As Rosalind Crone puts it, the minor theatres “were forced to adopt new dramatic sub-genres or styles, such as pantomime, burlesque, burletta, farce and melodrama, which many considered to be popular and plebeian” (127). As a consequence, there was an emerging countercultural scene at the margins of the patent theatres, intrinsically connected with popular culture and melodrama, in response to the monopolisation of the legitimate drama at Covent Garden and Drury Lane.

The minor playhouses were also established at a distance from the main theatrical districts, in neighbourhoods in the brink of the city and Westminster that had expanded due to urbanisation and population growth:

On London’s south bank, the Surrey in Southwark opened in 1805 and the Coburg (later renamed the Victoria), situated on the edge of the New Cut, began to stage plays in 1818. The fast-expanding districts to the east of the City also attracted theatrical speculators: the Pavilion and Effingham were established in Whitechapel (1828 and 1834 respectively), the City Theatre in Cripplegate (1831), the Garrick in Leaman Street (1831), the Standard in Shoreditch (1835) and the City of London in Norton Folgate (1837). An alteration in licensing laws also encouraged the emergence of theatrical saloons in these neighbourhoods, such as the Grecian, Albert and Britannia in Hoxton, founded between 1838 and 1841. By 1866, the Select Committee on Theatrical Licences listed twenty-five metropolitan theatres with a total audience capacity of just over 48,000, the majority of which had been founded before 1845. (Crone 126).

The definition of what “legitimate” theatre meant was imprecise, but it was normally attached to Shakespeare’s name. Just as the Chorus offers legitimacy to the historical account performed on stage in *Henry V*, Shakespeare’s name secures legitimacy to the theatrical practice of the patent theatres in the nineteenth century. According to Julia Swindells, Shakespeare conferred status of a tradition of learning,

and through the performance of his plays, theatre managers and actors could “demonstrate their own cultural credentials, their dramatic abilities and values” (34).

The distinction between “legitimate” and “popular” drama was certainly also a commercial choice. Categorising Shakespeare as legitimate would render his plays exclusive to the repertoire of the main theatres. As Swindells puts it, Shakespeare became synonymous with “the grand acting style of the eighteenth-century, [...] associate[d] with large spaces and exhibitionist manners, with Kean and Garrick and Siddons; and with the patent theatres, Drury Lane and Covent Garden” (35). In this manner, she concludes, “the debate about ‘the regular theatre’ is, then, for the most part, framed in terms of a defence of the large theatres” (35). As the London theatrical scene was eager for change, pressure became fierce to end the monopoly and to ‘free’ Shakespeare to a wider audience and to different acting styles. Concomitantly, conservative views manifested a desire to cling to an acting tradition linked to Garrick that was being threatened in the first decades of the nineteenth century.⁸

The fact that Shakespeare was the preeminent name at Drury Lane and Covent Garden does not mean that he was completely absent from the “minor” playhouses. Quite the contrary, these venues offered their own interpretation of Shakespeare’s works, adapting the original text to the restrictions imposed by the government. Shakespeare was thus transformed into burlettas, operas, and satires. Richard Schoch adds that the great theatre managers of the nineteenth century (Charles Kemble, William Macready, Charles Kean, Michael Phelps and Henry Irving), their lavish Shakespearean productions, their projects to instruct history and morality through Shakespeare’s plays, and their ambition to be regarded as respectable gentlemen, incited a comic attack from the ‘minor’ theatres – a “burlesque backlash”, as Schoch calls it (*Not Shakespeare: Bardolatry and Burlesque in the Nineteenth Century* 3). Schoch writes that their “pious pretensions of ‘legitimate’ Shakespearean culture” were “simply begging to be ridiculed” (*Not Shakespeare* 3). These burlesque vibrant productions were humorous and controversial, because “they seemed to imperil the sanctity of Shakespeare as a national icon” (Schoch, *Not Shakespeare* 3). Schoch cites as examples of this

⁸ David Garrick was the main Shakespearean actor in the eighteenth century. His acting style focused on representing emotions by means of gestures and facial expression – a style that became outmoded in the nineteenth century, as I explain in Chapter 7.

theatrical counterculture John Poole's *Hamlet Travestie* (1810), Richard Gurney's *Romeo and Juliet Travestie* (1812), E. L. Blanchard's *The Merchant of Venice (very far indeed) from the Text of Shakespeare* (1843), James Morgan's *Coriolanus; a Burlesque* (1846), the anonymous *Kynge Lear and Hys Faythfulle Foole* (1860), W. S. Gilbert's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* (1891), amongst others.

Prohibited from staging the original Shakespearean drama, minor theatres had to adjust in order for their productions to be approved. But, "however mangled or adapted into burlettas, pageants, or adaptations from the French, [they] were successful, in part because of their marginal legal status" (Newey, 'Shakespeare and the Wars of the Playbills' 24). Indeed, this marginal character is precisely what renders this theatrical scene powerful. Newey calls this attempt at asserting participation in national culture a creation of a "counter-public sphere" ('Shakespeare and the Wars of the Playbills' 15). In their "illegitimacy" and dissenting addresses, the minor theatres become a reaction to the bourgeois public sphere. They also provided a social space for informal political discussion apart from the mainstream venues, creating what Dotty and Gurnis called the "theatre scene": "an immediate contact zone between the stage and the city" (Dotty and Gurnis 12). The southside London theatres offered space for oppositional political debate and public meetings, along with a selling point for radical papers and pamphlets. According to Newey, "debates over the political constitution of Britain were often translated between the media of the streets, newspapers, shop windows, and stages of the local theatres in Southwark and Lambeth" ('Shakespeare and the Wars of the Playbills' 15). As such, the effervescent London theatrical scene went beyond the production of plays, encompassing a myriad of public gatherings for political discussion, planning and action, which illustrates the strong connections between theatre and politics in the nineteenth century.

1.1.3 The City and the Actor

The example of the cultural scene of the minor theatres in nineteenth-century London indicates a change in the public sphere of the city. As the 'public' became increasingly detached from the private home, it also locates in the city the point of contact between private individuals, enhanced by modernity and industrialisation. As Richard Sennett explains, "'public' thus came to mean a life passed outside the life of

family and close friends; in the public region diverse, complex social groups were to be brought into ineluctable contact. The focus of this public life was the capital city” (17). Gregory Dart analyses the development of the new mass audience in London in the first half of the century, which included the expanding professions and skilled workers, who were “imperfectly educated but hungry for culture” (15). They formed a new class of people with aspirations and with an increasing prominence in society, who turned to print and the stage as an informal means for self-education

With the growth of capitalism, culture also underwent significant changes, such as the mass production of clothes, the opening of department stores, large-scale printing of books and magazines, and the expansion of the theatrical business in view of profit. The actor or the artist gained new status as the century unfolded, although the working conditions were far from ideal. In the preface to *The Road to the Stage; or, the Performer’s Preceptor* (1827), Lemman Thomas Rede (1799-1832) writes about the acting profession, which is “fraught with toil, anxiety, and misery, beyond any other” (Rede iii). By exposing the harsh reality of an actor’s life away from the spotlight, Rede wishes to dissuade the young and inexperienced from falling victim to the alluring illusion of the theatre. He describes the typical circumstances of a young provincial actor at the time:

A country actor in a small company, and aspiring to a first-rate situation, will invariably have to study about five hundred lines *per diem* – it is astonishing how many persons are cured [of the wish to be an actor] by this alone; this will occupy the possessor of a good memory for six hours – his duties at the theatre embrace four hours in the morning for rehearsal, and about five at night; here are sixteen hours devoted to labour alone, to say nothing of the time required to study the character, after the mere attainment of the words. Let the stage-struck aspirant endure this, and, if a radical cure be not effected, he has the scenic *phobia*, and had better be given to the stage at once, for he will never fix to any thing else. (Rede ii).

Although the acting profession continued to be demanding as the century progressed, the theatrical business gained in social respectability. For instance, Henry Irving (1838-1905) was the first actor to be knighted in 1895. In a paper read at the Congress of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science in September 1884, the actress Madge Kendal (1848-1935) rejoiced that “there [was] at last a recognized social position for the professional player” (‘The Drama’, qtd. in Jackson 131). She adds: “the Theatrical Profession was considered outside, if not beneath, all others, and was regarded with something like contempt. It was a wrong,

cruel, and an absurd state of things, for even then the Theatre was popular, and was doing good work" ('The Drama', qtd. in Jackson 131). By the end of the nineteenth century, that had finally changed: "The Theatrical Professional is acknowledged to be a high and important one, and the society of the intelligent and cultivated actor is eagerly sought after" ('The Drama', qtd. in Jackson 131).

As Sennett points out, "the actor and musician rose in social status far beyond the level of servanthood which they occupied in the *ancien régime*.⁹ The performer's social rise was based on his declaration of a forceful, exciting, morally suspect personality, wholly contrary to the style of ordinary bourgeois life, in which one tried to avoid being read as a person by suppressing one's feelings" (26–27). Artists belonged to a different realm of private individuals, whose private selves were inevitably intermingled with their public personas. Hence the public fascination for the details of the private lives of actors and actresses in the nineteenth century, as the "Theatrical Gossip" column in *The Era* illustrates. For instance, the edition of 12 July 1846 informs the public that "Mr C. Kemble, the tragedian, is at present in Paris"; that George Handel Hill (1809-1849), also known as Yankee Hill, "is giving entertainment in Brooklyn"; and that there was "some slight stir" in New York after the runaway match of the only daughter of the actress Céline Céleste-Elliott (1815?-1882), also known as Madame Celeste, with "a Mr. Johnson, of the eminent banking firm of Lee and Johnson" (*The Era*, Sunday 12 July 1846).

Sennett refers to the man that inhabited the public realm as "an actor, a performer", and "the public actor is the man who presents emotions," involving him and other in a social bond (107–08). As the character Jaques famously states in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, "All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players. / They have their exits and their entrances. / And one man in his time plays many parts" (III, 7, 142-145). Therefore, the idea of the city as a big stage where men and women play daily different roles was already accepted during the English Renaissance. It developed from the Ancient Greek metaphor also present in Plato's allegory of the cave. Sennett points out that by the mid-eighteenth century, the idea of the *theatrum mundi* "was an old cliché dressed up in new ways" (109). Sennett remarks that the big city allows larger freedom for people to navigate through different social roles. For instance, a man who has harmed others in the past can

⁹ The *Ancien Régime*, or Old Regime, was the political and social system of the Kingdom of France until the French Revolution of 1789 abolished hereditary monarchy.

start anew with a new role: “And why should he not reform, since no appearance, no role, is fixed in the great city by necessity or by knowledge others have of one’s past?” (Sennett 110). Thus the big urban centres, given their multiplicity of trades and large population number, offer the individual more possibilities to change the role they play within society.

In *Paradoxe sur le Comédien* (1830), Denis Diderot (1713-1784), an important name in the theory of acting at the end of the eighteenth century, poses the following question: “Do we not say in the world that a man is a great actor? We do not mean by this that he feels, but on the contrary that he excels at simulating, even though he does not feel anything.”¹⁰ (101). Different from the civic man, who plays different roles in civil society, the actor on stage needs to have the ability to reproduce different human feelings convincingly. This means that it should be done naturally and without exaggeration.

According to Sennett, Diderot broke the “connection between acting, rhetoric, and the substance of the text”, creating “a theory of drama divorced from ritual”, being “the first to conceive of performing as an art form in and of itself, without reference to what was to be performed” (Sennett 111). Diderot proposed a dramatic art that is not concerned with the audience, anticipating the idea of the fourth wall separating the audience from the stage. He advises the playwright and the actor: “Whether you are composing or playing, do not think of the spectator, it is as if he did not exist. Imagine, on the proscenium, a large wall that separates you from the stage; act as if the curtain would not rise”¹¹ (Diderot, *Discours de La Poésie Dramatique* 66). In order to maintain the illusion created on stage, the audience should be ignored. In addition, there should be as little contrast in acting as possible, since the contrast reveals the artificiality of the art. In this manner, Diderot advocates a naturalistic acting style that would not compromise the theatre’s illusion of reproducing reality. For the same reason, Diderot condemns extravagance: “Pomposity spoils everything. The spectacle of wealth is not pretty. Wealth has too many caprices; it can dazzle the eye, but it cannot touch the soul. Under a garment overloaded with gilding, I never

¹⁰ All extracts from Diderot’s texts were translated from the French by me. The original reads: “Ne dit-on dans le monde que’un homme est un grand comédien? On n’entend pas par là qu’il sent, mais au contraire qu’il excelle à simuler, bien qu’il ne sente rien”.

¹¹ The original reads: “Soit donc que vous composiez, soit que vous jouiez, ne pensez non plus au spectateur que s’il n’existait pas. Imaginez, sur le bord du théâtre, un grand mur qui vous sépare du parterre; jouez comme si la toile ne se levait pas”.

see anything but a rich man, and it is a man I am looking for”¹² (*Discours de La Poésie Dramatique* 98–99). Therefore, the costumes and settings should not be excessive, since the attention should be on the representation of human feelings without unnecessary decoration.

In relation to acting, Diderot believed that a good actor is the one who can distance himself from his own feelings, and that good acting should favour artifice over natural expression, meaning that the actor should understand the nature of the feeling in order to be able to reproduce it; that is why the same emotion can be acted by an actor more than once, which is not possible for a human being in ordinary daily life. According to Sennett, “by withdrawing his own feelings from the material world, [the actor] has acquired the power to be conscious of what form is inherent in the realm of natural feeling. Because the performer builds on nature, he can communicate with people who remain in that chaotic state” (113). Diderot was thus against the explosion of feelings characteristic of the popular eighteenth-century emotional acting. As Sennett explains, the so-called “war between Sentiment and Calculation” emerged in the 1750s (114). The author illustrates this battle between sense and sensibility on stage with an occurrence at the Théâtre Boule-Rouge in Paris: the two rival actresses Clair Joséphe Hippolyte Leris (1723-1803), known as Madame Clairon and considered by Diderot “the female Garrick” (Sennett 114), and Marie Dumesnil (1713-1803) were debating the role of sensibility when preparing for a character: “Madame Dumesnil declared, ‘I was full of my part, I felt it, I yielded myself up to it.’ To which Madame Clairon replied abruptly, ‘I have never understood how one could do without calculation’” (Sennett 114). Dumesnil relied on *feeling* herself what the character would have felt in such situation, whereas Clairon invested on *understanding* the feeling in order to be able to recreate it with her body. Such a battle between emotional and realist acting was also the topic of theatrical disputes in English playhouses, and remained a controversy in the nineteenth century. An example is the changing of actresses during the 1842 season of *As You Like It* managed by William Charles Macready (1793-1873) at Drury Lane. The season began with Louisa Nesbitt (1812-1858) cast as Rosalind, but Helena Faucit (1817-1898) replaced her in later performances. While Nesbitt was criticised for lacking in

¹² Translated from the original: “Le faste gâte tout. Le spectacle de la richesse n’est pas beau. La richesse a trop de caprices; elle peut éblouir l’œil, mais non toucher l’âme. Sous un vêtement surchargé de dorure, je ne vois jamais qu’un homme riche, et c’est un homme que je cherche.”

sensibility, Faucit revelled “in the most joyous outbursts of sparkling fancy amid the freedom of the forest”, as stated by the reviewer from the *Edinburgh Observer* in 1845 (Brissenden 57). Faucit’s positive reviews in 1845 demonstrate that, despite Diderot’s criticism of sentimental acting in the late eighteenth century and the turn towards a more naturalistic approach to acting in the mid-nineteenth century, the school of sentiment was not completely rejected. The example of Edmund Kean’s *Richard II* in Chapter 5 will also corroborate this idea.

1.1.4 *This insubstantial pageant* – Sensation and History on Stage

A nineteenth-century playgoer had access to wide-ranging entertainment options in London. In addition to the traditional Covent Garden and Drury Lane, the city offered pantomimes, circuses, magic spectacles and animals shows. The 2016-17 exhibition *There Will Be Fun* at the British Library showcased examples of Victorian popular entertainment, with focus on five performers: the mesmerist Annie de Montfort, the “Royal Conjuror” Henry Evans Evanion (1832-1905), the magician John Nevil Maskelyne (1839-1917), circus proprietor ‘Lord’ George Sanger (1825-1911) and the comedian Dan Leno, stage name of George Wild Galvin (1860-1904). This exhibition demonstrates the diverse assortment of entertainment venues available for a London inhabitant or visitor during the nineteenth century. Additionally, one same venue could combine different genres in the same night in order to attract a broader audience. For instance, the playbill advertising the show at Drury Lane on 21 October 1843 includes a new ballet *The Peri*; the “Grand Comic Opera” *Cinderella, or the Fairy Slipper* in three acts, followed by “an entirely New and Original Absurdity, or Fairy Extravaganza” *Fortunio and his Seven Gifted Servants* in two acts (See figure 2). As Russell Jackson explains, “in the nineteenth century the British theatre was almost exclusively commercial and was central to popular culture and to what may be called the entertainment industry of an urban industrial life” (1). The theatrical essence of the time was thus intrinsically connected to the city life and the growing middle class

Figura 2 - Playbill Drury Lane October 21, 1843

THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE.
HADLE C. CRISI and M. PETIPA
 Having been received with perfect enthusiasm in the new Ballet of
THE PERI,
 It will be repeated EVERY EVENING of their performance.

This Evening, SATURDAY, October 21, 1843.
 Will be presented the Grand Comic Opera, in Three Acts, of
CINDERELLA!
Or, The FAIRY SLIPPER.
 THE MUSIC COMPOSED BY ROSSINI.

Conductor, Mr. BENEDICT.	Leader, Mr. R. HUGHES.
Felix, (Prince of Salerno) Mr. W. HARRISON.	
Alidoro, (The Prince's Tutor) Mr. G. BORNCASTLE.	
Handini, (The Prince's Valet) Mr. STRETTON.	
Fedora, (Sister to the Baron) Mr. HEADWYSE.	Faye, Miss NEWCOMBE.
Heaven and Attendants—Mrs. BAKER, J. P. POPE, J. H. JONES, J. HUGHES, B. DAVIS, M. BURNETT, D. G. B. BURNETT, J. H. BURNETT, J. H. BURNETT, J. H. BURNETT.	
Cinderella, (first time) Mrs. ALFRED SHAW.	
Clorinda, Miss HETTY.	Tabitha, Miss COLLETT.
Fairy Queen, Mademoiselle ALBERTAZZI.	
First Fairy, Miss HARRNETT.	Second Fairy, Miss GILMER.
Third Fairy, Miss HARRNETT.	Fourth Fairy, Miss GILMER.
Other Fairies, Miss HARRNETT, Miss GILMER, Miss HARRNETT, Miss GILMER, Miss HARRNETT, Miss GILMER.	

A PAS DE CHARACTER.
 By Mademoiselle CLARA WEBSTER and Madame GIUBILEI.
A PAS DE SOLDATS, from the Opera of 'GUILLAUME TELL,'
 By the Corps de Ballet.

FORTUNIO
AND HIS SEVEN GIFTED SERVANTS.

Donizetti's Opera of THE FAVORITE
 Will be played three times a week, with the Ballet of THE PERI.

Morton's New Farce of MY WIFE'S COME.
 Will be played on Tuesday next and THREE TIMES EVERY WEEK.

On Monday, DONIZETTI'S Grand Opera of THE FAVORITE, and THE PERI.
 On Tuesday, AN OPERA in which Mrs. ALFRED SHAW will appear.
 On Wednesday, DONIZETTI'S Grand Opera of THE FAVORITE, with the Ballet of THE PERI.
 On Thursday, AN OPERA in which Mrs. ALFRED SHAW will appear.
 On Friday, DONIZETTI'S Opera of THE FAVORITE, and the Ballet of THE PERI.

The Box-Office is open under the direction of Mr. WHITLOW.
 Dress Boxes 5s. Second Price 3s. 6d. Upper Circle of Boxes 2s. Second Price 1s. Upper Gal 1s. 6d. Middle Gal 1s. Lower Gal 1s.

The theatre offered a public space where the audience could experience a common response to the action portrayed on stage. Voskuil writes that “in their shared, somatic response to sensation plays, Victorians envisioned a kind of affective adhesive that massed them to each other in an inchoate but tenacious nineteenth-century incarnation of the English public sphere” (245). Although Voskuil writes about the emergence of this public theatrical sphere in relation to sensation drama, it also applies to the performance of history in the theatre. It evoked in the spectators a consciousness of being part of a communal history, sharing the same past and reliving it momentarily on stage.

Voskuil refers to the Victorian taste for authenticity and sensationalism as “a paradoxical way of imagining the public sphere in Victorian England” (245). Although illustrated editions of Shakespeare’s history plays at the turn of the nineteenth century depicted historical characters in contemporary dress, as I argue in Chapter 4, the stagings of *Richard II* in 1815, 1850 and 1857 distanced the dramatic action from the nineteenth-century present, recreating a supposedly authentic historical past in

terms of costume, setting and music. The techniques of sensation drama, which included exciting plots and special stage effects, were adapted to offer an illusion of the past as alive. In this sense, the nineteenth-century historical theatre functions as a sort of magic spell, in similitude bringing the dead back to life and transforming history into a spectacular pageant.

Spectacle was an intrinsic part of nineteenth-century society. The innovations made possible by new technology added excitement to everyday life. In London and Paris, the great cultural capitals of Europe at the time, a person would read about such novelties in the newspapers and see them in the streets. Sennett writes about the experiences that an old woman born in the *ancien régime* and living in Paris in the 1880s may have had during her lifetime:

The contrasts between the city of her youth and the city of her old age might appear to her as the feverish growth of public life in the 19th century. Spectacle was rampant on the city's streets: she might think of Nadar's¹³ ascents in a balloon which brought hundreds of thousands to the Champ de Mars; of the appearance of a giraffe in the Jardin des Plantes which drew such large crowds that several people were crushed to death; of a dog named Munito, who supposedly talked, attracting a vast throng at the Jardin Turc, waiting in vain day after day for Munito to hold forth. (Sennett 125).

Sennett's speculation illustrates well the sensationalistic characteristic of nineteenth-century entertainment in Paris. The situation in London was very similar, as the examples displayed at the aforementioned exhibition *There Will Be Fun* demonstrate. Yet, as Sennett points out, these spectacles were ephemeral: they would attract the public's undying attention for a moment until the audience quickly turned to the next novelty. The spectacle, in the manner of a theatrical production, vanishes after its last act. The ephemerality of spectacle draws a halt in the illusion it creates. Once the curtain in the theatre falls, the spectators are dragged back to the reality of the present. Similarly, when Nadar and the balloon leave the park, or when the Jardin des Plantes closes for the night, the illusion is over. It is no wonder that artists looked for means to hold the illusion longer, which would be achieved with photography in the first decades of the century, and cinema at its very end. History is

¹³ Nadar was the pseudonym of the photographer and balloonist Gaspard-Félix Tournachon (1820-1910). He is known for capturing the first aerial photographs in 1858, hovering Paris from a tethered balloon.

likewise ephemeral. Once moments are lived, they cannot be retrieved, only *reconstructed* by means of language, images, sounds or even smells.

In addition to being a public space for political discussion, the theatre developed as a place for embodying the transience of history, reconstructing the past in productions that could be staged again and again. Schoch calls the nineteenth century “the golden age of history” (Schoch, *Shakespeare’s Victorian Stage* 1). He affirms that it “was a time when the desire to know and possess the past rivalled science as the dominant system of cognition and history as a practice seemed to overtake the whole scope of representational activities: literature, architecture, handicrafts, painting, photography, sculpture, spectacle, and theatre” (Schoch, *Shakespeare’s Victorian Stage* 1). The number of publications that covered the history of England at the time are indicative of the thriving of the discipline and the readership’s interest. For example, John Lingard (1771-1851) published *The History of England, From the First Invasion by the Romans to the Accession of Henry VIII* in 1819; Sharon Turner (1768-1847) published *History of the Anglo-Saxons* between 1799 and 1805 and *The History of England* in 1839; Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859) published *The History of England from the Accession of James the Second* in 1848. These books sought to investigate England’s past, its culture and traditions, and its connections to their present time.

In discussing the construction of British traditions throughout history, Eric Hobsbawm affirms that “nothing appears more ancient, and linked to an immemorial past, than the pageantry which surrounds British monarchy in its public ceremonial manifestations”, especially as they were performed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1). As the author claims, some of these manifestations were not old “traditions” at all, but invented at that period for specific, albeit not always explicit purposes. The invention of tradition involves an attempt to connect present and past, implying a cultural continuum. A classic example mentioned by Hobsbawm is the rebuilding of the House of Parliament after the 1834 London fire in a neo-Gothic style, connecting the contemporary political space with a medieval heritage. Hobsbawm points to the fact that ancient materials, such as folksongs, physical contests and marksmanship, were re-used to institutionalise traditions for new purposes (Hobsbawm and Ranger 6). The same ritualisation of ancient material for contemporary political purposes occurs in the theatrical sphere,

where old history is recycled, transformed and performed in order to raise the audience's awareness in contemporary political issues.

David Cannadine argues that the beginning of the nineteenth century witnessed a change of public response towards the pageantry of the monarchy. As Cannadine puts it, "as the population was becoming better educated, royal ritual would soon be exposed as nothing more than primitive magic, a hollow sham" (102). Furthermore, the outside grandeur hid the concealed monarchical ineptitude. During Edmund Kean's season of *Richard II* at the Drury Lane in 1815, for instance, the United Kingdom was going through the period of Regency (1811-1820) under Prince George, later George IV (1820-1830), whose immoral behaviour and exaggerated expenditure rendered him an unpopular monarch. The staging of a weak king challenged by a fierce contender to the throne under these circumstances would undoubtedly add new topicality to the play.

The invented tradition of a ritual, although bearing an idea of constancy and fixity, fluctuates in meaning according to its context of occurrence. As Cannadine exemplifies, "under certain circumstances, a coronation might be seen by participants and contemporaries as a symbolic reaffirmation of national greatness. But in a different context, the same ceremony might assume the characteristics of collective longing for past glories" (105). The staging of a deposition, as in Shakespeare's *Richard II*, will inevitably be interpreted differently depending on the political atmosphere in and outside the theatre. It is an even more complex phenomenon, since it consists of the performance of a performed ritual: a theatrical adaptation of a ceremonial act performed by Richard II.

Monarchy was part of both society and politics, a connection between the power and the people, and between the past and present. The productions analysed in this dissertation were staged in a period in which revolutionary memories were still potent, and "there remained hostility to the further aggrandizement of royal influence by re-opening of the theatre of power which had been happily closed down by the end of the seventeenth century" (Cannadine 108). In this context, theatre functioned as a place where royal actions could be judged, and faults committed by kings from the past could have a repercussion, raising awareness on current political affairs. The theatre drew from the monarchy invented traditions, re-enacting them on stage, and calling the spectatorship's attention to the theatricality of royalty. Concomitantly, the monarchs there portrayed, such as Richard II, belonged to a long-gone historical

past, mythicised, from which the spectators were separated by time, freeing them to operate a more open judgement.

1.2 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the manifestations on stage of “the brightest heaven of invention” in Shakespeare’s *Richard II*. Recalling Shakespeare’s Chorus in *Henry V*, I discussed the prologue as a liminal space between the audience and the action performed on stage, inviting the spectators to actively engage with it. Moreover, I have examined the theatrical space as a locus for historical reconstruction and for fostering the audience’s awareness in the historical reconstruction process.

This chapter has also investigated the nineteenth-century theatrical public sphere, characterised by its post-industrialisation commercial role. Sennett explains how the number of public social places increased at the time, especially in the capitals, changing the sense of the public at the turn of the nineteenth century. This change allowed the individual to take control of the part they played in the public sphere, where big cities resemble big stages, and the men and women living in them actors and actresses. Urbanisation and population growth altered the theatrical landscape in London, expanding beyond the fashionable West End. Minor theatres developed as a social place for informal political discussions, which took place on stage and in theatrical neighbourhoods. With the Licensing Act of 1737, spoken drama became exclusive to the patent houses Drury Lane and Covent Garden, broadening the gap between “low” and “high” drama. In this context, Shakespeare assumed simultaneously a divisive as well as a key bridging role, being claimed by both the legitimate and illegitimate theatres. Minor theatres had to be creative, adding musical or dance intermissions, or other forms of popular entertainment, to Shakespearean texts in order to be permitted to stage them.

Finally, Chapter 1 has also explored the expansion of History as an academic discipline in the nineteenth century, and its effect on theatrical reconstructions of the past. In order to understand the performance of rituals and royal ceremonies on stage, I have turned to Hobsbawm and Ranger’s discussion on the construction of British traditions and their role in connecting past and present. In the history of British monarchy, old rituals were re-used for new purposes, in a similar manner with which

the theatre performs old stories to prompt new interpretations for a new audience. As the corpus of this research demonstrates, *Richard II* has been reinterpreted by Edmund Kean in 1815, Charles Macready in 1850 and Charles Kean in 1857, offering new possibilities for understanding Shakespeare's play, which are inevitably shaped by the conditions of the theatrical public sphere at the time.

CHAPTER 2: REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST: HISTORICAL DRAMA AND THE MEDIEVAL REVIVAL

*To reverence the King, as if he were
 Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,
 To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
 To ride abroad redressing human wrongs.
 To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
 To honour his own word as if his God's,
 To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
 To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
 And worship her by years of noble deeds,
 Until they won her; for indeed I knew
 Of no more subtle master under heaven
 Than is the maiden passion for a maid,
 Not only to keep down the base in man,
 But teach high thought, and amiable words
 And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
 And love of truth, and all that makes a man.*

(Alfred Tenyson, *Idylls of the King*, ll. 68-83)

Periodisation is a question that plays a significant role in medievalist scholarship: when did the Middle Ages end and when can post-medieval recreations of the Middle Ages be considered an example of medievalism? Mike Rodman Jones submits that not only is it important to distinguish the end of the Middle Ages, but also the beginning of modernity in order to understand medievalisms. For him, four aspects mark this transition in Western culture: first, politically, Henry VII's victory at Bosworth Field in 1485 and the beginning of the Tudor dynasty; second, textually, the development of print in William Caxton's print shop in Westminster in the 1470s, which prompted a shift from a scribal culture to mass production print; third, linguistically, the gradual standardisation of written English; and, finally, religiously, the Reformation, which is often considered as signalling the divide of religious culture between traditional Latin Christianity and the expanding modern fragmented churches (Jones 89). The turn from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century is, therefore, the cusp from medieval to Early Modern culture in England. Not surprisingly, it is also the moment when medievalist thinking began to establish. Nevertheless, the word *medieval* was only used at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Its first recorded

use dates back to 1817 in a text on British monasticism. Until then, the word generally used to describe the pre-Renaissance period in history was *Gothic*, although it carried a negative connotation associated with the German barbaric tribes. It was from the 1830s onwards that the word *medieval* began to replace *Gothic*, which in turn became increasingly used to refer to the architecture style (Alexander xxiv).

Medievalism in sixteenth-century England arose as a reaction to changes in politics and religion, supporting the Protestant Church and legitimising the Tudor claim to the throne. Although England's medieval past was Catholic, it was revived selectively and reconstructed for specific purposes. Dominique Goy-Blanquet refers to the different historiographical tendencies in sixteenth-century Reformist or Anti-Reformist history writing, each searching historical precedence to endorse their own claims. While Anti-Reformists appointed their past and validity in the history of the solid Catholic Church, the Church of England legitimated their authority in God, whose existence predated Rome or any canon law (Goy-Blanquet 58). Henry VIII's English Church was in this perspective a return to immemorial customs prior even to Rome. These opposing movements aimed at either effacing the medieval past or rescuing it from destruction. It is an example of conflicting but paradoxically supplementing visions of the Middle Ages.

According to David Matthews, parallel to a nostalgic longing for the past, which he calls the "romantic Middle Ages" (15), the Middle Ages have also been regarded as dark, barbarous, and superseded – the "gothic or grotesque Middle Ages" (Matthews 15). These two outlooks developed from a late-seventeenth-century dual perspective on the medieval past since the 1688 Glorious Revolution, which arguably sprang from the opposing Whig and Tory re-connections with the Middle Ages. The first, "a Whiggish celebration of the antiquity of British freedom," opposed to the "ultimately more influential, a Tory regret for the rejected feudal past" (Chandler 2). The Whigs looked to Anglo-Saxons' ideas about parliamentary kingship while the Tories leaned on Norman models of absolute monarchy introduced by William the Conqueror (c. 1028-1087). These two ensuing different approaches to the Middle Ages are not clear-cut divisions. On the contrary, they coexist and overlap in cultural reconstructions of the medieval past in what I call double-voiced medievalism.

By double-voiced medievalism I refer to the phenomenon of coexistent contrasting conceptions of the Middle Ages expressed in representations of the medieval past based on the tension between the grotesque and the romantic. These two categories are the extreme poles of this cultural phenomenon, and the artistic productions that reconstruct the medieval fluctuate in-between, inevitably pending to one side or the other. This fluctuating movement is constant, and hardly any artistic representation of the Middle Ages offers a completely grotesque or completely romanticised perspective of the medieval past.

Matthews explains that a gothicised conception of the Middle Ages is based on a simplistic idea that connects anything medieval to “threat, violence and warped sexuality” (15). The word *grotesque* derives from the word *grotto*, which means a cave, and from the Greek adjective *kryptos*, signifying *hidden* or *concealed*. Hence, the word *grotesque* refers to “darkness, obscurity, the hidden and repressed” (Matthews 20). Moreover, the “middle” of the Middle Ages refers to it as an in-between period, allocated after Antiquity and before Modernity, which conveys an idea of incompleteness or transition. According to Matthews, this tripartite division of history was devised by the Italian scholar Petrarch (1304-1374), who believed Modernity should favour a return to the Antiquity ideals, condemning the intermediate Middle Ages (Matthews 20). This idea was solidified during the Renaissance, when scholars were conceived to have overcome the ‘dark ignorance’ of the past.

Matthews mentions the antiquarian William Camden (1551-1623), who edited the medieval poetry anthology *Certain Poems, or Poesies, Epigrams, Rhythms, and Epitaphs of the English Nation in Former Times* in 1605. He wrote the following in the introduction to the piece: “I will only give you a taste of some of middle age, which was so overcast with dark clouds, or rather thick fogs of ignorance, that every little spark of liberal learning seemed wonderful” (Matthews 21). Camden uses the words ‘dark clouds’ and ‘fogs of ignorance’ to refer to the medieval past, which significantly summarises the period’s general prejudiced view on the Middle Ages.

Peter Raedts explains that Europe’s perception of its medieval past changed from negative to positive from 1750 onwards. Raedts exemplifies his point with an episode from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s (1749-1832) life in 1770, when the young man moved to Strasbourg to finish his law degree and met the philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1804). Herder was by then already famous for praising German cultural roots in opposition to the classical ideals, and for

encouraging the rescue and collection of traditional German tales and ballads. Persuaded by Herder, Goethe visited Strasbourg's countryside and became enchanted by Strasbourg cathedral, an immense Gothic building completed in the fifteenth century. Facing the Gothic architecture, Goethe realised he had fallen prey to "the prejudice of his day that the Gothic age was tantamount to disorder, unnaturalness, ornateness; [and that,] indeed, it was everything a person of good taste was supposed to dislike" (Raedts 1–2). In a moment of epiphany, Goethe acknowledged his previous biased opinion, and recognised the majesty of medieval German masters, such as Erwin von Steinbach (1244-1318), the main architect connected to the Strasbourg cathedral. As Raedts emphasises, although Goethe praised rather the artist responsible for the cathedral than the time and place he lived in, Goethe's essay "Von Deutscher Baukunst" (*On German Architecture*) (1773) contributed to the change of perspective regarding the Middle Ages at the end of the eighteenth century. As Raedts puts it, "never before had anyone who belonged to the band of leading intellectuals of his day praised a medieval monument so unconditionally and shown that medieval artists had been capable of an originality which was in no way second to that of the Greeks and Romans" (3). As part of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, Goethe saw in the Middle Ages an alternative to the rationalism and lack of creativity of classicism.

Raedts identifies two reasons for this perceptive shift in relation to the Middle Ages: first, the knowledge of other cultures beyond Europe as a result of the colonising overseas exploration, which offered contact with different ways of living and different beliefs, mostly incompatible with their own Christian history, expanding their understanding of the world and its history. Cultures were then understood to be following a sequence of three or four developmental stages: "the most primitive stage was that of the savages, the hunters and gatherers, still to be seen in America, subsequently the nomadic, cattle raising stage, then the sedentary, farming stage, both usually labelled together as the barbaric age. That in turn resulted in the commercial civilisation phase, which eighteenth-century philosophers considered the highest stage of society". When history was understood as a process of *progress*, the Early Modern period was consequently regarded as a step forward from the Middle Ages, and Classical Antiquity could no longer be considered superior to what came after. It also meant that the medieval past was a necessary step for the establishment of eighteenth-century Europe as it existed then for Goethe and his

contemporaries. Secondly, German scholars in the mid-eighteenth century such as Herder developed the idea that all cultures were equal and unique, and should thus be considered according to their own merits, not in comparison with contemporary European cultures. Likewise, medieval cultures should be regarded in their own right, and not in juxtaposition with Ancient Greece or Rome.

2.1 The Middle Ages in the Nineteenth-Century Imagination

As the centuries unfolded, the purposes of looking back at the Middle Ages varied. During the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries in Britain, the idea of the medieval past and medieval romance was greatly affected by Edmund Spenser's epic poem *The Faerie Queene* (1590-1596), in which the poet allegorically refers to different knights and their virtues. As Clare Simmons explains, these artists evoked the Middle Ages as a time and space that offered opportunities for adventure and fantasy, inspiring the Romantic imagination (103). Walter Scott's (1771-1832) *Ivanhoe* (1820) offered the foundation for perceptions of the medieval past, depicting medieval tournaments, battles, sieges and trial by combat. Scott's medievalism inspired the 1839 Eglinton Tournament, organised and dedicated to Archibald Montgomerie, the 13th Earl of Eglinton (Simmons 112–13). Its purpose was to re-enact a medieval joust tournament, and its popularity is demonstrated by the attendance of thousands of spectators, including Prince Louis Napoleon Bonaparte (1808-1873).

In *An Account of the Tournament at Eglinton* (1839), James Aikman describes the tournament where “the Earl of Eglinton had resolved to revive the manly sports of those days in which his ancestors were so distinguished” as “a galaxy of beauty and brilliancy not to be surpassed in the fables of eastern romance”, an “assemblage of fair women and brave men – themselves a spectacle of animating interest – that had come to shed lustre by their presence on the deeds of modern chivalry”, despite the overcast and rainy weather (Aikman 5; 7; 9). Aikman describes the ball on Thursday night:

[It] was one of the most splendid sights we have ever seen. In the vast assemblage there were not above a dozen of plain dresses, and many of the costumes, both male and female, were truly magnificent. The principal dancing room, just previous to the opening of the ball, presented one moving mass

of shining silks, waving feathers, and glittering jewels. Lord Eglinton and the Marchioness of Londonderry were remarked for the peculiar richness of their attire; but it was impossible to particularize others, for when you thought you had picked out the finest dress, your attention was immediately attracted by one that you imagined finer. (Aikman 14).

Figura 3 - The Tournament at Eglinton - August 1839 (March to the Tilting Ground) – Aikman, J. *An Account of the Tournament at Eglinton* (1839)



Interestingly, a review printed in the *The Pilot* from 4 September 1839 offers a rather different view of the whole pageant. Because of the intense rain in the first two days of the festival, the correspondent affirms that

Never was there such a deplorable exhibition as the grand procession. The Marquess of Londonderry was completely drenched; he had a most grotesque appearance as he struggled to keep his royal robes around him; and exposed, unconsciously, a large umbrella, in the vain endeavour. The mail-clad knights looked grim, indeed not with valour, but vexation as the rain descended in pertinacious torrents upon the fine caparisons and nodding plumes of their steeds. The heralds and the poursuivants, and the esquires and the pages, and all the motley multitude, were sore dispirited; and Lord Eglinton himself, it was evident, although he strove to make the best of it, and put on a smiling countenance, was vexed and disheartened. (*The Pilot*, Wednesday 4 September 1839).

At the end of his contribution, the writer stated that “the Eglinton tournament is among the things that were, and will be long remembered as the most magnificent abortion that has been witnessed for two centuries”, and adds a short mocking stanza: “Ill would it suit the dullard ear / Of distant listeners, to hear / All the vexatious I have borne / Since Tuesday night to Thursday morn” (*The Pilot*, Wednesday 4 September 1839). Clearly, the reconstruction of the medieval past and attempted revival of the idealised grandeur of jousting tournaments were perceived differently by these two chroniclers. The event aimed at creating the illusion of living in the past, to be experienced by both the role-players and the spectators. However, the illusion failed. Terrible weather conditions damaged the idealisation of the past and betrayed the artificiality of the plan. The two contradictory reports of the same event are an interesting example of the double-voicing surrounding medievalism: the opposition between and overlapping of a romantic and a grotesque Middle Ages. It is also a contrast between the ideal and the realistic, a disparity also explored in the literary production of the time.

The Tournament at Eglinton resonates with the nineteenth-century romantic quest for English roots in their medieval past. English identity was to be found in its own Middle Ages rather than in Ancient Greece or Rome, as done by the classicists in the sixteenth century. Chivalry became a powerful theme, especially during the Victorian era. Matthews affirms that the renewal of interest in chivalry and the romanticised Middle Ages began mainly in poetry and literary studies in the beginning of the eighteenth century, particularly under the influence of the French historian Jean-Baptiste de La Curne de Sainte-Palaye (1697-1781) and the German poet and literary critic Friedrich von Schlegel (1772-1829) (Matthews 24–25). Thomas Percy (1729-1811), for instance, published *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* in 1765, a collection of British ballads and popular songs; Thomas Warton (1728-1790) wrote a three-volume work on English poetry from the eleventh until the sixteenth centuries entitled *History of English Poetry* (1774-1781); and Richard Hurd (1720-1808) wrote *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, published in 1762. The Romantic poets from the turn of the century, such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) and John Keats (1795-1821), also found in the English Middle Ages a usable heritage for British culture in contrast with Classical antiquity. According to Simmons, by the end of the eighteenth century, England and northern Europe were overcoming the “cultural inferiority complex that privileged the literature and style of ancient

Greece and Rome over indigenous history, arts, and culture” (103). Britain thus turned to its medieval past as a means to express nationalist sentiments and to construct its own national identity.

With the uncertain consequences of the industrialisation and urbanisation of the big cities, artists turned to old British folk traditions from the British Isles and Britain’s Celtic roots, searching for a way of life more connected with ‘nature’ (Simmons 105). Examples of these Romantic efforts include the Ballad Revival movement of the late-eighteenth century. Walter Scott famously collected popular ballads and oral folk songs from the Scottish borders in his *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, first published in 1802 but expanded in later editions. This is an important moment in British medievalism, since, as Simmons puts it, it illustrates “the power of poetry to preserve national memory” (105). Literature was a way to rescue the roots of the British people.

The early-nineteenth-century historical novels feed on this recovery of the medieval past as the birth of British identity. Scott’s *Waverley* novels (1814-1832), the unfinished *Queenhoo-Hall* by Joseph Strutt (finished by Scott and published in 1808), Jane Porter’s *The Scottish Chiefs* (1810), and Thomas Love Peacock’s *Maid Marian* (1822) are key examples of this trend. Moreover, medieval texts regained attention from scholars and antiquarians, and were re-printed, such as Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (1476), Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte D’Arthur* (1485) and William Langland’s *Piers Plowman* (c. 1370-90). An interest in the medieval past prompted the desire to know more about it, replacing general ideas about the Middle Ages based on both history chronicles and fiction with structured academic and archival research. As illustration, Simmons names Henry Hallam’s *View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages* (1818), Sharon Turner’s *History of the Anglo-Saxons* (1799-1805), Robert Henry’s *History of Great Britain from the first invasion of it by the Romans, Written on a New Plan* (1771), and the aforementioned antiquarian and engraver Joseph Strutt, who reproduced rare medieval illustrations, displaying the Middle Ages and the medieval ways of life to the modern reader. For instance, he published *A Complete View of the Dresses and Habits of the People of England* in two volumes in 1786 and 1799 respectively, and *The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England* in 1801 (Simmons 108–09). These historiographical works were not only valuable to aid readers to visualise the past and its people, but they were of immeasurable worth as a resource for theatre managers and set and costume

designers, who relied heavily on works such as Strutt's to recreate the Middle Ages on stage.

The popular historical novels also found their way to the theatre. Scott's *Waverley* novels were a constant presence on the British stage from the first publication of the books. The first title of the series, *Waverley; or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since* (1814), set on the brink of the Jacobite uprising of 1745, reached Australia in 1822 at Perth Theatre Royal, and was later staged at Adelphi Theatre in March 1824, and at Edinburgh Theatre Royal in 1824, 1831, 1852 and 1871. *Ivanhoe* was staged for the first time one month after its publication at Surrey Theatre. Five other productions followed in the same year: at Coburg Theatre on 24 January, at the Adelphi on 27 January, simultaneously at Covent Garden and Drury Lane on 2 March, and at Birmingham Theatre Royal on 1 September. As the years followed, thirty more productions reached the stage until 1913, from operas to burlesques, pantomimes and even a production in German at Drury Lane in 1840 (Ford 20–27; 47–49).

In addition to tracing continuities and traditions, political reasons also account for establishing the Middle Ages as the set for a fictional narrative. In order to avoid censorship, turning to the past could be a veiled way to criticise the present state of affairs. As an example, Simmons mentions Robert Southey's dramatic poem *Wat Tyler* (1817) about the Peasants' Revolt in 1381 under Richard II's reign,¹⁴ as well as his *Sir Thomas More; Or, Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society* (1829), where Southey suggests that "the English people had been happiest at the end of the Middle Ages" (Simmons 110). Apart from *Sir Thomas More*, Southey incorporated other medieval figures in his poetic works, including the paradoxical Joan of Arc in the eponymous poem from 1796, who had previously become a dramatic character in Shakespeare's *Henry VI*.

Shakespeare's history plays reviving the Middle Ages were constant in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century playbills. However, they were not the only such plays to be staged. New medievalist creations were continually produced, adding more layers to the reconstructions of the medieval past. According to Simmons, "while medieval drama began to be studied during the Romantic era, it does not

¹⁴ Southey wrote *Wat Tyler* as a young man, although it was not published then. The 1817 edition was an unauthorised publication by his enemies to expose Southey's early republicanism. Similarly to the poet William Wordsworth, Southey left his youth radicalism behind and became increasingly more conservative throughout his life.

seem to have been performed. On the other hand, dramas that referred very loosely to the medieval period and that involved medieval settings and costuming were extremely popular” (115). As examples, Simmons cites the Scottish poet and dramatist Joanna Baillie and her *Plays of the Passions* (1798-1812), Anne Yearsley’s *Earl Godwin*, performed in 1789 and printed in 1791, and George Colman’s *The Battle of Hexham* (1789), set during the War of the Roses, and *The Surrender of Calais* (1791), set during Edward III’s reign (Simmons 115). The theatre was a dynamic medium to recreate the Middle Ages, since it deals not only with the printed word, but also with acting, setting and costuming, providing a three-dimensional reconstruction of the medieval past. Moreover, it was a means to familiarise the public with the medieval past, as well as a manner to criticise or elevate the present by comparison, and to raise the audience’s awareness about the act of historical reconstruction.

2.2 Historical Reconstruction and the Illusion of “Living History”

As the Eglinton Tournament and the several medievalist plays that hit the London stages in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries illustrate, the past was gradually understood as “a foreign country”, as L. P. Hartley once put it, a different way of living than today. However, David Lowenthal explains that “the past is a foreign country reshaped by today, its strangeness domesticated by our own modes of caring for its vestiges” (Lowenthal 4). Accordingly, the academic and artistic productions mentioned above have reshaped the past given their own yearnings and purposes. Lowenthal argues that the past began to be regarded as different from the present only in the late eighteenth century. Until then, “human nature supposedly remained constant, events actuated by unchanging passions and prejudices. Even when ennobled by nostalgia or deprecated by partisans of progress, the past seemed not a foreign country but part of their own” (4). When this distance in time and place was established and “yesterday became less and less like today” (Lowenthal 4), people became increasingly fascinated about eras that were long gone. One of the consequences was the emergence of a desire to preserve and reconstruct the past as an alternative to one’s own time; hence the antiquarian projects to save monuments and antiquities, and to start museums in Europe in the nineteenth century.

Stephen Bann identifies a “historical poetics” that was distinctive to the emergence in this period of a new way to acknowledge the past (*The Clothing of Clio: A Study of the Representation of History in Nineteenth-Century Britain and France* 6). Using a metaphor in *The Inventions of History*, Bann analyses the advertising poster of an exhibition at the British Museum in 1987-88 entitled “Views of the Past”. On the poster, we find a reproduction of a 1782 watercolour by James Lambert of Bramber Castle, in Sussex. There, two figures look at the remains of the Norman castle, one of whom is sketching. Based on the exhibition’s title and on the watercolour, Bann poses the following question:

In what sense, if any, are these two figures – the artist and his companion – ‘viewing the past’? Is there any sense at all in claiming that these attentive



observers (and the late eighteenth-century people for whom they serve as surrogates) were not simply considering a piece of architecture in its natural setting, but ‘viewing’ history in one of its

contemporary and concrete manifestations? (Bann, *The Inventions of History: Essays on the Representation of the Past* 122).

Whether the two men were indeed reflecting on the material vestiges of the past while looking at those ruins or not, it is impossible to say. However, Bann’s speculative example illustrates the potential wish to look beyond stones to imagine the past.

Figura 4 Lambert, James. Drawings of Castles and Churches in Sussex. 1779-1782. British Library, Add. MS 5676-5677

In addition to ruins and nature that have withstood the action of time, another way to look at the past is through architecture. In Romantic England, the movement devoted to preserve and reconstruct medieval architecture was known as the Gothic Revival. John M. Ganim emphasises that the idea behind medievalism and the Revival lies in conjuring up “an image of the built environment” (29). Whether authentically old or newly built with an old style, these buildings played a meaningful role in materialising the past in the present. When the two figures at Bramber Castle touch the ruins of the fortification, they are in fact touching the very same stones that sheltered the Braose family at the end of the eleventh century. The stones are a material connection bridging (many layers of) past and present.

It is no wonder that ruins captivated those interested in seeing and touching the material past. They were regarded as embodiments of history for having (partially) stood the test of time throughout centuries, bearing witness to the change of hundreds of seasons, and going far beyond the span of a human life. Britain’s material past was furthermore the inspiration for modern medievalists, who sought in medieval architecture a medium to return to former times. Horace Walpole (1717-1797), the author of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), considered the first Gothic novel in English language, was famously responsible for rebuilding a small seventeenth-century house and turning it into Strawberry Hill, a majestic Gothic-style villa (See figure 5). In a chronological summary of the principal rooms at Strawberry Hill, W. S.

Lewis lists over thirty rooms completed between 1748 and 1776, including a Great Parlour, Armory, Library, Round Drawing Room, Walpole's Bedchamber and Towers (Lewis 91). Strawberry Hill is a striking example of how the Middle Ages were re-created for eighteenth- and later nineteenth-century purposes. The medievalist movement of the period was significant for its political ideas, but also "its symbolic value as a metaphor of belief" (Chandler 10). Strawberry Hill was Walpole's "metaphor of belief", by means of which he expressed his idealised perspective of the medieval past, as well as a nostalgic longing for what these idealised Middle Ages could offer: romance, adventure and valour.

Of course, Strawberry Hill was an illusion, a way to "erase" the present and find refuge in an imaginary age. As Ganim points out, Walpole's villa "embodied an imagined vision of the Gothic, rather than a conscious imitation of existing medieval structures. Strawberry Hill would soon be dismissed by medieval revivalists in the early nineteenth century as an inconsistent confection built with techniques alien to medieval crafts" (30). This stage of the Gothic Revival is what Alexander calls "the playful, picturesque and theatrical phase of 'the Gothick architecture,' a phase beginning early in the [eighteenth] century with garden follies" (62).¹⁵ Alexander also refers to Walpole's Strawberry Hill, calling it "the self-amusing papier-mâché tracery of Horace Walpole",¹⁶ and adds more examples of contemporaneous architectural medievalist projects, such as William Beckford's "terror-Gothic 'Abbey'" at Fonthill, designed by James Wyatt in 1796. Walter Scott's "Scottish-Baronial" home Abbotsford House in the Scottish Borders is another remarkable example of early-nineteenth-century medievalism, where Scott sheltered his collection of curiosities and antiquities (Alexander 62–63). Chandler adds that Abbotsford House also illustrates the dynastic element of the Gothic Revival, since it could be regarded as Scott's claim to security and land establishment to be bestowed to his descendants, replicating the notion of the ordered feudal ideal in the Middle Ages (Chandler 186).

Figura 5 - Strawberry Hill. Creative Commons License

¹⁵ The author refers to the spelling used by Walter Scott in his personal journal and widely used to refer to the eighteenth-century exaggerated Gothic.

¹⁶ The ornamented ceiling in Strawberry Hill's Gallery is made of papier-mâché disguised as stone or wooden decorative details.

As we have seen, the purpose of re-living the Middle Ages in Romantic England was not simply consequent of a historical interest in English cultural heritage. It was, rather, a nostalgic desire to go back to a simpler unindustrialised way of life. It is therefore no wonder that the medieval past began to be greatly idealised by the end of the eighteenth century, when the rise of industrialism and major economic and social changes impacted particularly England and Europe as a whole: urban development, agricultural machinery and the effects of the Revolution and dissolution of the monarchy in France could be felt on the continent and beyond.

A nostalgia for the past was consolidated with criticism on the poor working



conditions of regular laborers at time. Augustus Pugin's book *Contrasts*, first published in 1836 and revised and republished in 1841, illustrates the divergence between present and past, comparing "the noble edifices of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries" with "similar buildings of the present day; showing the present decay of Taste", as he states in the book's subtitle. The word "noble" referring to late-medieval architecture reveals the idealised perspective with which Pugin looked at the past. According to Pugin, "on comparing the Architectural Works of the last three Centuries with those of the Middle Ages, the wonderful superiority of the latter must strike every attentive observer; and the mind is naturally led to reflect on the causes which have wrought this mighty change, and to endeavour to trace the fall of

Architectural taste” (1). For Pugin, the decline of architectural majesty in England is intrinsically connected to the decline of Catholicism and the rise of Protestantism. The nineteenth-century architect claims that “the triumph of these new and degenerate ideas [since the reigns of Henry VIII and Francis I] over the ancient Catholic feelings, is a melancholy evidence of the decay of faith and morals at the period of their introduction, and to which indeed they owe their origin” (Pugin 13). Pugin’s impression of the Middle Ages is by no means impartial, since it is imbued with his religious beliefs and his faith regarding the superiority of Catholicism. His architectural medievalism, including the interior design of the Palace of Westminster in London, has become an intrinsic part of the Gothic Revival. However, neither the term Gothic Revival nor Victorian Gothic were used by Pugin himself: “It was only a generation later, in 1872, that C. L. Eastlake in publishing the earliest *History of the Gothic Revival* established the former in English usage” (Hitchcock 7).

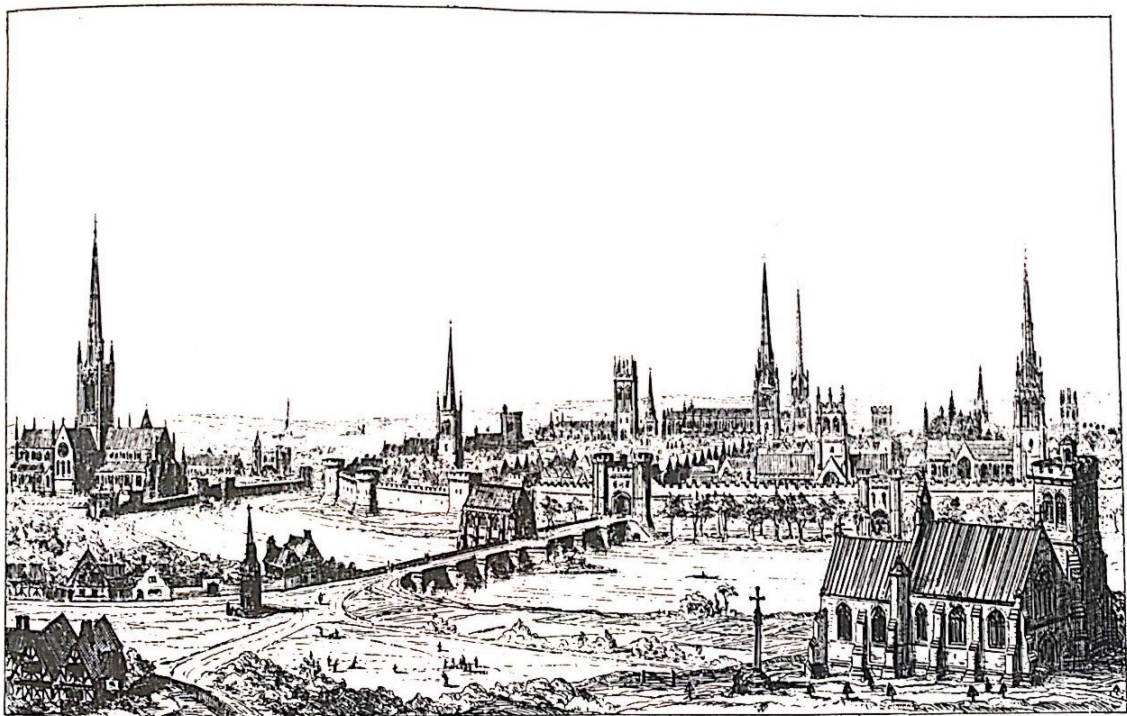
The Gothic Revival in England began in the early eighteenth century, “when clients and designers, in contrast to the almost unconscious post-medieval ‘survivalism’ characteristic of the work of many craftsmen-builders in the seventeenth and even the eighteenth centuries, began to aim at imitating, however superficially, however frivolously, the decorative aspects and the picturesque massing of medieval structures” (Hitchcock 9). For Pugin, these Neo-Gothic buildings, although constructed in the nineteenth century, could not be considered nineteenth-century buildings. In fact, he manufactures the illusion that it was possible to erect a medieval building in the present by using medieval techniques. He makes the following distinction in the preface to the second edition of *Contrasts*: “revivals of ancient architecture, although erected in, are not buildings of, the nineteenth century, – their merit must be referred back to the period from whence they were copied” (Pugin v). Pugin’s conviction reveals the nineteenth-century beliefs that the past could be, literally, re-constructed.

Pugin’s definition of “pure Gothic” or “pointed architecture” is based on the construction style and “decorative complexity” from the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth-centuries, which “recall the moment of the last complete hegemony of Catholicism, on the eve of the Reformation” (Ganim 31). Pugin’s architectural style consequently manifests his support of Catholicism, congruent with the Anglo-Catholicism of some members of the Oxford Movement. Conversely, it avoids the late-Gothic perpendicular style, which can be seen in King’s College Chapel in

Cambridge, for instance, for its connection with “Henry VIII’s projects, and therefore with both apostasy and persecution of Catholics, though Pugin never makes this rationale explicit” (Ganim 31). Ganim goes on to explain that “as the nineteenth century developed, Pugin’s identification of the Gothic as a quintessentially Catholic style would be challenged by the adaptation of the style for other purposes, including civic institutions, especially in the north of England, and evangelical Protestant churches around the Empire” (31). In fact, it was his Catholicism that hindered Pugin from being properly recognised for his work and from receiving public commissions. As Alexander puts it, “the silence about Pugin on the part of the leading advocates of a return to medieval ideals was not professional jealousy but anti-Catholic prejudice” (66), even after the Catholic Relief Act of 1829, which allowed Catholic members to sit in Parliament.

Pugin’s medievalist project to re-build Catholic England is a biased and idealised re-imagination of the past. Alexander explains that “Pugin’s vision of English life during the Wars of the Roses is amusingly serene, and should be taken not literally but symbolically” (69). It is the role of the medieval past as a Catholic symbol that fuelled Pugin’s medievalism. Additionally, Pugin also regarded industrialism as a cause for the contemporary state of decay; he felt that “the increase of industrial production ha[d] come at a dire human and spiritual cost, visible in greed, cruelty, social division and harshness of urban life” (Alexander 69). In *Contrasts*, for example, Pugin compares a Catholic town in 1440, which landscape is enriched with Gothic-towered chapels, abbey and guild hall, with the same place in the mid-nineteenth century. A stone wall circles the medieval town, and outside the gates it is possible to see some people interacting in a field behind the church and a single person rowing a boat. The feeling produced is of idyllic peace and community. In contrast, the description of the same town in 1840 emphasises the change in the landscape: the tall Gothic towers and churches have been replaced by square plain buildings, such as the new jail. Of the imposing Abbey there are only ruins, and the New Parsonage House and Pleasure Grounds feature a Neoclassical architectural style. Walking on the path in front of the parsonage house, it is possible to distinguish a woman holding a boy’s hand, pushing a cart with two children, followed by yet another child.

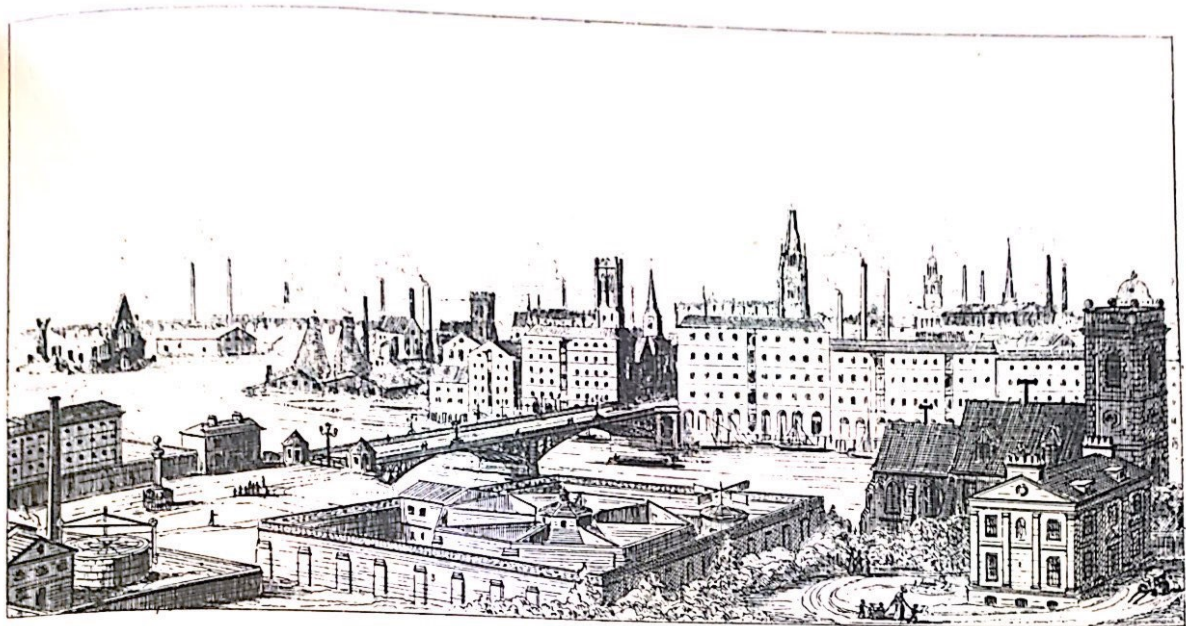
Figura 6 - Catholic town in 1440. Pugin, A. *Contrasts*.



The picture implies suffering, since the woman walks with her back bent and head down, suggesting exhaustion. Finally, the landscape is complete with over fifteen chimneys releasing pollution in the once clean air of the 1440s. As a result of comparing the harshness of the present with the picturesqueness of the past, the medieval feudal system was thus revisited with nostalgia. As Chandler explains, “in contrast to the alienated and divisive atmosphere of an increasingly urbanized and industrialized society, the Middle Ages were seen as familial and patriarchal” (3). Moreover, the lost bond between master and employees was regretted, along with grief for the loss of connection with nature, which can also be identified in Pugin’s illustrations.

Figura 7 - The same town in 1840. Pugin, A. *Contrasts*.

The re-evaluation of the medieval past which started in the mid-1700s carried on to the nineteenth century, when the relationship with the Middle Ages changed from interest to idolatry by a great number of people. Surely, the medievalist “dream of order”, as Chandler calls it, was an idealised agenda. It was mainly a desire to get lost in an illusion of a romantic past, “a period of heroic action and belief” (Chandler 125). Simmons mentions Kenelm Henry Digby’s (c. 1797-1880) *Broad Stone of Honour, or Rules for the Gentlemen of England*, first published in 1822. For Digby, the Middle Ages symbolised what the future of England could be, especially in



relation to chivalric and Christian values, as illustrated by stories of King Arthur and Charlemagne (Simmons 112–13). Digby advocated a return to “the custom of our ancestors”, that youth should be instructed and trained “to piety, heroism, loyalty, generosity, and honour; that men might learn to emulate the virtues of their famous ancestors, and as Christian gentlemen, to whom Christendom was a common country, to follow the example of those ancient worthies who were the defenders of the church, the patrons of the poor, and the glory of their times” (Digby 4). Digby’s words demonstrate how the idea of the medieval ideal was intrinsically connected with honour, piety and gender ideals.

Medieval heroism and the idea of the hero were also studied by the medievalist Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881). Carlyle's *Past and Present* (1842) was published during a period of hardship when rural England had suffered with bad harvests in 1837, bank failures in 1838 and the closing of cotton factories in 1839. By that time, paupers made almost one tenth of the English population (Chandler 137). In such a trying period, looking back at an idealised medieval past where lords, vassals and serfs could rely on reciprocal allegiance was appealing. Chandler points out that Carlyle had turned to German Idealism and Romantic writers in a search for meaning and purpose, and their ideas prompted him to develop a biased perspective in favour of the Middle Ages (124).

When referring to "heroes", Carlyle meant moral and unselfish men who would be concerned with the welfare of society as a whole. In other words, the hero was a modern-day knight following the chivalric code. To exemplify his medieval hero, Carlyle presents Lord Edmund, a landlord who possessed a large amount of land in Eastern England. He was a man with an ordinary life, who "did go about in leather shoes, with *femoralia* and bodycoat of some sort on him; and daily had his breakfast to procure; and daily had contradictory speeches, and most contradictory facts not a few, to reconcile with himself" (Carlyle 56). Although a simple and normal man, his existence benefitted others, providing him with admiration and rendering him a hero. He managed to lead such a life "by doing justly and loving mercy"; he had walked "humbly and valiantly with God, struggling to make the Earth heavenly, as he could: instead of walking sumptuously and pridefully with Mammon, leaving the Earth to grow hellish as it liked" (Carlyle 57). The counterpart of Lord Edmund was Carlyle's contemporary man. In the modern world, the medieval hero is transformed into the ordinary working man, the one who "stood bravely in defense of his own", and "needed no yeomanry-cavalry to keep his tenants in order" (Chandler 141). The nineteenth-century knight was in danger of extinction.

The striking contrast between past and present became tangible to Carlyle when in September 1842 he visited the workhouse of St. Ives and the ruins of St. Edmund's Abbey. Just as for Pugin, to whom the contrast between a medieval and a modern poor house in 1836 had symbolised the decline of England, the differences between the workhouse and the abbey ruins represented for Carlyle the British decay since the Middle Ages. Carlyle noticed that "in the workhouse healthy inmates sat enchanted in their 'Bastille,' victims of a do-nothing government and a laissez faire

economy; [while] in the abbey they had once received wise government in their prosperity and ample charity in their need” (Chandler 138). From this first comparison, Carlyle developed others in *Past and Present*, where he opposes the chaotic present with a harmonious medieval past, using the same contrasting narrative technique as Pugin in *Contrasts*.

When looking at the ruins of the Abbey of St. Edmundsbury, Carlyle reflects on how history loses materiality when tucked away inside history books:

Alas, what mountains of dead ashes, wreck and burnt bones, does assiduous Pedantry dig up from the Past Time, and name it History, and Philosophy of History; till, as we say, the human soul sinks wearied and bewildered; till the Past Time seems all one infinite incredible grey void, without sun, stars, hearth-fires, or candle-light; dim offensive dust-whirlwinds filling universal Nature; and over your Historical Library, it is as if all the Titans had written for themselves: DRY RUBBISH SHOT HERE! (Carlyle 53).

How different the historical experience is when, rather than looking at pages from a book, one has the opportunity to look at material vestiges of the past, conjuring the souls of men and women long gone and imagining how life must have been like in those days. It is as if Carlyle, just like so many other “Romantic myth-makers, [...] [were] ultimately vindicating a notion of resurrection from the dead – ‘let these bones live!’” (Bann, *The Inventions of History: Essays on the Representation of the Past* 143). When looking at the walls of St. Edmund’s Abbey, originally founded in the eleventh century, Carlyle reflects: “it was a most real and serious purpose they [the walls of the abbey] were built for! Yes, another world it was, when these black ruins, white in their new mortar and fresh chiselling, first saw the sun as walls, long ago” (53). Indeed, the sense of historical awareness is distinct when one is in material contact with the past, albeit divided by a barrier of time.

In Ralph Waldo Emerson’s review of *Past and Present*,¹⁷ Emerson refers to Carlyle as “a powerful and accomplished thinker, who has looked with naked eyes at the dreadful political signs in England for the last few years” (7). Such “dreadful political signs” are vividly described by Carlyle in the beginning of his book:

England is full of wealth, of multifarious produce, supply for human want in every kind; yet England is dying of inanition. With unbated bounty the land of England blooms and grows; waving with yellow harvests; thick-studded with

¹⁷ Published in *The Dial* in July 1843.

workshops, industrial implements, with fifteen millions of workers, understood to be the strongest, the cunningest and the willingest our Earth ever had; these men are here; the work they have done, the fruit they have realised is here, abundant, exuberant on every hand of us: and behold, some baleful fiat as of Enchantment has gone forth, saying, "Touch it not, ye workers, ye master-workers, ye master-idlers; none of you can touch it, no man of you shall be the better for it; this is the enchanted fruit!" On the poor workers such fiat falls first, in its rudest shape; but on the rich masterworkers too it falls; neither can the rich master-idlers, nor any richest or highest man escape, but all are like to be brought low with it, and made 'poor' enough, in the money-sense or a far fataller one. (Carlyle 17).

Carlyle's discourse resembles the speech given by Gaunt in *Richard II*. Carlyle refers to England's wealth and diverse produce, the bountiful land, thriving harvests, and the industry of the "strongest", "cunningest" and "willingest" workers in the world. Despite the natural richness, "England is dying of inanition", because they are stuck in a "fatal paralysis", and cannot profit from their own land. Gaunt's speech in 2.1 praises England, "this other Eden, demi-paradise, / This fortress built by Nature for herself" (2.1.47-48), and its "happy breed of men" (2.1.50). However, this "blessed plot" is "now leased out", "like a tenement or pelting farm" (2.1.55, 65-66). Both Carlyle and Shakespeare's Gaunt grieve the present situation of their England, looking back at the past as a more suitable alternative.

As Emerson puts it, Carlyle's *Past and Present* "firmly holds up to daylight the absurdities still tolerated in the English and European system. It is such an appeal to the conscience and honour of England as cannot be forgotten, or be feigned to be forgotten" (Emerson 7). Emerson's words, as well as Carlyle's and Gaunt's, reflect a romanticised view of the Middle Ages and of the natural world. Nature is, after all, another materialisation of the past: it is antiquity. When man loses connection with nature, he becomes miserable: "had he faithfully followed Nature and her Laws, Nature, ever true to her Laws, would have yielded fruit and increase and felicity to him: but he has followed other than Nature's Laws; and now Nature, her patience with him being ended, leaves him desolate" (Carlyle 36). In contrast to the medieval man who had a harmonious connection with nature, the nineteenth-century man has forfeited it for industrialisation and profit exploration, and now suffers the consequences of his actions.

The influential social critic and medievalist John Ruskin (1819-1900) also reflected on material vestiges of the past left in architecture and art. He regrets how modernity intervenes with historic buildings and artefacts. John Ganim affirms that Ruskin disapproved of the approach of French architects such as Eugène-Emmanuel

Viollet-le-Duc (1814-1879) and Jean-Baptiste Antoine Lassus (1807-1857), and their attempt to rebuild or renovate medieval constructions in ruins. Ruskin advocated that maintaining the ruins would offer the viewer a point of contact with the people who had built and used the buildings. This experience is more authentic than reconstructed sites based on modern ideas of Gothic art and architecture (Ganim 33). Ruskin's approach is connected with late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century interest in ruins, as exemplified by Lambert's illustration of Bramber Castle mentioned above. The fascination with ruins was also expressed in poetry, especially in poems from the Graveyard school, whose pre-Romantic members turned to stones, skulls, tombs and ruins to ponder over mortality, fragments and their sense of sublime. According to Chandler, "the ruins were meant to give a park or garden a pleasurable romantic gloom. They show in their landscape setting the same attempt to couple nature and the past that was characterizing the poetry of the time and the same attempt to use the faraway in time and place as a stimulus to emotion" (185). Nature was therefore a means of connection between past and present, while the ruins were the material vestiges of this connection.

As Carlyle and Pugin had done, Ruskin returned to the Middle Ages as a contrast to both the alienating and materialistic culture of modern life and Ancient Rome. Ruskin's medievalism is based on an establishment of relationships between the natural order and the medieval state, on a belief in nature and nature's God (Chandler 196). In his famous three-volume *The Stones of Venice* (1851-1853), Ruskin depicts the history of the Italian city from medieval to modern days, going from the Byzantine period, through its Gothic phase up until its Renaissance. According to Ruskin, the city's architectural decline is symbolic of the decline of society after the Middle Ages. Despite his later scepticism in religion, Ruskin viewed the Middle Ages as a period of belief. In this sense, medieval architecture was strictly interwoven with faith, and Gothic was the quintessential style for worship, since it depended on no trivial embellishment and allowed for freedom and self-expression. Although in the appendix to *The Stones of Venice* Ruskin belittled Pugin's skills as an architect along with his Catholic approach, both medievalists identified in medieval architecture its connection to faith and a superior way of life. Regardless of their religious backgrounds, Pugin, Ruskin and Carlyle identified in the return to the Middle Ages a reconnection with a more creative, spontaneous and democratic way of life, which had been lost by their nineteenth-century contemporaries.

Finally, medievalism in the nineteenth century also found extensive representation in paintings. As Chandler explains, “although medievalist painting is usually thought to have begun in England with the founding of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848 and thus to have started almost one hundred years after the Gothic Revival, medievalism in the arts actually had a very long genealogy” (191). An example of early art medievalism is the Nazarene Brotherhood, a group of German and Austrian painters based in Rome who had a great effect on the later Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in England, although the latter tended to negate the connection with the former because of the Catholicism of the Nazarenes. The members of the German brotherhood attempted to revive in contemporary painting the spirit of the medieval artist, especially the early Italian painters. For the Nazarenes, the nobility of the medieval artists rested on their sacrificing their individuality for the community (Chandler 191–92). Prominent members were Peter von Cornelius (1783-1867) and Johann Friedrich Overbeck (1789-1869). In Great Britain, there were also painters who preceded the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in depicting the Middle Ages on canvas, including the Scottish William Dyce (1806-1864), the English John Frederick Lewis (1804-1876), and the Irish Daniel Maclise (1806-1870). However, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood were indeed the most significant exponents of the medievalist thought and what they imagined to be medievalist practice in nineteenth-century art. The Brotherhood started in 1848 when seven young members from the Royal Academy Schools with similar artistic principles got together to propose a return to a style of art previous to Raphael’s Renaissance techniques. The artistic creations produced by the members¹⁸ carried the letters PRB, and included a variety of genres – poems, paintings, sculptures, amongst others. By placing medieval art in a superior stance to Renaissance Classicism, the Brotherhood subverted the academic canonical order. As Alexander puts it, “the avant-garde overturns the immediate past in the hope that the future may resemble a remoter past” (126). And this remoter past, the Middle Ages, was the source of the artists’ idealised inspiration. They exchanged the conventions of classicism for a less rational look at nature.

¹⁸ The three founders were Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), William Holman Hunt (1827-1910) and John Everett Millais (1829-1896), who were later joined by the poet William Michael Rossetti (1829-1919), the painter James Collinson (1825-1881), the art critic Frederic George Stephens (1827-1907) and the poet and sculptor Thomas Woolner (1825-1892).

The examples mentioned above in diverse areas of expression illustrate how important the contrasts and connections between past and present are for the medievalist thought, especially in the long nineteenth century. Chandler explains that such opposition was also founded on a longing for imagination and emotion, challenging modern rationalism. In this perspective, medieval society united men through bonds of loyalty and generosity, while the egotism of modern society led men apart (Chandler 153). In politics, the return to feudalist thinking inspired the creation of a new political grouping following a split within the Tory party in the 1840s. The Tories had been associated with tradition, conservatism and medievalism, while the Whiggish party advocated liberalism and material progress. As Chandler puts it, “the ‘New Toryism’ of the 1840s, like the contemporaneously developing Oxford movement, was quite deliberately retrogressive, seeing in a return to ancient principles a bulwark against corrosive liberalism” (157–58). The split within the Tory party began in the 1830s, when Sir Robert Peel (1788-1850) led some of the members to think about reconciling with the prospering industrial class, moving to a more liberal and mercantile approach (Chandler 158). The opposing group within the party led by Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) and the Young England party rejected Peel’s ideas, and “posited instead a new political philosophy – one might well say, a new feudalism – that attempted to forge a bond between the landed aristocracy and the laboring masses” (Chandler 158). The main objectives of this new party were to restore the reputation and prominence of the monarchy and England’s traditional institutions, to reconcile all classes, and to improve the life conditions of the poor (Chandler 159). It was undoubtedly an ambitious and idealising project. As Chandler emphasises, the party was characterised by its influences from romanticism, a touch of dandyism – “the white-waistcoats of Lord John Manners and his friends were almost as much discussed in society as Disraeli’s rings and ruffles” (Chandler 159) –, preference for ceremony and ritualism, an interest in the Anglo-Catholic revival, and a wish to unite Church, the State and the people. As an illustration, an extract of Lord Manners’ poem *England’s Trust* (1841) provides an interesting representative of Young England’s longing for the medieval past:

Gone are the days and gone the ties that then
Bound peers and gentry to their fellow men
Now in their place behold the modern slave,
Doomed from the very cradle to the grave,
To tread his lonely path of care and toil

Bound, in sad truth, and bowed down to the soil;
 He dies, and leaves his sons their heritage—
 Work for their prime, the workhouse for their age. (qtd. in Chandler 162).

Manners' poem is also reminiscent of the contrasts in Pugin's book, depicting an idyllic medieval community in opposition to the suffering and exhaustion of the "modern slave". Although Lord Manners and several of his Young England fellow members came to realise that an idealised rural program could not be the only approach to fighting the hardships of nineteenth-century England, its creation is representative of the young medievalists' early beliefs and their relationship with the medieval past.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has investigated the reception and reconstruction of the Middle Ages at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of nineteenth century in order to provide context for the analysis of the Richard II productions that compose the main corpus of this research. I began this discussion by problematising the demarcation of the end of the Middle Ages. As Rodman Jones explains, the shift between the medieval past and the beginning of modernity can be traced to Henry VII's victory at Bosworth Field in 1485, the development of William Caxton's print shop in the 1470s, the progressive establishment of a standard form of written English, and the Reformation. Therefore, there is not one specific event that marks the end of the Middle Ages, but a combination of factors that contributed significantly to a change in the ways of living. All the representations of the medieval past subsequent to this shift are objects of study in the field of medievalism. This chapter has briefly discussed examples of medievalism in Early Modern Britain, such as the work of history chroniclers and the rise of the history play. This was followed by a more comprehensive overview of medievalisms in the nineteenth-century British imagination, covering the Tournament of Eglinton and its failed attempt to recreate a medieval tournament; Walter Scott and the rise of the historical novel; the Gothic Revival in architecture, and a renewed interest in feudalism, as well as in Christian and chivalric values.

Moreover, in this chapter I have explained the concept of double-voiced medievalism, which analyses the circumstances affecting reinterpretations of the

medieval past that fluctuate between an idealised/romantic perception, on the one side, and a grotesque/barbaric perspective, on the other. This dualism is a consequence of opposing Whig and Tory reconnections with the medieval past since the Glorious Revolution of 1688: the first advocated individual freedom, liberalism, and progress, while the second praised tradition and conservatism, nostalgically lamenting the end of a feudal 'harmonious' hierarchy. This polarisation inevitably affects all representations of the Middle Ages, which are intrinsically associated to the historical, cultural and political contexts of the time. Hence the importance of evaluating these conditions prior to analysing Edmund Kean's, Macready's and Charles Kean's reinterpretations of Shakespeare's Richard II.

CHAPTER 3: *THE WELL OF HISTORY*: HISTORICISM AND SHAKESPEAREAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

*For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground
And tell sad stories of the death of kings.
How some have been deposed, some slain in war,
Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed,
Some poisoned by their wives, some sleeping killed,
All murdered. For within the hollow crown
That rounds the mortal temples of a king
Keeps Death his court.*

(Richard II, Act III, Scene 2)

In conversation with the antiquarian William Lambarde (1536-1601) in August 1601, queen Elizabeth supposedly said: “I am Richard II, know ye not that?” (Scott-Warren 208). The queen explicitly drew a parallel between herself and the Plantagenet king as both were childless monarchs who saw their positions on the throne threatened by a usurper: Richard by his cousin Bolingbroke, and Elizabeth by the Earl of Essex. The conversation between Elizabeth I and the antiquarian took place just months after the commission of a new staging of Shakespeare’s *Richard II* by the Chamberlain’s Men at the Globe and the execution of the Earl for treason. The record of this dialogue describes the day, just weeks before Lambarde’s death, in which he presented the queen with a compendium assembled by himself of documents concerning the reigns of English monarchs from King John until Richard III, known as the *Pandecta Rotulorum*. Lambarde had been Keeper of the crown records stored in the Tower of London, which served as the basis for his collection. When Elizabeth was going over this gift, remembering the main events of English royal history, she made the famous remark that opens this section.

As the conversation continued, the queen added to Lambarde: “he that will forget God, will also forget his benefactors; this tragedy was played 40^{tie} times in open streets and houses” (qtd. in Scott-Warren 208). The tragedy the queen refers to could be that of a subject challenging the royal authority of his sovereign, which has happened time and again throughout English history; or she could be referring to a specific theatrical tragedy brought to the stage months earlier: Shakespeare’s *Richard II*. As Stephen Greenblatt points out in the seminal introduction to *The Power*

of *Forms in the English Renaissance* (1982), *Richard II* was performed only once in 1601, on the day prior to Essex's rising against Elizabeth. However, in the queen's mind, it had been played over forty times in open streets and houses. According to Greenblatt:

For the Queen the repeatability of the tragedy, and hence the numbers of people who have been exposed to its infection, is part of the danger, along with the fact (or rather her conviction) that the play had broken out of the boundaries of the playhouse, where such stories are clearly marked as powerful illusions, and moved into the more volatile zone – the zone she calls “open” – of the streets. (3)

The “open streets and houses” in Elizabeth's time compose the Early Modern public sphere, where political debates would take place amongst ordinary people. The queen understood the danger of the repetition of the play – not in number of performances, but repeated in political discussions of the day and fermented by Shakespeare's play. This example illustrates how a dramatic piece can affect beyond the realm of theatrical illusion and induce political instability in the ‘real’ world.

The fact that drama and real-life politics became so intertwined, with the extraordinary production of *Richard II* inciting Essex's rebellion and endangering Elizabeth's hold on the throne, helps us to frame the power relationships between theatre and politics. As Greenblatt explains, this connection lays bare how literary (and theatrical) texts are “as fields of force, places of dissension and shifting interests, occasions for the jostling of orthodox and subversive impulses” (6), which are in constant movement. The result is that the interpretation of a text is not fixed within an encapsulated set of contextual aspects from its moment of conception. Rather, the myriad possible interpretations changes as these are reshaped by readers, critics, spectators and artists, and their own contexts throughout the centuries.

When Shakespeare reimagined Richard II's fourteenth-century reign for dramatic purposes, he would not have understood this period of time as *medieval*. As we have seen, this word only came into usage in the nineteenth century. However, that does not mean that Shakespeare would not have reflected on how Richard's past differed from his own present time. The first part of this chapter explores the ways Shakespeare negotiated different layers of past in his history plays, especially *Richard II*. I argue that even though at the end of the sixteenth century there was not yet a clear understanding of the Middle Ages as a specific period of time,

Shakespeare's history plays assisted in establishing conceptions of the medieval past that would reverberate in modern understandings of the Middle Ages.

On the one hand, the past performed on stage in *Richard II* represented certain religious beliefs and ideas about kingship that were no longer familiar to a modern audience. On the other hand, Shakespeare's play stresses human feelings of longing, ambition, weakness, and powerlessness, which arguably transcend divisions of time, creating a sense of continuity with the past. I should emphasise that human emotions should also be historicised, and the meaning of words that describe such feelings changes through time. Ambition for a Richard's contemporary would not necessarily bear the same significance as for a nineteenth-century playgoer. However, the capability to rouse emotions remains present in Shakespeare's text throughout time. It is another example of the paradoxical juxtaposition of ruptures and continuities in representations of the past.

3.1 History and Politics in the Theatrical Public Sphere

When recreating the past for scenic purposes, Shakespeare deals with the process of history-making and history-writing in a very perceptive way. In the same manner that he refers to theatre and theatrical techniques by means of metatheatres in plays such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595-6) or *The Taming of the Shrew* (1590-2), Shakespeare proposes a meta-historical reflection in his history plays, inviting the audience to think about history while watching history being acted on stage. In Act 2, Scene 3 in *Henry VI – Part 1*, for example, the Countess of Auvergne invites Lord Talbot, the feared English military commander, to her home with the plan of imprisoning him. However, the man she meets is not what she had expected, based on the circulating reports of his military prowess. She questions:

Is this the scourge of France? Is this the Talbot, so much feared abroad
That with his name the mothers still their babes? I see report is fabulous and
false. (2.3.15-18)

The Countess contrasts the image of Talbot created by war tales with the ordinary man standing in front of her, exposing the partiality of historiographical records, oral or written. Shakespeare extends this opposition by emphasising that the actor on stage is *not* Talbot either. Talbot responds to the lady's threats of

imprisonment: “I laugh to see your Ladyship so fond / To think that you have aught but Talbot’s shadow / Whereon to practice your severity.” (2.3.46-48). The embodiments of historical figures on stage are but shadows of their real selves. In fact, the stage could never hold the *real* Talbot. This idea is reinforced by the fact that Shakespeare uses the word ‘shadow’ as a metaphor for stage craft. In her study *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* (1962), Anne Righter discusses the uses of words that were part of the Early Modern theatrical lexicon and that expose the illusory essence of theatre, such as “counterfeit”, “act”, and “play”. She writes that “shadows, dreams, a sense of enchantment and festivity surround the idea of the play” in the early comedies (104). In addition, Shakespeare also used the word ‘shadow’ as a metaphor for the Early Modern actor in the history plays, as the example above from *Henry VI – Part 1* demonstrates.

The word appears seven times in *Richard II*. Significantly, when Richard breaks a mirror after giving the crown and sceptre to Bolingbroke in Act 4, the new king exclaims: “The shadow of your sorrow hath destroyed / The shadow of your face” (4.1.287-288). Although Richard responds that his sorrows are “very true”, the actor can only perform a shadow of the feelings that the real Richard II suffered after his deposition in 1399. The seventh definition of the word ‘shadow’ in Samuel Johnson’s 1755 dictionary reads: “an imperfect and faint representation; opposed to substance”; while the ninth definition reads: “type; mythical representation” (Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*). These two eighteenth-century definitions of the word emphasise its connection to the theatrical craft, especially that of the actor, of reproducing reality by means of inciting the imagination.

The key for Shakespearean historical reconstruction was imagination, the ascent to “the brightest heaven of invention” (as the Chorus in *Henry V* puts it), and reincarnating the dead through theatrical illusion. According to Hattaway, Shakespeare and his contemporaries “made no attempt to create a sense of geographical exactitude or historical authenticity by ‘accurate’ theatrical settings. Elizabethan playhouses were not designed for visual extravaganza, as nineteenth-century theatre: there was no question of constructing scenic likenesses of palace rooms or tavern ‘ordinaries’, formal gardens or fields for battle” (11–12). Rather, the characters refer to places in speech. It is up to the spectator to ‘see’ the illusion with their mind’s eye. In the second scene in Act V in *Richard II*, for example, the Duke of York recounts to his wife how Bolingbroke and Richard were received in London after

the king's downfall. While Richard was received with dust and rubbish, Bolingbroke: "Mounted upon a hot and fiery steed / Which his aspiring rider seem'd to know, / With slow but stately pace kept on his course, / Whilst all tongues cried 'God save thee, Bolingbroke!'" (5.2.8-11). Shakespeare chooses to *recount* the entrance of the two cousins in London instead of *showing* it on stage. The audience would have to, just like the Duchess, imagine the whole event based on York's words. Conversely, and famously, Charles Kean reconstructs the whole 'historical episode' on stage in his 1857 production at the Princess's Theatre, aided by a majestic set, actors in historically accurate costumes, hundreds of extras on stage (each performing their own rehearsed choreography), music as conducted in the times of Edward II, and real horses.

On the bare or adorned stage, it is Shakespeare's imagination that puts the historical pieces together, intermingling past and present. In order to narrow down my focus whilst analysing *Richard II* in parallel with the nineteenth-century productions that make up the corpus of this research, the second part of this chapter highlights three themes which are essential to the play and to its representation of the Middle Ages: pageantry, kingly authority, and nostalgia. This study sheds light on how the medieval past and medieval traditions were perceived by Shakespeare, as well as by his nineteenth-century adaptors.

3.1.1 Ritual and Pageantry

As Stephen Orgel explains, pageantry was one of the main attractions of Elizabethan popular culture in general and theatre in particular. It made possible the reconstruction of "the spectacle of courts and aristocratic enterprises to an urban, predominantly middle-class audience" (19). Orgel adds that the power of pageantry was specifically attractive when it favoured a nostalgic medievalism, expressing the traditional principles of the chivalric code and an ordered hierarchy. As he puts it, "it was a mythology consciously designed to validate and legitimate an authority that must have seemed, to what was left of the old aristocracy, dangerously *arriviste*" (Orgel 19). The cultural image of a chivalric court along with its forms of public displays on and off the stage worked as a way to legitimate the hold of monarchs to the throne. For instance, Henry VII had no clear claim to the crown after defeating Richard III in the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485, except for the fact that Henry's

mother Margaret was a great-granddaughter of John of Gaunt, one of the sons of Edward III. In order to strengthen the image of royal power and to put forward an appearance of a noble and honourable court, Henry VI borrowed chivalric models from Burgundy (Orgel 19).

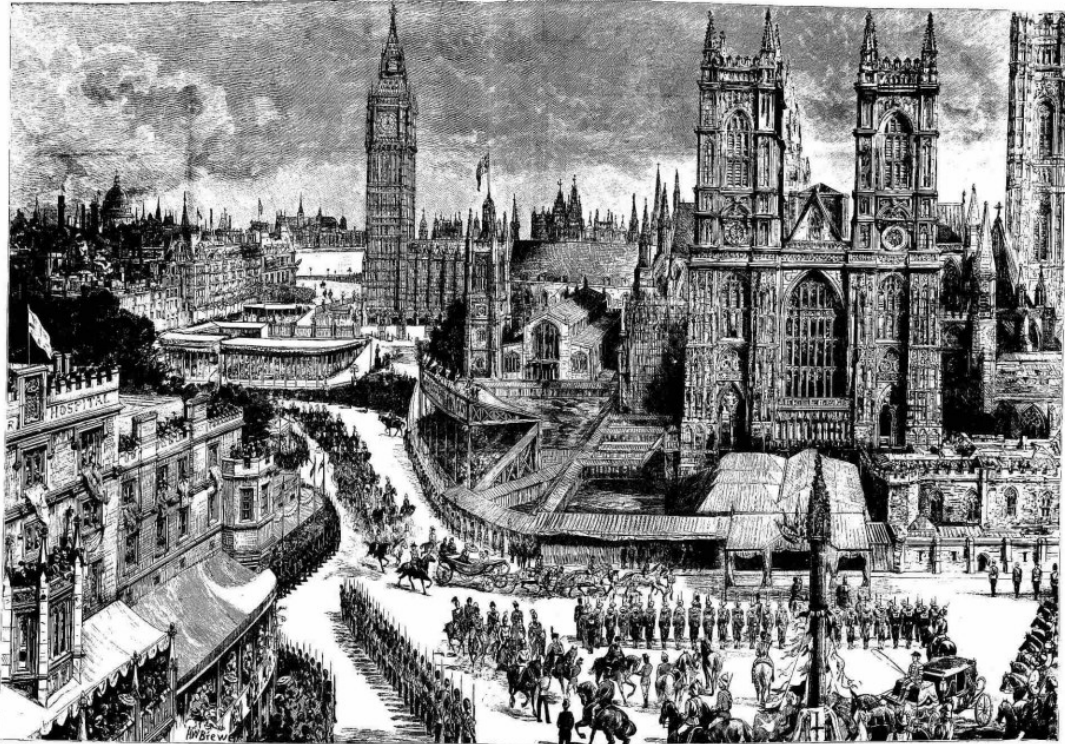
In addition to creating an illusion of royal legitimacy, the spectacle of courtly pageantry displays the significance of symbolic fictions within a society (Orgel 20). They are illustrative of society's needs and longings. In each period, rituals epitomise a rupture as well as a continuation with the past: they project the aspiration to break from old patterns but also manifest an idealisation of what only the past could afford, and the present lacks. *The Graphic* of 28 June 1887 includes a whole 93-page special illustrated edition in honour of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, a celebration of her 50th anniversary on the throne. It places Victoria within the tradition of British monarchy, explaining that only three other sovereigns had had Jubilees: Henry III, Edward III and George III. In this way, it celebrates the continuation of the long-lasting tradition. However, it also makes clear how Victoria's Jubilee differs from those that occurred before: Henry III's reign "was a period of civil war at home, of disastrous expeditions and futile enterprises abroad"; Edward III's was overcast "due to the Plague and long war, by the thralldom of the monarch to a woman of no reputation, while the promise of the future was bedimmed by the sure prospect of a long minority under the young son of the Black Prince, and by the ominous mutterings of discontent, which forecasted the coming peasants' revolt"; and, finally, George III "was not of sound mind, when the nation, despite its many anxieties and heavy war burdens, celebrated his Jubilee" (*The Graphic*, June 28, 1887, 4). Victoria's Jubilee, on the other hand, "sums up an era of rapid material, moral, and mental development, which has been without a break, and has no counterpart in the story of any state or dominion, in all the long centuries of the past" (*The Graphic*, June 28, 1887, 4). Additionally, the paper expresses that "London has been [then] the centre of a Royal gathering well-nigh unique in her history, European and Eastern rulers alike joining in the rejoicings of Sovereign and People" (*The Graphic*, June 28, 1887, 670). These guests, listed by *The Graphic*, emphasise the international reach of Victoria's Empire.

Victoria's Golden Jubilee was not just a celebration of the cultural, political, economic and military accomplishments of her reign; its ceremonious pageantry emphasises the connection with the past through tradition and, mainly, through the

institution of monarchy. *The Graphic* traces the origin of Buckingham Palace back to the reign of King James I, “when that sovereign, with a view to stimulate the manufacture of silk in England, established a plantation of mulberry trees to supply food for the silkworms” (*The Graphic*, June 28, 1887, 677). This “Mulberry Garden” eventually turned into St. James’s Park. *The Graphic* also describes the lavish decorations from Waterloo Place to Piccadilly Circus during the procession to Westminster Abbey. Two “triumphal arches” were placed at the two ends, and between these there was a series of 13 panels of about 60 to 70 feet suspended 40 feet in the air. The crowd gathered at the streets in anticipation to see the queen. As *The Graphic* describes it, “at length the time came when the longed-for spectacle presented itself. The great gates of Buckingham Palace turned upon their hinges for the exit of Her Majesty. Quick, loud voices of command are heard, the trumpets blare, the soldiery spring into rigid attitude of attention, and there issue forth scarlet outriders, then a band of officials of the Household, followed by the Headquarters Staff of the Army” (*The Graphic*, June 28, 1887, 29).

Figura 8 - The arrival of the Queen's carriage at Westminster Abbey, June 21 1887, *The Graphic*

46—THE JUBILEE CELEBRATION NUMBER OF THE GRAPHIC, JUN 24, 1887—27



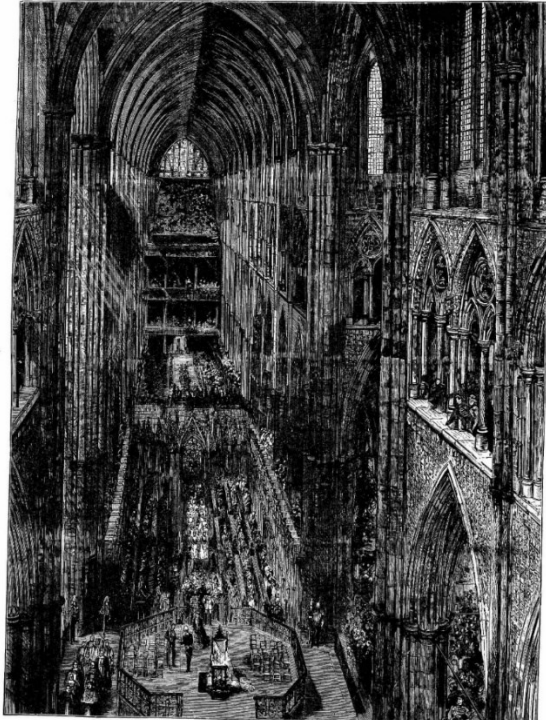
THE JUBILEE OF HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN—ARRIVAL OF THE QUEEN'S CARRIAGE AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY, JUNE, 21
Image © Illustrated London News Group. Image created courtesy of THE BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD.

The Abbey, a material vestige of the thirteenth century, adds legitimacy to the queen's role. *The Graphic* writes that the procession, "which moved up the ancient Abbey of Edward the Confessor was one calculated to fascinate the eye and stir the imagination. Such ordered pomp and State, so full of historic association, so fraught with reverent suggestions, is scarcely possible to any Court than that of St. James's on those occasions when it is associating in some solemnity of the State Church" (*The Graphic*, June 28, 1887, 32). The solemnity of the occasion is therefore enhanced by the historical environment, inciting the spectator's eyes and imagination to place Victoria as part of this tradition. Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee demonstrates that courtly pageantry is intrinsically connected to the idea of 'tradition'. As Hobsbawm explains, traditions refer to pasts – either factual or invented – which impose fixed and normally formalised practices, ratified by repetition (2). To clarify, Hobsbawm distinguishes tradition from mere convention or routine. The latter are also construed by means of repetition, but they do not have a significant ritual or symbolic capacity (Hobsbawm and Ranger 3), which is in the essence of tradition. The

repetition of returning to Westminster Abbey for royal celebrations and solemnities is thus symbolic, emphasising the idea of the immortality of the body politic.

Figura 9 - Arrival of the royal party on the dais in Westminster Abbey, June 21, 1887, *The Graphic*

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THE JUBILEE OF HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN—ARRIVAL OF THE ROYAL PARTY ON THE DAIS IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY, JUNE 21

Image © Illustrated London News Group. Image created courtesy of THE BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD.

In the theatre, the courtly rituals receive a new lawyer of repetition with each production. When transferred to the stage, they become a double performance: an acting representation of what is already a theatrical performance. A ritual on stage is, therefore, *not* a ritual, but a performance of a ritual. Furthermore, staging royal pageantry involved performing and, consequently, *embodying* the monarch. According to Orgel, “theatrical pageantry, the miming of greatness, is highly charged because it employs precisely the same methods the crown was using to assert and validate its authority” (23), shedding light on the whole artificiality of the strategy. In his text, Orgel refers to the conversation between Queen Elizabeth and the antiquarian Lambarde mentioned above in this chapter, in which the queen’s association with Richard II potentially transformed Shakespeare’s play into an allegory of her own reign. Orgel writes that the intertwining of stage performance and

politics converted Shakespeare's *Richard II* into "a piece of very dangerous civic pageantry" (23). The example exposes Elizabeth's concern in being associated with an heirless deposed monarch, whose person was embodied by an actor on stage, and who, indirectly, embodied her own.

Shakespeare's reincarnation of the historical Richard II first appears on stage at a demonstration of royal power and civic pageantry. In Act 1, Henry Bolingbroke formally accuses Thomas Mowbray of having murdered the Duke of Gloucester and of harbouring treacherous plans against the king. Gages are ceremoniously thrown on stage, and the two noblemen are expected to fight to the death at the lists in Coventry in the third scene of the act. This scene is symmetrically arranged with the king at the centre, entering the stage after the flourish, another symbolic element that adds to the pageantry of the scene. After the monarch's entrance, Bolingbroke comes in, followed by the challenging combatant, Mowbray, both clad in armour. As Minoru Fujita points out, the symmetrical setting of the scene mirrors the structure of the Elizabethan playhouse itself, where the throne would be set in the elevated centre, and the stage surrounded by spectators on the three sides (Fujita 23–24). In this manner, the scene would highlight the theatrical essence of the medieval tournament ritual.

The sequence of formal procedures accentuates the ceremonial characteristic of the event. The Lord Marshal mediates the exchange between the king and the contenders. Richard refers to the occasion in a quite matter-of-fact tone: "Marshal, demand of yonder champion / The cause of his arrival here in arms. / Ask him his name, and orderly proceed / To swear him in the justice of his cause" (1.3.7-10). When the marshal transmits the sovereign's words to the audience, he enhances its pageantry, alluding to its chivalric tradition, changing "in arms" with "knightly clad in arms", and altering to swear "in the justice of his cause" for "speak truly on thy knighthood and thy oath". Shakespeare's Lord Marshal highlights the pomp of the circumstances. In this context, both Mowbray and Bolingbroke take the role of the medieval knight, fighting to prove their honour.

Mowbray affirms that he has come "engaged by my oath – / Which heaven defend a knight should violate!" (1.3.17-18), drawing attention to the chivalric oath of honour and loyalty to his lord. The true knight would win the joust with divine intervention, since God would protect the one with the just cause. This is what leads Bolingbroke to affirm he is ready to prove himself "by heaven's grace and [his] body's

valour” (1.3.40-41) to God, the king, and himself. The concept of a trial by combat is associated with an ideal of knighthood and valour, which is potentially embodied by Bolingbroke himself. However, Bolingbroke never has the chance to prove that his cause is supported by divine authority. As soon as the signal to start the combat is issued, Richard drops his warder – a symbol that signifies that the battle must stop. In this manner, the king disrupts the ritual and passes his own arbitrary verdict to the contenders. When interrupting the ceremony, Richard places himself above divine authority, believing himself capable of judging the lives of the contenders in lieu of God.

Courtly ritual was not only part of the tournament described in the opening act of *Richard II*, but also in the interaction between sovereign and subjects. In Act 3, Bolingbroke, Northumberland, York and other lords arrive in Bristow Castle. This is where the king’s favourites Bushy and Green have sought refuge after Bolingbroke has disrespected Richard’s order of banishment and returned to English lands. The scene becomes an unofficial trial of the king’s favourites, led by Bolingbroke, who appropriates the role of the sovereign, foreshadowing his official deposition of Richard II later in the play. Bolingbroke eloquently enumerates the accusation against the courtiers: “You have misled a prince, a royal king, / A happy gentleman in blood and lineaments, / By you unhappied and disfigured clean” (3.1.8-10). The two men are accused of corrupting the king’s perception of Bolingbroke. Assuming a royal authority for himself, the Duke condemns both of them to death. This scene recalls the “Merciless Parliament” of 1388, in which the Lord Appellants (Gloucester, Arundel, Warwick, Bolingbroke and Mowbray) assembled to protest against the king’s relationship with some of his courtiers, naming five of the king’s protégés that should be tried for treason (Norwich 88–90). In Shakespeare, Bolingbroke synecdochally becomes the embodiment of the Lord Appellants, while Bushy and Green represent the convicted five of the king’s five favourites. Bolingbroke takes the power over the lives of these two men into his own hands, mirroring the ritualistic elements of 1.3, when Richard settled the fates for Bolingbroke and Mowbray. However, Bolingbroke does not have the official power to pass this sentence. In order to legitimise his verdict, Bolingbroke condemns Bushy and Green to die in the presence of other noblemen who could bear witness to the event.

The scene discussed above emphasises how Bolingbroke’s behaviour becomes more ceremonious as he sees himself closer to the role of king, while

Richard makes the inverse journey, going from the royal authority that interrupted the ritual of tournament to paying deference to the rising subject. When Richard becomes a prisoner at Flint Castle, the conversation between Bolingbroke and the captured king stresses how language and bodily submission play a significant role in royal ritual and pageantry, and epitomises the inverted roles of king and subject in the middle of the play. This is the very moment when the journeys of the two men meet halfway: Richard treads his descent into misery and death, while Bolingbroke rises to kingship.

Lord Northumberland, Bolingbroke's supporter, disrespectfully refers to the king at Flint Castle as merely "Richard", for which he is rebuked by York: "It would beseem the Lord Northumberland / To say King Richard. Alack the heavy day / When such a sacred king should hide his head" (3.3.7-9). The unceremonious way Northumberland refers to Richard demonstrates the lord's confidence in Bolingbroke's victory and in Richard's deposition. Answering the call from outside the castle, Richard and his supporters enter the scene. Shakespeare does not give indications to its *mise-en-scène*, but at this moment both Bolingbroke and the king appear on stage, one within the castle while the other is without, materialising the opposition between the two contending men. York still sees majesty in the king's countenance. Bolingbroke, however, sees a "blushing discontented sun" (3.3.63) – a direct contrast to Richard's previous comparison of his own throne to the rising east a scene earlier (3.2.45).

When facing Northumberland, Richard rebukes the nobleman for not kneeling in respect of his majesty – another sign of Northumberland's unceremonious treatment of Richard. Richard emphasises that God's protection sanctifies his royal position and that "no hand of blood and bone / Can gripe the sacred handle of our sceptre, / Unless he do profane, steal or usurp" (3.3.79-81). Not treating Richard with the proper deference that his royal person requires would signify challenging God's own prerogative. When Richard accepts Bolingbroke's request to have his land and title reclaimed as well as his banishment discharged, the king fears he has debased himself in speaking too kindly. He feels his actions are not in accordance with his divine power of kingship. His feelings, however, do not change his actions, since he becomes more and more submissive to Bolingbroke. When answering Northumberland, Richard refers to his cousin: "What says King Bolingbroke? Will his majesty / Give Richard leave to live till Richard die?" (3.3.173-174). Tellingly, Richard

refers (ironically) to Bolingbroke as 'King Bolingbroke' and alludes to his newly acquired power in deciding whether the real king, now merely 'Richard', should live or die. The actor playing Richard in a performance of the play may pronounce the sentences above in either a submissive or ironic manner, affecting how Richard positions himself in the scene: as a still strong monarch or as a despairing man.

Bolingbroke requests that Richard meets him in the base court, meaning that Richard would have to descend from the castle to meet the Duke outside. This request challenges Richard's royal prerogative, since a king should never move to meet his subject, only the other way around. Richard understands the defiance in Bolingbroke's petition: "Down, down I come [...] / In the base court? Base court where kings grow base / To come at traitors' calls and do them grace! / In the base court come down. Down court, down king" (3.3.178-182). The physical *up* and *down* in the stage setting parallels the political rise of Bolingbroke concomitant to Richard's downfall. When the king approaches, however, Bolingbroke respectfully kneels in his presence in a ceremonious act of deference. But Richard knows that Bolingbroke's heart is proudly "up" although his knees are "low", hinting at Bolingbroke's fake display of respect. Shakespeare's Richard willingly submits to Bolingbroke, assuming he must set out for the Tower in London even before Bolingbroke made this request: "What you will have I'll give, and willing too, / For do we must what force will have us do. / Set on towards London, cousin, is it so?" (3.3.205-207). Richard seals his own fate as he follows Bolingbroke to London, acting like a subject rather than the monarch. Richard's surrender eventually leads him to an official deposition, which takes place in 4.1, arguably the climax of the Shakespearean play. Richard then yields the crown to Bolingbroke, who prepares to be crowned Henry IV.

A royal coronation offers the ultimate demonstration of civic pageantry. It is an example of tradition based on symbolic repetition, creating a ritual that has been preserved for over a thousand years, functioning as legitimisation of the monarch's hold to the crown. Over a century and a half after Richard's deposition, Elizabeth I was anointed the representative of God on Earth in a grand theatrical event. According to David Bergeron (1978), Elizabeth was aware of the importance of this civic pageant for her own benefit, leading her to participate actively in its preparation. Although the City of London and the trade companies provided the spectacle as a gift to the new sovereign, Elizabeth's attitude "seems to be that if the city needs assistance in making the entertainment more colourful, more spectacular, then let the

citizens have what they need, even if the queen must provide it” (Bergeron 5). According to a contemporary record, Elizabeth “was of the People received marvellous entirely, as appeared by the assembly, prayers, wishes, welcomings, cries, tender words, and all other signs, which argue a wonderful earnest love of most obedient subjects towards their sovereign” (Arber 218). Even though Shakespeare would not have seen Queen Elizabeth’s entrance into London (he was less than 5 years old at the time), this example demonstrates the social importance of the coronation ritual in asserting the subjects’ love for the sovereign.

Shakespeare depicts the ritualistic royal pageant of coronation in reverse in *Richard II*: instead of being crowned king, Richard *de*-crowns himself. It is a physical representation of the lack of love and respect that Richard inspired as a monarch. Simultaneously, it is the moment in the play where he regains the sympathy of the audience. He is unsuccessful as a king but becomes the suffering victim of Bolingbroke’s machinations in the eyes of the audience. Stripped of his crown, Richard can be seen as a man. Moreover, when the king is brought forward for public surrender, he has to learn a new political role, that of being submissive to another sovereign. He has to learn how to bow, bend the knee and flatter. At this point in the play, Richard is still king at the same time that he is no longer king, in the same paradoxical manner that Schrödinger’s cat in quantum physics is simultaneously dead and alive. Richard is but a shadow of a king, and it is precisely such conundrum in identity that makes the play interesting for an audience at any given time, regardless of the political associations with contemporary state of affairs. Furthermore, following the understanding of the word ‘shadow’ as another term for ‘actor’ in the Early Modern period, Shakespeare’s word choice also emphasises that the Richard on stage is merely an actor playing the part of the historical Richard II. In this sense, the Richard on stage is *not* a reality, but a liminal entity in-between reality and imagination.

In a metaphorical depiction of monarchy being pulled apart, Shakespeare’s Richard holds one side of the golden crown and tells Henry to hold the other: “Now is this golden crown like a deep well / That owes two buckets, filling one another” (4.1.183-184). When the play began, Richard’s bucket was high and empty, “dancing in the air”, while Bolingbroke’s bucket was at the bottom, banished and stripped of his titles and money. Now the situation is reversed: Bolingbroke’s bucket is empty and free, while Richard’s is “down and full of tears” (4.2.185-186). Shakespeare repeats

the dichotomy *up* versus *down*, which I have discussed above in the scene at Flint Castle. Walter Pater associates Richard's de-coronation with a 'degradation' in the Roman Pontifical liturgical book. A degradation is a canonical penalty "by which an offending priest or bishop may be deprived, if not of the essential quality of 'orders,' yet, one by one, of its outward dignities" (Pater 198). In this context, Richard performs his own rite of degradation, dismissing from his physical body all the supernatural power of the divine right of kings.

Margaret Loftus Ranald links Richard's de-coronation to the chivalric tradition of "unclothing the knight in the reverse order of his investiture" (176), depriving the former knight of his title for having abused the code of honour or for having betrayed his lord. Ranald recounts the case of Sir Andrew Harclay's treason against Edward III at the Battle of Beighland in 1322. Harclay had his sword broken over his head; he was stripped of his Tabard, his hood, his coat-of-arms and girdle; his armour was bruised, beaten and cast aside; and the king said he should no longer be considered a Knight, but a Knave (Ranald 177). Richard, however, does not *suffer* the degradation rite, but theatrically *performs* it *unto himself*, aching to see his kingly self disappear. Simultaneously, Richard reflects on the complexity of his own change of identity: he has no name, no title; he does not know how to call himself. Accordingly, Richard requires a mirror in order to find what face he has "since it is bankrupt of his majesty" (4.1.265-266). He is surprised to note that his face still looks the same: no more wrinkles, no deeper wounds. He smashes the mirror in a hundred pieces, only to find out that the substance – his soul, his grief – remains whole. It was only the shadow of himself that was destroyed with the mirror. His physical body remains while his political body no longer exists. As Fujita puts it, "Richard II was commonly understood to be the last genuine mediaeval king [in England], and the scene showing his tragic fall was, to an extent, accepted as a dramatic portrayal of mediaevalism in decline" (15). As we have seen, an Early Modern audience would not have understood Richard II as a *medieval* king, since the establishment of the Middle Ages as a distinct separate historical period dates to a later time. Nevertheless, Richard's death on stage could potentially raise the audience's awareness of the dramatic fall of a line of Plantagenet kings that ended with Richard II, giving way to the Lancaster dynasty. More broadly, Richard's death represents a rupture with tradition and hereditariness, as well as a challenge to God's anointed

representative on Earth, opening a precedence for political change on secular grounds.

Fujita uses the term 'medievalism' in the sentence above as referring to a broad representation of the medieval past as dissolving along with Richard's political body. It does not refer to a reception of the Middle Ages as a cultural construct, as I understand the term. Nonetheless, it is an interesting observation, since it brings to light the idea of a construction of the Middle Ages *within* Shakespeare's play as embodied by the waning figure of Richard, and replaced by the new dynasty started by Henry IV. The play, therefore, brings to the fore different Early Modern perceptions of the Middle Ages: an earlier past romanticised by Gaunt, and a corrupt past embodied by Richard.

The last instance of ritual pageantry to which I would like to call attention occurs in the very last scene of *Richard II*, when Richard's coffin is brought on stage. Henry IV is at Windsor Castle with the Duke of York when Exton enters the stage with the coffin: "Great king, within this coffin I present / Thy buried fear. Herein all breathless lies / The mightiest of thy greatest enemies, / Richard of Bordeaux, by me hither brought" (5.6.30-34). The king's reaction, however, is not what Exton expected. The king does not thank him for his act: "for thou hast wrought / A deed of slander with thy fatal hand / Upon my head and all this famous land" (5.6.34-36). Although Henry wished Richard dead, he curses the act of murder and the murderer, exiling Exton. He makes it explicit that the guilt of conscience should be entirely Exton's. Bolingbroke ends the play by promising a pilgrimage to the Holy Land to atone for the sins he committed to gain power. As history (and *Henry IV – Part 2*) tells us, that journey is never undertaken.

It is significant that Shakespeare chooses to end his play with the physical presence of Richard's coffin on stage. The death of a king in Shakespeare's lifetime would be honoured with an impressive public funeral. As Michael Neill explains, funeral ceremonies were "the pageant theatre of death and mourning", displaying the appropriate rank and status of the dead person. Although funerals had a religious background, public state funerals were mainly secular events presided by heralds instead of parsons, rather associated with "the rituals of antiquarian feudalism than those of Christianity" (Neill 154). It was a ritual that would follow an arrangement of organised pageants, ranging "from the display of knightly arms, banners, and heraldic devices to the arrangement of successive groups of paupers, yeomen,

household servants, serving gentlemen, client gentry, and noble mourners with their followers” (Neill 154). In Shakespeare’s play, however, Richard is denied this honour. His coffin is brought on stage by his own murderer, Exton, and put in view of Bolingbroke, the man who is indirectly responsible for Richard’s death. The positioning of both the usurper and the corpse of the usurped side by side emphasises that Richard’s life was cut short by Bolingbroke’s intervention. In addition to being an embodiment of Henry’s guilt in display for himself and for the theatre audience, the coffin foreshadows the death and bloodshed that will characterise Henry’s reign as Henry IV. In Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, the pageantry of the royal funeral cortège is thus deliberately omitted (visually and verbally) in order to emphasise the political consequences of Bolingbroke’s actions in disrupting the hereditary chain of kingship. Instead of the ceremonial pageantry, the audience gets only an empty promise from the new ruler to atone for his sins.

3.1.2 The Arbitrary Power of Kings

Shakespeare’s reconstruction of the Middle Ages in *Richard II* is grounded on medieval political theology that regarded the king as having two bodies: the body natural, his own breathing human body, and the body politic, a personification of the state. According to Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen in the RSC edition of *Richard II*, “as body politic, the king was incarnation of the nation; as body natural, he was a mortal like anyone else. This was what made possible the paradoxical words ‘The king is dead, long live the king’” (10), a traditional saying at the accession of a new monarch, meaning that the body natural of the previous king is gone, but the body politic lingers on in the body natural of the new king or queen. In this sense, monarchy – the body politic – is immortal.

The idea of a king’s two bodies springs from the medieval belief in the divine right of kings – a belief that the monarch was an indisputable representative of God on earth. This is what leads Richard to disregard Bolingbroke’s rebellious attacks in the faith that God would protect his hold to the throne: “Not all the water in the rough rude sea / Can wash the balm off from an anointed king. / The breath of worldly men cannot depose / The deputy elected by the Lord” (3.2.54-57). In Richard’s mind, Bolingbroke’s “worldly breath” could not compete with Richard’s divine essence, granted him by the royal unction. Richard believes he was chosen by God to perform

His will on earth. This belief is what Rebecca Lemon considers as the source of Richard II's tyranny in her political analysis of the play. According to Lemon, in depicting Richard's "errancy, Shakespeare not only stages the spectre of tyrannical leadership before his audience, but he also locates the origin of this tyranny: it emerges from the king's faith in his own divine right" (247). Richard's abuse of power, his different penalties for Bolingbroke and Mowbray, and his indulgence of favourites are all rooted in the certainty of his unquestionable place as king.

As Lemon argues, Shakespeare does not depict Richard as a tyrannical king on stage as a direct reference to a specific monarch, namely Elizabeth I, but rather as an established criticism against tyranny altogether and possibly against a tyrannical successor for the ageing queen. The author affirms that "the play does not represent this political model of the divine right of kings neutrally. Shakespeare stages this doctrine as a prop for corrupt kingship, displaying a limit-case for divine right theory as subjects consent to rule by a murderous sovereign" (Lemon 256). The threat of a tyrannical rule was specially topical at the very end of the sixteenth century, when the old and unmarried Queen Elizabeth had no heirs to pass on the English crown, which might otherwise fall into the hands of the Catholic Philip II of Spain (1527-1598),¹⁹ or in the hands of the Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia, Philip's daughter with his third wife Elisabeth of Valois (1545-1568). Either outcome could result in a return to Catholicism after a period of stabilisation of Protestantism under Elizabeth I, or lead to a civil war.

Shakespeare endorses that a mortal being temporarily embodying the supernatural entity of monarchy is merely performing a role. The monarch, in this sense, is just like an actor on a stage, playing the role of a king from his coronation until his death or deposition. During this time, both bodies inhabit a single physical space. In the play's deposition scene, Richard emphasises the performative nature of a king's role, using his own authority to perform the split of his body natural from the body politic. Being left with only his natural body, bereft of divine power, he is but a shadow of himself.

The public persona of a ruler is invariably a role-play. As King James I wrote in his treatise *Basilikon Doron*²⁰ (c. 1599): "a King is as one set on a stage, whose

¹⁹ Philip II of Spain had a claim to the throne by means of his marriage to Mary I (1516-1558).

²⁰ 'Royal gift' in Ancient Greek.

smallest actions and gestures, all the people gazingly doe behold” (qtd. in McIlwain 43). Peter Holland acknowledges that the theatricality of the king’s role has been underscored in some productions of the play, including Stephen Pimlott’s staging for the RSC at The Other Place in 2000 with Samuel West (1966-) in the title role. In the beginning of each session, West would sit on a coffin with the theatre lights off, holding a book, and he would read from a passage in the play, which could vary each night of performance. Only after calling attention to himself as an actor on a dark stage does he decide to perform. The lights of the stage then go on and he assumes his role as Richard II (Holland 221–22). In a similar manner, Ian Richardson (1934-2007) and Richard Pasco (1926-2014) called attention to Richard and Bolingbroke as performers by exchanging roles throughout the play in John Barton’s RSC production in 1973. The main idea behind the decision of casting the two actors as both the king and the usurper “was that kings, like actors, are ‘twin-natured’, their personhood and their role intrinsically intertwined” (Dawson and Yachnin 90). These productions accentuated the public’s awareness of the performative nature of the actor’s job, as well as the theatricality of Shakespeare’s character in the play, and Richard II’s own role in performing kingship.

In Ernst Kantorowicz’s seminal work on the study of medieval political theology, the author explains how the idea of a king’s two bodies persevered in Shakespeare’s lifetime. When James VI of Scotland succeeded Elizabeth as king of England and Ireland as James I, uniting the three kingdoms under one crown, the philosopher and statesman Francis Bacon (1561-1626) suggested the name ‘Great Britain’ “as an expression of the ‘perfect union of bodies, politic as well as natural” (Kantorowicz 24). Shakespeare’s understanding of the king as a performer, in fact of the human being as a player of different roles, is apparent in *Richard II*. Kantorowicz explains that although the image of the monarch’s two bodies has arguably vanished from modern constitutional thought, it still has a significant appeal today mainly because of Shakespeare, who “has eternalized that metaphor” (26).

Kantorowicz identifies three moments in *Richard II* that endorse the performative nature of kingship. Richard plays three roles: King, Fool and God, “all one, and all simultaneously active” (Kantorowicz 27). In the scene on the coast of Wales, he plays the King. When Richard learns about Bolingbroke’s betrayal, the Bishop of Carlisle calms him: “Fear not, my lord. That power that made you king / Hath power to keep you king in spite of all” (3.2.27-28). The power that anointed

Richard king is divine; therefore, God will keep him protected from the attacks of worldly men. Richard deeply believes in this. However, as the king learns the bad tidings brought by Lord Salisbury of the desertion of his Welsh army and of his being “one day too late”, Richard doubts his own divinity. At this moment of hesitancy, Richard remembers the mortality of his body natural. Death awaits all human beings, regardless if king or servant. Consequently, Richard realises how frail a king’s hold to the body politic is, susceptible to be ripped away, leaving him just as any other human fragile and mortal body.

Still clinging to his majesty, Richard takes refuge at Flint Castle in Act III, Scene 3. I have referred to this scene previously when discussing Northumberland’s lack of ceremonious treatment to Richard and Bolingbroke’s affected humility. Kantorowicz sees in this scene the continuation of the disintegration of Richard’s “oneness of the body natural with the immortal body politic” (30). Richard puts himself at Bolingbroke’s disposition: “What must the King do now? Must he submit? / The King shall do it. Must he be deposed? / The King shall be contented. Must he lose / The name of king? I’ God’s name, let it go” (3.3.148-151). Richard ridicules his own position as a king, acquiring a submissive status and referring to himself as a King with no royal authority. In this instance, he plays the role of the Fool, “who is two-in-one and whom the poet otherwise introduces so often as counter-type of lords and kings. Richard II plays now the roles of both: fool of his royal self and fool of kingship” (Kantorowicz 33). He debases his body natural, he becomes “a fool playing a king, and a king playing a fool” (Kantorowicz 33). This instance also highlights the theatricality of the situation, where Richard performs an exaggerated submission to Bolingbroke, calling his cousin “King Bolingbroke” and “his majesty”, while referring to himself as simply “Richard”.

Finally, Richard plays the role of God in the scene at Westminster. In the reversed coronation ritual, Richard compares himself to Christ, associating Bolingbroke’s treason with Judas’ betrayal. However, unlike Jesus, who had loyalty from his other eleven followers, Richard had none in twelve thousand. In *The Hollow Crown* series, the director of *Richard II* (2012) Rupert Goold (1972-) emphasises Richard’s association with Christ by adding religious symbols. In the very first seconds of the episode, the camera moves from a crucifix to Richard’s throne, stressing the link between royal power and divinity. And at the end of the film, Richard’s corpse is brought to Henry IV inside a simple wooden coffin. The actor Ben

Whishaw (1980-) is covered in a white shroud, in a position that resembles Christ's crucifixion, enhancing the comparison.

As Richard performs his de-crowning, he officially removes the body politic (and its sacredness) from himself. He performs the ceremony as "both priest and clerk", since he is the only one with the divine authority to un-king himself. Therefore, he uses the powers granted by God against himself: "God save the king, although I be not he" (4.1.174). As he is bereft of his body politic, he tries to render his human self kingly: "You may my glories and my state depose, / But not my griefs, still am I king of those" (4.1.191-192). This "inner kingship", however, also dissolves as he realises himself to be a traitor: "For I have given here my soul's consent / T' undeck the pompous body of a king, / Made glory base and sovereignty a slave, / Proud majesty a subject, state a peasant" (4.1.248-251). As Kantorowicz puts it, "the king body natural becomes a traitor to the king body politic" (39). His complete dissolution happens as he looks at himself in the mirror, which Kantorowicz calls "the climax of that tragedy of dual personality" (39). His physical appearance does not portray his imagined inner kingship: "Is this the face which faced so many follies, / That was at last outfaced by Bolingbroke?" (4.1.284-285). As he smashes the mirror into pieces, Kantorowicz explains that Richard undermines any possibility of duality; what is left is merely a human miserable man (40).

As Holland explains, Kantorowicz's interpretation of *Richard II* "engages with the gap between body natural and body politic, between individual and social role, in a way that denies the play's status as a record of a time past" (222). For Holland, there was no gap between Early Modern politics and the performativity of Richard's and Bolingbroke's characters. This way, Shakespeare did not establish a divide between medieval thought and Early Modern humanism. In fact, Shakespeare created a world "which manifested strongly that which was also true about his own. The medieval was no longer discontinuous but a mark of continuity" (Holland 222). That was one of the characteristics of Shakespeare's medievalism: recreating the medieval past to reflect on his own time, emphasising the ruptures and continuities of history.

In addition to the belief that monarchs were God's chosen representatives on earth and, therefore, possessors of divine power, early historical chroniclers such as Edward Hall (1498-1547) and Raphael Holinshed (1525-1580) perceived history as developing under divine control, "events from the death of a king to the fall of a

sparrow were demonstrations of God's providence" (Hattaway 16). In that way, humans had little agency. However, Shakespeare's plays, although having Hall and Holinshed as main sources, explore the power of ordinary men to create their own destiny. In *Richard II*, for instance, Bolingbroke questions Richard's position on the throne and forces the anointed monarch to give up the crown in favour of a nobleman who had not been chosen by God to perform that office. Bolingbroke criticises Richard's use of his authority to change sentences of banishment at his will: "How long a time lies in one little word! / Four lagging winters and four wanton springs / End in a word; such is the breath of kings" (1.3.212-214). Bolingbroke's rebellion indicates that secular political objectives can change the course of divine history. Bolingbroke thus acts as representative of secular power challenging a medieval gullible ideal of divine kingship.

3.1.3 Nostalgia

As we have seen, Shakespeare reconstructs the medieval past in *Richard II* by performing medieval pageantry and ritual, by depicting and challenging the medieval political theology of the divine right of kings and the dual nature of the monarch's body; and, as I explain in this section, by means of a nostalgic longing for the past. Nostalgia is at the core of medievalism. In evoking a reframing of the Middle Ages, works of art turn to the past as an alternative reality for their own present: either to escape the present's frustrations, or to reinforce the improvements the present can offer and that the past could not. Interestingly, Matthews points out that the word *nostalgia* was originally a term to describe not the longing for the past, but a longing for a place: home. "In 1756 it was given as a synonym for [the German word] *Heimweh*, the pain felt for home" (Matthews 64). Only later did the word assume a more specific reference to feeling more at home in the *past*. As Matthews points out, 'time' and 'place' are two categories that are complex to distinguish, one being directly attached to the other. All corporeal entities occupy simultaneously a physical space at a specific period of time. In medievalist nostalgia, 'time' becomes a 'place', materialised by physical reconstructions of the Middle Ages. The past "is no longer so very distant, but one that can be visited" (Matthews 64) through literature, art, and the theatre. With Shakespeare's history plays the audience's feeling of being at home may be even greater since the place they witness on stage is the same in which they

are in the present, only at a different time period. This idea is intrinsically connected to Chandler's explanation of the Medieval Revival in nineteenth-century Britain as a mainly idealised evocation of a mythical Middle Ages as a safe and familiar home in contrast to the rapid changes of modernisation, as I have explained in Chapter 2.

The idealisation of the past is embodied in the play by the character of John of Gaunt, who, in fact, differs a lot from the historical Gaunt (1340-1399). Gaunt was Richard's uncle and the oldest surviving son of the admired King Edward III, who had reigned for fifty long years, achieving great military victories and restoring royal authority after the forced abdication of his father, Edward II (1284-1327). Gaunt was a powerful man, "his lands were said to extend over one-third of the entire country, while for many years he maintained at his own expense a personal retinue of no fewer than 125 knights and 132 esquires, effectively a sizeable private army" (Norwich 56). During the Peasants' Revolt in 1381 against the high taxes, the wealthy Gaunt could have paid the debt for half a dozen counties without even noticing it, but he preferred to make an arrogant display of his assets, exasperating the rebels (Norwich 61). Shakespeare's Gaunt, however, is not an arrogant exhibitionist. He is an old man who loves his son and suffers to see him banished; an uncle disturbed with the neglect with which his nephew has governed the kingdom and with the mysterious circumstances surrounding his brother's death; and, notably, someone dispirited with the condition of England.

In contrast to Gaunt's noble character, Richard is portrayed at first as a selfish man. When Bushy brings news of his uncle's imminent death, Richard rejoices, since "the lining of his coffers shall make coats / To deck our soldiers for these Irish wars" (1.4.59-61). At Gaunt's death, Richard seizes his property and adds it to the royal treasury to finance his expensive wars in Ireland. When Gaunt dies, the spectator feels that the last hope of redemption for Richard dies with him. Gaunt embodies an idealised alternative for England's future, what it could have been under the governance of the uncle instead of the nephew Richard.

Gaunt discerns in himself "a prophet new inspired", who compares the present England with an ideal past, predicting its imminent downfall: "This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England, / [...] is now bound in with shame, / With inky blots and rotten parchment bonds: / That England, that was wont to conquer others, / Hath made a shameful conquest of itself" (2.1.50, 63-66). Gaunt's speech illustrates a type of medievalism in which he contrasts the majesty of the early Middle ages, the

“teeming womb of royal kings”, the age of the Crusades distinguished “for Christian service and true chivalry”, of the knights who fought to recover Christ’s “sepulchre in stubborn Jewry”, with the collapsing present in the hands of Richard II.

Even though Gaunt lacked the terminology we are familiar with nowadays, the past he describes is certainly the period we now understand as the High Middle Ages: the age of the Crusades and “true chivalry”, perhaps evoking the past personified by Richard’s ancestor, Richard I (1157-1199), the “Lion Heart”, the great warrior and military leader, and a commander in the Third Crusade (1189-1192). This idealised past in Gaunt’s mind is dying with him. In contrast, the impression that Shakespeare’s Richard presents is of a capricious and authoritarian king who uses his power tyrannically against the well-being of his people. Shakespeare’s Bolingbroke, on the other hand, represents quite the contrary, at least in the first half of the play: the abused hero who gathers strength in exile to avenge the death of his father and the wrongdoings to his family and lawful inheritance. After Gaunt’s death, Bolingbroke embodies the hope to restore England to its former chivalrous glory.

Gaunt’s nostalgia exemplifies an instance of double-voiced medievalism within the Shakespearean text. Shakespeare evokes two layers of medieval pasts: the earlier past of the Crusades, mourned by Gaunt; and the later Middle Ages as personified by Richard II, a weak and tyrannical leader who betrayed the sacred ideal of the body politic. The medieval world constructed by Shakespeare in *Richard II* is a combination of both medieval pasts, paradoxically idealised and grotesque. Therefore, there is medievalism *within* the text: as the medieval Gaunt looks back at a romanticised earlier Middle Ages. However, there is also medievalism within the *performance*, when the sixteenth-century audience would look back at both Gaunt’s idealised British past as well as at Shakespeare’s complex reconstruction of the late fourteenth century, the latter being contemporary to the historical Richard and Gaunt, but nonetheless a past for the actors and spectators in the theatre.

The famous “garden scene” provides insight into the play’s contrast of the chaotic present under Richard’s rule with an idealised past. The scene takes place at the Duke of York’s garden, where the queen and her lady attendants are walking. Separated from her husband, the sad queen tries in vain to get comfort from her ladies. A gardener and two servants enter the stage, and the queen approaches to hear their conversation. The gardener points to an apricot tree, in which the fruits “like unruly children make their sire / Stoop with oppression of their prodigal weight”

(3.4.30-31). The fruits of the apricot tree are so heavy that they burden the tree. It is the task of the gardener to “cut off the heads of too-fast-growing sprays / That look too lofty in our commonwealth” (3.4.34-35). All should be even in the garden, all the “noisome weeds” that absorb the soil’s fertility should be plucked away. The servant replies to the man, comparing the garden to the state of England:

Why should we in the compass of a pale Keep law and form and due proportion, Showing, as in a model, our firm estate, When our sea-walled garden, the whole land, Is full of weeds, her fairest flowers choked up, Her fruit-trees all upturned, her hedges ruin’d, Her knots disorder’d and her wholesome herbs Swarming with caterpillars? (3.4.40-47).

The servant’s speech recalls previous passages in the play, such as Bolingbroke’s reference to Bushy, Bagot and their accomplices as “the Caterpillars of the commonwealth” (2.3.165); as well as Gaunt’s prophetic vision of England leased out as “a tenement or pelting farm” (2.1.60) and of Richard as a landlord and not a king. As the servant’s lines illustrate, Richard has not been a good landlord, neglecting the parasitical weeds that poisoned the English soil and the power of the heavy fruits that threatened the vigour of the tree. The gardener responds to his servant that the person responsible for the decay of the garden, namely King Richard, is withering like a leaf in autumn, and the weeds are being plucked out from the root by Bolingbroke.

The Queen overhears that Bolingbroke has seized Richard, and that he will undoubtedly be deposed. She is outraged by this conversation: “How dares thy harsh rude tongue sound this displeasing news? / What Eve, what serpent, hath suggested thee / To make a second fall of cursed man? / Why dost thou say King Richard is deposed? / Darest thou, thou little better thing than earth, / Divine his downfall?” (3.4.77-79). The queen refers to another garden, that of Adam and Eve, from which they were expelled for committing the first sin of mankind. Just like Adam and Eve, Richard has sinned and for this reason he will be banned from his garden, England. Fearing for the life of her husband, the Queen leaves to London, and the gardener plants a rue, a “sour herb of grace”, where her majesty’s tear fell on the ground “in the remembrance of a weeping queen” (3.4.105-107).

The gardener and his servant evoke a past in which the fair flowers were not choked up, the fruit trees were not unpruned, the hedges were not ruined, and the herbs were not swarming with larvae. This past has been ruined by Richard. As

Isabel Karremann explains, nostalgia is a “historical emotion”, in the sense that it summons the past as a way to oblivate the present. “Nostalgic memories thus offer only a very selective version of the past, but they authorise and legitimise that version through addressing the emotions” (Karremann 34). The gardeners, therefore, summon the past epitomised by the pre-Fall Garden of Eden as a way to legitimate their frustration with the present. They engage with an imagined past, which is evoked by confronting the heavy peaches burdening the tree.

A question that may result after analysing the previous examples of nostalgia in *Richard II* is whether it consists of medievalism or merely a general longing for the past. Could Shakespeare’s approach to the past be considered medievalist? Although the word medieval did not exist for Shakespeare’s contemporaries, there was an idea of difference dividing the Renaissance from what came before. Leslie Workman explains that “medievalism could only begin, not simply when the Middle Ages had ended, whenever that may have been, but when the Middle Ages were perceived to have been something in the past, something it was necessary to revive or desirable to imitate” (1). It does not matter, therefore, if Shakespeare understood the period in which *Richard II* lived as medieval, but what is important is that Shakespeare perceived that past to be different from his own lifetime. It was a period he thought significant for revival in order to shed light on the political situation of his own time. In the same manner, Gaunt and the gardeners in *Richard II* summon a past they perceived different from their own. The gardeners’ metaphorical garden evokes a more broad ‘pastness’, an idealised imagination of what came before *Richard*. However, their reflection adds to Gaunt’s speech reviving the splendour of the times of chivalric knights and Crusades, which is a clear reference to the period we now understand as the Middle Ages.

3.2 Conclusion

This chapter has explored Shakespeare’s historiography. Although not a historian, Shakespeare’s history plays contributed to the circulation of ideas about the past during his lifetime and beyond. In Shakespeare’s dramatisation of *Richard II*’s reign, he condenses and alters the chronological order of several historical events in order to create his own medieval past. However, the reconstruction of the Middle Ages as prompted by Shakespeare’s *Richard II* does not end with the play. The

dramatic text is not a fixed entity; it is altered and adapted according to the necessities of each production, which in turn is staged in different times and places, and performed by different people.

This chapter has focused specifically on three aspects in *Richard II* that are essential to comprehending Shakespeare's reconstruction of the Middle Ages in this play: ritual and pageantry, the arbitrary power of kings, and nostalgia. These demonstrate that Shakespeare places the events in *Richard II* at a time that was different from his audience's present, but with which they could simultaneously identify.

I return to the title of this chapter, "the well of history", which is an expression taken from Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1820), a nineteenth-century reconstruction of England during the reign of Richard I, the "Lion Heart". In a dedicatory epistle to the imaginary tedious Rev. Dr Dryasdust, Scott apologises for the "slight, unsatisfactory, and trivial manner" with which he has transformed antiquarian research into the novel in question (Scott 5). He knows Dr Dryasdust believes that "the very office of an antiquary, employed in grave, and, as the vulgar will sometimes allege, in minute and trivial research, must be considered as incapacitating him from successfully compounding a tale of this sort" (Scott 8), meaning that serious historical research should not be used for popular romance purposes. Disputing the belief of the pedantic historian, Scott had had successful precedents in such an endeavour, including Horace Walpole's popular Gothic tale and George Ellis' *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances* (1805). In his satirical apology to the reverend, Scott adds: "Still the severer antiquary may think that, by thus intermingling fiction with truth, I am polluting the well of history with modern inventions, and impressing upon the rising generation false ideas of the age which I describe" (8). In fact, Scott's *Ivanhoe* played a significant role in later popular perceptions of Richard I and England's medieval past. That is because all interpretations of the past are affected by other reconstructions of the past, be they in historical writing or popular culture.

Furthermore, a fiction writer does not claim complete accuracy. On the contrary, "it is necessary, for exciting interest of any kind, that the subject assumed should be, as it were, translated into the manners as well as the language of the age we live in", as Scott puts it in his defence against Dryasdust's censure (9). Scott advocates that, in order for a modern audience to enjoy a medievalist work, the author must search for "that extensive neutral ground, the proportion, that is, of

manners and sentiments which are common to us and to our ancestors, which have been handed down unaltered from them to us, or which, arising out of the principles of our common nature, must have existed alike in either state of society” (Scott 9). Scott also suggests that the medievalist fiction writer should avoid unintelligible archaic language that would only drag the reader away instead of bringing them closer to the medieval past. Therefore, it is the similarities between past and present that connect the readers of the present with the people from the past, because that creates empathy.

Writing over two hundred years before Scott, Shakespeare recreated the reigns of English monarchs for theatrical purposes, intermingling fiction with truth. In this perspective, could Shakespeare be condemned for polluting the well of history? Shakespeare did not propose his history plays to be accurate pieces of historical work, filled with unintelligible archaisms and dealing with sentiments foreign to his Elizabethan audience. On the contrary, Shakespeare’s history plays created a bridge between past and present, offering the spectators a chance to see, hear and live the medieval past, re-connecting with their ancestries. Therefore, neither Shakespeare nor Scott were “polluting” the well of history. Alternatively, they were offering their contemporaries a bucket with which to reach the source.

CHAPTER 4: SHAKESPEARE ILLUSTRATED: THE PLAY ON THE PAGE

*Before my God, I might not this believe
Without the sensible and true avouch
Of mine own eyes.*

(*Hamlet*, Act I, Scene 1)

The nineteenth century was the period in which Shakespeare's plays first began to be "engaged with on the page rather than on the stage" (Hollingsworth 44). The increase in the publication of critical and commercial editions of Shakespeare's works contributed to the establishment of a larger reading audience with access to the author's plays and poems. This information sheds light on how substantial Shakespeare's presence was in the print culture of nineteenth-century London, on who had access to Shakespeare's edited texts, and, especially, on which texts were available on the market for the stage adaptors of Shakespeare's plays. Furthermore, this was also the moment when Shakespeare's printed texts received illustrations, adding a new layer of visual interpretation of Shakespeare's characters and – in the case of *Richard II* – of Shakespeare's Middle Ages.

In this chapter, I navigate through the scholarly and more popular editions of Shakespeare's text, since Samuel Johnson's in 1765 until James Halliwell's 1850 edition, which includes daguerreotypes of the main actors of the time in Shakespearean character, shedding light on the theatrical practices common then. My goal is to investigate how the relationship between Shakespeare on the page with the stage has changed throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as his plays become more readily available to a wider audience, by means of cheaper and illustrated publications. These illustrations demonstrate that the past was gradually understood as different from the present, and therefore more alluring and mysterious – hence the growing interest in knowing about the past and the preoccupation with historical accuracy in visual representations of the past. Simultaneous to a desire to understand the past, there emerges a desire to connect with it. Art draws an illusionistic bridge between past and present. The illustrations analysed in this chapter indicate that the essential connecting element between past and present is human emotion. Although emotions find different expressions in different social and cultural contexts, the manner with which *Richard II* depicts loss and vulnerability, for

instance, has the capability to move both an Early Modern as well as a contemporary audience. In this manner, the Middle Ages became simultaneously – and paradoxically – foreign *and* familiar.

Christopher Decker indicates that four collected editions of Shakespeare's works were published in the seventeenth century; in the eighteenth century, they were more than 80; and in the nineteenth century, over 800 collected editions, around 2,700 single plays and 150 editions of the poems were produced (16). The numbers illustrate how Shakespeare became an increasingly significant name in the prospering publishing business of the time. According to Decker, the early-nineteenth-century editions of Shakespeare's works that appeared on the market were still indebted to eighteenth-century editors. *The Plays of William Shakespeare* (1765) in eight volumes, edited by Samuel Johnson, laid the groundwork for the majority of editors that followed suit. George Steevens (1736-1800) published *The Plays of William Shakespeare* in 1773. Steevens used Johnson's text, to which he added more material written by himself and other contributors. Edmond Malone (1741-1812) extended Steevens's 1778 revised edition, writing a *Supplement* in 1780 and adding an appendix in 1783. In retaliation, Steevens published another revision of his earlier work, expanding it into fifteen volumes in 1793. This, in turn, served as the foundation for the work of Isaac Reed (1742-1807), published in twenty-one volumes in 1803, an edition that is known as the 'first variorum'. After Reed died in 1807, a reprint was published in 1813 (Decker 16–17). This variorum offered an immense amount of commentary on Shakespeare's play, being the lengthiest edition of Shakespeare up to the present day. For the reader to have an idea of the amount of paratextual material added to Shakespeare's dramatic text, Decker explains that "readers of the 1803 variorum had to contend with three volumes, amounting to 1,455 pages, before they made landfall on the first play, *The Tempest*" (18). This extra material no doubt played a part in the reading experience and in how Shakespeare was perceived by the printing culture of the period: mainly as an intellectually demanding author who required a specialised type of reader.

Reduced versions of the massive tomes began to circulate in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century. These editions challenged the scholarly characteristic of the variorum and aimed at a broader – although still exclusive – public. Alexander Chalmers (1759-1834) published in 1805 a reduced version of the 1803 variorum, cutting the first three volumes to under 120 pages (Decker 18).

Another (more successful) attempt to popularise the editions of Shakespeare's text was undertaken by Manley Wood the following year. Wood chose to add a small selection of prefatory material, but innovated in removing all the annotations and footnotes to the end of each play, not disturbing the reader with scholarly commentary during the reading experience. Finally, another novelty of the beginning of the century was the publication of Shakespeare in pocket formats, which could be moved around significantly easier than the variorum tomes that rather belonged in libraries and studies. William Pickering (1796-1854) in association with the printer Charles Corrall produced the *Diamond Classics* pocketbook series. It began in 1820 and consisted of reprints by Latin, Italian, Greek and English authors, such as Cicero, Dante, Homer, Petrarch and Milton. Shakespeare was published in nine pocketbook volumes during the year 1823. These publications demonstrate the path taken by Shakespearean editors in the first half of the nineteenth century, detaching Shakespeare from an academic book culture and introducing his work to a more general reading audience.

Two other features of early-nineteenth-century Shakespearean editing business are worth mentioning, since they started to make an impact before 1815, the year in which Edmund Kean's *Richard II* premiered on the Drury Lane stage: Therefore, they are editions that would have been known by Richard Wroughton (1748-1822), the adaptor of the Shakespearean text for the 1815 production, but also by the audience attending the performance. In 1807, Henrietta Maria Bowdler (1750-1830) and her brother Thomas Bowdler (1754-1825) published anonymously²¹ *The Family Shakespeare*, which was intended to offer a morally and religiously suitable version of Shakespeare's text for the English family. The edition altered or omitted several passages regarded as vulgar or indecent, and eighteen plays were completely excluded from Henrietta Bowdler's selection of the canon for being considered inappropriate (Decker 19).²² Bowdler's project illuminates one of the

²¹ The first edition in 1807, published anonymously, contained mainly Henrietta's work. The second expanded edition was carried out by her brother, Thomas. It was published in 1818 and featured only Thomas' name as the editor.

²² The first edition of *The Family Shakespeare* contained the following selection of 20 plays: *The Tempest*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Winter's Tale*, *King John*, *Richard II*, *Henry IV – Part 1*, *Henry IV – Part 2*, *Henry V*, *Richard III*, *Henry VIII*, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *Cymbeline*, *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello*. The second edition of 1818 included 16 more plays: *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Measure for Measure*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Henry VI – Part 1*, *Henry IV – Part 2*, *Henry VI – Part 3*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Timon of Athens*, *Coriolanus*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Titus Andronicus* and

trends of nineteenth-century Shakespearean editions: that of expurgated versions, a consequence of the evangelicalism and revival of Protestantism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. However, as Decker points out, unexpurgated editions still exceeded the number of expurgated ones (20).

The second aspect was the printing of cheaper facsimile versions of the First Folio of 1623, allegedly exact copies of the original seventeenth-century document, produced by letterpress, pressing paper against inked movable types to create the imprint.²³ The first facsimile of the Folio was published by Vernor and Hood in 1807, the same year as *The Family Shakespeare*. It was marketed at £5 5s, a substantially lower price than the £38 requested for the Folio itself at the time.²⁴ Still, it would only have been affordable to a small parcel of the population. At that time, £5 5s would correspond to the price of one cow, or five stones of wool.

Facsimile editions provided ‘authenticity’ without the intervention of scholarly commentary, promising “the most direct contact with pure Shakespeare” (Decker 20). The access to a facsimile of the First Folio would allow the nineteenth-century reader to feel closer to the 1623 context of publication of the first collected works of Shakespeare. In this manner, the facsimile functions as an illusion in two ways. First, as a fake antique, since it was not a document printed in 1623, but a copy printed in the reader’s present time. Second, and most importantly, as a bridge between past and present, connecting Shakespeare’s nineteenth-century readers with their seventeenth-century counterparts. Moreover, copies of the First Folio allowed the readers certain freedom to engage with and annotate the text, which the antique value of the authentic Folio would not allow. For example, the poet John Keats (1795-1821) owned one such facsimile copy, acquired in 1817. According to R. S. White, Keats copiously marked and annotated it, comparing the Folio text with other editions published in his own time. As White puts it, Keats’ “interest reaches from the technicalities of textual criticism to the most wide-ranging admiration for

Romeo and Juliet. The 1818 edition thus presents 36 plays by Shakespeare. When Decker refers to 18 plays that were not part of the 1807 edition, the author probably refers to *Pericles*, *Prince of Tyre* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.

²³ Only in 1864 was photolithography used to reproduce the original First Folio in an edition by Howard Staunton, a volume which completely overshadowed the early letterpress facsimiles (Decker 21).

²⁴ According to an advertisement published at the *Edinburgh Review* from 1808 (Decker 20). For the sake of comparison, the First Folio was originally sold for 20s in 1623 (St Clair 146). This information indicates that the value of the Folio had increased significantly in the period between 1623 and 1808.

Shakespeare's thought and linguistic craft" (147). His engagement with the Shakespearean text had a major effect on Keats's craft as a poet. The Folio facsimile did not function as a simulacrum of Shakespeare for Keats, it was not an object to be admired from a distance, but a text to be read, re-read, and with which Keats interacted.

Keats's understanding of the act of reading Shakespeare emphasises that it should not necessarily be an individual practice, but "paradoxically, a simultaneous continuum between passivity and active creation, between self-annulment and self-absorption" (White 21). The poet comprehended reading as a co-operative process, an experience that could be shared between "like-minded readers of the same text" (White 22). White adds an interesting example of Keats's reading practice, implied in a letter written to his brother George Keats: "You will remember me in the same manner – and the more when I tell you that I shall read a passage of Shakespeare every Sunday at ten o Clock – you read one at the same time and we shall be as near each other as blind bodies can be in the same room" (White 22). Although apart from each other, reading Shakespeare at the exact same time would connect the two brothers' experiences, binding them. In this sense, Keats's suggestion of a communal reading of Shakespeare's text resembles the experience of the spectators joined to watch the production of the play. During that moment, they share feelings elicited by the actions on stage, which also creates a powerful bond among audience members.

The rising number of Shakespearean editions mentioned above demonstrate that Shakespeare was a popular name within the early-nineteenth-century cultural scene. The newly available editions were striving to break loose from the restraints of scholarly texts and to reach a broader audience. Smaller and cheaper publications of the plays invited readers to try Shakespeare for themselves, without the erudite language of his commentators. Catherine Morland, the protagonist of Jane Austen's novel *Northanger Abbey*, probably completed in 1803 but published only posthumously in 1818, exemplifies the extent of Shakespeare's presence in the English cultural scene at the time. The narrator describes the reading habits of the young woman as follows: "But from fifteen to seventeen she was in training for a heroine; she read all such works as heroines must read to supply their memories with those quotations which are so serviceable and so soothing in the vicissitudes of their eventful lives" (Austen 17). She read Alexander Pope, Thomas Gray, James

Thomson, and Shakespeare, with whom she learned that “Trifles light as air / Are, to the jealous, confirmation strong, / As proofs of Holy Writ” (*Othello*, 3.3.332-334), that “The poor beetle, which we tread upon, / In corporal sufferance feels a pang as great / As when a giant dies” (*Measure for Measure*, 3.1.84-86) and that a young woman in love always looks “like Patience on a monument / Smiling at Grief” (*Twelfth Night*, 2.4.112-113). Austen’s character, a young woman from a family of ten children in the county of Wiltshire, who did not have access to higher social circles or sophisticated cultural venues until she travelled with the wealthy Allen family, illustrates how printed Shakespeare became available to different social classes. Although Catherine had never been to Bath, never attended a ball in Tunbridge, was unfamiliar with the fashion of London, and – to the extent of the reader’s knowledge – had never seen a performance of Shakespeare’s plays on stage, she had read Shakespeare on the page.

Catherine also read the popular Gothic tales of Anne Radcliffe (1764-1823) that infused her impressions of the medieval abbey, home of the Tilneys, with feelings of foreboding and terror. Catherine’s perspective on the medieval past was influenced by her experience reading late-eighteenth-century Gothic fiction, in which the Middle Ages were evoked to convey powerful emotions, especially those connected with terror and a sense of sublime. The pathos induced by such a representation of the medieval past is significant to understanding medievalism at the turn of the century, as I will argue in Chapter 5 in relation to Edmund Kean’s production of *Richard II*.

As Catherine Morland demonstrates, engagement with Shakespeare was not exclusive to middle and upper classes. In fact, Jonathan Rose explains that certain members of the working-class also felt a connection with the Shakespearean text. He writes that “in mid-century London newsboys spent their odd 6d. on *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*” (122). Throughout the century, Shakespeare was both read and seen by the working masses, who filled the pit and galleries of the playhouses, commented on the action on stage, drawing comparisons with previous productions and amongst actors, and knew passages from Shakespearean poetry by heart. The poet was hailed by many as “a proletarian hero who spoke directly to the working people” (Rose 122–23). Rose’s commentary on the social domain of theatre exemplifies the way the critic William Hazlitt (1778-1830) understood the theatrical public sphere, namely as a means for personal experience and for definition of the self. It was

through cultural exchange that one became conscious of their own opinions. For instance, Rose adds that a weaver's son translated *The Merchant of Venice* into Lancashire dialect (123), adapting Shakespeare to his own reality. Furthermore, the working class was aware of the political language and tone in Shakespeare, which could be used to forward their own ambitions. One example is the Irish trade unionist John Dougherty (1798-1854), who spoke a manifesto to ally all trade unions in a National Association for the Protection of Labour in 1830, in which he included military extracts from *Julius Caesar* (Rose 123). Dougherty was doubtless moved by Shakespeare's words, which led him to reflect on his own self and social role.

As the examples above confirm, Shakespeare was present almost everywhere in the first half of the nineteenth century – from the expensive voluminous critical editions of his complete works, to the reading room of a countryside young woman, to the political manifesto of a trade unionist. These are instances in which the Shakespearean text was engaged with on the page, and the reader relied on their own imagination to envision the sets and characters. In the following section, I look at how Shakespeare's text was visually received and reinterpreted in this period of time, especially how *Richard II* and its medieval setting were recreated in illustrated editions of the play.

4.1 Early-Nineteenth-century Romantic Imagination: Shakespeare and Visual Culture

The page and the stage were not the only channels through which Shakespeare's presence was felt in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Shakespeare's characters and poetry gained different forms and interpretations in visual art. Illustrated editions helped to broaden the literary culture in England and to visually materialise imagined characters and plots. Since the first illustrated edition of Shakespeare's works edited by Nicholas Rowe (1674-1718) in 1709, the characters in *Richard II* had been visually recreated in at least nine different projects until Edmund Kean's production of the play in 1815. The illustrations went through significant change, from a depiction of the characters in contemporary eighteenth-century clothes to a stricter concern with historical accuracy, as well as a keener interest in the victimised Richard instead of Bolingbroke.

The last decades of the eighteenth century witnessed an increasing fascination with emotions, as exemplified by the picturesque aesthetics of the Boydell Gallery and the engravings of Henry Fuseli (1741-1825). There was a rejection of didacticism of art in favour of a fusion with the imagination: an art that speaks “to the heart as well as the eye” (Dias 124).

Hazlitt’s understanding of the role of poetry is very much linked to the conveyance of emotions. He explains: “The best general notion which I can give of poetry is, that it is the natural impression of any object or event, by its vividness exciting an involuntary movement of imagination and passion, and producing, by sympathy, a certain modulation of the voice, or sounds, expressing it” (Hazlitt, Vol. V 1). This extract brings forth some of the essential arguments in Hazlitt’s appreciation of art, and, particularly, poetry: above all, it should be able to incite feelings of passion and sympathy in the reader. Moreover, it should be done naturally, not an artificial demonstration of emotion. In Hazlitt’s words, “poetry is the universal language which the heart holds with nature and itself” (Hazlitt, Vol. V 1). In this sense, Hazlitt’s understanding of poetry parallels Diderot’s statements on acting, discussed in Chapter 1. A good actor should avoid artificiality, extreme contrasts and exaggerated demonstrations of feelings.

In another essay, Hazlitt discusses the concept of *gusto* in art, which he explains as the “power or passion defining any object” (Hazlitt, Vol. IV 77). Any object has a degree of expression, associated either with pleasure or pain, “and it is in giving this truth of character from the truth of feeling, whether in the highest or the lowest degree, but always in the highest degree of which the subject is capable, that *gusto* consists” (Hazlitt, Vol. IV 77). Hazlitt exemplifies with the Venetian artist Titian (c.1488-1576). According to Hazlitt, through Titian’s use of colour, the persons depicted on the canvas not only seem to think but to *feel*. The colour of the human flesh as he paints it seems “sensitive” and “alive all over”, having not only realistic texture, but conveying emotion – of pleasure, lust, fear, etc. – to the beholder. White draws attention to the fact that Hazlitt is not always consistent in his use of the word *gusto*. Nonetheless, Hazlitt managed to give name to a very complex experience: “a quality which is active at each stage of the whole *process* which brings together the artist, the work of art, and the one who receives the work as reader or observer” (White 38). It is not only what the art object expresses that matters, but its combination with how the beholder receives it and manifests the reaction.

This period of primacy of feeling demonstrated an ambiguous attitude towards *Richard II* and its leading role. At the same time that Bolingbroke's victory is celebrated and Richard's unjust behaviour is despised, Richard's character receives sympathy as a suffering victim. There is an increasing interest in depicting the king's soliloquies in the scene at Pomfret Castle, in which he compares his prison with the world, reflecting on his own mortality. On the other hand, there is a growing preoccupation with historical authenticity, adding details of clothing, architecture and decoration that display the medieval past. I thus argue that the Middle Ages are not visually represented as merely a means to materialise the past, but, mainly, to evoke emotion and pathos.

Hazlitt censures the extreme dedication to historical accuracy on stage when it interferes with the flow of emotions. In his review of the adaptation of Scott's *Ivanhoe* at Drury Lane in 1820, Hazlitt criticises that the actor playing Ivanhoe was in full armour. With the heavy garments, he had difficulties in moving around the stage, which affected the flow of the production. If the props, costumes and settings that convey historical authenticity are added at the expense of feeling, they should not be included.

4.1.1 1709-1800

According to Richard Altick, the bookseller Jacob Tonson (1655-1736) published in 1709 the first illustrated edition of Shakespeare's plays, edited by Nicholas Rowe. Tonson published other illustrated works at the time, including editions of *Paradise Lost*, and works by Francis Beaumont, John Fletcher and John Dryden. Altick asserts that these editions "found an audience composed not only of the well-to-do and presumably cultivated persons who could afford the collected works of a dramatist but of the larger body of ordinary playgoers as well" (37). The plates used for the illustrations in Tonson's Shakespeare, for instance, were also used in other publications, from cheap printings of individual plays to expensive mezzotints²⁵ (Altick 37).

The illustrations were made by the French artist François Boitard (1670-c. 1715), who chose to illustrate scenes with a more general appeal, focusing on main

²⁵ Mezzotints are a type of engraving on copper or steel, done by scraping or burnishing a roughened surface to produce light and shade, creating half-tones.

themes of the play in question. Interestingly, Boitard's frontispieces for the comedies had a general eighteenth-century style, with the characters wearing wigs and tricornered hats – distant from the Shakespearean Renaissance context. The frontispiece for *Measure for Measure*, for instance, shows Deputy Angelo wearing the three-cornered hat, a knee-length coat, knee breeches and medium-heeled shoes (See figure 10)²⁶. The illustration is relevant for shedding light on the theatrical conventions of the time and the use of contemporary clothing on stage.

Figura 10 - The frontispiece for *Measure for Measure* in Rowe's 1709 edition



²⁶ Shakespeare, William, and Rowe, Nicholas. *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear : In Six Volumes*. By N. Rowe. 1709. Print.

Period in which each play was set, although they do not demonstrate a strict concern with historical accuracy. *Richard II* was included in the third volume of Rowe's edition, along with *King John*, the two parts of *Henry IV*, *Henry V* and the first two parts of *Henry VI*. Rowe obviously followed the chronology of the succession of British monarchs, adopting the order in the First Folio instead of the chronology of Shakespeare's writing.

Boitard's engraving for *Richard II* depicts Richard's assault by Exton and his men in the prison scene. Two bodies are on the ground, the chair is turned, a fallen plate of food is on the floor, and the assaulters hold axe-like weapons. The king, also holding an axe, is surrounded by his enemies. All the men have similar features, wearing breeches, hose and doublets, which indicates that the artist historicises the image in relation to Shakespeare's lifetime instead of Richard II's medieval past (See figure 11). Although there is no clear visual reference to the Middle Ages, there is an

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implication of brutal violence and imminent death, held in the position to attack. This examples evokes a perception of the Middle Ages as the Dark Ages. As Matthews explains, and the following illustrated editions of Shakespeare's plays exemplify, it was only in the eighteenth century that the medieval past was re-evaluated in a positive light

Figura 11 - Engraving Richard II in Rowe's 1709 edition

Lewis Theobald commissioned completely new images for the second edition of *The Works of Shakespeare*, published in eight volumes in 1740. They were designed by the French artist Hubert-François Gravelot (1699-1773), who became known in England for his book illustrations. For example, he designed iconic illustrations for Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740). According to Stuart Sillars, Theobald's edition promoted the illustrations of Shakespeare's works to another level of conception and style (73). Gravelot's style brought the influence of the French Rococo to British engraving art. As Sillars explains, his illustration "concretises the moment through sensuality of texture, frequently heightened by an erotic charge beneath the finely rendered surfaces of fashionable costume and discourse within which Gravelot reconfigures the plays" (75). It is a highly ornamental style, devoted to capturing feeling through minute detail and texture. Originating in the eighteenth century, the style reflects the period's imagination; however, it had never yet been used to interpret the Shakespearean imagination.

Sillars points out that there emerges an anachronistic matter in applying an eighteenth-century style to a Renaissance text, but that it is not necessarily

detrimental to the reader's experience. The illustrations "for the plays translate character and action into settings contemporary with their reader, not with their writer. The result is the implementation of an aesthetic difference which, like the use of contemporary costume on stage, paradoxically stresses both the immediacy and the artifice of the form" (Sillars 76). The Shakespearean characters illustrated by Gravelot would look contemporary to the eighteenth-century readers, although not to Shakespeare. That would bring the Shakespearean imagination closer to Theobald's contemporaries, but it would also emphasise the artificiality of these illustrations for a late-sixteenth-century text because of its anachronistic incongruence. Sillars sees "this equation between artifice and naturalism" at the centre of Gravelot's work (76).

Gravelot demonstrates a concern with specific moments in the play, with the articulation of the human body, with the flow of fabrics and clothes, and facial and body expression. For *Richard II*, the French engraver chose the garden scene in Act III, the most bucolic scene in the play (See figure 12).²⁷ There is a contrast of light and darkness in Gravelot's interpretation of this symbolic scene. The castle tower is visible in the background, overlooking the garden. The queen is seen in the foreground, surrounded by two ladies, all dressed in flowing gowns and tight corsets. The gardener talking to the queen is overcast in darkness, while the two servants in the back almost fade into the backdrop of trees. The tree branches and leaves on the right side tower above the queen and ladies, threatening to expand their dark limbs. As Sillars points out, Gravelot uses "visual metaphors [...], exploiting the contrast between elegance of style and violence of event" (78). The gardener in the shadow gives the queen the bad news about the state of the realm consequent to her husband's lack of care with the garden of England. The queen is still covered with light, but the threatening tree arms above foreshadow the approaching darkness if the rotting weeds do not get plucked away. Gravelot's representation of the medieval in this illustration is quite ambiguous: it combines a romanticised atmosphere, characterised by the light spots and the female characters, with the haunting approach of darkness. Gravelot already anticipated certain elements that would define Gothic imagery in the second half of the century.

Figura 12 - Engraving for Richard II in Theobald's 1740 edition of the play

²⁷ Shakespeare, William. *The works of Shakespeare: in eight volumes. Collated with the oldest copies, and corrected: with notes, explanatory, and critical: By Mr. Theobald.* Vol. 4, Printed for C. Hitch and L. Hawes, H. Lintot, J. and R. Tonson, J. Hodges, B. Dod, J. Rivington, M. and T. Longman, J. Brindley, C. Corbet and T. Caslon, 1757. Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

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Four years later, Thomas Hanmer (1677-1746) commissioned an illustrated edition of Shakespeare's works. He gave specific directions for twenty-seven of the thirty-one illustrations undertaken by the artist Francis Hayman (1708-1776). Hayman follows the trend initiated by Gravelot in focusing "on the naturalism setting and the presentation of characters as human individuals within (Sillars 86). At this point, the emphasis on character, not on setting. As Sillar explains, historical accuracy was then concern mainly for the Roman plays. However, in Hanmer's instructions for

Hayman's illustration for *Richard II*, the reader perceives an interesting approach to the depiction of the medieval past.²⁸ The scene chosen for the frontispiece was Act I, Scene 4, the lists at Coventry. Hanmer is precise in instructing the moment he wishes to be engraved: "The king throws down his warder or ward-staff to prevent their engaging" (Allentuck 307–09). It is the precise moment in which Richard interrupts the medieval ceremony. Hanmer is also specific about costume: Bolingbroke and Mowbray are "completely armed on horseback and ready for the combat", and the king "is seated in state surrounded with his nobles" (Allentuck 307–09). Furthermore, the editor suggests a particular historical text as the source for Hayman to follow: "This Print representing the ancient ceremony of combat, if it be truly and justly set forth, will be valued as a curiosity upon that account, and it may be taken from one done with great exactness in Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire* publish'd 1730. Vol. 1. p. 110" (Allentuck 309). The source is not a medieval text but an eighteenth-century study of the Middle Ages. Dugdale's book is based on records, manuscripts, charters, evidences, tombs and arms, "beautified" with maps, prospects and portraitures. Significantly, Dugdale uses the word *beautify* to describe his interpretation of the medieval archive, which reveals his role in manipulating the material in order to offer a romanticised image of the period.

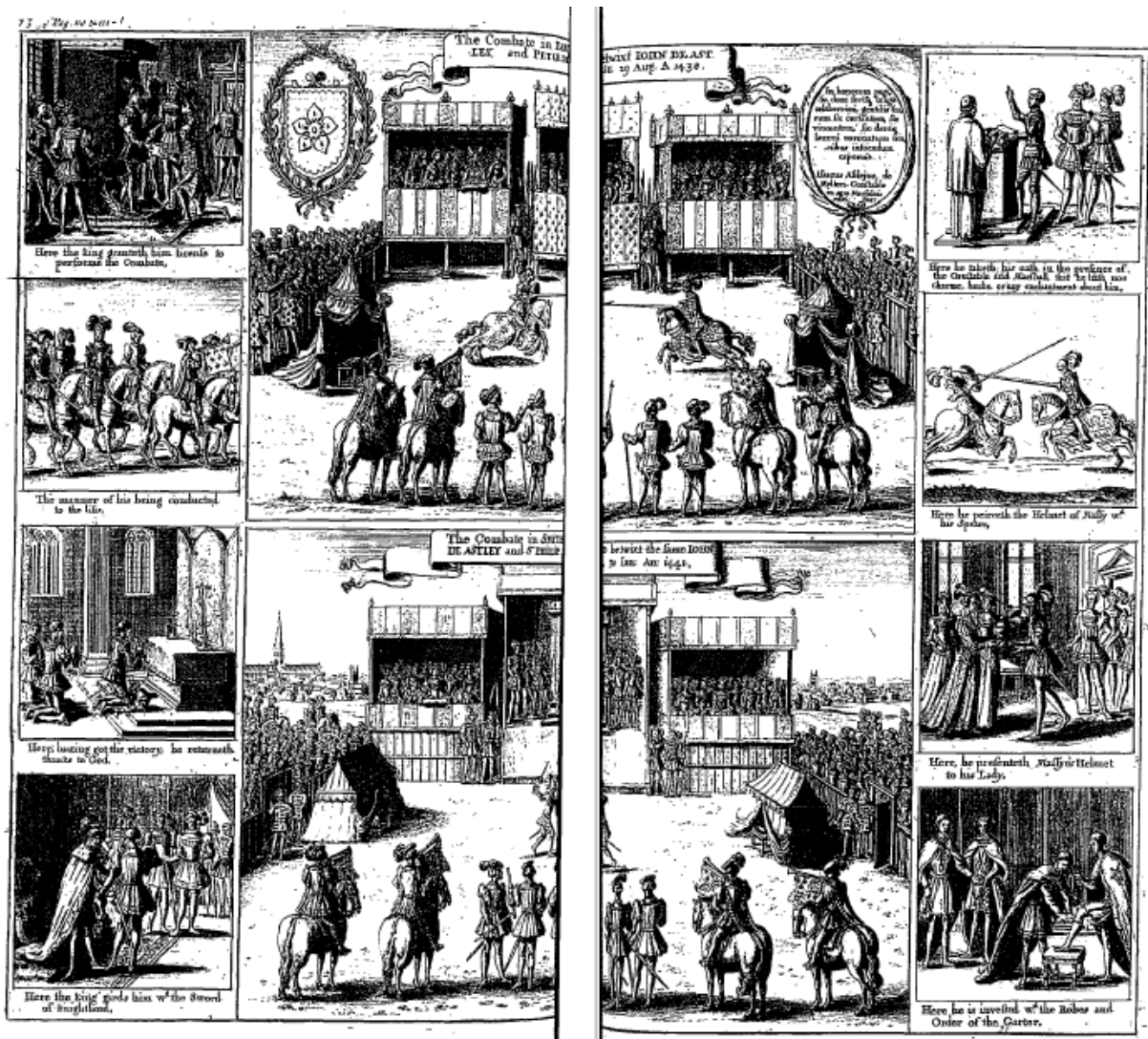
According to Hanmer, the frontispiece would be a "valued curiosity" to his contemporary reader, since it would provide them with a visual representation of "the ancient ceremony of combat". The print in Dugdale's book portrays different events: a combat in Paris in August 1438, fought by two knights in armour on horses, holding lances; a combat in Smithfield in January 1441, where the two contenders fight each other with swords on foot; and a sequence of individual smaller tableaux on the left and right sides depicting the traditional procedure: the king grants the knight license to perform the combat, the knight takes the oath in the presence of the Constable and the Marshal, swearing that he has no charm or enchantment upon him, he is then conducted to the lists, where he pierces the other combatant's helmet with the spear, he thanks God for his victory, he presents the adversary's helmet to his lady,

²⁸ Marcia Allentuck describes the instructions written by Hanmer and copied by Charles Roger (currently part of the Cottonian Collection in Plymouth) in her article "Sir Thomas Hanmer Instructs Francis Hayman: An Editor's Notes to his Illustrator (1744)", published in the *Shakespeare Quarterly* in 1976.

the king girds him with the sword of knighthood, and, finally, the knight is invested with the robes and Order of the Garter in the last tableau (See figure 13).²⁹

Figura 13 - Print showing a medieval tournament in William Dugdale's *The Antiquities of Warwickshire Illustrated* (1730)

Hayman reinterprets the print from Dugdale's book, adapting the illustration of the combat in Paris, which is the scene in the top part of the central piece. Bolingbroke and Mowbray are both clad in armour, each riding a horse and holding a lance. The king takes the central position, sitting on his throne in the royal platform (See figure 14)³⁰. In the lower foreground, two horsed heralds with trumpets stand on



²⁹ Dugdale, William. *The antiquities of Warwickshire illustrated; From Records, Manuscripts, Charters, Evidences, Tombes, and Armes: Beautified with maps, prospects, and portraictures*. By Sir William Dugdale. Vol. 1, printed for John Osborn and Thomas Longman, 1730. Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

³⁰ Sillars, Stuart. *The Illustrated Shakespeare, 1709-1875*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, page 98.

each side, accompanied by other lords. Hayman's illustration captures the moment when the king is dropping his ward-staff, causing the spectators on the platform to look puzzled with the interruption. Sillars points out that Hayman's version shifts "the image from one of ceremonial to one of dramatic engagement" (97). Although Dugdale's print indicates movement, especially in the middle with the two knights on horseback, the ensemble is quite static. Conversely, Hayman's adaptation is not a fixed tableau to explain the etiquette of a ceremony; rather, it portrays the moment of one specific dramatic action, the drop of the warder, with focus on the king, who takes the centre of the image. Hayman's other engravings for Hanmer's edition were generally directed at depicting individual characters and dramatic movement. However, the illustration for *Richard II* exhibits an unprecedented attention to setting. Different from Gravelot's emphasis on violence, Hayman's reconstruction of the Middle Ages is centred on knightly pageantry, offering a more idealised image of the medieval past.

Figura 14 - Frontispiece to *Richard II* in Hayman's 1744 edition



39 Francis Hayman, engraved by Hubert Gravelot: Frontispiece to *Richard II*. Page size 29 × 20 (11½ × 8).

Hanmer's instructions to Hayman for the frontispiece of *Richard II* confirm an awareness of the historical moment depicted in Shakespeare's play. According to Sillars, "it is probably the earliest example of such an extreme concern with historical accuracy, and certainly the first image that expresses it by imitating an engraving from the period it intends to establish" (97), even though that image is itself an eighteenth-century construction. Hanmer's *Richard II* proposes a mixture of concern for historical authenticity with description of action, movement and character. Furthermore, it is a moment in the play that incites emotion, emphasised by the puzzled faces of the spectators at Coventry. This combination is what incites sympathy in the reader, who can recognise the emotional reaction framed in the illustration.

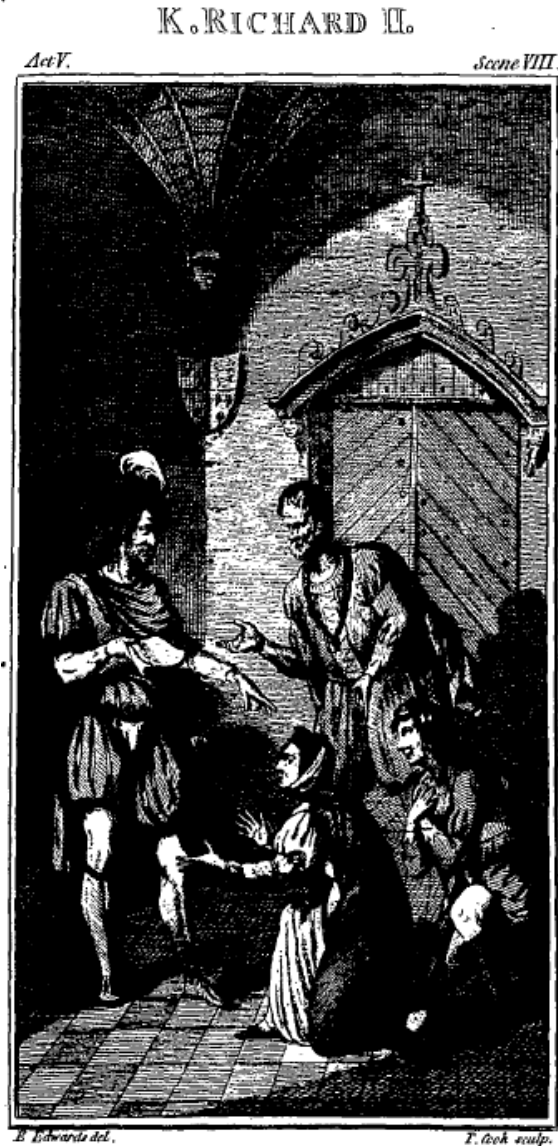
As the second half of the eighteenth century unfolded, the publisher John Bell (1745-1831) commissioned new illustrations for Shakespeare's plays. He was in charge of publishing an "Acting" edition of Shakespeare's works, based on the promptbooks used at Drury Lane and Covent Garden. *Bell's Edition of Shakespeare* consists of the twenty-four plays that were part of the theatres' repertoire at the time, and included frontispieces, illustrated scenes and characters, and portraits of actors. It was published by subscription in 1774, followed by a 'continuance' in the following year with the remaining plays and poems in the Shakespearean canon (Sillars 113–14). The weekly edition cost 6d each, making it affordable to a good parcel of the population and greatly contributing to the visual understanding of the plays. Furthermore, the illustrated scenes and portraits were also sold separately, which gave the purchaser the opportunity to keep a visual record of the play without textual interference. An edition with only the engravings of the actors was published in 1776, which suggests that these images were commercially appealing. It could also indicate that theatregoers kept these illustrations of actors as fans collect celebrity photographs nowadays, or even as souvenirs of a particular play.

Bell's edition of *Richard II* brings two engravings, designed by Edward Edwards (1738-1806). Edwards' designs usually depict two or three figures in a naturalistic setting during one specific moment of the play, normally moments of intimacy and not pageantry, partly due to the small-scale nature of the format. Edwards chose to portray Act V, Scene III (although the plate refers to a non-existent 'Scene VIII') (See figure 15).³¹ It is the scene in which the Duchess of York asks the newly kinged Bolingbroke forgiveness for her son, Aumerle, who had conspired in favour of Richard. Bolingbroke's line is transcribed on the engraving: "I pardon him, as God shall pardon me" (5.3.130). The illustration shows Bolingbroke holding Aumerle's treacherous papers and pointing at the boy, who kneels next to his mother, the Duchess. The Duke of York is standing and looks at the new king as he forgives Aumerle. This is an interesting choice, since it is one that is commonly deleted from productions for the sake of time limitations. However, the single line accompanying the image is significant: Bolingbroke forgives the 'wrongs' of Aumerle in the hopes that God would forgive his own crimes. Edwards highlights that Bolingbroke's choice for forgiveness is not selfless, but a way to secure his own

³¹ Shakespeare, William. *Bell's edition of Shakespeare's plays, as they are now performed at the Theatres Royal in London*. Printed for John Bell, 1773-76. Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

absolution. In this manner, Bolingbroke's character is depicted as dubious: aware of his own crime, but only repentant for fear of God's punishment.

Figura 15 - Edward's engraving for Richard II in Bell's "Acting edition" of 1774



Y pardon him, as Heaven shall pardon me.

Published according to Act of Parliament Oct^r 1774.

Edwards' depiction of the past combines the setting of a medieval castle, with ogival arches, a heraldic shield decorating the wall, and a cross over the main door – a reference to the Middle Ages Catholic past, although the characters' clothing have

a Renaissance style. Bolingbroke, for instance, wears a hat with a feather, a shirt with bulgy sleeves and a trunk hose. The characters are thus depicted in the fashion of the playwright's time, associating them with Shakespeare's creations. On the other hand, the reconstruction of the medieval setting indicates a higher concern with historical accuracy, raising awareness to the historical Bolingbroke's own lifetime.

Figura 16 - Francis Aickin as Henry IV in Bell's "Acting edition" of 1774



Bell's 1774 edition also includes a portrait of Francis Aickin (?-1805) in the character of Bolingbroke (See figure 16).³² According to Kalman Burnim and Philip

³² Shakespeare, William. *Bell's edition of Shakespeare's plays, as they are now performed at the Theatres Royal in London*. Printed for John Bell, 1773-76. Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

Highfill Jr., Aickin never played the role of Bolingbroke, as *Richard II* was not performed during the time the Irish actor remained in London (1765-1792). However, he played the role of Henry IV in the two parts of the eponymous play (Burnim and Highfill Jr. 39). The engraving is thus a depiction of Aickin as he would have played Henry Bolingbroke in *Richard II*, based on his other performances. It portrays a Bolingbroke in an eighteenth-century wig tied back in a ponytail, knee breeches, long waistcoat, a shirt with frills, and holding a hat with an upturned brim, decorated with a feather. This is very likely how the character would have been seen on an eighteenth-century stage. Interestingly, Aickin's Bolingbroke starkly differs from Edwards' conception of the king, as seen above. Moreover, the portrait of the actor in costume has no resemblance at all to the medieval Henry IV. There were historical sources available at the time which could assist in a more plausible reconstruction of the appearance of Henry Bolingbroke, such as the 1618 engraving, now part of the National Portrait Gallery collection.³³ Alternatively, the engraving in Bell's edition shows an adaptation of the character to his readers' contemporary fashion. The line transcribed on the print reads: "Go some of you, convey him to the Tower" (4.1.315). It is the confirmation of Henry's victory over Richard, who, deprived of his crown, must be conveyed to the Tower, where he dies. The accompanying quote advances a perception of Bolingbroke as the victor over the defeated Richard.

Bell published another edition of Shakespeare's works in 1788 with added commentaries. It was a more scholarly edition, and that is why it is commonly referred to as the "Literary" edition, in contrast with the "Acting" one mentioned above. As Sillars explains, each play in this edition had at least two images: a 'Vignette' and a character portrayal (129). The vignette for *Richard II*, designed by Edward Burney (1760-1848), depicts another instance from Act V, Scene III (the same scene chosen for Bell's Acting edition): the moment that Aumerle kneels before the new king (See figure 17).³⁴ The image is framed within a circle, and below the quote from the play reads: "Forever may my knees grow to the earth" (5.3.29). This is a moment of Aumerle's complete submission to the new king. Both of Bell's editions

³³ *King Henry IV*, probably by Renold or Reginold Elstrack (Elstracke), line engraving, 1618, 6 7/8 in. x 4 3/4 in. (176 mm x 121 mm) paper size, 1931. Reference Collection: NPG D2373.

³⁴ Shakespeare, William. *The Dramatick Writings of Will. Shakspeare,; With the Notes of All the Various Commentators; Printed Complete From the Best Editions of Sam. Johnson And Geo. Steevens*. London: Printed for, and under the direction of, John Bell, 1788.

convey an image of Bolingbroke as the victor, of a superior (although of a dubious character) being, inspiring submission.

Figura 17 - Engraving for Richard II in Bell's "Literary edition" of 1788



The two characters are apparelled in an overall imagined version of Renaissance style. Henry does not wear a crown, but a hat decorated with feathers – similar to the one Aickin wore for the part. The expression on the new king's face is different from how Edwards had depicted him. Burney gives an air of compassion and candour to the new king. However, above the framed image there is a symbol: a dagger stuck on a piece of paper, probably the proof of Aumerle's treason. On one side of the dagger there is the head-side of a snake, agonizing in pain, a possible reference to the fact that Bolingbroke achieved his victory by means of treachery. The middle of the snake's body seems to be pierced by the dagger as well, and, on the other side, the tail of the snake comes out of a Medusa-like head. The image represents renewal and rebirth. Just as the snake disposes of its old skin in order for new skin to grow, the old king Richard had to be disposed, so a new monarchy could arise, personified by Henry Bolingbroke. Although the new king is depicted in a positive light in the drawing within the circle, the symbol of the agonising snake above sheds light on Bolingbroke's deceitful way of conquering the crown, exposing the artifice in Bolingbroke's demeanour. There is a noteworthy contrast between a romanticised illustration of authority and loyalty, and the grotesque depiction of renewal through betrayal and death.

The second illustration of Bell's 1788 edition for *Richard II* portrays the actress Elizabeth Farren (1759-1829) as the Queen (See figure 18).³⁵ She is alone in the garden, one hand holding a white handkerchief and the other pointing at the plants. The queen's contemplative expression suggests that she is reflecting on her separation from her husband. She also melancholically meditates on the state of England, after her conversation with the gardener, comparing the kingdom to the garden where she stands. The actress wears a mantua with a low-cut square neckline, trimmed with lace to cover her bust, and a veil covers part of her hair. This 1788 edition thus reinforces the eighteenth-century clothing style for the illustrations, already present in Bell's "Acting" edition. However, different from Aickin's artificial posing, Farren is depicted in a moment of intimate meditation. Although the actress embodies the queen, and the setting frames her melancholy, the character is the

³⁵ Shakespeare, William. *The Dramatick Writings of Will. Shakspeare,; With the Notes of All the Various Commentators; Printed Complete From the Best Editions of Sam. Johnson And Geo. Steevens*. London: Printed for, and under the direction of, John Bell, 1788.

focus of the illustration. It is the queen's deliberation on her uncertain future that raises the sympathy from the viewer, who is invited to share the queen's plight.

Figura 18 - Engraving for Richard II in Bell's "Literary edition" of 1788

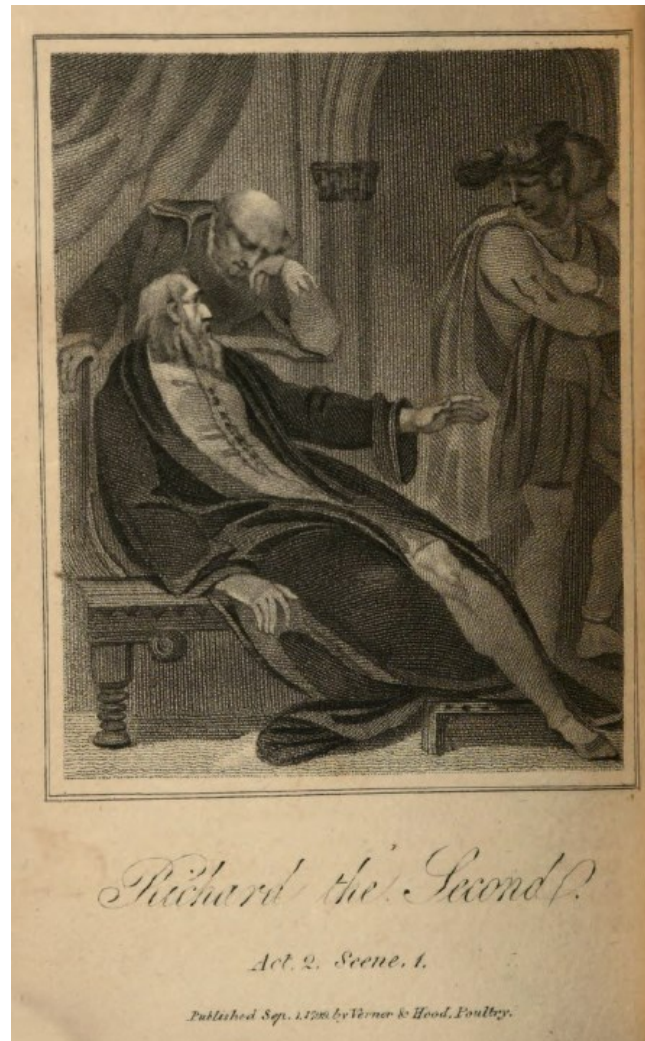


At the turn of the century, the engraver and publisher Edward Harding (1755-1840), also librarian to Queen Charlotte, offered a new approach to Shakespearean illustration. His edition was comprised of thirty-eight parts, sold at 2s each, published between 1798 and 1800, and later in duodecimo volumes (Sillars 149). Each play's

title-page includes the note ‘Ornamented with Plates’ in a black-Gothic font, establishing a connection with the Gothic tradition in literature at its heyday in the 1790s. Sillars sees the characters depicted by the engraver William Nelson Gardiner (1766-1814) as grotesque, “hampered by weak design and poor reproductive technique” (151). Harding’s *Richard II* was released in 1799 in the fifth volume, which also contained *Macbeth* and *King John*, therefore following a different sequence than the *Folio*. The first illustration is inserted in-between the end of the first act and the beginning of the second act (See figure 19)³⁶. It refers to Act II, Scene 1, in which the dying Gaunt gives his nephew his final warning, nostalgically evoking the England from the past. Old Gaunt reclines languidly on an armchair, and a figure stands behind him, most likely York, leaning his elbow on the upholstery of Gaunt’s chair. The figure on the right, partially concealed by shadows, is the king. He glances at his dying uncle, but his body is turned away. He is dressed in tight hose, short breeches, a doublet, cape and a hat, which gives him an overall Renaissance style. Behind the figures it is possible to notice one of the two columns that hold an arch, setting the scene within a castle. However, the setting works as mere backdrop for the illustration of the characters as individuals. Despite Richard’s central prominence in the play, he is the most obscure figure in this image. The focus is on dying Gaunt, the father of Bolingbroke. In contrast, Richard is depicted in a childish and stubborn posture, disregarding his uncle’s suffering. Given this image, the viewer most likely turns his compassion towards Gaunt – and, consequently, Bolingbroke – and away from the king.

³⁶ Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616. *The Plays of William Shakspeare*. Harding's edition. London, E. Harding, 1798-99.

Figura 19 - Engraving for Richard II in Harding's 1798-1800 edition

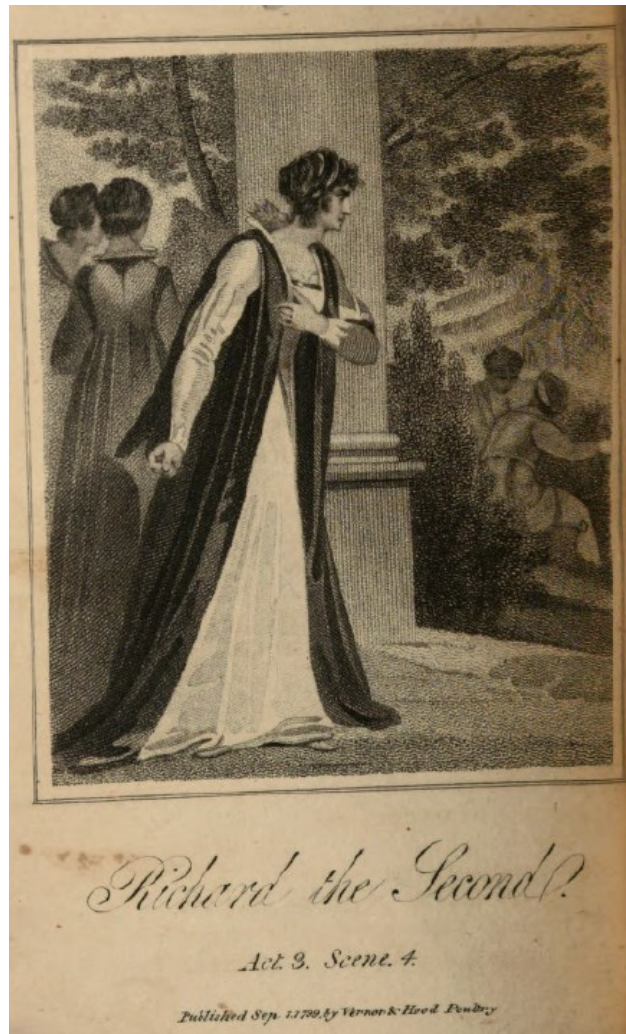


The second illustration is interleaved within Act III, Scene 4. It portrays the queen, accompanied by ladies in waiting, listening to the gardeners' conversation (See figure 20).³⁷ Different from the eighteenth-century-style queen from Bell's edition, Harding's queen wears clothes that are associated with a medieval tradition: a floor-length tunic with a high collar at the back, covered with a cape with loose sleeves, pointy shoes, and her hair is fastened in a coronet braid. She stands in front of a thick pillar, looking at the blurred gardeners in the back. The queen and her reaction to the gardeners' conversation are the focus of this image. Her face is the only one visible to the viewer, and it demonstrates a fierce expression. While Burney's queen displays a calm inner meditation, Gardiner's is in a tense position,

³⁷ Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616. *The Plays of William Shakspeare*. Harding's edition. London, E. Harding, 1798-99.

attentive, perhaps thinking of a way to help her husband. The former combines a passive romantic femininity with an eighteenth-century style, whereas the latter emphasises the medieval context and female agency.

Figura 20 - Engraving for Richard II in Harding's 1798-1800 edition

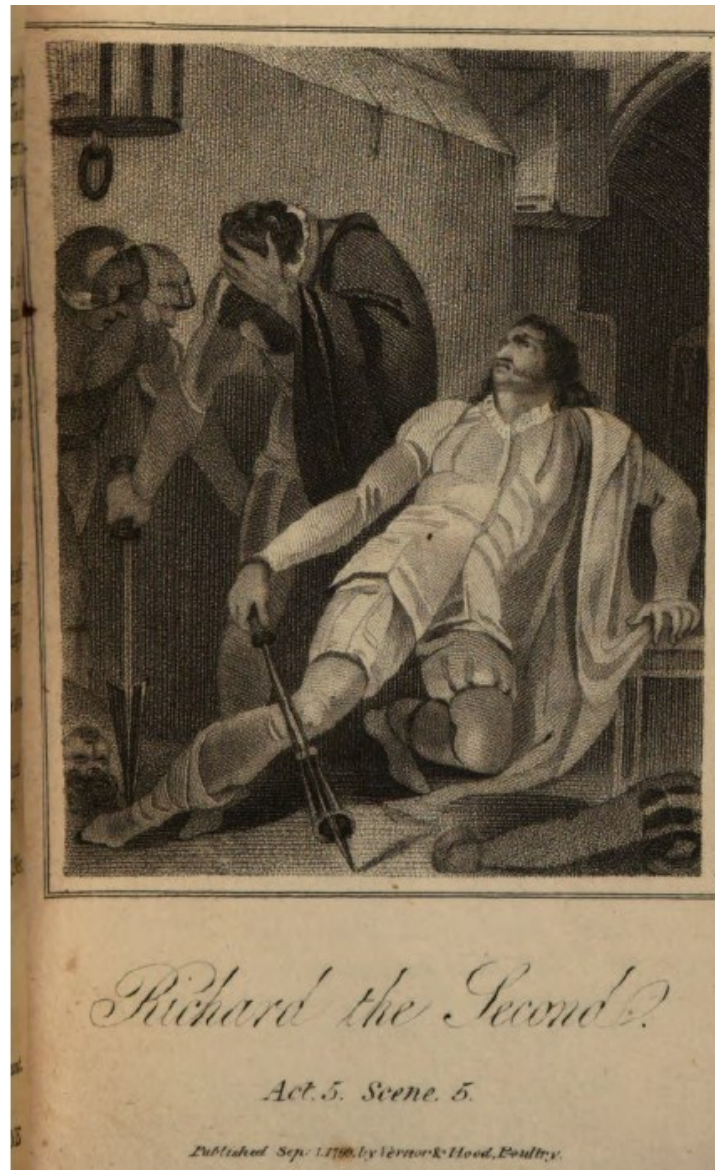


Finally, the third illustration by Gardiner depicts the death of the king, inserted at the end of Act V, Scene V (See figure 21).³⁸ Richard agonises in pain, leaning on a stool as if falling to the ground. He wears white, while his assaulters, concealed in the background, wear dark clothes. One man with the spear that fatally wounded the king has his head down, as if in regret, his left hand hides his face. Richard is featured with loose long hair and a beard, and the small dark wound on his body contrasts

³⁸ Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616. *The Plays of William Shakspeare*. Harding's edition. London, E. Harding, 1798-99.

with the lightness of his clothes. The scene conveys a tragic feeling of irreversibility and regret. This is the first occasion since Boitard's 1709 engraving in which the king's death is portrayed. Unlike Boitard, however, Gardiner does not focus on the brutality of the attack, but rather on the poignancy of Richard's death – a moment of sentiment and sensibility. The Richard from the third illustration awakens in the viewer a completely different feeling from the first illustration, in which the king shuns from Gaunt's agony. Now it is himself who is in agony, exposing his human mortality, symbolised by the dark stain on his clothes. Boitard's engraving illustrates the dissolution of the monarch's 'body natural' as it succumbs to death. Although arguably lacking in technique, the depiction of Richard's almost lifeless face and the intense suffering from the killer hiding his face creates an image infused with the consequences of betrayal, reallocating the viewer's sympathies towards Richard as the play draws to an end. As we have seen, Tonson and Bell's editions favoured images of Bolingbroke, even though he can be considered the antagonist of the play, since the text is, of course, named after Richard. Hanmer, in his turn, manifested a keener interest in historical authenticity, emphasising the setting in the medieval combat. But, he also favoured the Duke of Hereford, choosing to depict a moment of Richard's fickleness contrasted with Bolingbroke's knightly aura of honour. It is only with Harding, in the very beginning of the nineteenth century, that the king receives more attention.

Figura 21 - Engraving for Richard II in Harding's 1798-1800 edition



4.1.2 The Boydell Shakespeare Gallery and the National Project of Historical Painting

Another late-eighteenth-century project to materialise Shakespeare's characters, and which is worth examining as it paved the way for understanding Shakespeare visually at the turn of the century, was the iconic Boydell Shakespeare Gallery, which opened in 1789 at the Pall Mall. It initially exhibited 34 paintings of

Shakespeare's works, and more were added each spring, resulting in a total of 167 canvases by 33 artists (Altick 43). The paintings were later adapted into engravings that composed two edited volumes with a hundred prints each. A new edition of the plays was especially commissioned to accompany the engravings. According to Sillars, the serial parts began to be advertised in 1791, but the engravings began to appear in print only in 1794. The whole Collection of Prints was published in its complete form in 1802 (181).

Sillars writes about the significance of Boydell's large-scale project in establishing a connection between Shakespeare and the Picturesque. There was an increasing focus on the portrayal of emotions, in keeping with the aesthetics of the time. In the 1789 Preface to *The Pictures in the Shakespeare Gallery Pall-Mall*, a description of the paintings to be displayed at the exhibit, Boydell writes that "to advance that art [of historical painting] towards maturity, and establish an English School of Historical Painting, was the great object of the present design" (iii), associating Shakespeare's name with the tradition of painting scenes of history on canvas. Furthermore, Boydell wanted to foster the contribution of English artists to the engraving business, until then dominated by France. He claims that the best English painters had been formerly engaged in "painting Portraits of those who, in less than half a century, will be lost in oblivion" (v). Therefore, Boydell committed to employing those he considered to be the best English artists of his age to contribute to the dissemination of historical painting in the country. He believed it to be "an undertaking where the national honour, the advancement of the Arts, and their [the artists'] own advantage, are equally concerned" (Boydell vi). It was thus a national project to promote England in the European artistic sphere. It is no wonder that the subject matter chosen for such a project was the work of the national poet, although Boydell admits that "it must not, then, be expected, that the art of the Painter can ever equal the sublimity of our Poet" (vi). Boydell's approach to the Shakespearean text parallels Hazlitt's: they both believed that neither performance nor visual representation of Shakespeare could parallel the 'sublimity' of the poet's language – this could only be fully appreciated with our mind's eyes.

Figura 22 - A printed reproduction of Brown's painting of the deposition scene in *Richard II* for the Boydell Gallery



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The second canvas was painted by James Northcote (1746-1831), and refers to Act V, Scene 2, the moment in which the Duke of York describes to the Duchess Richard and Bolingbroke's entrance in London (See figure 23).⁴¹ In the Shakespearean text, the Duke recounts what he saw, but Northcote recreates the entrance of the new and former kings: Bolingbroke "mounted upon a hot and fiery steed", wearing armour and received with flowers by the infatuated ladies on the right side of the image; and Richard, "his face still combating with tears and smiles, the badges of his grief and patience" (Shakespeare 5.2.32-33), looking down and avoiding people's eyes, riding a brown horse scared by a dog, and shunned by the men on the left side of the picture. The painting represents the public approbation of Bolingbroke as the new king and their satisfaction with Richard's fall. Rosie Dias explains that, although historical painting was still dependent on objectivity and authenticity, Northcote's aesthetics allowed a fusion with imaginative literature,

creating “a vivid and affecting narrative which speaks to the heart” (123–24). Historical painting should not be exclusively political or didactic, but should convey emotions, “speak[ing] to the heart as well as the eye” (Dias 124). In this way, Northcote’s approach to art parallels Hazlitt’s and Keats’s ideas against the didacticism of art, and in favour of an artistic experience that moves the reader, observer or spectator.



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Figura 23 A reproduction of Northcote’s painting of Richard and Bolingbroke’s entrance in London for the Boydell Gallery

Hazlitt recorded some of his conversations with the artist Northcote, over 80 years old at the time, published in *Conversations of James Northcote* (1830). In one of these talks, the two discuss the painting of portraits and history. Northcote affirmed that there is one thing that connects the two art genres: conveying expression. Hazlitt

transcribes Northcote's thoughts: "The great point is to catch the prevailing look and character: if you are a master of this, you can make almost what use of it you please. If a portrait has force, it will do for history; and if history is well painted, it will do for portrait" (Hazlitt and Northcote 18). What was important for Northcote was to capture the character's expression while engaged in action. However, that is not an easy task, since "it is not enough that it [the action] is seen, unless it is at the same time *felt*" (Hazlitt and Northcote 19). Northcote argued that there is no story without expression. Hazlitt then connects the task of the artist in conveying feeling through expression with the role of the actor, making a distinction between good and bad acting: "That is, between face-making or mouthing and genuine passion? To give the last, an actor must possess the highest truth of imagination, and must undergo an entire revolution of feeling" (20–21). Natural sensibility was required from the artist, such as Northcote, to paint the instances of emotion on canvas, and from the actor, such as Edmund Kean, to embody feelings on stage.

Dias associates Northcote's preoccupation with the feelings excited by the paintings with the 'picturesque', a culture of sensibility and passion. She identifies the painter's predilection for English history paintings, especially from the fifteenth century, as offering picturesque opportunities: "for Northcote, the 'picturesque' qualities of the era do not merely reside in the profusion of armoury and horses it allows the artist to deploy but, rather, in the numerous 'tragic' and 'sad' episodes it encompasses" (Dias 124). It is the feeling evoked by the events in the play that fascinated the artist. Conversing with Hazlitt, Northcote said that the art of the painter "depends on seizing the nicest inflections of feeling and the most evanescent shades of beauty" (Hazlitt and Northcote 163), emphasising the connection between art and emotion. The medieval past is thus recreated not merely as a background for historical action but mainly as a means to convey emotion. Brown chose to depict the tragic scene of a king's de-coronation while Northcote painted the sad entrance of the vanquished Richard next to the winning opponent, both instances of intense pathos in the Shakespearean play, highlighted by the profusion of details and facial expression on the canvases.

4.1.3 1805-1815

After the success of the Boydell Gallery, Henry Fuseli (1741-1825), another painter employed in Boydell's project, was engaged by the publisher Alexander Chalmers to illustrate a new edition of Shakespeare's works in ten volumes, launched in 1805. According to Sillars, "Fuseli turned to advantage the unusually elongated format of the edition by adapting the mannerist emphases of his figure painting and exploiting the space to produce a series of situations of conflict, enclosure or concentration" (157). After painting in large scale for the Gallery, working with a limited space to fit the paper could be challenging for the artist. However, he took advantage of the minute space by concentrating on detailed parts instead of offering a general depiction of the whole. For *Richard II*, Fuseli chose to

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Richard in prison at Pomfret Castle, with his thoughts (See figure 24).³⁹ This scene had been illustrated before, with different points of attention: Boitard's 1709 engraving shows the assault on Richard, and Gardiner at end of the century portrayed the king's death. Fuseli, however, a moment of intimate reflection of deposed king, on his own, and waiting for his fate to be decided by

Figura 24 - Engraving for *Richard* Chalmers' 1805 edition

// in

³⁹ Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616, Henry Fuseli, and George Steevens. *The Plays of William Shakespeare: Accurately Printed From the Text of the Corrected Copy Left by George Steevens: With a Series of Engravings, From Original Designs of Henry Fuseli, And a Selection of Explanatory And Historical Notes*. London: Printed for F.C. and J. Rivington [etc.], 1805.

The print refers to a non-existent Scene 5 of Act IV; it is, in fact, Scene 5 of Act V. The words from Shakespeare's text that accompany the image are the following: "I wasted time and now doth time waste me. For now hath time made me his numbering clock" (5.5.48-49). Richard is depicted in a thoughtful position, in front of an open book, sitting on a chair with crossed legs, the left elbow touching his knee, and the left hand holding his chin. The hat with a decorative feather gives him a noble look, emphasised by the cape that hangs from his shoulders onto his knees. In a way, Fuseli makes Richard a proto-Hamlet. He looks at a clock, managed by an angel of death, who has control of one of the clock pointers. The skulled angel stares back at Richard, who, the reader knows, is at this moment thinking about how he no longer has control of his life time. The death creature seems to be on the verge of changing the time on Richard's clock, foreshadowing his death in the same scene. Through the barred window, it is possible to see the face of a man in helmet, who looks inside to check on the prisoner. It is most likely Sir Exton who arrives to commit

the murder, stopping Richard's clock forever. The way Fuseli has captured the puissance of this moment in this compressed frame is remarkable. The posture of King Richard resembles more a philosopher in contemplation than a medieval English monarch – perhaps a way to highlight the tragedy of Richard's journey. Nonetheless, it confers a different approach to the character of Richard, depicting the inevitability of his fate, re-evaluating his role as a villain. Fuseli takes to another level the attention to Richard's tragic suffering initiated by Gardiner.

Thomas Tegg's (1776-1845) *The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare*, published in twelve volumes from 1812 to 1815, was the last project to contribute to the visual imagination of Shakespeare's characters before Edmund Kean's premiere in 1815. *Richard II* features in the sixth volume, along with parts 1 and 2 of *Henry IV*, published in 1813. It was therefore available for Kean's theatrical conceptualisation of the play.

Richard II opens the volume with two illustrations, designed by John Thurston (1774-1822) and engraved by Richard Rhodes (1766-1838). The first is a vignette for the play, showing Bolingbroke clad in armour being led to exile by his old father (See figure 25).⁴⁰ Gaunt leans on his son and holds his right hand, demonstrating suffering, while Bolingbroke looks down. The latter's armour is covered by a surcoat, which emphasises his nobility. In addition, he wears a helmet adorned with a feather, and carries a lance. They are both followed by a guard, who looks away, as if concerned with the suffering he is witnessing. The vignette is accompanied by a quote from Act I, Scene 3: "Go. Say I sent thee forth to purchase honour. And not the king exil'd thee" (1.3.281-282). It is Gaunt's solace to Bolingbroke, telling him to look at banishment not as an order from the king, but as a way to seek adventure and honour. The connection between Bolingbroke and the medieval knight's code of honour is clear in this depiction. Furthermore, Gaunt's suffering emphasises the king's injustice in sentencing Bolingbroke. The reader would recognise such feelings, identifying with Henry's plea against Richard. It is thus a shift from Gardiner's second engraving and Fuseli's illustration, who had re-evaluated Richard's role as the villain. The medieval imagery is emphasised by Bolingbroke's armoury, whose obedience to royal authority and fortitude to accept his sentence of exile romanticises the figure of the medieval knight.

⁴⁰ Thurston, John, 1774-1822, and Richard Rhodes. *Illustratio[ns] of Shakspeare*. [London,: T. Tegg, printed by Dixon & co., 1812-1817.

Figura 25 - Title-page of *Richard II* in Tegg's 1812-1815 edition

The other of the volume's title-page has a Gothic illustration depicting the queen, wearing a long gown, a cape, a crown she approaches the is tending a tree (See atmosphere is vegetation is on the the characters in image is full of anticipates the fall of

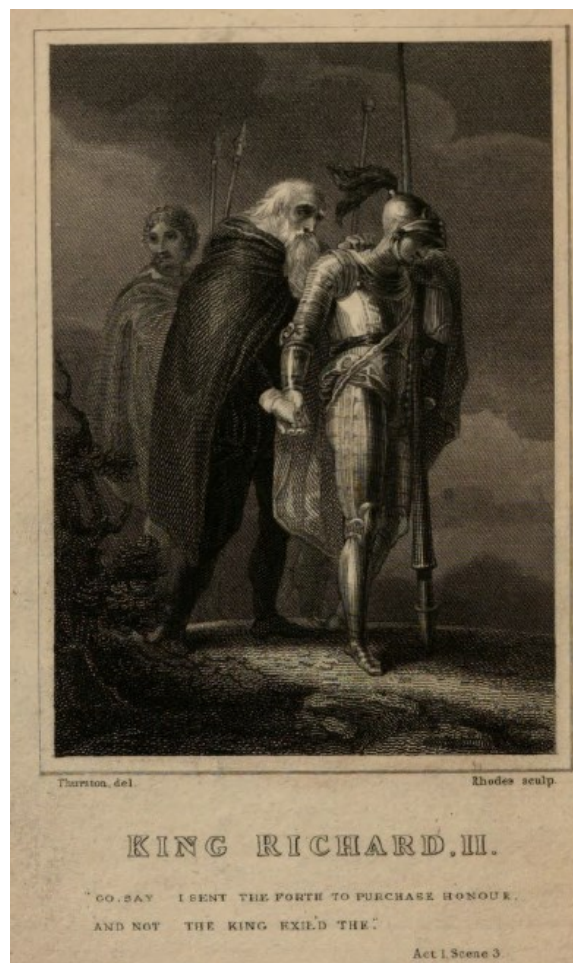
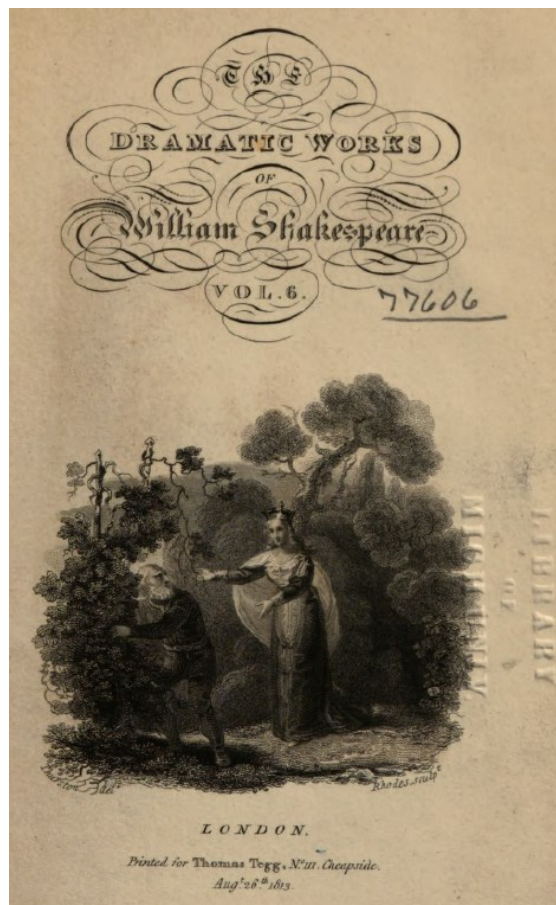


illustration is part page. The image atmosphere, wearing a long and loose hair, as old gardener, who figure 26).⁴¹ The sombre, and the verge of engulfing darkness. The foreboding as it Richard, foretold

⁴¹ Thurston, John, 1774-1822, and Richard Rhodes. *Illustratio[ns] of Shakspeare*. [London,,: T. Tegg, printed by Dixon & co., 1812-1817.

by the gardener. It poses a stark contrast to Gravelot's depiction of the garden scene in Theobald's edition from over a century before. Gravelot's portrayal of the young gardener in the shadows and the dark tree branches on the right side of the image convey an ominous feeling. However, the unaffected manner of the queen and her ladies dressed in rococo style clothes conveys a lightness to the ensemble. Thurston's, on the other hand, enhances the darkness of the vegetation, ages the gardener, who looks even scared of the queen's approach, and frames the image within a circular shape, conferring an oppressive feeling to the reader.

Figura 26 - Title-page of Tegg's 1812-1815 edition



Thurston adds a tone to Shakespeare's reminiscent of the present in late-eighteenth-

fiction. This literary genre medieval past as a way to prompt emotions, mainly that of fear, mystery and terror. Chandler refers to Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) as an example of the

Gothic sombre garden scene, symbolism century Gothic reimagined the

use of medieval imagery to explore “the irrational terrors of the mind” (21). The aforementioned Catherine Morland, Austen’s protagonist in *Northanger Abbey* and a reader of Radcliffe’s novel, exemplifies such irrational terrors of the mind with her fanciful fears concerning the death of Mr. Tilney’s wife. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the heroine Emily leaves the banks of the Garonne for an ancient Italian castle, where her perception of the medieval surroundings mirrors her state of apprehension. The ruins, the castle tower and the oldness of the Alps intensify her fearful meditations. Radcliffe’s fiction thus evokes the Middle Ages not in an attempt to reconstruct the historical past, but as a locus that stimulates feeling. The connection of the medieval past with the enhancement of feeling resides at the core of medievalism at the turn of the eighteenth century. This medieval ideal affects the way with which Shakespeare’s medieval Richard II was visualised at the time – on print and on stage, as has been demonstrated by the example of Tegg’s edition above, and as I will argue in Chapter 5 in relation to Edmund Kean’s production of the play at Drury Lane in 1815.

4.1.4 1838-1857

After Thurston’s illustrations for Tegg’s *The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare*, the early Victorian period added new interpretative layers to the materialisation of Shakespeare’s characters and medieval past in print. The examples in the previous section indicate that the past and its exoticness stimulate an emotional reaction from the observer. As the nineteenth century unfolded, the attention shifted from stimulating feelings towards a stronger didactic preoccupation with the role of art as instruction. According to Stuart Sillars, there were two main illustrated editions of Shakespeare in the early-Victorian period prior to William Charles Macready’s production of *Richard II* at Haymarket Theatre in 1850, and Charles Kean’s at the Princess’s Theatre in 1857. The first one was by Charles Knight (1791-1873), followed by Barry Cornwall⁴² (1787-1874). These two works were thus available material for Macready and Kean in their visual reinterpretation of Shakespeare’s *Richard II*.

⁴² The pseudonym of the poet Bryan Waller Procter, who had written one of Edmund Kean’s first biographies, *The Life of Edmund Kean* (1835).

Knight's and Cornwall's editions were both published in a serialised manner, and later collected in an individual edition. Sillars draws attention to the cheapness of the serialised editions of the plays, which could imply that their target audience were not experienced readers or frequent spectators of Shakespeare, but rather an audience approaching it for the first time (253). In this way, the illustrations in these editions had an essential role in shaping the readers' experience and mental visualisation of the plays and its characters. According to Sillars, the various (illustrated and not-illustrated) Victorian editions of Shakespeare had specific aims that varied from a concern with the moral and religious education of its readers to offering a literary entertainment as an alternative for drinking and other types of 'vulgar' diversion. The idea of literature and art as a means to educate oneself reflected "the Victorian ethos of social mobility through self-improvement" (Sillars 254). What Shakespeare's history plays could offer the Victorian reader or theatregoer was the possibility not only to learn about their nation's history through page or stage, but also to foster an awareness of their own communal past.

Knight's *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspeare* [sic], also commonly known as the *Pictorial Shakespeare*, was published in fifty-six monthly instalments from 1838 to 1843. It was later published in seven volumes with a supplementary eighth book on the life of Shakespeare. Knight, a member of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK), had a clear view regarding the objective of his publications. He understood them as a means to circulate useful knowledge to a wider public, where the comprehension of the written text was aided by the addition of illustrations. The *Pictorial Bible* (1836), the *Pictorial History of England* (1837-44) and *London Pictorially Illustrated* (1841-44), for instance, "all display Knight's concern with Christian education coupled with self-advancement" (Sillars 254). For the *Pictorial Shakespeare*, Knight included images and descriptions of the historical context of the events in each play, even in plays set in no specific time, such as the comedies. However, in addition to being simply a tool for the education of history, Knight's images, especially the ones in the frontispieces, also offered an imaginative interpretation of the play in question (Sillars 254), proposing a combination of history and fantasy.

In Knight's autobiography *Passages of a Working Life During Half a Century with a Prelude of Early Reminiscences*, originally published in 1864-5, he reflects on the illustrations for Shakespeare's editions published in the previous century, before

his own project. He had been looking at these artistic materials as inspiration to create his own pictorial edition of Shakespeare since 1837, which gave him a grounded knowledge on the subject. He concludes that “there were embellishments to various editions from the time of Rowe, chiefly of a theatrical character, and, for the most part, thoroughly *unnatural*”⁴³ (*Passages of a Working Life* 283–84). As we have seen, Rowe’s was the first illustrated edition of Shakespeare’s plays in England, with the images designed by the French artist Boitard. They have little concern with historical authenticity and depict the characters in rather static and artificial poses, and Knight perceived the unnaturalness of the ensemble in these early illustrations. Furthermore, Knight was not altogether positive about the Boydell Gallery project and its “grand historical pictures” either: they “were not in a very much higher taste [than Rowe’s], furnishing a remarkable example of how painters of the highest rank in their day had contrived to make the characters of Shakspeare [sic] little more than vehicles for the display of false costume” (*Passages of a Working Life* 284). The fact that the paintings lacked historical plausibility bothered Knight, who wished to represent “the Realities upon which the imagination of the poet must have rested” (Knight, *Passages of a Working Life* 284), placing great emphasis on historical authenticity in his *Pictorial Shakespeare*.

Knight’s aim was to take into account “the localities of the various scenes, whether English or foreign; the portraits of the real personages of the historical plays; the objects of natural history, so constantly occurring; accurate costume in all its rich variety” (Knight, *Passages of a Working Life* 284). Knight recounts how he had borrowed the notebook of the antiquarian Frederick William Fairholt (1814-1866), where its owner had written down a list of archaeological subjects. With the help of this list, Knight got in contact with Ambrose Poynter (1796-1866), one of the founding members of the Institute of British Architects, who provided Knight with “a series of the most beautiful architectural drawings, which imparted a character of truthfulness to many scenes, which upon the stage had in general been merely fanciful creations of the painter” (Knight, *Passages of a Working Life* 284). It is interesting how Knight compares the truthfulness of setting on the illustrated page with the stage, the latter being hitherto the result of an artist’s imagination and less bound to the restrictions of reality. The artist William Harvey (1796-1866) was in charge of producing the

⁴³ My emphasis.

frontispieces, which, “embodying the realities of costume and other accessories [sic], would have enough of an imaginative character to render them pleasing” (Knight, *Passages of a Working Life* 284–85). Knight’s project thus differs from his predecessors in that he makes explicit his concern to offer the reader a truthful representation of reality, especially with the history plays, but without neglecting the reader’s enjoyment.

The plays in Knight’s *Pictorial Shakespeare* are supported by extra material and critical texts, including an ‘Introductory Notice’ with information concerning the time period, setting and costume, a list of characters, and glossarial and textual notes. According to Sillars, “the swerve towards the annotative and explanatory, coupled with the breaking of the play’s continuity, defines the reading experience as more analytic and historicist than empathetic, an approach quite in accord with the objectives of Knight’s other publications” (256). In this manner, the extra scholarly information, placed in-between acts, interrupts the reader’s aesthetic engagement with the text. In fact, it would constantly remind the reader that they are reading an annotated edition of the play, breaking the illusion of immersion within the medieval world of *Richard II*, for instance. This textual interruption would not happen on stage, where the action is not interwoven with historical explanation or critical commentary.

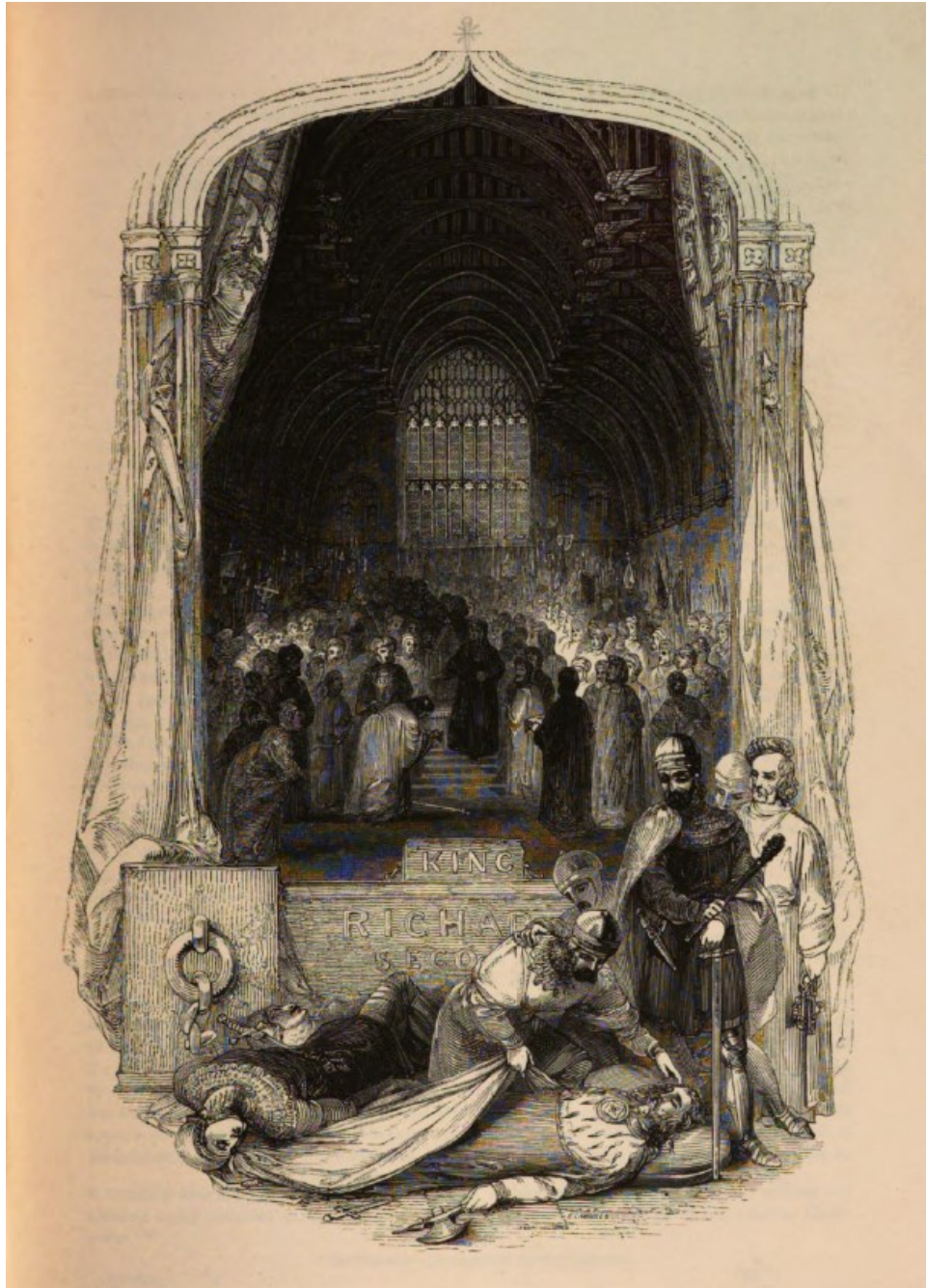
Another consequence of the scholarly material added to Knight’s edition is the inevitable didacticism of the art. As we have seen in the previous chapter, William Hazlitt and John Keats were strong opposers of a didactic and moralising approach to art. Fuseli’s paintings for the Boydell Gallery also exemplify the distaste for exclusively political or didactic art, in favour of an art that would awaken feelings in the beholder. It is evident then that as the nineteenth century unfolds, there is an increasing interest in historical accuracy and a disdain for exaggeration and artificiality in the display of emotions. Nonetheless, the reader’s or playgoer’s aesthetic experience is not fully overlooked, as the extract from Knight’s autobiography mentioned above demonstrates.

The first illustration in Knight’s *Richard II* is placed on the frontispiece, where Sillars identifies the more imaginative visual representation of each play, while the other in-text illustrations have a more practical and didactic function. There are in total thirty-three illustrations decorating and commenting Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, a much more substantial number than in the previous illustrated editions. The frontispiece, designed by Ebenezer Landells (1808-1860), combines two significant

moments in the play (See figure 27)⁴⁴: in the background, there is a depiction of the interior of Westminster Abbey with its Gothic arches and stained glass window, where Richard is seen in a humble position, bowing to Bolingbroke, who stands in front of the throne, and yielding the crown to the usurper. Richard is dressed in simple white clothes, symbolising his role as the sacrificial victim, while Bolingbroke wears dark garments, a possible allusion to the distinction between good and evil. In the forefront, Richard's dead body lies on the ground, dressed in royal clothes. His head rests on a pillow, and one hand still holds an axe, reminiscent of the deadly encounter with Sir Exton. Bolingbroke kneels beside the former king's body, and he is depicted in the act of closing Richard's eyes and covering his body with a blanket. Next to him, a man looks at the scene with disdain, probably Northumberland or even Exton, since the man carries three weapons: a dagger, a sword and a mace. There is a predella with the title of the play *King Richard II*, dividing the two scenes. However, the predella is also part of the scenes, since the characters in the foreground conceal part of the title, interweaving the text on the page with the historical events, emphasising the combination of fact and fiction. Sillars points out that the pairing of these two events in the play represent a moment of duality at the end of the final act, when Bolingbroke regrets his actions at the sight of the brutality of Richard's death: it is "a graphic statement of a moral issue crucial to the play" (Sillars 265). The depiction of Richard as Bolingbroke's victim is emphasised by the above-mentioned opposition between light and dark, and, as Sillars notices, by the dead monarch's appearance – with long hair and beard – that resembles an image of Christ (267). The association of Richard with Jesus Christ elevates him to a position of martyr, as someone who wrongly suffered at the hand of others and whose sacrifice culminates with death.

Figura 27 - Title-page of Tegg's 1812-1815 edition

⁴⁴ Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616, E. H. (Edward H.) Thomson, and Charles Knight. *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspeare*. London: Charles Knight and Co., 1839-1843.



The frontispiece is followed by an 'Introductory Notice', in which the editor writes about the chronology of the text, accompanied by an illustration of knights entering a list during a medieval tournament. This image is reminiscent of Dugdale's print, which served as foundation for Hayman's illustration for Hanmer's 1744 edition. Interestingly, Knight emphasises in the introductory text that the deposition scene in the play was only printed in 1608, making it clear to his readers that "all that part of the fourth Act in which Richard is introduced to make the surrender of his crown,

comprising 152 lines, was never printed in the age of Elizabeth” (Knight, *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspeare: Histories* 81). In this manner, Knight calls his readers’ attention to the pre-1608 omission in print of this politically charged scene, inviting them to consider the reasons for this absence. Knight’s readers would without a doubt peruse the 152 lines indicated by the editor with extra attention and curiosity.

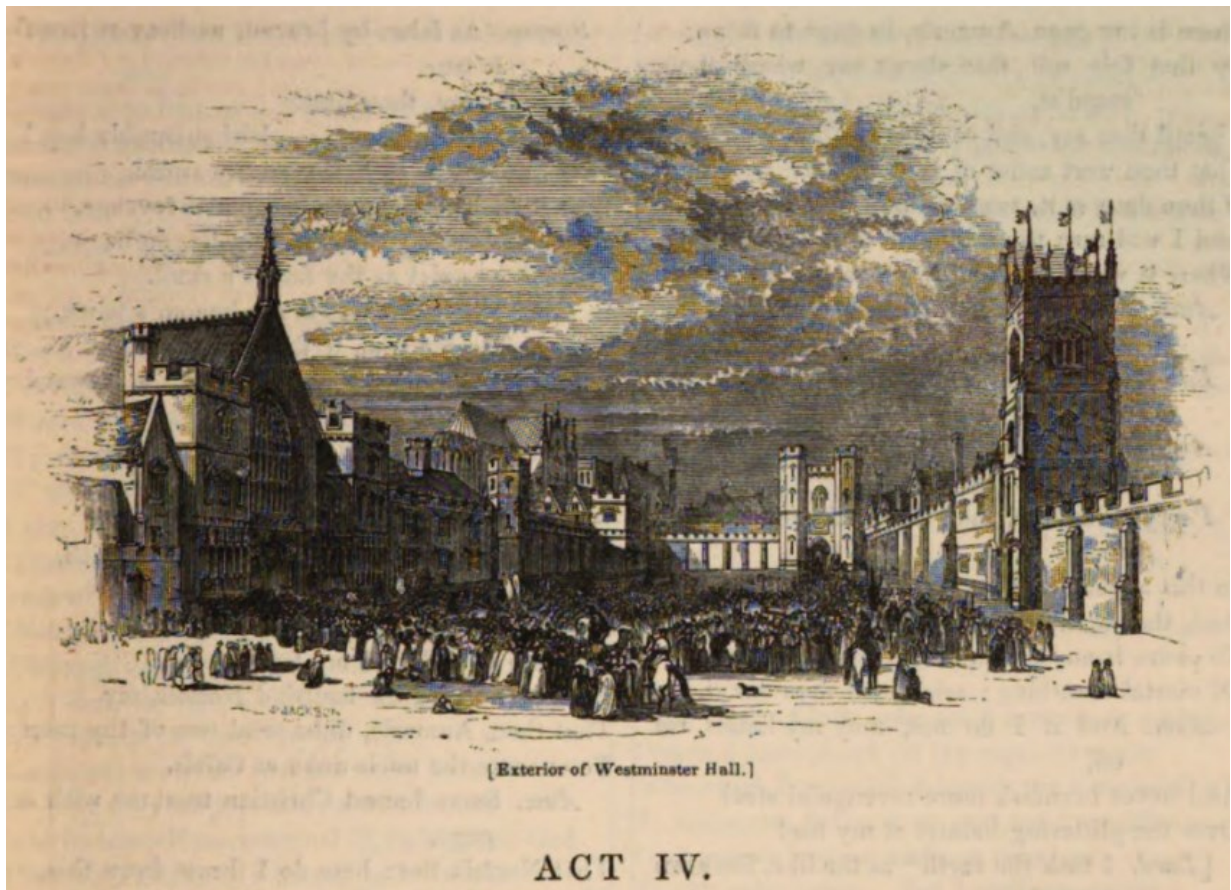
Further in the Introductory Notice, Knight writes an account of the credibility of the representation of setting and costume in his edition. As we have seen, the architect Poynter was hired to make historical drawings of the architecture of the period, which were used to support the illustration of the edition. For instance, for Act I Poynter drew a palace that, although imaginary, “presents an example of the architectural style of the period. The interior is represented as tapestried, with the well-known cognizances of Richard II, the sun and the white hart” (Knight, *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspeare: Histories* 85) (See figure 28). Interestingly, the illustrations in the *Pictorial Shakespeare* commonly depict the scene from a distance, which resembles the perspective the audience would have of the theatre stage.



The attention given to the symbol of the white hart, Richard II's personal badge, is also seen in Richard's robes. According to Arthur Charles Fox-Davies, "although some have traced this badge from the white hind used as a badge by Joan, the Fair Maid of Kent, the mother of Richard II., it is probably a device punning upon his name, 'Rich-hart.'" (467). The colour of the hart evokes Richard's innocence and purity, crowned king when just a child at the age of ten. Furthermore, the white hart also elicits the image of the white stag, traditionally associated with Christ. In this manner, Richard's display of himself, connecting his royal persona with the symbolism of the white hart, creates an idealised perception of kingship, as the virtuous saviour.

Knight explains that he went through a process of historical reconstruction for the depiction of Westminster in Act IV in the attempt to depict the palace as it must have looked at the end of Richard's reign. He took John Thomas Smith's *Antiquities of Westminster* (1807) as historical source (See figure 29). The effort with which Knight and his companions strove to represent reality on print demonstrates the importance the publisher placed on historical authenticity grounded on documentary evidence. The *Pictorial Shakespeare* was not an edition for pure entertainment, but with the aim of offering knowledge to its reader.

Figura 29 - for *Richard II* in Knight's *Pictorial Shakespeare*



The depiction of costume was also thoroughly researched. Knight explains that the illustrations for the lists at Coventry in Act I, for the meeting of Richard and Bolingbroke in Act III, and for the entry of Richard and Bolingbroke in London in Act V, “are designed with a strict adherence to the costume of the period” (Knight, *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspeare: Histories* 85). The design was made by

Robert William Buss (1804-1875), famous for the unfinished watercolour *Dickens' Dream* (1875). The costume study was based on authorial evidence, such as Richard's portraits and effigies, and medieval illuminated manuscripts and anecdotes that illustrate "the dress and armour of the people at large" (Knight, *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspeare: Histories* 86). Furthermore, the artist and editor perused the descriptions of clothing in other sources, such as Chaucer's poems, Froissart's chronicles and the French document *Metrical History of the Deposition of Richard II*, written by Jean Creton (1386-1420), a member of the French court of Charles VI who had visited England during the time of Richard's reign and who could thus provide first-hand description of the clothing style of the time. Knight explains that "the foppery of dress" was prevalent during Richard's reign, something that was "the universal theme of satire and reprobation amongst the poets and historians of the day" (*The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspeare: Histories* 86), who condemned such vanity. For instance, Richard owned a coat adorned with precious stones that was estimated at thirty thousand marks (Knight, *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspeare: Histories* 86). Richard's high expenses to support his narcissism, illustrated in these images, is one of the reasons that led the public to rise against their monarch.

Each act in the *Pictorial Shakespeare* is followed by the section 'Historical Illustrations', which explain in detail the historical events depicted in the Shakespearean drama, providing a lot of contextual information to the reader. After Act I, for instance, there is general information about the origins of a trial by combat, an illustration of the back and front of one golden noble,⁴⁵ an illustration of the Savoy Palace – inherited by John of Gaunt through marriage, an illustration of the Duchess of Gloucester in the habit of a nun of Barking Abbey,⁴⁶ an explanation of the genealogy of the seven sons of Edward III, amongst other curiosities and relevant information. The author even suggests a comparison between the description of Mowbray's sins with the fall of the guilty Templar without a blow in Scott's *Ivanhoe* (Knight, *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspeare: Histories* 110). This demonstrates that the period's imagination concerning the Middle Ages was still highly affected by Scott's medievalism, even though *Ivanhoe* had been published almost twenty years before the the first volume of Knight's *Pictorial Shakespeare*.

⁴⁵ The coin in use at the time of Richard's reign.

⁴⁶ This is the abbey where the Duchess retired after her husband's death.

Succeeding the general illustrations, there is a more academic section of historical illustrations, which contains, for instance, a copy of Richard II's portrait in the Jerusalem Chamber, a portrait of the Duke of York, and an illumination of Richard in full armour as printed in the *Metrical History of the Deposition of Richard II*. In addition to the images, there is also a lot of written information. For example, Knight writes about Shakespeare's task as a poet, who followed a different approach to history than his contemporary chroniclers. Knight writes:

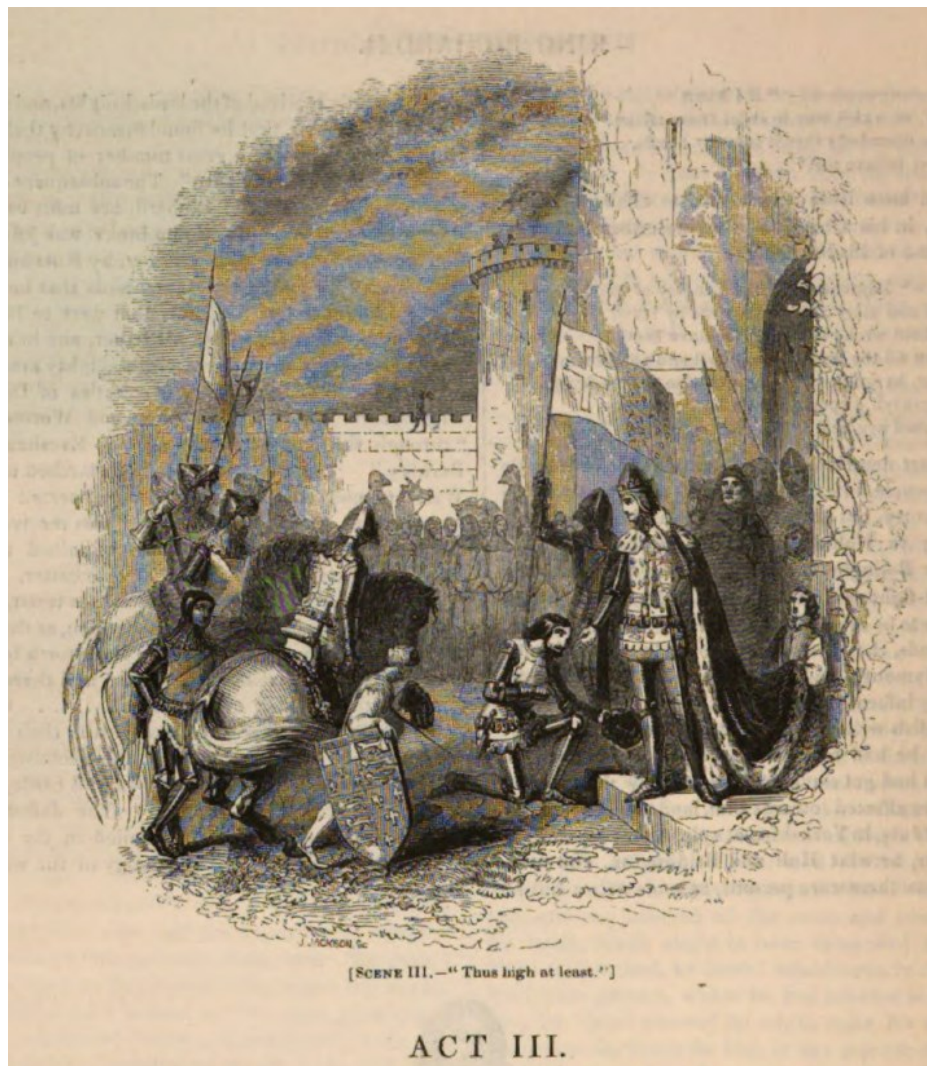
The scenes which this play presents, and the characters which it develops, are historically true to the letter. But what a wonderful vitality does the truth acquire in our poet's hands. The hard and formal abstractions of the old chroniclers – the figures that move about in robes and armours, without presenting to us any distinct notions of their common human qualities, – here shew themselves to us as men like ourselves, – partaking of like passions, and like weaknesses. (Knight, *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspeare: Histories* 101)

Knight's words indicate that the editor took Shakespeare's scenes in *Richard II* as "historically true to the letter", although that was not strictly the case. However, this extract also exemplifies how Knight *experienced* the past through Shakespeare. Shakespeare took facts from history chronicles and breathed life into them, making it possible for the reader to connect with the people from the past, knowing that, although living in completely different contexts, they could potentially feel the same emotions. The belief was that the knowledge of a shared element with the past, that is, human feelings, rendered Shakespeare's play more impactful than the words in a history book. Knight expresses his trust in Shakespeare as a medium for education, but, what is more, his trust in Shakespeare as a powerful poet.

It is clear that Knight does not look back at the past with a sense of superiority or disdain, but, rather, curious to understand the people that lived in those days. Knight demonstrates his enthusiasm in investigating "all the gorgeous array of chivalry, as it existed in the age of pageants" (*The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspeare: Histories* 102), paying close attention to behaviour, clothing, architecture and human relations. The rich illustration of the opening of Act III, where the king meets Bolingbroke outside Flint Castle, exemplifies the attentive craft of the artist. This is a moment of confrontation between the current king and the contender of the crown in the middle of the play. After this moment, Richard's prospects become darker as Bolingbroke's ambitions imbue him with increasing power. In

Shakespeare's text, the king is forced to descend, leaving the castle and joining Bolingbroke outside, a symbol of Richard's loss of power, since it is he who must walk to Henry, and not the other way around – as royal deference would require. The illustration in the *Pictorial Shakespeare* undermines the symbolism of Richard's debasement by depicting a humble Bolingbroke on his knees, bowing to his sovereign, not daring to look him in his eyes (See figure 30). Shakespeare's text emphasises the falseness of Bolingbroke's deference when Richard states: "Up, cousin, up. Your heart is up, I know, / Thus high at least, although your knee be low" (3.3.193-194). Shakespeare's Richard is aware of Bolingbroke's proud ambitions, whereas the Bolingbroke in Knight's edition shows a more genuine display of courtesy and obedience. Furthermore, Richard's regal clothes, his ermine cape held by a servant, and the crown on his head magnify Richard's majesty.

Figura 30 - Act 3, Scene 1, Knight's Pictorial Shakespeare



The encounter takes place in front of a medieval castle with turrets, battlements and a bastion. The two men are surrounded by people watching the scene, including soldiers clad in armours on horses and holding banners. Knight refers to Creton's *Metrical History of the Deposition of Richard II* for archival evidence to depict this scene. In the Historical Illustration section after Act III, Knight writes that, according to Creton, Bolingbroke entered the castle and, perceiving the king at a distance, "bowed very low to the ground; and, as they approached each other, he bowed a second time, with his cap in his hand" (Knight, *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspeare: Histories* 127). Therefore, the drawings in Knight's edition do not illustrate Shakespeare's dramatic text, but reconstruct the events of the play in a more 'authentic' way, turning to historical records as authorial support over Shakespeare's dramatisation. Furthermore, Knight's selection of sources and enhancement of Richard's display of majesty indicate his position as favouring Richard, the legitimate holder of the crown, over the usurper Bolingbroke, depicted mainly in submissive or repenting poses.

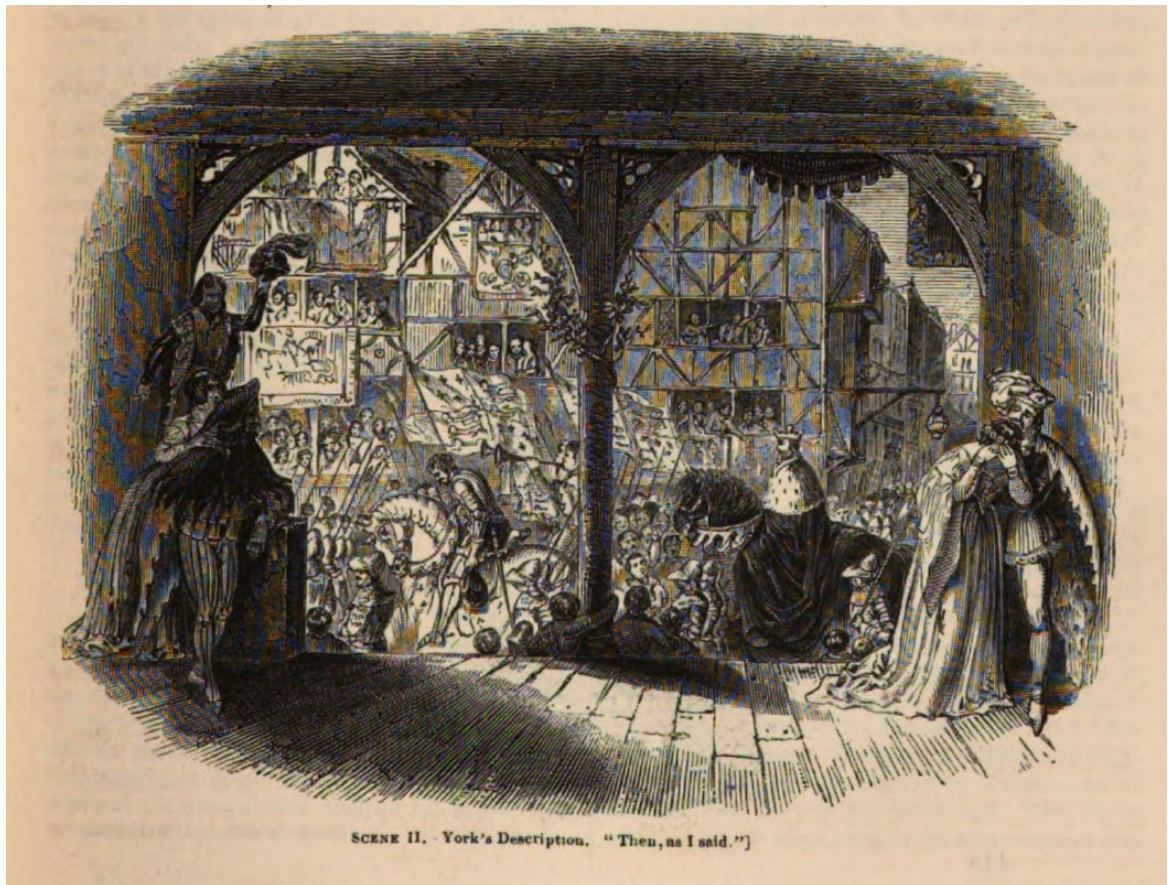
Knight also adds an illustration of the remains of Flint Castle in 1840 made by G. F. Sargent, with the following message to the reader: "Go to the rude ribs of that ancient castle" (See figure 31). The effect of this engraving is the interweaving of past and present, linking what the reader sees on the page with their own present. Although Flint Castle as Richard and Bolingbroke saw it no longer existed, a nineteenth-century visitor could look at its remains, imagining the past in their minds. Knight encourages the reader to take the aesthetic enjoyment of history beyond the page, encountering its vestiges in the "rude ribs" of Flint Castle. In a similar manner to the two figures observing Bramber Castle in Lambert's 1782 watercolour (See figure 4), as I explain in Chapter 2, the reader of Knight's edition is invited to look beyond the fragmented stones of Flint Castle in 1840, using their imagination to reconstruct it to its fourteenth-century grandeur, and peopling it with Shakespeare's characters.



Figura 31 - Remains of Flint Castle (1840), Pictorial Shakespeare

After the encounter between Richard and Bolingbroke in Act III, the old and the new king return to London, although Shakespeare does not dramatise their entrance into the city. Knight's edition supplies the reader with a visual representation of York's words, depicted from quite a curious angle (See figure 32). The parade is viewed from within a wooden structure, where a few other people stand to watch the procession – the ones on the left cheering, while the woman on the right side cries, supported by her husband. There are more of similar wooden houses on the other side of the street, also filled with people watching the event. In this perspective, the

viewer could potentially feel as part of the audience looking on at Richard and



Bolingbroke.

Figura 32 - Act 5, Scene 2, Knight's Pictorial Shakespeare

Richard leads the parade, mounted on a white horse, but his head is down in embarrassment and humiliation. Bolingbroke follows in the rear on a dark horse, dressed in the royal ermine and wearing the crown. The banners carried by knights in the parade display Bolingbroke's coat of arms, not Richard's anymore. This is an interesting example of how Knight goes beyond the Shakespearean text to offer the reader as much truthful information as possible. The choice of a white horse for Richard and a dark one for Bolingbroke is not random (although Northcote had given Richard a dark horse, and Bolingbroke a white one), emphasising the opposition between light and dark as symbolic of the opposition between good and evil. Moreover, Richard's defeat and Bolingbroke's victory are seen from afar, diminishing their power and keeping Richard's humiliation out of the spotlight. Different from Northcote's 1793 painting, Bolingbroke is not received with admiring eyes. Au contraire, the people seem disapproving of or at least indifferent to his triumph.

Knight ends *Richard II* with a 'Supplementary Notice', in which he writes about the state of the play during his time. He writes that the play was generally considered unable to affect the passions of the viewers or to offer historical instruction, but the editor disagrees: "we think it [the play] might somewhat 'affect the passions,' – for 'gorgeous tragedy' hath there put on her 'scepter'd pall,' and if she bring not Terror in her train, Pity, at least, claims the sad story for her own" (Knight, *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspeare: Histories* 149). Similar to Hazlitt a few decades earlier, Knight understands Shakespeare's *Richard II* as a play that affects the reader by inciting pity. He affirms that Richard is not a character of "passive fortitude", as Samuel Johnson had described him, but a character of "passionate weakness", hence the public's sympathy for the monarch's fall (Knight, *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspeare: Histories* 152). The illustrations compiled in *The Pictorial Shakespeare* clearly depict such sympathy for the king.

Furthermore, the editor also believes that the play enlarges the reader's mind, since it discloses "the moral and intellectual strength and weakness of humanity" through "a splendid frame-work of the picturesque and the poetical" (*The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspeare: Histories* 149). Knight sees didacticism in the play, but framed by beautiful poetry. The reader is "plunged into the midst of the fierce passions and the gorgeous pageantries of the antique time" (*The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspeare: Histories* 149). The editor does not use the word *medieval*; he merely refers to the past generally as "the antique time". However, the way he describes this time period makes it evident that he envisions the medieval past: "the halls and galleries, where is hung 'armoury of the invincible knights of old'", the spear, the steel, the banners, trumpet sounds, heralds, marshals, and dungeons (*The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspeare: Histories* 149). These elements are not simply decorations to the story, but they are the setting of human victory or defeat, triumph or mortal rage.

Knight's statement suggests that *Richard II* was not a favourite in the Shakespearean repertoire in the early-Victorian period. In fact, after Edmund Kean's production at Drury Lane in 1815, perhaps fostered by the recent deposition of Napoléon Bonaparte in France (see Chapter 5), *Richard II* was rarely seen on the English stage. There was a revival of Kean's production at Drury Lane on specific occasions: 23 October 1816, 20 April 1818, 8 September 1820, and 21 February 1822; it was performed in benefit of the young actress Clara Fisher (1811-1898) on 1

March 1824 at Drury Lane, and on 12 January 1829 Kean reappeared in the title role at Covent Garden.⁴⁷ After that, the play went to rest, only to be revived by William Charles Macready, who played the title role in December 1850 at Haymarket Theatre, and later by Charles Kean, who played the king in March 1857 at the Princess's Theatre. According to the extensive research done by Janice Norwood, those were the only productions of Shakespeare's *Richard II* at the main theatres in London in the first half of the nineteenth century. The number is very little in comparison to *Richard III*, for example, which was constantly performed in a variety of theatres. In this case, Knight's affirmation of the play not being truly appreciated by the people at his time is reflected on the stage.

Political potency may be one of the reasons for the omission of the play on the London stages. As the Essex Rising has demonstrated, the play could be used to foster certain political ideologies. However, Knight sees Shakespeare's depiction of the Lancaster usurpation of the crown in the dramatic text as politically impartial. According to Knight, Shakespeare is "elevated far above the temporary opinions of his own age, or of succeeding ages. His business is with the universal, and not with a fragment of it. He is, indeed, the poet of a nation in his glowing and genial patriotism, but never the poet of a party" (Knight, *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspeare: Histories* 151). In his ambiguous representations of both Richard and Bolingbroke, the playwright does not take evident sides. However, Knight was aware that the play had been used for certain political purposes, bending Shakespeare's texts towards either a legitimation of the divine right of kings or towards the right to disrupt the hereditaryness of the crown if the monarch fails to fulfil his/her obligations. For example, Knight writes that the play had been a success in 1738, during the administration of Prime Minister Robert Walpole (1676-1745), when it was commissioned by the Shakespeare Ladies Club. According to Knight, the play "had an unusual success, principally because it contained many passages which seemed to point to the then supposed corruption of the court" (150). Although Knight exposes the ideological purpose behind the 1738 production of *Richard II*, and despite his acknowledgment that the play had been used to foster certain political ideals, he does not make his own approach explicit. In any case, the illustrations in his edition

⁴⁷ This information is retrieved from Janice Norwood's "A reference guide to performances of Shakespeare's plays in nineteenth-century London in *Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century* (2012), edited by Gail Marshall.

present a rather optimistic interpretation of Richard, creating sympathy for his suffering, diminishing the force of his defeat by depicting it from afar, and mainly representing Bolingbroke in postures of submission or regret.

At the very dawn of Victoria's reign in 1838, when the first volume of *The Pictorial Shakespeare* was published, Knight is careful not to challenge the hereditary principle of royal succession, since Victoria inherits the crown after the death of her uncle William IV (1765-1837), who died without any legitimate children – although he had fathered ten illegitimate children by the actress Dorothea Jordan (1761-1816), his open mistress and herself a Shakespearean actress, having played remarkable roles such as Ophelia, Imogen and Viola.

Following a different approach to Knight's, Barry Cornwall edited his *Illustrated Shakespeare*, published in serial parts between 1838 and 1840, simultaneously to Knight's edition.⁴⁸ The artist assigned for designing the illustrations was Kenny Meadows (1790-1874), who offered an innovative graphic representation of Shakespeare, no doubt influenced by his career as a caricaturist. He contributed drawings to the weekly magazine *Punch*, and illustrated the project *Heads of the People* (1840), which contained caricatures of English types and character sketches written by Douglas Jerrold (1803-1857), William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863) and Leigh Hunt (1784-1859).⁴⁹ Furthermore, Meadows also had experience in historical drawing, having contributed with illustrations for James Robinson Planché's (1796-1880) study on Shakespeare's historical costumes, published in 1843. I will return to Planché in Chapter 7 when I briefly discuss his production of *King John* at Covent Garden in 1823, which is known for starting the preoccupation with historical accuracy on stage, and to explain his participation in the scene of popular entertainment in London.

Whereas Knight's edition focuses on setting and explicatory images, Meadows uses techniques of grotesque exaggeration to convey a focus on character (Sillars 273). This approach to visually interpreting Shakespeare is embedded within a Gothic representation of the grotesque, at times tending to bizarre exaggeration. His images are also emblematic, offering a myriad of possible meanings through

⁴⁸ *The Works of Shakspeare revised from the best authorities with a memoir, and essay on his genius, by Barry Cornwall.* London: R. Tyas, 1843.

⁴⁹ Some of the character types include "the dress-maker", "the 'lion' of a party", "the old housekeeper", "the theatrical manager" and "the factory child". Meadows' drawings are sharp and critical, highlighting the character's flaws in a satirical manner.

symbols. According to Sillars, Meadows “is the maverick voice of violent, corrosive sensuality, developing in the eccentricity of his symbolic images an extreme extension of the half-comic, half-satiric grotesquerie fashionable in the illustrations of novels by Dickens and Harrison Ainsworth” (Sillars 287–88). Meadows had, for instance, designed some of the illustrations for Dickens’ *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*, which are also filled with symbolic images.

The reader of Cornwall’s *Richard II* immediately notices that the frontispiece bears a mysterious and emblematic tone, with the title printed in letters that darkly resemble thin tree branches or human bones (See figure 33). The title of each play is also generally accompanied by one or two small images that function as symbols for the play. For example, the headpiece to *Henry VI – Part 3* opens with the title enclosed by two long swords. Each sword has a snake wrapped around it, holding a rose in its mouth. The snakes are facing each other, and the flowers touch in the middle. At the bottom, there is a crown resting on a box or tile, on which the words ‘Act I’ are written. The meaning is powerfully clear: it is a story about two households fighting for the crown, a strife that would initiate the Wars of the Roses. The roses in the serpents’ mouth thus acquire emblematic meaning, each symbolising one of the contending Houses: York and Lancaster. According to Sillars, Meadows “uses the emblem to delineate character and idea in Shakespeare through the emotional temper of the Gothic, in the process acquiring a reputation for grotesque, if not bizarre, exaggeration” (275). The size of the swords and snakes in comparison to the crown and the title gives them an unrealistic proportion, but it also emphasises the importance of confrontation and battle in the fight for the crown, the core theme of the play.

Figura 33 - Title page to *Richard II* in Cornwall's edition



In the case of *Richard II*, above the title there is a small dark gauntlet, which will undoubtedly remind the careful reader of the beginning of Act IV, when the lords throw their gloves in a chain reaction to Aumerle's denial of the accusation of conspiracy to kill the Duke of Gloucester. The gauntlet signifies that the themes of conflict and medieval honour are key in this play. The second symbol on the frontispiece is the small image of two heralds at the bottom of the page. They are both blowing trumpets, but each one to a different side, which could allude to the clash between Bolingbroke and Mowbray that opens the play, but also to the clash between Bolingbroke and Richard, which is the core of the drama. As Sillar points out, "it is with more static images that Meadows is at his most effective in his Shakespeare visualisations, and which constitute his most original contribution to Shakespeare imaging: a highly idiosyncratic use of emblematic images to enfold in

single statements facets of language, character or plot" (275). The example of the gauntlet and the pair of opposed heralds in the frontispiece of *Richard II* demonstrates Meadows' powerful use of emblematic images, which convey substantial meaning through minimal expression.

The only textual information added by Cornwall for each play consists of a section called 'Introductory Remarks', and another called 'Notes' at the end of the play. Therefore, the edition is not as preoccupied as Knight's project in providing the reader with extra historical information. The text in the introduction to *Richard II* comments on the existence of a previous play on the reign of that monarch during Shakespeare's time, but it adds that the editor does not believe that Shakespeare was in any way indebted to such play. As a confirmation of this hypothesis, the editor recalls the events surrounding Essex's "ill-advised incursion" in 1601 (Cornwall 45). He believes Shakespeare's text was *not* the one performed by Essex's followers on the eve of the rebellion. Cornwall states that Augustine Phillips, one of the actors at the Globe, when requested to put on the play, had answered that the text was old and that the group would therefore lose money in staging it. Essex's followers thus offered the troupe forty shillings, a great amount, which sealed the deal. Cornwall explains that "this term *old*, sufficiently indicates that it was not the work of Shakspeare, which had not been written more than three or four years" before (Cornwall 45). There was, in fact, another text about Richard II's deposition in circulation at the time. It was John Hayward's *The First Part of the Life and Raigne of King Henrie IIII*, published in 1599. Hayward's is not a dramatic text, but a historical account of the fall of Richard II. The subject of royal deposition was no doubt sensitive, since Hayward was taken as a prisoner to the Tower of London. Cornwall, however, believes that the author's imprisonment was not due to the content of the book, but to its dedication to the Earl of Essex at a time when he had fallen from the queen's grace.

Cornwall's conclusion is that the play requested by Essex's followers in 1601 "was written in a totally different spirit from Shakspeare's tragedy and from Hayward's history" (45). The only possibility for Cornwall is that a play previous to Shakespeare's existed and was the object of treason during the Essex Rebellion. Cornwall is adamant in making it clear to his readers that Shakespeare's *Richard II* is free from blame: "From a play like the older one, thus fallen into discredit, and fraught probably with pernicious sentiments, Shakspeare can have borrowed little more than

the subject. *His* production is adapted to no such purpose as the other. True to his design of representing history, and of revivifying its personages, he has been neither unjust to Richard, nor partial to Bolingbroke” (45). Cornwall is right in pointing to Shakespeare’s relative balance of power between Richard and Bolingbroke in the play; however, his dismissal of Shakespeare’s *Richard II* in the events of February 1601 seems to result from a desire to acquit the Shakespearean play of political propaganda. He is mistaken when he affirms that the scene of Richard’s deposition was withdrawn from the first publication of *Richard II*, but that it appeared in the second, therefore Q2, in 1598. As we have seen, only Q4 from 1608, after Elizabeth’s death, includes the deposition scene. Cornwall expects to convince his reader that the queen would not be threatened by the appearance of the deposition scene in print:

Queen Elizabeth seldom strained at a gnat or swallowed a camel; and to have objected to the scene of Richard’s deposition, while she permitted the scene of his murder, his deposition being recognised in the play, and, accordingly, perfectly well known to the audience, is to suppose a degree of squeamishness in that great princess not only foreign to her character, but absolutely absurd and irrational. (Cornwall 45)

Whether Cornwall’s addition of erroneous information is on purpose or not, one can only speculate. Could he have suppressed the information of the absence of the deposition scene in Q2 only to confirm the idea that the queen was not threatened by it? Or was it an honest mistake which led him to assume as much?

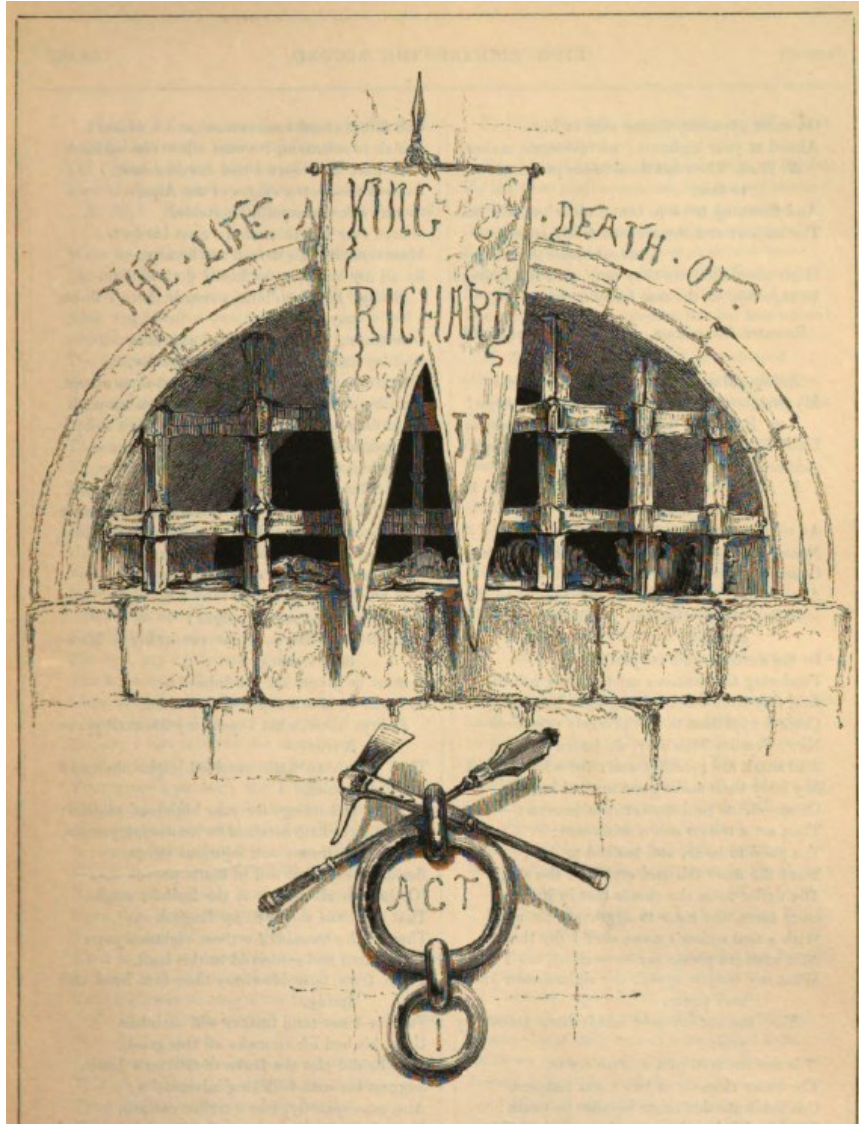
In any case, Cornwall emphasises the beauty of Shakespeare’s poetry in the play, affirming that “few of his [Shakespeare’s] dramas contain finer things, both of poetry and passion”, adding that “no man could have imagined that *this* play would help the cause of treason: that the semblable presentment, on a public stage, of this weak and wilful, this dejected and yet majestic creature, Richard, could steel men’s hearts” (45). Cornwall highlights the poetic achievements of the play in order to undermine its political potency. That would be in accordance with the overall censoring disposition of the theatrical sphere at the time, still under the 1737 Licensing Theatre Act, which would only be dissolved in 1843.

Despite Cornwall’s praise of the poetry and passion within the play, the headpiece to Act I, designed by Meadows, creates in the reader a darker expectation (See figure 34). The words ‘King Richard II’ are written on a banner, placed in front of

a dark prison cell. On the wall, the words “The life and death of” are added to the title’s words. Behind the bars of the prison cell, there lies a skeleton, already foreshadowing the death of the king that gives name to the play. The size of the banner is disproportionate to the skeleton, creating the illusion of a massive royal banner. This opposition between royal majesty and mortality is brought forth by

the

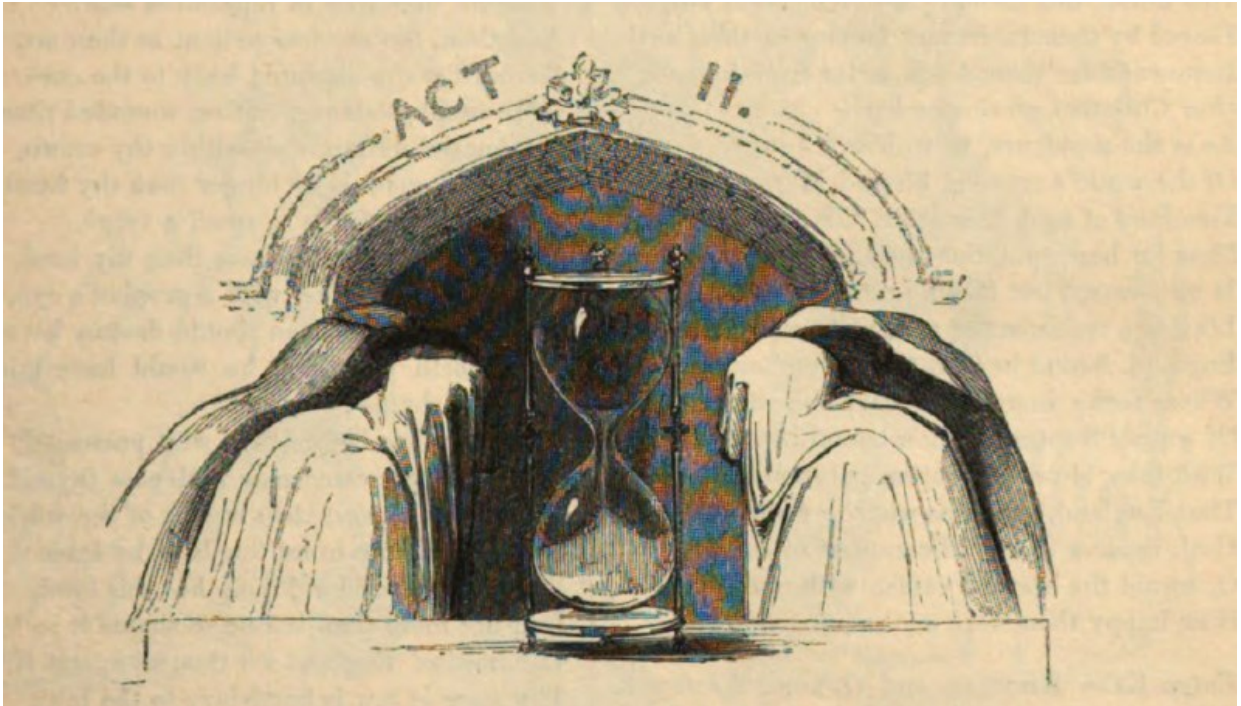
34 -
1 of



Meadows’
organisation of
ensemble.

Figura
Title-page for Act
Richard II in
Cornwall's edition

The headpiece to Act II is also emblematic, with its title written on the arch of a Gothic construction (See figure 35). Three or four hunched hooded figures, faces covered and looking down, stand on each side of a big hourglass. In this act, Richard



decides to take possession of the property and titles of John of Gaunt, denying Bolingbroke his rightful inheritance. This decision is what starts Richard's own hourglass, which speedily leads him to his fall from power and towards death. The hooded figures function as harbingers of death, waiting for Richard to make the wrong decisions so that they can strike their blow and collect his soul.

Figura 35 - Title-page to Act 2 of *Richard II* in Cornwall's edition

The image that opens Act III also reinforces the imminence of death, not only for Richard but for those that support him (See figure 36). The execution block is covered by a black cloth, on which the words 'Act III' are written. The axe, in disproportion to the size of the background arched window, rests on the cloth, ready to be used, anticipating the deaths that occur throughout the play. In this specific act, for instance, Bushy and Bagot are sentenced to death by Bolingbroke, Salisbury's army flees from Wales believing the king to be already dead, and the queen overhears the gardeners' prophetic conversation.

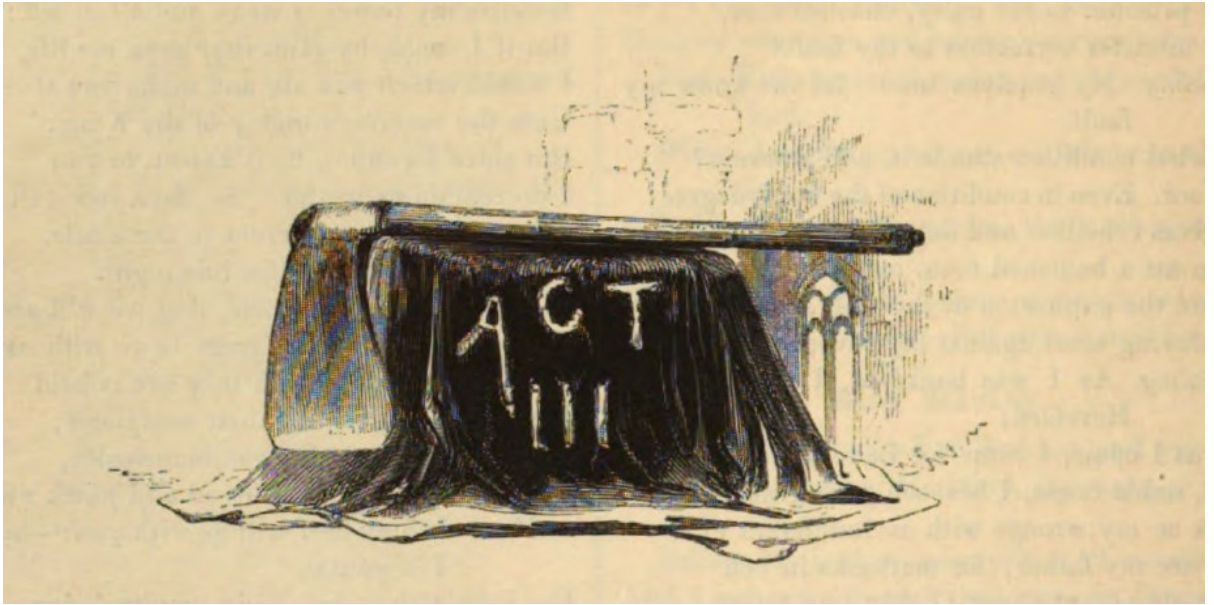


Figura 36 - Title-page to Act 3 of *Richard II* in Cornwall's edition

Meadows' illustration at the end of the play emphasises the curse that will follow the new king, Henry IV (See figure 37). Albeit the crown has been secured by Bolingbroke, it brings with it the shadow of a murdered king, represented in the image by the small crowned skeleton resting within the hollow crown. The skeleton is reminiscent of the headpiece to Act I, where a skeleton lies behind prison bars. Furthermore, it is possible to see on the left side of the crown a faint sketch of the hunched hooded figures from the headpiece of Act II, subtly inferring that Henry IV will also encounter conspiracy and opposition in his reign, and that these figures will follow him, ready to collect his soul as well. In Shakespeare's *Henry IV – Part 2*, the new king will justly complain: "uneasy lies the head that wears a crown" (3.1.31), especially if it is such a crown as the one devised by Meadows.

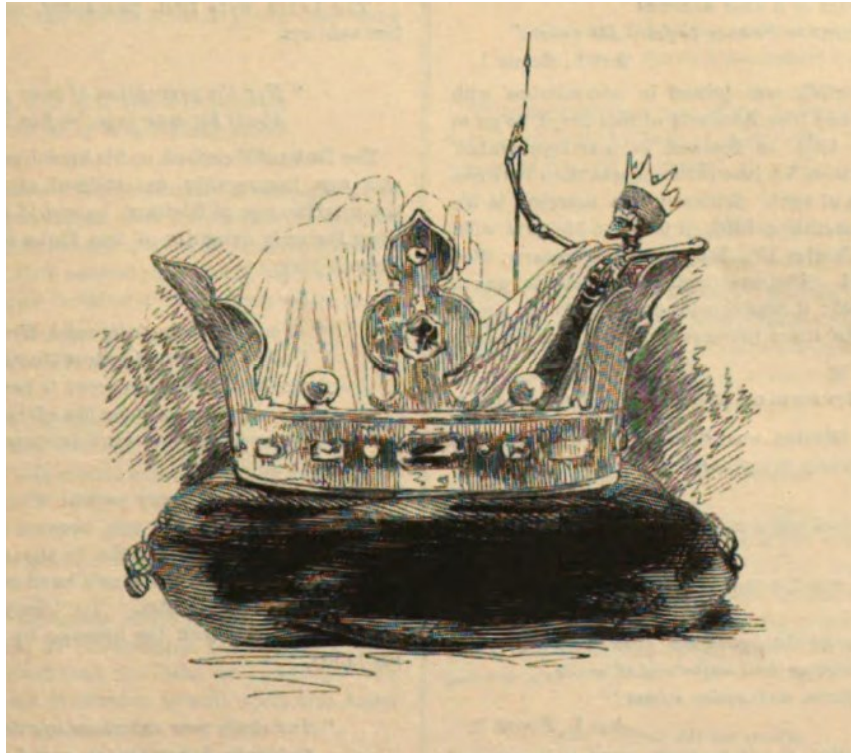


Figura 37 - Engraving for *Richard II* in Cornwall's edition

In relation to historical accuracy, Meadows creates a medieval atmosphere by incorporating in his drawings features of Gothic architecture, such as the pointed arches and ribbed vaults, and by depicting the characters in medieval clothes –

different from the artists of the previous century, who, as we have seen, had



represented Shakespeare's characters from the history plays in contemporary eighteenth-century attire or a general Renaissance style. For instance, for the illustration of Act I, Scene 2, Meadows depicts the Duchess of Gloucester in a flowing medieval gown, elaborate headwear and a wimple to cover her hair, while John of Gaunt is represented wearing a long tunic and a headdress in the form of a turban (See figure 38). By means of this more accurate depiction of setting and costume, Meadows creates a more concrete link between Shakespeare's play and the historical Middle Ages, although inevitably filtered by his nineteenth-century imagination.

Figura 38 - Act 1, Scene 2, Cornwall's edition

Finally, the three-page-long section called 'Notes' at the end of the play brings succinct contextual historical information, such as details about locations mentioned in the text, a description of the ceremony expected from the participants and spectators of a public challenge, and general facts about Edward III's family tree. In his final paragraphs, Cornwall returns to the critical reception of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, putting together extracts from the works of other scholars. By means of this selection, the editor presents two starkly opposing views on Richard II as a king. The first demonstrates a clear idealised understanding of the royal body. Cornwall quotes from August Wilhelm Schlegel's (1767-1845) *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* (1809-1811): "in 'King Richard II.,' the poet exhibits to us a noble kingly nature, at first obscured by levity and the errors of unbridled youth, and afterwards purified by misfortune, and rendered more highly splendid and illustrious" (Cornwall 88). Richard's tyranny is dismissed by Schlegel as "the errors of unbridled youth", while his royal characteristics – noble, kingly, splendid and illustrious – come forward only after his purifying experience of misfortune, associating Richard with the figure of the martyr. Schlegel's words emphasise that Richard's royal features were always present, as befits all royalty, but concealed by the acts of his immaturity. According to the author, when Richard faces the threat of losing his throne, "he then feels, with painful inspiration, the elevated vocation of the kingly dignity, and its prerogatives over personal merit and changeable institutions" (88). Even bereft of his crown, the earthly symbol of royalty, Richard's kingliness does not leave his body, since he possesses "innate nobility no humiliation can annihilate" (88). For Schlegel, there is no doubt that Bolingbroke *usurped* the crown. On the other hand, Bolingbroke's father, John of Gaunt, is for the German poet and critic "a model of chivalrous birth: he stands there like a pillar of the olden time which he had outlived" (88). Schlegel sees in Shakespeare's depiction of Gaunt a reminiscence of the grandeur and nobility of the past. Although Gaunt does not refer to this past as *medieval*, since that would be an anachronistic use of the term, his speech is, in fact, an idealisation of the period before Richard II's ascension to the throne, a period we now understand as the Middle Ages. In this manner, Schlegel has noticed the medievalism in Gaunt's words.

Cornwall also adds extracts from Augustine Skottowe's *The Life Of Shakespeare: Enquiries Into The Originality Of His Dramatic Plots And Characters* (1824), which provides a completely opposite understanding of Shakespeare's king.

Whereas Schlegel emphasises Richard's innate majesty, Skottowe brings forth Richard's "violence, rapacity, and tyranny" (Cornwall 88). The author praises Shakespeare's poetry, but concludes that, as Richard "pusillanimously yielded to despair, our sympathy is but slight, and Richard is upbraided and forgotten" (Cornwall 88). Schlegel and Skottowe's criticisms demonstrate the two poles of approaches to the medieval past: on the one side, the idealisation of the past, a sense of shared honour, and the ennoblement of the royal body; and, on the other, its association with tyranny, violence and greed. Cornwall adds these selected texts to his 'Notes' on *Richard II*; however, it is not clear how he stands in relation to these two opposing views of medieval kingship.

Knight's and Cornwall's editions commented here provide an insightful look into how *Richard II* was received in England in the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century, right before the staging of Macready's production at the Haymarket in 1851. Knight endeavours to offer his readership education through art, presenting Shakespeare's history plays as a means to understand England's history. Knight's curiosity and fascination about the past leads him to think of ways with which he could associate the past with his own present. He concludes that this link is the human emotions that all people share, in the past, present or future. Knight's Middle Ages are thus the setting for human victory or defeat. By contrast, Cornwall's publication of *Richard II* includes ambiguous editorial material, which directs to both compassion and condemnation towards Richard, as well as to an understanding of the medieval past as either idyllic or brutally repressive, leaving it to the reader to reach their own conclusions.

Sillars mentions only Knight's and Cornwall's illustrated editions of Shakespeare in the first half of the nineteenth century. However, there is one more edition that should be taken into account in order to understand how Shakespeare's *Richard II* was visually reinterpreted at the time. I refer to James Halliwell-Phillipps' (1820-1889) *The Complete Works of Shakspeare* [sic], printed by John Tallis (1817-1876) in 1850. The images in this edition circulated to a wide audience, which means that Macready and Charles Kean could have seen them before offering their own visual interpretation of the play on stage. Sillars mentions a rare 1853 reprint of Halliwell's edition, held at the Folger Library, but does not offer an analysis of the material.

The title page promises the reader an edition “elegantly and appropriately illustrated by portraits engraved on steel, from daguerreotypes of the greatest and most intellectual actors of the age, taken in the embodiment of the varied and life-like characters of our great national poet”. Halliwell’s project is similar to Bell’s Acting edition from 1774 in the sense that it depicts actors performing Shakespeare’s character. The change in approach to historical drama is visible in these prints, which shed light on the theatrical conventions of the mid-nineteenth century. Different from Francis Aickin in his eighteenth-century clothes to perform Henry IV, the actors’ costumes in this production demonstrate a concern with historical accuracy. For *King John* there is a print of Henry Betty as Falconbridge, of Miss Glyn as Constance, Macready as King John with Mr Cooper as Hubert, and another of Mr Bennett as Hubert;⁵⁰ for *Richard II* there is only one image, that of Macready in the title role (See figure 39)⁵¹; for *Henry IV – Part 1* there is a print of Mr Creswick as Hotspur (See figure 40), Mr Hackett as Falstaff, and one of Mr H. Marston as Hotspur with Mr F. Robinson as Prince Hal; for *Henry IV – Part 2* there is a print of Macready as Henry IV; for *Henry V*, we see a print of Madame Celeste as Princess Katherine; there are no images for *Henry VI*; for *Richard III*, there is a print of Charles Kean in the title character, one of Mr J. W. Wallack as Gloucester, Mr Couldock as Richard III, two very interesting images of the sisters Ellen and Kate Bateman as Richard III and Richmond, respectively, and one of Garrick as Richard III. Finally, for *Henry VIII*, there is a print of George Bennett as the title character, Macready as Cardinal Wolsey, of Miss Glyn as Queen Katherine, and the only group image, depicting Cardinal Wolsey seeking shelter at the Abbey of Leicester, after he fails to obtain a divorce for the king. This print is based on Richard Westall’s painting for the Boydell Gallery.

⁵⁰ The fact that the prints illustrate two different actors playing the same part of Hubert (Cooper and Bennett) indicate that the artists working for Halliwell’s edition based their work on more than one production of each play (when available).

⁵¹ Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616, Henry Tyrrell, and J. O. (James Orchard) Halliwell-Phillipps. *The Complete Works of Shakspeare: Revised From the Original Editions*. London: Printed and published by John Tallis and company, 1850.



Figura 39 - William Charles Macready as Richard II

The number of prints available indicate the popularity of each play on stage at that given period, since the more productions available, the more options there were for the artist to use the new technology to imprint the actor in costume on the page. For instance, the absence of plates for *Henry VI* is a consequence of the play being rarely performed at the time. According to the reference guide by Norwood, it was only staged twice in the period between 1800 and 1899: *Henry VI* (mainly Part 2) was staged at Drury Lane in December 1817, advertised as *Richard Duke of York, or the Contention of York and Lancaster*, with Edmund Kean as York; and *Henry VI – Part 2* was performed for Shakespeare’s Tercentenary at Surrey Theatre in April 1864. The scarcity of productions of *Richard II* at the time also justifies the fact that there is only one print for this play in Halliwell’s 1850 edition. As we have seen, after Edmund Kean’s production in 1815 and its few revivals, *Richard II* only returned to the London stage in December 1850 with Macready. As Macready is depicted in the title role, the third volume of Halliwell’s edition, “Dramas on English History”, could only have been printed after the production at Haymarket in December of 1850. It could be that the third volume was printed at a later date than the first two volumes on Tragedies and Comedies, or that certain images were only included in later reprints.

Figura 40 – Mr Creswick as Hotspur



study

and

reconstructs the medieval past. The king is a prisoner at Pomfret Castle, as the added extract from the play makes clear: "I have been studying how I may compare this prison where I live unto the world". He is dressed in plain black clothes, but the

What is significant for this is the way Macready embodies the medieval Richard II, how the setting

ermine collar around his neck and wrists indicate his royalty. His face has a contemplative expression, his body is relaxed, but his right finger is raised as in the middle of an important thought. The actor is in a still pose, but not in an unnatural position. On the contrary, it conveys the idea of the movement of thoughts within the king's head. Finally, in relation to the setting, it is possible to identify symbolic objects – such as the loose chain on the bottom left – and the details of medieval architecture, like the stone floor and the pillars sustaining the arched ceiling. This is a concern not only apparent in the print of *Richard II*, but in all histories. See, for instance, the print of Creswick as Hotspur above. The actor is dressed in tight hose with leather soles, short doublets and a belt – the result is visually different from the eighteenth-century apparel of earlier productions. Instead of approximating the action on stage to the audience's contemporary time, the use of different clothes created a distance between the people on and off stage, fostering an illusion that the actors walking on the wooden platform really belonged to another age.

Macready's body position is vaguely reminiscent of Fuseli's depiction of the king meditating in the prison just moments before his own death. In addition to the preoccupation with adding historical accuracy by means of costume and setting, the print in Halliwell's edition demonstrates a combination of historical plausibility and emotion. Finally, the use of a modern technology such as the daguerreotype in order to recreate the medieval past visually results in a complex anachronistic overlapping of history and modernity, one that would be taken to another degree with the use of photography in the works of Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879), as I explore in Chapter 7.

4.2 Conclusion

The *visual* representation of the Middle Ages and of Shakespeare's *Richard II* went through a significant change, as the examples in this section demonstrate. I have analysed the illustrated editions of the play since Rowe's 1709 edition with engravings by François Boitard, until Halliwell's 1850 compilation of portraits of actors engraved on steel from daguerreotypes. In the beginning of the century, the characters of the play were depicted in print in contemporary fashion, which caused an anachronistic incongruence, since the characters represented would not have been historically familiar with that way of dressing. Editors at this time bridged the

gap between the reader's present and the story's past, perhaps in the attempt to draw the reading audience closer to Shakespeare's work. While Boitard emphasised the violent side of the past, exemplified by the brutal attack on Richard, Gravelot in 1740 offered a more ambiguous representation of the past, using oppositions of light and darkness to contrast the fluidity of the Rococo style and its sensual texture with the foreboding darkness of the tree branches in the garden scene. From there, Hanmer was the first to put forward an explicit concern for historical authenticity in 1744. In his instructions to the artist Hayman, Hanmer referred to a specific scholarly source (although an eighteenth-century reconstruction of a medieval tournament) as basis for the illustration of the lists at Coventry. Hayman adds unprecedented attention to setting, emphasising the pageantry of the medieval chivalric tradition, but without forfeiting the depiction of dramatic action, inciting an emotional reaction from the reader.

The stage and the page became intrinsically intertwined in Bell's Acting edition of Shakespeare, based on the promptbooks used at Drury Lane and Covent Garden at the time, and including portraits of actors in character. This edition provides valuable insight on how Shakespeare's history plays were performed on stage, generally in eighteenth-century fashion, as the portrait of the actor Francis Aickin as Henry IV wearing a long wig and holding a tricorne hat exemplifies. Both Bell's Acting and Literary editions give prominence to Bolingbroke's character and his victory over Richard. In 1798-1800 Harding's edition engraved by Gardiner reallocates the viewer's sympathy towards the usurped king, who is depicted as the victim of Bolingbroke's oppression. The focus is once more on character, and not on setting, emphasising the tragedy and suffering by means of Gothic imagery. Characters are depicted in more spontaneous poses, different from the unnatural static positions of previous illustrations.

The Boydell Gallery in 1789 was a decisive moment in the visual representation of Shakespeare, associating the poet's name with a national project of historical painting. The big format of the canvas allowed artists to explore more details and to expand the depiction of setting, such as Brown's composition of the deposition scene and Northcote's interpretation of the entrance of Richard and Bolingbroke in London. These canvases offer a combination of pageantry and feeling, objectivity and imagination. The exhibition opposed the didacticism of art, placing art's power in its ability to move the viewer – a goal painters and actors

should likewise strive for. Fuseli, an artist that contributed to the Gallery, created the design for Chalmers' edition in 1805. Instead of the extensive space available on a canvas, Fuseli adapted his style for the constraints of the book illustration, choosing to focus on specific moments of intimate reflection, for instance, Richard's thoughts as a prisoner in Pomfret Castle. While Fuseli emphasises the dignity of Richard's contemplations before death, Thurston romanticises Bolingbroke as the honourable medieval knight in Tegg's 1812-1815 edition. At this point, the Middle Ages are explored as a way to awaken the irrational fears of the mind, in a similar manner as the novels of Anne Radcliffe at the turn of the nineteenth century.

As the century unfolded, the preoccupation with engaging the viewer's feelings remained, but in combination with an idea of art as a means of instruction as well as entertainment. Knight's *Pictorial Shakespeare* 1838-1843 offered the reader extensive extra material, using images to aid the historical explanation. However, the information in-between acts interrupted the flow of the dramatic text, breaking the reader's illusion of immersion within Shakespeare's medieval world. Richard receives more attention than Bolingbroke, who is mainly depicted in submissive positions. Knight also draws renewed attention to setting, including comparisons between the appearance of a historical site as it would have looked to fourteenth-century viewers, and how it then looked to a nineteenth-century visitor. Cornwall's 1838-1840 edition took an opposite approach. The artist Meadows gave priority to emblematic images and the use of symbols to offer a myriad of meanings through minimal expression. Historical authenticity is put to the background, favouring instead imaginative reinterpretations of the characters and settings, and using non-proportional scales to highlight the grotesqueness of the medieval past.

Finally, Halliwell proposes an updated Acting edition in 1850, illustrated with engravings based on daguerreotypes of the most prominent actors and actresses at the time in Shakespearean characters. This edition elucidates how the theatrical conventions had changed since Bell's Acting edition of 1774. Instead of approximating the historical characters on stage to the audience's contemporary time, the theatre in the mid-nineteenth century enhanced the illusion of the past being visually different from the present by the use of historically plausible costumes and setting. The daguerreotype as a new technology offered unprecedented possibilities to 'freeze' time and reproduce it more objectively than in a painting or drawing. However, the prints in Halliwell's edition do not show the actors in static unnatural

poses, as Bell's Acting edition does, but they are shown in dramatic action, as the print of Macready as Richard II exemplifies.

These visual representations of Shakespeare's characters in *Richard II* and visual reinterpretations of Shakespeare's reconstruction of the Middle Ages help us understand how the people at those different time periods engaged with and understood the past. It becomes clear that the past was gradually understood as different from the present, awakening the curiosity to understand how those people from the past lived. Hence, the increasing preoccupation with historical authenticity in the depiction of the Middle Ages. At the same time, there was an expanding desire to cross the imaginary bridge that connects present and past, by establishing connections with the people from the past, mainly through the arousal of emotional response from the reader or spectator. By understanding how the people from the past (brought to life by art) felt similar emotions as we do today, the past becomes more inviting. Although different and exotic, the past can also be home.

CHAPTER 5: FLASHES OF LIGHTNING: SHAKESPEARE IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY AND EDMUND KEAN'S *RICHARD II*

*The play'r's profession (tho' I hate the phrase,
'Tis so mechanic in these modern days)
Lies not in trick, or attitude, or start,
Nature's true knowledge is his only art.
The strong-felt passion bolts into the face,
The mind untouch'd, what is it but grimace?
To this one standard make your just appeal,
Here lies the golden secret; learn to FEEL.
Or fool, or monarch, happy, or distrest,
No actor pleases that is not possess'd.*

“The Actor”, ll. 39-48, Robert Lloyd (1733-1764)

After a gap of almost eighty years since John Rich's production of *Richard II* commissioned by the Shakespeare's Ladies Club in 1738, Edmund Kean (1787-1833) brought *Richard II* back to the stage in 1815. Kean's production is inserted within a tradition that reimagines the medieval past as a locus for feeling and emotion, a desire also expressed in the historical paintings of the time and in the zenith of Gothic literature in the 1790s. The first illustrated editions of Shakespeare's plays in the first decades of the eighteenth century favoured depictions of a confident Bolingbroke in *Richard II*, clad in armour and demanding reverence from his new subjects. However, as the century unfolded, there was a shift in interest from the usurping Bolingbroke towards the victimised Richard, with the latter depicted in meditative poses while locked up at Pomfret castle. In these images, constraining medieval walls frame the deposed king's weakness. The critic William Hazlitt (1778-1830) identified Shakespeare's protagonist in *Richard II* as a character of *pathos*, that is, of feeling combined with weakness. This combination was key in both understanding and acting the role. Nevertheless, when Edmund Kean revived the play in 1815, he tackled the character in another way. He gave a performance full of energy and confidence, reassessing Shakespeare's Richard, turning him into a

character of *passion* rather than *pathos*. His portrayal of the medieval king disappointed Hazlitt, an admirer of Kean's career. This clash between a heroic and a weak king is at the heart of my discussion concerning Kean's Middle Ages.

By this time, Shakespeare had achieved established notoriety, and was considered by most as a poetic genius. His intricate language and poetic imagery led some to believe his texts should be rather read than performed, somewhat setting his work apart from the common popular entertainment of the era. Hazlitt was an influential voice in this regard. In his account of Edmund Kean as Richard II in the premiere season at Drury Lane, Hazlitt wrote: "Representing the very finest of them [Shakespeare's plays] on the stage, even by the best actors, is, we apprehend, an abuse of the genius of the poet, and even in those of a second-rate class, the quantity of sentiment and imagery greatly outweighs the immediate impression of the situation and story" (Hazlitt, Vol. V, 221). That is because the imagination is deeply connected to one's individual impressions and perceptions, and, therefore, superior to the more passive act of witnessing.

A re-evaluation of the imagination is central to the period's understanding of art. According to Hazlitt, Shakespeare's "more refined poetical beauties and minuter strokes of character" are lost on the audience in a theatre. The passages that appeal the most to our feelings and senses are "little else than an interruption and a drag to the business of the stage" (Hazlitt, Vol. V, 222). This 'loss', in Hazlitt's view, was indefensible. For this reason, he warns his contemporaries: "we should never go to see them [the plays] acted, if we could help it" (Hazlitt, Vol. V, 222). Hazlitt indeed could not help it; he was an avid theatregoer himself, writing theatrical reviews and essays from 1813 until his death in 1830. Although Hazlitt was a passionate enthusiast of the theatrical sphere, he recommended the act of reading Shakespeare because it is a *personal* imaginative task.

In a piece for the *London Magazine* in April 1820, Hazlitt wrote that: "The age we live in is critical, didactic, paradoxical, romantic, but it is not dramatic" (*The London Magazine*, Jan-June 1820, 432). Hazlitt himself embodies the paradoxical nature of his age, exemplified by his advocacy of the act of reading Shakespeare while being himself a constant visitor at the London theatres. Nevertheless, the critic believed that no good tragedy or comedy had been written in the last fifty years up to that moment in 1820. He attributed the lack of good drama at the time to the period's preoccupation with universal issues rather than personal experiences.

Jonathan Mulrooney writes that Hazlitt's criticism offers "an imagining of what it means to be a human being in an age when the most radical of idealisms has failed and in which the British response to that trauma has begun to elide individual and local identities" (154–55). Mulrooney refers to the French Revolution in 1789, which awakened spirits of change and freedom throughout Europe, but eventually resulted in another era of tyrannical government in France, under Napoleon Bonaparte's dictatorship after the coup of 18/19 Brumaire in 1799, year VIII under the French Republican calendar. Hazlitt wrote about the consequences of the Revolution to the late-eighteenth-century individual: "That event has rivetted all eyes, and distracted all hearts; and, like people staring at a comet, in the panic and confusion in which we have been huddled together, we have not had time to laugh at one another's defects, or to condole over one another's misfortunes" (Hazlitt, *The London Magazine*, Jan-June 1820, 433). The consequence is that national concerns overshadow individual experience. As Hazlitt puts it:

We have become a nation of politicians and newsmongers; our inquiries in the streets are no less than after the health of Europe; and in men's faces, we may see strange matters written, – the rise of stocks, the loss of battles, the fall of kingdoms, and the death of kings. The Muse, meanwhile, droops on bye-corners of the mind, and is forced to take up with the refuse of our thoughts. (*The London Magazine*, Jan-June 1820, 433).

In Hazlitt's view, the focus of art had been directed towards the general nature of men, prompted by the revolutionary end of the eighteenth century, leaving no room for the appreciation of human caprices and passions – the core of tragedy and comedy.

Hazlitt disdains the rise of the "public man", shaped by the universalising character of the commercial press. The critic borrows words from Edmund Burke's anti-revolution pamphlet *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790): men have become public creatures, "embowelled of our natural entrails, and stuffed with paltry blurred sheets of paper about the rights of man" (*The London Magazine*, Jan-June 1820, 433). The public man who concerns himself with the affairs of the world and the rights of men is, according to Hazlitt, not dramatic. In this context, the critic felt that the individuality of art had lost its prominence. As a consequence, drama failed to excite an emotional response from the spectators.

The critic associated the loss of drama of his lifetime with the dominance of the English press, particularly the commercial press: "the press has been the ruin of the stage, unless we are greatly deceived" (*The London Magazine*, Jan-June 1820,

433). Newspapers were being created and printed daily, and, by the end of the eighteenth century, political and critical periodicals were established in addition to the ones that reported only news. Political ideas were thus circulating more broadly, available to the literate population.⁵² According to James van Horn Melton, the developing of this burgeoning print culture provided a medium through which private individual members could make their opinions known, and therefore public (1). This exchange of public opinion was not restricted to print, but also encompassed theatres, salons, coffee houses and other entertainment venues. These places “heralded the arrival of ‘the public’ as a cultural and political arbiter, an entity to which contemporaries increasingly came to refer as a sovereign tribunal” (Melton 2). Following the debates inspired by the French Revolution to change the old order of things, the public sphere became increasingly invested with authority over political matters.

The public individual is associated with the rise of the public sphere, as I have investigated in Chapter 1. As we have seen, political concerns that go beyond the feelings of one person find space for debate in the public sphere, and the theatre has been one such place. Drama can evoke laughter, tears, fear, or any other emotion Hazlitt could characterise as passion. However, the theatre also has a broader role, that of connecting the audience with the outside world via the stage. Hazlitt is not against the public power of theatre, but, rather, against a homogenising public sphere that would erase individuality. For Hazlitt, the theatre should highlight personal and individual experiences, which would in turn be talked about and shared in the public sphere, thus rejecting a homogenisation of identity. It is only by contrasting experiences with others that one is able to reflect on their own selfhood.

The theatrical public sphere is a place for bringing people together to discuss art and how art moves them personally. According to Mulrooney, “reading, writing, and talking about theatre take on [...] a humanizing rather than a dehumanizing

⁵² William St Clair has investigated the growth of the London book production. For example, in the period 1700-1750 there was an estimated average output of 500 books by title. Between 1800 and 1810, the number had risen to 800, an increase of about 300 books annually within roughly one hundred years. By 1827, they were 1,000 and rising fast, which meant an increase of about 200 books annually within roughly two decades (455-456). The literacy rates also increased in this period, one of the contributing factors being that progressively more occupations required the ability to read and write. According to St Clair, the literacy rates differed greatly across the United Kingdom, depending on social class and geographical location. As the author explains, “by the middle of the romantic period more than half the adult population had the ability to read, some quite well, and in some areas such as London and lowland Scotland a higher proportion” (266).

tenor" (154), different from the universalising nature of the commercial press. Allowing "the coming together of men and women in theatre's urban and unruly space", the theatre grants "nothing less than an ongoing reconception of Britain's public life along experiential rather than 'abstracted' lines" (Mulrooney 154). The experiential nature of theatre is accordingly at the core of Hazlitt's conception of the theatrical public sphere. The theatre offers the playgoer the possibility to return to the local and individual, instead of the national and general. This notion of the social role of theatre at the beginning of the nineteenth century is crucial to understanding Edmund Kean's contribution to it, as well as to placing his Shakespearean productions in context. In addition to arousing an emotional response from the audience, Kean reignites the attention to the political subtext in *Richard II*.

5.1 The Middle Ages and the Spirit of the Age

In an era that lacked 'dramaticity', returning to – or, rather, imagining – a more dramatic past was a way to reconceptualise the present, infusing it with sentiment. Artists thus created a mythical 'Age of Chivalry', bearing little resemblance to the actual medieval period, as a way to summon the emotions that the present supposedly lacked. Hence, the profusion of medieval imagery and subject-matter in literature, art and theatre at the turn of the nineteenth century. The idealism of the real world had failed with the unsuccessful Revolution in France, but the fictional world allowed alternative scenarios, including an alternative Middle Ages.

As we have seen, Hazlitt believed that dramatic poetry was incompatible with the political and revolutionary spirit of his age. He illustrates his point referring to Sir Walter Scott's historical reconstruction in fiction. In Hazlitt's view, Scott excelled in the "grotesque and the romantic", offering "that which has been preserved of ancient manners and customs, and barbarous times and characters, and which strikes and staggers the mind the more, by the contrast it affords to the present artificial and effeminate state of society" (*The London Magazine*, Jan-June 1820, 436). Interestingly, Hazlitt counteracts the artificiality of his age with the ancient manners and customs of the "barbarous" medieval past. The critic sees his time as effeminate in contrast to a masculine medieval past, characterising his present age as passive and lacking individual heroic initiative.

As we have seen in Chapter 2, Scott was a prominent figure in the Medieval Revival, creating stories of medieval Britain and Scotland such as *Ivanhoe* (1819) and *The Monastery* (1820) that would infuse the minds of his contemporaries with romantic images of the Middle Ages. As Alice Chandler explains, Scott created such minutely detailed descriptions of the medieval world that many readers took his fiction for historical truth (12), intermingling fact and fiction, and reinforcing a perception of the medieval past as a place for heroic adventure. Chandler identifies Scott's medieval myth as appealing to the desires of his age: "its wish to make the individual life heroic and yet to unify and order society", it was also related "to the Romantic fear of time and to its converse, the desire for permanence and stasis" (51). The Middle Ages could materialise the period's desire for an ideal and stable society.

Ivanhoe was Scott's first novel about the English past. According to Hazlitt, despite "teeming with life and throbbing with interest", it was "a decided failure" when compared to his previous works. He claims that the variety of events and characters is distracting, there is too much historical detail, and, in short, "the body of the work is cold and colourless" (*The London Magazine*, Jan-June 1820, 438). Hazlitt's explanation of the limitations of Scott's writing illustrates the relevance he confers on emotions: instead of being passionate, *Ivanhoe* "is strictly national; [...] traditional; [...] relies on actual manners and external badges of character; [...] insists on costume and dialect" (*The London Magazine*, Jan-June 1820, 438). Hazlitt sees *Ivanhoe* as a representation of national history and concerns, which fails to affect the reader with instances of the passions that move human nature in general.

Hazlitt's comparison between the characters Rob Roy, from Scott's 1817 eponymous novel, and Robin Hood from *Ivanhoe*, is telling: "What rich Highland blood flows through the veins of the one; colours his hair, freckles his skin, bounds in his step, swells in his heart, kindles in his eye: what poor waterish puddle creeps through the soul of Locksley; and what a lay, listless figure he makes in his coat of Lincoln-green, like a figure to let, in the novel of *Ivanhoe*!" (*The London Magazine*, Jan-June 1820, 438). Scott's Rob Roy springs from the past with passion, whereas his Robin Hood fails to convey any emotion to his readers – he is merely the representation of a historical myth on the page. Hazlitt justifies this difference by speculating that Scott did not have the same interest in English history as he had in Scottish tradition, the setting of his previous novels. Whether or not that was the

case, what Hazlitt's review demonstrates is that the past evoked in *Rob Roy* is more capable of inciting a passionate response than *Ivanhoe*.

Hazlitt exposes the borrowing of novel plots to be adapted to the stage as a lack of creativity, another endorsement of the artificiality of his era. For instance, Thomas Dibdin (1771-1841) staged a melodramatic adaptation of Scott's poem "The Lady of the Lake" at the Surrey Theatre in September 1810. The poem had been published four months previously and sold over 25,000 copies, promising a high attendance at the theatre (Tanitch 30). The period also witnessed theatrical adaptations of a number of fairy tales, including a revival of Michael Kelly's *Bluebeard or Female Curiosity* (1798) at Covent Garden in February 1811. This production included the appearance of sixteen white horses and a dog on stage, which caused a sensation in the audience (Tanitch 31). Characters from the sixteenth-century Italian *commedia dell'arte* were also seen on stage in productions such as Charles Farley's (1771-1859) *Harlequin Asmodeus and Cupid on Crutches* at Covent Garden in December 1810, Joseph Grimaldi's (1778-1837) *Harlequin and Padmanaba or, The Goldfish* at Surrey Theatre in December 1811 and Dibdin's *Harlequin Brilliant* at Sadler's Wells Theatre in July 1815. Reflecting on the adaptation of old stories, Hazlitt writes that "with all the craving which the public and the Managers feel for novelty in this respect, they can only procure it at second-hand by vamping up with new scenery, decorations, and dresses, what has been already rendered at once sacred and familiar to us in the closet" (*The London Magazine*, Jan-June 1820, 437). In his view, the written text is *sacred*, and should therefore be confined to the pleasure of individual reading. The way a novel is contrived, the critic says, is not fitting for the stage. That is why he believed that the theatrical adaptations of novels could rarely be successful.

Hazlitt refers to two specific adaptations of Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819) to demonstrate his point: one called *Ivanhoe* at Covent Garden, and the other called *The Hebrew*, at Drury Lane. Both were staged in the first months of the year 1820, speedily following the publication of the novel and profiting from its success and popularity. Hazlitt acknowledges the commercial advantages of adapting a successful novel: it "fills the coffers of the theatre for a time; gratifies public curiosity till another new novel appears" and, he adds sarcastically, "probably flatters the illustrious prose-writer, who must be fastidious indeed" (*The London Magazine*, Jan-June 1820, 437). He claims that theatrical adaptations offer only "a twentieth part of

[the author's] genius", comparing it to "showing a brick for a house". Surprisingly, however, Hazlitt was pleased with the two aforementioned adaptations of Scott's *Ivanhoe*: the play at Covent Garden "seems to give all (or nearly so) that we remember distinctly in the novel", and the one at Drury Lane, "which constantly wanders from it [the novel], without any apparent object or meaning, yet does so without exciting much indignation or regret" (*The London Magazine*, Jan-June 1820, 439).

George Soane (1790-1860), a known author of melodramas, wrote *The Hebrew*. Hazlitt felt that, as a play, it "is ill-constructed, without proportion or connection", and as poetry, "it has its beauties, and those we think neither mean nor few". But the production's main achievement was the "individual touches of nature and passion" (*The London Magazine*, Jan-June 1820, 439). He found particularly moving "the turns and starts of passion in feeble and wronged old age", which were "delicate and striking", delivered mainly by Isaac, the Jew of York, played by Edmund Kean. Isaac's character combines feebleness and passion, a combination that Hazlitt understands as *pathos*. It indicates that Kean was able to perform such feelings on stage, but decided to take a different approach when acting Shakespeare's Richard II five years earlier, as I argue below.

If Hazlitt had to choose only one of the stage adaptations of *Ivanhoe*, he recommends his readers the following: "Of the two plays, [...] go to see *Ivanhoe* at Covent Garden: but for ourselves, we would rather see the *Hebrew* a second time" (*The London Magazine*, Jan-June 1820, 440). The fact that Kean managed to offer the public expressive instances of feeling makes the experience at Drury Lane more meaningful than the superior textual adaptation of *Ivanhoe* at Covent Garden. Hazlitt puts the characters' *pathos* in prominence over the grandeur of the scenery or historical authenticity. He adds that the fact that Mr. Penley, the actor who played *Ivanhoe* at Drury Lane, was wearing an armour, "done after a bold and noble design", only hindered the scene, rendering it nearly ridiculous, since he had to run from one side of the stage to the other in those heavy clothes, "as fast as his legs can carry him" (*The London Magazine*, Jan-June 1820, 439). In this instance, the accuracy of costume worked as an impediment for the actor, breaking the audience's illusion of seeing the past.

The theatregoer's experience is necessarily framed by the actor, who works as a threshold between the dramatic text and the audience – much as the prologue

functions as a liminal space between the world within the theatre and the world outside, as we have seen in Chapter 1. Hazlitt argues that the actor's business is "to imitate humanity in general". However, it is a business "that perishes with him, and leaves no traces of itself, but in the faint descriptions of the pen or pencil" (Hazlitt, Vol. V, 173) – hence the importance of the theatrical critic to reconstruct on page the actor's art. The actor should affect the critic, causing an impression that he would deem worthy of describing to his readers.

5.2 The Sun's Bright Child: Edmund Kean

The previous section has described the state of the theatrical public sphere in the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Edmund Kean's production was first staged. Despite Hazlitt's deeper appreciation of Shakespeare on the page, he admits that there are certain aspects of the Shakespearean drama that are livelier on the wooden platform: "it is only the pantomime part of tragedy, the exhibition of immediate and physical distress, that which gives the greatest opportunity for 'inexpressible dumb-show and noise'", quoting from Hamlet (Hazlitt, Vol. V, 222). The wordless elements of the dramatic text, moments of action and expression of feelings, can better be presented by actors on stage.

Hazlitt's appreciation of the embodiment of emotion on stage refers to a style of acting still reminiscent from the mid-eighteenth century, whose main exponent was the theatrical star David Garrick (1717-1779). The extract of the poem that opens this chapter, "The Actor" by Robert Lloyd (1733-1764), written in honour of Garrick, "thrice Happy Genius", exemplifies the purpose of the actor: "learn to FEEL", in capital letters. Hazlitt believed that only a few actors of his time had managed to achieve such expectation and to fill Garrick's shoes, Edmund Kean being one of them. Given the period's understanding of art as a means to awaken feelings, the perception of the medieval past as a trigger for emotion, and the ambiguous impression of Shakespeare's Richard II (either as a tyrannical ruler or as a weak and suffering king), it is significant to examine how Kean interpreted the play and the character in the 1815 season at Drury Lane.

1815 was a year of renewed political unrest – England was in the fourth year of the Regency, since King George III (1738-1820) had been deemed unfit to rule in 1811, and France witnessed the deposition and exile of the controversial Napoléon

Bonaparte (1769-1821). In this context, Kean performs a heroic Richard II, distant from Hazlitt's ideal of the Shakespearean character as one of weakness combined with feeling. It was not a result of Kean's inability to convey such a combination, since he was praised for those precise elements in his acting of the Jew in the 1820 adaptation of Scott's *Ivanhoe* at Drury Lane. Although Kean's Richard II was performed five years previously to the Jew in *The Hebrew*, it can be assumed that Kean's choice to perform a heroic Richard II instead of a feeble character was deliberate, which leads me to reflect on the possible reasons for this choice of approach.

Edmund Kean spent his childhood in proximity to the theatre. He was the illegitimate son of the actress and prostitute Ann Carey, who left him under the care of other women, especially of Charlotte Tidswell, or 'Aunt Tid', the mistress of his uncle, Moses Kean. Tidswell was a member of the Drury Lane company and encouraged Edmund to participate in the theatrical sphere. He made occasional appearances in minor roles as a child at Drury Lane, he became a part of John Richardson's booth-stage troupe that toured from village to village, and secured roles in pantomimes and illegitimate playhouses in the provinces (Thomson 139–40).

When Richard II premiered in March 1815, Kean's reputation was already established as the most promising actor of the age. He had made his debut in London only a year before with the role of Shylock in a revival of *The Merchant of Venice* on 26 January at Drury Lane. Hazlitt wrote about Kean's first appearance in the royal theatre in *The Morning Chronicle* of 27 January: "For voice, eye, action, and expression, no actor has come out for many years at all equal to him" (Hazlitt, Vol. V, 179). Hazlitt understands Shylock to be the character of "a man brooding over one idea, that of its wrongs, and bent on one unalterable purpose, that of revenge" (Hazlitt, Vol. V, 179). Kean was not as successful in conveying this feeling, according to the critic, but he excelled in "giving effect to the conflict of passions arising out of the contrasts of situation, in varied vehemence of declamation, in keenness of sarcasm, in the rapidity of his transitions from one tone and feeling to another, in propriety and novelty of action, presenting a succession of striking pictures, and giving perpetually fresh shocks of delight and surprise" (Hazlitt, Vol. V, 179). Hazlitt appreciated Kean's ability to make quick transitions – both physically and emotionally, depicting the inner conflict of the character.

Peter Thomson writes that Kean differed in style and approach from John Philip Kemble (1757-1823), the theatre manager of the Covent Garden of the previous generation, although still active on stage at the beginning of Kean's career but soon to retire in 1817. Kemble was a man of the ruling theatrical elite, son of the actor and theatre manager Roger Kemble (1721-1802) and brother of the great tragedian Sarah Siddons (1755-1831), whereas Kean "came to Shakespearean tragedy like an invader, not an adherent" (Thomson 145). In relation to style, Kemble relied on a scholarly pursuit to give a sense of order and unity to the Shakespearean canon, while Kean, "lacking the steadiness of purpose that distinguished Kemble at his best, sought only to exploit the emotional range" (Thomson 150). Kemble belonged to an earlier tradition of Shakespearean acting, focused on form and closer to the standards of eighteenth-century theatre, and Kean introduced a new manner of understanding the actor's role, one that Hazlitt shared: the embodiment of feeling.

Thomson adds that Kemble was confident of a successful season for the Covent Garden in 1814, having recovered from the damage to his reputation occasioned by the 1809 Old Price riots. The fact that a new actor was to premiere during that season at the rival theatre did not worry Kemble. In January 1814 Kemble starred as Coriolanus at Covent Garden, while Kean performed Shylock at Drury Lane. Kean opted for a different approach to Shylock's character, different from what other actors, Kemble included, had previously done. The poet Bryan Waller Procter (1787-1874), one of the first biographers of Kean, wrote that Kean had only met the rest of the cast on the morning of the first performance. The other actors believed the new and still unknown performer was "sure to fail". As the rehearsal started and Kean spoke his first words, he was interrupted by the manager Raymond, who did not approve of Kean's changes to the established part. The actor supposedly replied: "it is an innovation, Sir; it is totally different from anything that has ever been done on these boards. [...] perhaps I may be wrong; but, if so, the Public will set me right" (Procter 31-32). Kean was not wrong, his impersonation of the wronged Jew drew applause from the public. Procter describes how Kean "went on, victorious, to the end [of the character's participation in the play]; gathering glory after glory, shout after shout, till the curtain fell. Nothing like that acting, – nothing like that applause, had, for many previous years, resounded within the walls of the ancient or modern Drury. It was a new era" (Procter 39). Kemble was forced to admit the strength of Kean's novelties in acting, which was confirmed by the new actor's subsequent

popularity in the London theatrical scene. Kemble was sixty years old when he retired from the stage in 1817, three years after Kean's first appearance at Drury Lane. It was, perhaps, Kean's newfound fame as well as Kemble's old age that led him away from the spotlight.

In February of the same year, Kean played the role of Richard III. The play had been staged a year earlier at Covent Garden. On that occasion, the popular former child actor William Henry West Betty (1791-1874), now aged 22, played the title role, but it was not a success (Tanitch 37). On the other hand, Kean received a lot of attention for his performance at Drury Lane, mainly positive reviews for bringing innovation to the role. Hazlitt describes it as "entirely his own, without any traces of imitation of any other actor" (Hazlitt, Vol. V, 180). The critic pinpoints what it is about Shakespeare's character that the actor should be able to perform: Shakespeare's Richard is "towering and lofty, as well as aspiring; equally impetuous and commanding; haughty, violent, and subtle; bold and treacherous; confident in his strength, as well as in his cunning; raised high by his birth, and higher by his genius and his crimes; a royal usurper, a princely hypocrite, a tyrant, and a murderer of the House of Plantagenet" (Hazlitt, Vol. V, 181). This is a role that Kemble and also Thomas Cooke (1786-1864) had played before, but neither had managed to convey Richard's passionately conflicted character. Although Hazlitt acknowledges that Kean did not succeed completely, he affirms that the actor managed to surpass his predecessors.

Thomson explains the political repercussions of performing Richard III in 1814: George III had been declared unfit to rule, the Prince Regent's inclination to marry was as cynical as Richard III's, and few of the king's twelve surviving children were free from scandal (155). The representation of the bad use of power on stage would possibly lead the audience to draw parallels between the stage and the state of the monarchy. Moreover, it was a period in which continental Europe still felt the consequences of the French Revolution's attack on ancient systems of hereditary government, and witnessed the rise and fall of Napoléon as both a challenger of such old power institutions but also as a man fallen prey to ambition and thirst for power. Peter Manning stresses that Kean acted Cibber's adaptation of the Shakespearean text, which "replace[d] subtleties with crude effects, and reduce[d] Shakespeare's Machiavellian figure to a boisterous monster" (193). The lawyer and diarist Crabb Robinson (1775-1867), for instance, described Kean's portrayal of the king as

“unkingly” (Thomson 156) for accentuating the evils of abusing power and “royal misdemeanour”, incompatible with an idealised perception of the monarch.

Lord Byron (1788-1824) was one of the spectators of Kean’s Richard III. Byron was an early admirer of Kean, and Kean’s performance fascinated the poet to such a degree that he attended the theatre every night during the first season; he sent Kean an elegant snuff-box from Italy, and wrote the following verses:

Thou art the sun’s bright child! The genius that irradiates thy mind
Caught all its purity and light from heaven Thine is the task, with mastery most perfect,
To bind the passions captive in thy train
[...] I herald thee to Immortality! (Hackett 128)

The poet was enthralled by one of the “added points” that Kean introduced to the part, especially the one on the eve of the Battle of Bosworth. Both the critics Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt (1784-1859) (who saw the play in 1815 after his release from prison) wrote about this specific moment. Hunt was disappointed overall with Kean’s acting, deeming his style “too artificial to be a mere falling off from nature” (Rowell 52). However, despite Kean’s artificiality, Hunt praises the particular moments of naturalness and authenticity that Kean brings to the character, “passages of truth and originality” (Rowell 52). One such moment is that on the night before the battle. According to Hunt,

it would be impossible to express in a deeper manner the intentness of Richard’s mind upon the battle that was about to take place, or to quit the scene with an abruptness and self-recollecting, pithy and familiar, than by the reveries in which he [Kean] stands drawing lines upon the ground with the point of his sword, and his sudden recovery of himself with a ‘Good night’. (Rowell 53)

It is one of Kean’s special moments, because he manages to convey feeling with naturalness, awakening the spectator’s sympathy. Kean’s creation of the king drawing on sand with the point of his sword became iconic, and Byron incorporated it in his conspicuous “Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte [sic]”, from April 1814, after the poet’s disappointment with the Emperor’s easy retreat to the island of Elba:

Then haste thee to thy sullen Isle, And gaze upon the sea;
That element may meet thy smile— It ne’er was ruled by thee!
Or trace with thine all idle hand In loitering mood upon the sand
That Earth is now as free! That Corinth’s pedagogue hath now
Transferred his by-word to thy brow. (ll. 118-126).

Byron connects Kean's performance of a meditative moment that precedes the tragic battle at Bosworth with Napoléon's isolation in the island. Byron's biased poetical expression manifests his disillusionment with the former hero-figure in forsaking his ambitious projects. Byron is embittered at the failed attempt to retain a French Republic and its consequential drawbacks in initiating a republic state in England, more than he is concerned with the fall of the individual man. Byron's poem expresses resentment for what Napoléon had represented for him, which was, in fact, but an illusion, a "fabricated" image of Napoléon that Byron constructed for himself.

5.2.1 Kean and Napoléon Bonaparte

The moment when Kean's Richard draws meditatively on the sand with his sword incites sympathy from the beholder, who – even if temporarily – identifies with the calculating Richard. It is a complex and contradictory emotion to feel sympathy for the villain of the play, hence its powerfulness. By transferring this impassioned moment to Napoléon, Byron awakens the same paradoxical reaction from his readers.

Byron also identified himself with the pre-exile heroic figure of Bonaparte. As Manning puts it, "it is not fortuitous that an echo of Kean should be found in *the Ode on Napoleon*, for Byron's self-identification with Napoleon was recognized by their contemporaries in a commonplace linking of the two that often expanded to include Edmund Kean" (196). Byron's poem thus connects himself, Napoléon, Kean and Richard III. The playgoer Leveson Gower writes in a letter after watching Kean as Richard III: "Kean gives me the idea of Buonaparte in a furor. I was frightened, alarmed" (Sprague 79). The Irish poet and diarist Melesina Trench (1768-1827), in her *Correspondence*, writes about her experience seeing the same production: "[Kean] reminded me constantly of Buonaparte that restless quickness, that Catiline inquietude, that fearful somewhat resembling the impatience of a lion in his cage. Though I am not a lover of the drama [...], I could willingly have heard him repeat his part that same evening" (Trench 283). The poet Keats also sees the connection; he categorises Byron and Napoléon, as well as Charmian from *Antony and Cleopatra*, as belonging to "the worldly, theatrical and pantomimical" in opposition to "the unearthly, spiritual and ethereal" (Keats 395). Finally, Thomson compares Kean's

impulse to exceed expectations with the character of “the heroes of 1814”: Byron and Napoléon (163).

These examples demonstrate that the images of Kean and Napoléon shared a common ground in the early-nineteenth-century cultural scene in London. In Frederick William Hawkins’ biography of the actor *The Life of Edmund Kean* (1869), he writes about Kean’s acceptance of the audience’s applause after his second time as Shylock during his debut season at Drury Lane. He writes: “The fact that, after he had made a graceful acknowledgment of the welcoming applause, he took about as much notice of those in front as Napoleon is said to have done of his Parisian audiences, at once impressed the spectators in his favour” (140). Hawkins’ comparison between Kean’s theatrical audience at Drury Lane with Napoléon’s Parisian audiences adds topicality to the connection.

Hawkins tells the story of how Kean returned to Portsmouth as a renowned actor and supposedly looked for the proprietor of a tavern who had been generous to him as a young itinerant actor. He wanted to return the kindness he had received, but learned that the old man had passed away. Kean found the servant who had worked for the man, who told the actor how the old man had died. When Kean asked for the time, he realised that the servant did not own a watch. He then gave the man five pounds so that he could buy a watch and think of his old master every time he checked the time. Although this “magnanimous and almost extravagant generosity”, as Hawkins puts it, cannot be verified, the story serves as a way for Hawkins to compare the actor with Napoléon once again:

Edmund illustrated his natural goodness of heart, and exhibited a superiority to the silly vanity of wishing to bury his antecedents in oblivion. The spirit which prompted Napoleon to astonish the crowned heads at Dresden by adverting to something which happened “when he was a lieutenant in the regiment of La Fêre,” and Goldsmith to startle a brilliant circle at Bennet Langton’s by referring to something which occurred “when he lived among the beggars in Axe-lane,” distinguished the great tragedian of fifty years ago in an eminent degree. (324–25).

For Hawkins, Edmund Kean, Napoléon and the writer Oliver Goldsmith⁵³ (1728-1774) were examples of men who achieved success but who did not hide their humble beginnings. It is interesting to note that Hawkins writes over thirty-five years

⁵³ Goldsmith was part of The Club or Literary Club, a London dining club founded in February 1764 by Joshua Reynolds, Samuel Johnson, Bennet Langton, Edmund Burke, and others. The actor David Garrick and the Shakespearean editor George Steevens were also members.

after Kean's death, but the association of the actor with Bonaparte still remained. Moreover, Hawkins' recollection of the French military leader is by no means impartial: there was only mention of Napoléon's humility and generosity, there is no mention of his tyrannical rule.

On 23 November 1813, one year before Kean's debut at Drury Lane, Byron wrote in his diary about his discontent with Napoléon's eminent fall after his failed conquest in Russia. For Byron, Napoléon was a symbol of republicanism against the old monarchical system that was still strong in England. He noted:

Past events have unnerved me; and all I can now do is to make life an amusement, and look on while others play. After all, even the highest game of crowns and sceptres, what is it? Vide Napoleon's last twelvemonth. It has completely upset my system of fatalism. I thought, if crushed, he would have fallen, when *fractus illabatur orbis*, and not have been pared away to gradual insignificance; that all this was not a mere jeu of the gods, but a prelude to greater changes and mightier events. But men never advance beyond a certain point; and here we are, retrograding, to the dull, stupid old system, – balance of Europe – poising straws upon kings' noses, instead of wringing them off! Give me a republic, or a despotism of one, rather than the mixed government of one, two, three. A republic! – look in the history of the Earth – Rome, Greece, Venice, France, Holland, America, our short (eheu!) Commonwealth, and compare it with what they did under masters. (Byron, Vol. II, 272–73).

Byron's diary entry makes it clear his belief that, even if Napoléon was a despotic ruler, he was still a change from the old hereditary monarchy. On 18 February 1814, Byron is afraid of the outcome of Napoléon's enterprise, fearing the end of the 'Republic': "Napoleon! – this week will decide his fate.⁵⁴ All seems against him; but I believe and hope he will win – at least, beat back the invaders. What right have we to prescribe sovereigns to France? Oh for a Republic! 'Brutus, thou sleepest.'⁵⁵ (Byron, Vol. I, 393)

Byron even had a print of Napoléon, engraved by Raffaello Morghen (1758-1833), framed and hung on his bedroom wall: "It is framed; and the Emperor becomes his robes as if he had been hatched in them" (Byron, Vol. I, 396). Byron's attitude exemplifies the myth constructed around the figure of the French military leader. His image was used to advocate different – and, sometimes, opposing – ideas. In 1819, Richard Whately (1787-1863) published the pamphlet *Historic Doubts*

⁵⁴ Napoléon fought the battle of Mormant against Marshal Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher's army on 17 February, 1814, and that of Montereau against Prince Schwartzberg on the 18th. The French were victorious in both.

⁵⁵ Byron quotes from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.

Relative to Napoleon Bonaparte. In its introduction, the writer comments that the public's attention on "the extraordinary personage from whose ambition we are supposed to have so narrowly escaped" has not abated: "We are still occupied in recounting the exploits, discussing the character, enquiring into the present situation, and even conjecturing as to the future prospects of Napoleon Buonaparte" (Whately 9). The popular fascination with Bonaparte's history is based on a constructed image of the myth: "the extraordinary nature" of his exploits, "their greatness and extensive importance", as well as their "unexampled strangeness" and the "stimulant mysterious uncertainty that hangs over the character of the man" all contributed to a "fabricated" image of Napoléon (Whately 9–10). Descriptions of Napoléon varied from a man "of extraordinary talents and courage" to a man "of very moderate abilities, and a rank coward"; his expedition against Egypt was seen as "planned and conducted, according to some, with the most consummate skill", and, to others, "with the utmost wildness and folly". Whately does not deny the existence of Bonaparte but does refute the Bonaparte 'created' by newspapers. He adds, sarcastically: "whatever is *long adhered to* and often *repeated*, especially if it also appears in *several different papers* (and this, though they notoriously copy from one another,) is almost sure to be generally believed" (20). Repetition creates an illusion of truth.

The newspapers also had a pecuniary advantage for circulating extraordinary stories about Napoléon, since they would be more appealing to the public, who would in turn be incited to buy the paper. Finally, periodicals also normally followed a determined political stance, for which the articles would be adapted to enforce the view of the paper. In this case, Whately humorously adds:

Now it must be admitted, that Buonaparte is a political bugbear, most convenient to any administration: "if you do not adopt our measures and reject those of our opponents, Buonaparte will be sure to prevail over you; if you do not submit to the Government, at least under our administration, this formidable enemy will take advantage of your insubordination to conquer and enslave you: pay your taxes cheerfully, or the tremendous Buonaparte will take all from you". (24).

Members and supporters of the Whig party, for instance, "the warm advocates for liberty, and opposers of the encroachments of monarchical power", supported Napoléon's campaign even though he had been represented as having been "if not a tyrant, at least an absolute despot" (Whately 32). Whately speculates as to why these contrasting images were circulating – and why people believed so

easily in them – and the result is a satiric cautionary tale against the unreliability of the press and the propagandistic war of political parties. Additionally, Whately's pamphlet sheds light on the ambiguity surrounding the representation of Napoléon in the second decade of the nineteenth century. Representing Bonaparte as either a threat or a victory, or as either a tyrant or a hero, affected the way art depicted power and monarchy at the time.

5.2.2 Kean's Richard II

In Kean's second season at Drury Lane, the actor performed an ambiguous representation of monarchical power. In comparison with Richard III's "noise and bustle", Hazlitt admits he prefers "the nature and feeling" of Richard II, where "the weakness of the king leaves us leisure to take a greater interest in the misfortunes of the man" (Hazlitt, Vol. IV, 272). After a demonstration of kingly authority and the arbitrariness of his behaviour in Act I, the spectator faces Richard II "staggering under the unlooked-for blows of fortune, bewailing his loss of kingly power, not preventing it, sinking under the aspiring genius of Bolingbroke, his authority trampled on, his hopes failing him, and his pride crushed and broken down under insults and injuries, which his own misconduct had provoked, but which he has not the courage or manliness to resent" (Hazlitt, Vol. IV, 272). Whereas the focus of interest in Richard III is the ascension to power, in Richard II it is the fall from power that takes centre stage. While Richard III is a cruel cold-blooded tyrant, Richard II is a weak effeminate victim of Bolingbroke's cunning.

The role of Richard II evokes a different type of emotion from the audience than that of Richard III. As Hazlitt explains: "we feel neither respect nor love for the deposed monarch; for he is as wanting in energy as in principle: but we pity him, for he pities himself" (Hazlitt, Vol. IV, 272). The pity incited by the Shakespearean character creates a bond with the audience, who sympathises with Richard not as a body politic but as a body natural: "The sufferings of the man make us forget that he ever was a king" (Hazlitt, Vol. IV, 273). His mortality, his weakness, his uncertainty is what renders Richard a powerful character, but one of pathos and not passion.

Hazlitt reviewed Kean's performance as the title role for *The Examiner* on 19 March 1815:

If his conception is not always just or profound, his execution is masterly; that where he is not the very character he assumes, he makes a most brilliant rehearsal of it; that he never wants energy, ingenuity, and animation, though he is often deficient in dignity, grace, and tenderness; that if he frequently disappoints us in those parts where we expect him to do the most, he as frequently surprises us by striking out unexpected beauties of his own; and that the objectionable parts of his acting arise chiefly from the physical impediments he has to overcome. (Hazlitt, Vol. V, 224).

This extract of Hazlitt's criticism illustrates the author's ambiguous perception of Kean's acting style. Although Kean may not have reached Hazlitt's standards to convey the Shakespearean genius, the critic grants that the actor conveys emotion, even surprising the audience by offering his own personal contribution to the Shakespearean character, his well-known innovative individual touches.

Hazlitt writes that it was a common assumption that Richard II was Kean's finest role until that point in his career in 1815, despite his success as Richard III the previous season. Nevertheless, Hazlitt found it "a total misrepresentation" (Hazlitt, Vol. V, 223). In Kean's Richard II, Hazlitt perceived "only one or two electrical shocks", whereas in other roles the actor had offered many more. Hazlitt's main criticism on Kean's acting was that he was either energetic or nothing, he made Richard "a character of passion, that is, of feeling combined with energy; whereas it is a character of pathos, that is to say, of feeling combined with weakness" (Hazlitt, Vol. V, 223). Hazlitt's distinction between 'passion' and 'pathos' is significant, the latter being a combination of feeling with weakness, the core of Richard's tragedy, and a challenging emotion for an actor to convey. Procter manifests a similar opinion concerning Kean's Richard II. Although an admirer of the actor's career, Procter thought Kean's "was not a true portrait of the weak and melancholy Richard" (126). Procter also identified the lack of what Hazlitt describes as pathos in Kean's role: "The grandson of Edward the Third was not fierce nor impetuous, but weak and irritable, and in his downfall utterly prostrate in spirit. We did not recognise these qualities in the acting of Mr. Kean, who was almost as fiery and energetic as he used to be in Richard the Third" (Procter 126). Both Procter's and Hazlitt's reviews indicate that Kean could not offer a combination of emotion and frailty to the spectator. Kean gave energy and passion, but no despair.

In Hazlitt's 1820 recollection of the state of drama in England during his lifetime, the critic declares Kean to be the greatest tragedian alive: "We do not think there has been in our remembrance any tragic performer equal to Mr. Kean" (Hazlitt, *The London Magazine*, Jan 1820, 68). The only exception for Hazlitt was the 'Tragic

Muse', Sarah Siddons, who had retired from the stage in 1812. In relation to Kean's acting style, Hazlitt wrote that "Mr. Kean is all effort, all violence, all extreme passion: he is possessed with a fury, a demon that leaves him no repose, no time for thought, or room for imagination" (Hazlitt, *The London Magazine*, Jan 1820, 68). The words Hazlitt uses to describe Kean in acting highlight the tragedian's energetic style, which is valuable for embodying several Shakespearean characters, although not Richard II.

In 1817, Kean played the leading role in *Othello* at Drury Lane. In an entry dated 27 April, 1823, published in the second part of *Table Talk* (1836), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) recalls his experience watching Kean as *Othello*: "Kean is original; but he copies from himself. His rapid descents from the hyper-tragic to the infra-colloquial, though sometimes productive of great effect, are often unreasonable. To see him act, is like reading Shakespeare by flashes of lightning" (41). Coleridge draws attention to the abrupt alternations between highly energetic and ordinary instances in Kean's acting, his "inspired footnotes in action", as Thompson phrases it. The simile comparing Kean's dramatisation with reading Shakespeare "by flashes of lightning" illustrates the interweaving of darkness with moments of intense brightness.

The critic George Henry Lewes (1817-1878) compared Kean's acting with the art style of the Italian painter Caravaggio (1571-1610):

Although fond, far too fond, of abrupt transitions – passing from vehemence to familiarity, and mingling strong lights and shadows with Caravaggio's force of unreality – nevertheless his instinct taught him what few actors are taught – that a strong emotion, after discharging itself in one massive current, continues for a time expressing itself in feebler currents. The waves are not stilled when the storm has passed away. There remains the ground-swell troubling the deeps. In watching Kean's quivering muscles and altered tones you felt the subsidence of passion. The voice might be calm, but there was a tremor in it; the face might be quiet, but there were vanishing traces of the recent agitation. (8–9)

Lewes compares Kean's intertwining of intense and feeble moments on stage with Caravaggio's chiaroscuro painting technique. The fact that Lewes and his contemporaries referred to painters to understand theatre might suggest a static and pictorial understanding of the performing art. However, Caravaggio's paintings convey movement and feeling, the same objectives that Lewes and Hazlitt set for the

theatre. Such moments that Hazlitt understands as of “extreme passion” distinguished Kean from other actors of his time, and started – as Procter would put it – a “new era”. However, as Lewes explains, as important as starting a fit of passionate acting was the knowledge of how to subside from it, hence Kean’s customary pauses or silences that worked for impact as well as for recomposing himself.

Forker explains Hazlitt’s criticism of Kean’s performance as mainly resulting from the alterations made by Richard Wroughton in his adaptation of the text – the one used by Kean for the production. Hazlitt considered the text as the best adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Richard II* so far, since “it consists entirely of omissions, except one or two scenes which are idly tacked on to the conclusion” (Hazlitt, Vol. V, 224). However, that was not the case. Wroughton not only deleted parts of the original text, but also added a combination of other Shakespearean extracts, exposing Bolingbroke’s explicit plan to seize the crown and dissipating the ambiguity that surrounds the character in Shakespeare’s text. In the following section, I analyse Wroughton’s adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Richard II* as used for performance at Drury Lane in 1815 by Edmund Kean. For my analysis, I refer to the transcription of Kean’s promptbook, corrected by the prompter George Charles Carr. This document is currently held at the Folger Library.

5.3 *How sweet a thing it is to wear a crown*: Richard Wroughton’s textual adaptation of *Richard II*

In the same manner as eighteenth-century adaptations of Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, Wroughton’s textual adaptation contains substantial changes: more than a third of the lines of the play were cut, and around two hundred were inserted, including extracts from other Shakespearean plays. For instance, when the queen finds her husband Richard dead on stage, she delivers King Lear’s words spoken over the body of his daughter Cordelia: “Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life, / And thou no breath at all?” (5.3.305–306). It is not clear whether the audience would have recognised these extracts from other plays. However, the fact that Wroughton borrowed excerpts from Shakespeare’s texts instead of creating new ones himself indicates a preference for the Shakespearean authorial voice. Even though the words

about Cordelia did not belong in *Richard II*, they were still genuinely Shakespeare's creation. The selection made by Wroughton demonstrates an inclination to borrow passages from other plays that would convey emotion. As Bate and Rasmussen assert, Wroughton's text was a "natural successor" of Theobald's adaptation, foregrounding spectacle over language or politics (129). The text favours words that allow the actor to perform passionately.

While re-working Shakespeare's *Richard II*, Wroughton introduced a pastiche Elizabethan song sung by Blanche (one of the queen's ladies) in the Garden Scene, allowed more space to the role of the Queen, focused the plot more exclusively on the conflict between Bolingbroke and the king, and rendered Richard's character more heroic than in the Shakespearean original text. Forker sees the latter as a reason for Kean's energetic acting, which was criticised as lacking pathos by Hazlitt (Forker, *Richard II, 1780-1920* 106). Since Wroughton's text suggests a more decisive and less weak Richard, Kean acted it accordingly. Nevertheless, Wroughton's changes did not bother the audience. It was, in fact, a commercial success: it was staged 13 times in the first season, and continued to be part of the theatre repertory until 1828. It was also staged in America in 1820 and 1826 with Kean again in the leading role. According to Dawson and Yachnin, "Kean's 'passion' was contagious and audiences responded enthusiastically, despite (or perhaps because of) the depredations made to the final act of the play by its adapter" (83). Wroughton's version of the play ends with a repentant Bolingbroke confessing his crimes and with the Queen's death on stage. Wroughton thus creates events that would incite the audience's emotional reaction: instead of Bolingbroke's ambiguous regret at the sight of Richard's coffin, as in the Shakespearean original, Wroughton ends with the melodramatic death of a heartbroken queen and the confession of a penitent usurper, fearing God's punishment. As a result, the audience feels deeper the offence of Richard's murder.

In the advertisement to his adaptation of *Richard II*, published with the printed edition of the text, Wroughton laments that the play had been neglected by the London theatre managers for the past years. He allows that the text was "too heavy for representation" as it was originally conceived, although it is not clear what Wroughton means by 'heavy'. It could mean that the content of the play was too politically charged, since dealing with the forced deposition of a monarch. Or, that the poetic language was burdensome or lengthy, "bordering too much on the Mono-

drama” (Wroughton 1). Indeed, Richard speaks a large percentage of the play’s total text, over 27%. For a matter of comparison, Prince Hamlet, for instance, speaks 37% of the lines in the eponymous play.

Wroughton believes that disregarding so “exquisite a production” as Richard II could be considered “Theatrical Treason”. For this reason, he proposes a new adaptation to rescue the play from its state of disregard. He admits having borrowed lines from Henry VI, Titus Andronicus and King Lear, although he has also borrowed from Antony and Cleopatra and Richard III. Wroughton justifies his decision to combine extracts of different plays by referring to Colley Cibber’s adaptation of Richard III, which also altered Shakespeare’s original text significantly. Although Cibber’s adaptation was partly censored at the time of its creation in 1699, it became very popular at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was, as Wroughton points out, “now acted at both Theatres”, Covent Garden and Drury Lane.⁵⁶

It is interesting that Wroughton uses the term “theatrical treason”. It can be interpreted in, at least, two ways. First, the fact that Richard II was not performed in the previous seven decades could be considered a ‘crime’, since it prevented spectators from enjoying the production of such an important play in the Shakespearean canon. However, it is possible to give it another interpretation, especially when considering the political situation of Europe in the year of Wroughton’s publication. After the promises of freedom and change prompted by the French Revolution in 1789, a period of political unrest followed in France and Western Europe. The disillusionment derived from the failed revolution, the violence of the Reign of Terror and the eventual establishment of Napoléon Bonaparte as Emperor of France, creating a new oligarchy, affected the way monarchy was perceived in the United Kingdom as well. William Wordsworth’s (1770-1850) autobiographical epic poem *The Prelude* (1805) illustrates the author’s change of heart from a radical pro-revolutionary youth into a conservative older man after the disillusionment with the outcomes of the French Revolution. He describes his residence in France in Book 9. After encountering a starving girl on the streets of Paris, he is still hopeful of changes that would end poverty, recompense labour, and abolish “empty pomp” and the cruel power of the state (ll. 524-538). However, years

⁵⁶ *Richard III* was staged three times at Covent Garden in 1814: in January with John Philip Kemble in the title role; in March it was staged with Charles Young as the protagonist; and in November again with Kemble. At Drury Lane, it was staged twice with Edmund Kean: in February and October (Norwood 358; 371).

later, he reconsiders his naïve confidence. He abhors those who changed “a wat of self-defence” for “one of conquest”, becoming oppressors in their turn (ll. 796-799).

The examples from Wordsworth’s *The Prelude* contrast the idealised radicalism of Romantic poets at the turn of the century with the pragmatic realism of the failure of the First French Republic. Although an early supporter of the revolution, Napoléon later proclaimed himself Emperor of the French in 1804, which resulted in differently shaped cultural images of the French leader, according to different political views: some saw him as a tyrant, while others, such as Byron, regarded him as a hero. After defeat in the Battle of Leipzig, Napoléon was forced to abdicate and sent to exile in the island of Elba in May 1814 (Lockhart 738). The French monarchy was restored with Louis XVIII, though this time it was to be a constitutional monarchy and not an absolutist government as it had been pre-Revolution.

Re-establishing the monarchy, however, was seen as a step backwards by radicals, including Byron. Four days after Napoléon’s abdication, Byron writes in his diary that, being out of town for six days, he returns to London to find news of Bonaparte’s fall: “On my return, found my poor little pagod, Napoleon, pushed off his pedestal; – the thieves are in Paris. It is his own fault” (Byron, Vol I, 403). Byron blames Napoléon himself for his own fall. The poet associates the Frenchman with the Ancient Greek Milo of Croton, a wrestler with a number of military victories, who, according to the legend, tried to tear a tree apart with a wedge, but the tree closed back while his hand was still inside, locking his arm until he was attacked to death by wolves. In Byron’s words, “like Milo, he [Napoléon] would rend the oak; but it closed again, wedged his hands, and now the beasts – lion, bear, down to the dirtiest jackal – may all tear him. That Muscovite winter wedged his arms” (Byron, Vol I, 403). The allusion to Milo promotes the idea of the mighty who, unable to confront their own weakness and mortality, are inevitable doomed to fall. On April 9th, Byron adds that he was “utterly bewildered and confounded” with Napoléon’s decision to “abdicate the throne of the world”, quoting from Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*: “I see men's minds are but a parcel of their fortunes”.⁵⁷

Napoléon escaped Elba in February 1815, just weeks before the inaugurating performance of Kean’s *Richard II* on 9 March. Napoléon would be defeated by a British-led coalition commanded by the Duke of Wellington at the Battle of Waterloo

⁵⁷ “I see, men's judgements are a parcel of their fortunes.” *Antony and Cleopatra* (3.2.32).

in June of the same year. However, his escape in February may have reignited the spirit of some of his supporters, believing it possible that the heroic figure of Napoléon could return to power. Bearing this in mind, I think that Wroughton's reference to "theatrical treason" in regard to the absence of Richard II on the English stage can be understood within the overall context of apprehension following Napoléon's abdication. Such an ambiguous figure, oscillating between tyrant and hero, and, moreover, recently deposed, would no doubt be called to mind at the performance of a king's deposition on stage. That would be an even stronger case given Kean's prior association with Bonaparte. Staging Richard's de-coronation at a time of such political unrest in France and in England, and during a period when drama in London was controlled and heavily censored by the Lord Chamberlain under the Licensing Act, could be regarded as subversive.

The caricatures by James Gillray (1756-1815) and George Cruikshank (1792-1878) exemplify the controversial representations of Napoléon in the first decades of the nineteenth century in England. Boney's meditations on the Island of St. Helena – or – The Devil addressing the Sun (1815), for instance, satirically depicts Napoléon , or 'Boney', in exile at the island of Saint Helena after his second deposition, as Satan from Paradise Lost (see figure 40).

Figura 41 - Boney's meditations on the Island of St. Helena – or – The Devil addressing the Sun (1815), George Cruikshank



Napoléon was not the only prominent political figure of the time that could be evoked by the presence of Shakespeare's Richard II on stage. The portrayal of Richard's rambling thoughts and weak masculinity could be associated with George III's mental illness. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Man* (1790), Mary Wollstonecraft writes about the weakness of kings, referring to the "barbarous monarchy" of Edward III and Richard II's "total incapacity to manage the reins of power" (9-10). She heartily writes against Edmund Burke's royalist consternation with the way Louis XVI had been treated in France by the revolutionaries, being forced to submit to the National Assembly. In his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), Burke writes in

favour of monarchy's traditional hierarchical system, threatened by the revolutionary spirit of the age. However, Wollstonecraft exposes Burke's contradictory beliefs, recalling how he had reacted in favour of the first Bill of Regency in 1789, following the early signs of deterioration of George III's mental health. During a speech to the House of Commons on the 6th of February 1789, Burke ironically said: "Ought they to make a mockery of him [George III], putting a crown of thorns on his head, a reed in his hand, and dressing him in a raiment of purple, cry, Hail! King of the British!" (Wollstonecraft 25). Burke's choice of words evokes the symbols of Christ's crucifixion to mock the image of the king's martyrdom. While being sympathetic towards the French King's abuse by the radical mob, Burke had been eager to see George III stripped of his royal title and functions a decade earlier.

According to Janet Todd, Burke had supported the Prince of Wales in 1789 and advocated his nomination as the new monarch, for which he would have been offered the post of Paymaster-General. However, the Prime Minister William Pitt (1759-1806) introduced a Bill to restrict the Prince's powers in case the king were removed from office. Concerned with the outcome, Burke collected statistics from mental institutions in the country to demonstrate the improbability of the king's recovery at the age of 55, defending that the king's son should be appointed full monarch. According to Todd, "this undignified display of self-interest made him [Burke] a figure of ridicule in the press, and nearly ruined his career when, despite statistics, the King recovered before the bill was completed, not to suffer another attack until 1801" (376). Wollstonecraft, although vigorously against hereditary rule, felt sympathy for George III: "the loss of reason appears a monstrous flaw in the moral world, that eludes all investigation, and humbles without enlightening" (26). Madness, she states, "is only the absence of reason", when "the wild elements of passion clash, and all is horror and confusion" (Wollstonecraft 27). When the loss of reason is out of human control, such as in the case of George III, it deserves sympathy rather than scorn.

When Richard is taken to the cell at Pomfret Castle in Shakespeare's play, his soliloquies convey a mixture of reason and madness. He talks to himself, explores the depths of his own mind, and reflects on the parts he played as one person – a king, a beggar and a fool. He speaks of himself in the first and third persons, transitioning from experiencing his tragedy to observing it as a bystander. Moreover, he hears music, even though it is unclear if the music exists *de facto*, or

whether it is played only inside his own head. Although his mind seems to be delirious, this is the moment in the play in which he is portrayed as a suffering human being rather than as merely a monarch, and hence as worthy of sympathy. This instance of Richard's human vulnerability is what animates Fuseli's visual depiction of the scene in his contribution to Chalmers' illustrated edition of Shakespeare's works in 1805. In a similar manner that George III's mental state elicits pity from Wollstonecraft, Shakespeare manages to turn the spectator's sense of affinity in the play, exposing the stark contrast between the whimsical Richard from Act I and the suffering pitiful victim of Act V.

Richard II in performance at Drury Lane in 1815 can thus potentially conflate at least two prominent political persons: the deposed half-hero half-tyrant Napoléon and the weak and mentally unstable George III. These political associations enhance the topicality of the play, illustrating its potential as "theatrical treason". I will now turn to the text of Wroughton's adaptation of Richard II in order to investigate how Wroughton and Kean have reimagined the Shakespearean text for the early-nineteenth century audience within this context.

5.4 Edmund Kean's *Richard II*

It is clear from the promptbook's very first page that Kean had an antiquarian preoccupation with the historical plausibility of his production. He handwrote key information about the historical Richard: "Richard the 2nd, Son of Edward the Black Prince, succeeded his father Edward 3rd 1377, Assassinated 1399", to which he added the note: "reigned 22 years". This information contextualises Richard and places him within the chain of British kings. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that Kean uses the word 'assassinated', and not 'murdered' or 'killed'. The assassination of Richard in the play may have recalled the assassination of the Prime Minister Spencer Perceval (1762-1812) by John Bellingham (1769-1812) at the lobby of the House of Commons on 11 May, 1812. *The Weekly Entertainer* from 22 June, 1812 reports the "Circumstantial Account of the Assassination of Mr. Perceval by John Bellingham, and of his Trial, Conviction, and Execution for that Crime" (482), and the issue of 27 July refers to Bellingham as the "assassin" (585), a term that carried dark undertones. Therefore, Kean's use of the word could potentially evoke the unlawful

murder of the head of the British government by a discontented citizen three years earlier. Associating Richard with Perceval would convey the idea that the king had been illegitimately murdered, enhancing the immorality of Bolingbroke's actions.

The cast of actors that participated in this production of *Richard II* included Kean in the title role, the Irish actor Alexander Pope (1763-1835) as John of Gaunt, Mr. Holland was the Duke of York, Robert William Elliston (1774-1831) played Bolingbroke, Mr. Carr – most likely the prompter – played Sir Stephen Scroop, Mrs. Bartley was the queen, and Miss Poole played Blanche, a character added by Wroughton: she is Gaunt's wife and functions as the queen's companion. On the side page of the promptbook, Kean wrote by hand information about Richard's queens: the first, "Anne – sister of Wenceslaus King of Bohemia", and "2nd wife – Isabella. Daughter of Charles 6th of France, Affianced 9 years old". Although the historical Isabella was only nine years old when she married Richard II and became his second wife, Shakespeare's queen is not a child in his *Richard II*. Neither is she depicted as a child in Wroughton's text, but as a mature character, whose role was extended in conversations with the added character of Blanche, and who returns for a final and melodramatic appearance in the final scene.

The production was staged for the first time on March 9th. The correspondent for the *Morning Chronicle* wrote on the subsequent day about the absence of *Richard II* from the stage until that point:

The Tragedy of *Richard the Second* has certainly been placed peaceably on the shelf for upwards of a century and a half – not because it was wanting in striking and splendid beauties – not because it was defective in historical truth, or deficient in strong and well-drawn character – but because the innumerable beauties it possesses, and which bear so strongly the marks of the great master's hand, were scattered amongst a mass of less valuable material, and encumbered by the pressure of a large portion of heavy and uninteresting matter. (*Morning Chronicle*, 10 March, 1815)

The reviewer grants that there is beauty in the original Shakespearean text, but that it was barred by uninteresting parts. As he points out, the new production at Drury Lane promises to "sift the chaff from the grain", confirming what Wroughton had proposed in the advertisement to the printed text. The result was enriched by Kean's "impressive talents" and "successful representation". Moreover, the newspaper writes that *Richard II* "will be considered as indebted for existence, and

for future and lasting fame, to the extraordinary talents which have thus added another leaf to the never fading wreath which adorns the bust of our immortal Shakespeare" (*Morning Chronicle*, 10 March, 1815). In this sense, the critic agrees with Wroughton that the original Shakespearean text no longer appealed thoroughly to the early nineteenth-century audience. Wroughton's changes illustrate the preferences of the time: a play focused on characterisation, plot development, a larger space for female roles and a taste for sentimentality. These characteristics play a part in how the Middle Ages were recreated for this audience and perceived by them.

Wroughton's adaptation begins with the ceremonial dispute between Bolingbroke and Mowbray to be decided by the king. Kean's production highlights the courtly atmosphere of the scene through set disposition. A handwritten drawing on the promptbook indicates that King Richard sat on his throne at the centre background of the stage. On either side of the king stood four soldiers with a banner, and on the farther left and right sides stood six lords each. A chair for John of Gaunt was set on the stage-right and a chair for the Duke of York was placed in the same level on the stage-left. The rigid and symmetrical *mise-en-scène* represents the austerity of courtly ceremonies and recalls Hayman's engraving for Hanmer's illustrated edition of Shakespeare's works in 1744 (See figure 13). As we have seen, Hayman reworked Dugdale's static print to convey movement and action, precisely that of the king interrupting the medieval combat. Kean uses the same imagery for a now three-dimensional display of medieval pageantry and kingly authority.

A print published by William West in 1825 shows Kean in his majestic costume for the part. Kean's Richard wears medieval garments, according to the time the play is set, rejecting the portrayals of the characters in contemporary fashion as in the illustrations of the plays from the 1700s to late 1780s. Kean's Richard II bears no resemblance to Gardiner's grotesque and expressionless character nor to Fuseli's contemplative king. Kean embodies a new version of Richard II, conscientious of historical authenticity and aware of his powerful position. He wears a rich dress, embroidered with a pattern of leaves, crowns and the letter 'R' (perhaps reminiscent of Northcote's depiction of the throne occupied by Bolingbroke in his painting for the Boydell Gallery). The king displays signs of his royal authority: the crown, a livery collar and a sword (although, interestingly, he holds the sword by the

blade, and the tip of the sword points to his stomach). The pomp of dress conveys Richard's power, divinely granted (See figure 41).

Figura 42 - Edmund Kean as Richard II. London: Published by W. West, 7 April, 1815.
LUNA: Folger Digital Image Collection.



Kean wore a different costume, in full armour, for the third act of the play. The following quote accompanies the print: "Heaven for his Richard hath in heavenly pay / A glorious angel" (3.2.60-61) (See figure 43). It is an extract of Richard's speech in defence of his divine rights as king, when he affirms that "not all the water in the rough rude sea / can wash the balm off from an anointed king" (3.2.55-56). Richard is confident of his victory against Bolingbroke because he believes in God's

undivided protection. This confidence is expressed by Kean's second dress: a full coat of armour, sabatons, breastplate, ornamented gauntlets, chain mail, open visor and a helmet decorated with a crowned lion. The lion is evoked in the play in two moments of kingly authority. The first, during Bolingbroke and Mowbray's contention, Richard uses his royal power to end the quarrel. He tells Mowbray to withdraw his provocation: "Rage must be withstood. / Give me his gage. Lions make leopards tame" (1.1.173-174). The lion is a symbolic part of the English coat of arms. As Richard puts himself in the position of the lion, he believes himself capable of taming the leopards, Mowbray and Bolingbroke. The second time the lion is evoked in the play takes place in the last act, when the Queen sees her husband for the last time – in the Shakespearean original. She tries to infuse renewed energy into Richard's decaying body and mind. She evokes the lion within Richard: "Hath Bolingbroke / Deposed thine intellect? Hath he been in thy heart? / The lion dying thrusteth forth his paw / And wounds the earth, if nothing else, with rage / To be o'er-powered" (5.1.27-31). She urges Richard to fight back and not to let himself be passively carried away.

Figura 43 - The first and second dress of Mr. Kean in Richard II.; Two full length theatrical portraits on one sheet, side by side; Print on paper; Published by William West, London, 1825. V&A Museum



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strength and confidence, and it is a lion that embellishes Kean's helmet in his performance at Drury Lane. These examples demonstrate that Richard has received a new appraisal in Kean's production. As we saw in Chapter 4, the illustrated volumes of Shakespeare's work in the eighteenth century depicted Bolingbroke in a favourable light, or as a suffering victim of Richard's tyranny. It was Fuseli who offered a new look on Richard, focusing on the king's introspectiveness and shifting the balance of sympathy. Fuseli's emphasis is on the character's feelings and emotions. Kean's Richard, on the other hand, shows no signs of weakness. The two costumes for the actor emanate heroic confidence. The consequence is that Kean's embodiment of Richard overshadows what Hazlitt thought was most significant about Shakespeare's character: *pathos*, or "feeling combined with weakness" (Hazlitt, Vol V, 223).

Wroughton merged the first and third scenes of Act I into one longer scene, where the king hears the subjects' pleas and immediately professes his verdict. Kean's annotations on the promptbook show that he has crossed out the lines 115-

123, in which King Richard swears to be impartial towards Mowbray and Bolingbroke. This is an empty promise of impartiality, a proof of Richard's fickleness, since he conveys different sentences to Mowbray and Bolingbroke. Richard's unpredictability confirms his belief on the divine right of kings, as well as his disregard for probity. As a representative of God on Earth, he had the power to decide the fate of other people's lives according to his caprices. The fact that Kean removed these lines – although they remained in Wroughton's adaptation – suggests that Kean purposely omitted an instance of the king's untrustworthiness. The result is the portrayal of a stronger – and, as Hazlitt puts it, "heroic" – monarch. Consequently, Kean's version depicts an unshaken demonstration of kingly authority, excluding the ambiguity of Shakespeare's character and compromising the role's potential for pathos. This example justifies Hazlitt's concern that the performed play could not achieve the same complexity as the play on the page.

Kean's Richard is more decisive and authoritative. Manning agrees that Wroughton's text offers "a worthier figure out of Richard", and that this transformation was reinforced by Kean's "acting Richard heroically" (199). When Bolingbroke and Mowbray refuse to return the gages thrown in defiance, Richard exclaims: "Rage must be withstood", and, according to the handwritten stage directions, he "comes down from the throne and advances to the front – all the Lords rise". The figure of the king incites respect from the court members, who stand when he stands. Although Wroughton's text kept Richard's plea to Bolingbroke: "Cousin, do you begin throw up your gage", Kean crosses out this extract of the text. On the Drury Lane stage, the king directly states his command after standing from the throne: "We were not born to sue, but to command; / Which since we cannot do to make you friends, / Draw near, and list what, with our council, we have done", and banishes Bolingbroke from England for "twice five summers" and Mowbray forever, "never to return".

The first scene of Act 3 in Wroughton's adaptation mirrors the scene at court analysed above. This time, however, it is Bolingbroke, recently returned to England and contravening his sentence of banishment who commands the improvised ceremony. He takes the role of the king, deciding the fate of Bushy and Green, who are condemned "to the hand of death". Wroughton adds nineteen lines for Bolingbroke in a soliloquy at the close of the scene, exposing his treacherous plans:

Now, Henry, steel thy fearful thoughts,

And change misdoubt to resolution:
 Be what thou hop'st to be: or what thou art
 Resign to death; it is not worth enjoying:
 Let pale-fac'd fear keep with the mean-born man,
 And find no harbour in a royal heart.
 Faster than spring-time showers, comes thought on thought,
 And not a thought, but thinks on dignity.
 My brain, more busy than a labouring spider,
 Weaves tedious snares to trap mine enemies.
 Now, whilst Richard safely is in Ireland,
 I have stirr'd up in England this black storm,
 By which I shall perceive the common's minds:
 And this fell tempest shall not cease to rage
 Until the golden circuit on my head,
 Like to the glorious sun's transparent beams,
 Do calm the fury of his mad-bred flaw:
 Come, my lords, away,
 Awhile to work, and, after, holiday. (Wroughton 36).

In this passage, Wroughton combines lines from *Henry VI – Part 1* (3.1.1-10) and *Henry VI – Part 2* (3.1.330-335), spoken by Richard, 3rd Duke of York. It is meaningful that Wroughton borrows York's conspiratorial words against his sovereign, Henry VI, to voice Bolingbroke's plans. In this manner, Bolingbroke's intentions become evident: he wishes "the golden circuit" on his head.

Bolingbroke's assertiveness towards his ultimate victory would undermine a heroic perception of Richard. In their confrontation, there can be but one winner and one victim. Interestingly, Kean has crossed out the entire scene for his production at the Drury Lane. As a result, the spectators would not witness the authoritarian side of Bolingbroke, who unofficially takes the role of the monarch in this scene, condemning Bushy and Green to death. Another consequence of this omission is that Kean maintains Richard's authority for longer than the Shakespearean original. The critic in the *New Monthly Magazine*, although praising Kean's excellence in acting, acknowledges that "Mr. Kean's Richard II is totally different from Shakespeare" ([June 1815], 459-460): "How we were surprised then to find, in the Richard II of Mr. Kean, a vigorous and elevated mind, struggling indeed against necessity, but struggling like a king; yielding to resistless force, but yielding like a philosopher; greater beyond comparison in his dungeon than Bolingbroke on his throne!" ([May 1 815], 360-361). The critic was aware of Kean's choice to prolong the image of an authoritative and "vigorous" king, abridging Bolingbroke's display of power.

Richard maintains his assertiveness in the first half of Wroughton's adaptation, but his grandeur is challenged when the king accepts Bolingbroke's request to meet him outside the castle. Richard turns to Aumerle and fears he has

been too kind and weak, allowing Bolingbroke to have what he wanted. However, the stage directions handwritten by Kean emphasise the majesty that Richard still holds: “A long Flourish here as the gates of the Castle are opened, and Richard’s officers, Banners & Soldiers come out and form down [...] opposite Bolingbroke’s army – Richard follows with Aumerle, Carlisle, Scroop and Salisbury”. In Kean’s production, the king does not face Bolingbroke alone, but is followed by a small army and faithful lords. The display of pageantry in the scene sustains the appearance of Richard’s authority longer than the original Shakespearean text. Furthermore, the king does not “descend” to meet Bolingbroke, which would signify Richard’s descent in power, but Bolingbroke comes to meet him in front of the castle gates. The two noble men stand face to face in a more equalitarian confrontation. Bolingbroke’s deference to his sovereign confirms Richard’s superior rank: he kneels and demands the others to “show fair duty to his majesty”. However, Richard is only clinging to an illusion of power. Despite maintaining his position as the one to whom others should kneel, he knows his body politic is disintegrating.

The ceremonial mood and Richard’s assertiveness in Kean’s adaptation compromise the scene’s *pathos*. Hazlitt writes about the way Kean embodied Richard, expressing “all the violence, the extravagance, and fierceness of the passions, but not their misgivings, their helplessness, and sinkings into despair” (Hazlitt, Vol V, 223). Hazlitt comments specifically on this scene of confrontation between Richard and Bolingbroke. He criticises Kean’s Richard’s manner of expostulating with Bolingbroke, “which was altogether fierce and heroic, instead of being sad, thoughtful and melancholy” (224). By insisting on a noble depiction of Richard, Kean fails to convey the character’s essence of feeling combined with weakness.

Kean’s performance as Richard II recalls how the actor had played Richard III a year previously. The critic in the *New Monthly Magazine* noted the similarity between the two: “Mr. Kean indulged rather too freely in what constitutes a predominant feature of his acting – a certain, sarcastic, epigrammatic turn, which gives peculiar force and meaning to particular passages” ([May 1 815], 360-361), which he had employed with Richard III, and which did not agree with the character of Richard II. Hazlitt adds that the key to understanding Shakespeare’s Richard II is also a key to understanding human nature in general, how “feeling is connected with the sense of weakness as well as of strength, or the power of imbecility, and the

force of passiveness" (224). That is why Richard's monologue while in prison in the last act is so illustrative of the character's pathos. It is then that Richard exposes his powerlessness, eliciting a deeper understanding of himself, just minutes before his death.

Richard's display of weakness in the deposition scene also provides a powerful expression of *pathos*. As we saw in Chapter 3, in a reversed ritual of coronation, Shakespeare's Richard compares himself to Christ, having been betrayed not only by one man but by "twelve thousand". It is at this moment that Richard's 'body natural' dissociates completely from the body politic. In Wroughton's text, Bolingbroke is already in a firm position to take the throne as he believes it constitutes his right. Wroughton borrows and adapts from Aaron's discourse in *Titus Andronicus*. Bolingbroke starts the scene with these words: "My countrymen, my loving followers, / Friends that have been thus forward in my right, / I thank you all; / And to the love and favour of my country, / Commit myself, my person, and my cause". Bolingbroke addresses his "countrymen" as a leader, who thanks the others present for supporting his claim. When Bolingbroke mentions his "cause", he could well be referring to the misappropriation of his lands and title by Richard. However, Wroughton's adaptation makes Bolingbroke's treasonous plans explicit since the third act of the play, when he speaks of the wish to wear the "golden circuit" on his head. In this context, the "cause" can only mean his claim to the crown.

When Richard is brought to the stage to face Bolingbroke's accusations, Kean's production emphasises the symbolic importance of the royal regalia. After Richard "undoes" himself, washing away his balm and giving away his crown – acts which are performed by language –, two officers remove the crown and the sceptre on a cushion to the back of the stage, symbolising the disintegration of Richard's political body. It is significant that Wroughton excludes most of Shakespeare's text that accompanies the reversed royal ritual. For instance, Richard does not compare himself to the martyrdom of Christ, he does not say "God save the king, although I be not he", he does not refer to the golden crown as a deep well, he does not place himself as king of his own griefs, and he does not utter the paradoxical words: "Aye – no. No – aye, for I must nothing be, / Therefore no 'no', for I resign to thee" (4.1.200-201). The dissolution of the king's two bodies, the lifting off of the powerful body politic that leaves only a meagre body natural behind, is what adds *pathos* to the

Shakespearean Richard. Without the words, the *pathos* of the scene would have to be fully expressed by the actor's body and voice.

After Richard is conveyed to the Tower as Bolingbroke's prisoner, Wroughton adds a collage of extracts from other Shakespearean plays to highlight Bolingbroke's satisfaction after succeeding in taking the crown: "How sweet a thing it is to wear a crown, / Within whose circuit is Elysium, / And all the poets feign of bliss and joy" (from *Henry VI – Part III*, 1.2.323-324), followed by: "Ah! Majesty! Who would not buy thee dear? / Let them obey, who know not how to rule" (from *Henry VI – Part 2*, 5.1.5-6). Bolingbroke rejoices in his victory over Richard. He is no longer the victim, but the winner, and his bucket is finally full while Richard's is empty. He boasts: "Now am I seated as my soul delights, / And all my labours have as perfect end / As I could wish – the crown, the crown is mine. / Fortune, I acquit thee – let come what may, / I'll ever thank thee for this glorious day". The end of the deposition scene in Wroughton's adaptation confirms Bolingbroke as a plotter, removing the ambiguity of Bolingbroke's motives in Shakespeare's *Richard II*. As Manning puts it, the Wroughton-Kean *Richard II* radically challenges the essence of the play: "Shakespeare's study of the political struggle between ambiguously presented claimants of the throne was changed into a tale of usurpation in which an apparently foolish monarch with a turn for epigram proves surprisingly noble in adversity, though he is ultimately defeated" (200–01). This choice increases the audience's sympathy for the deposed Richard. Manning, exploring Kean's influence on Byron's work, finds the same pattern in the poet's play *Sardanapalus* (1821). In it, "Byron's ironic, pacifist monarch, though overthrown by the scheming Beleses, unexpectedly emerges from his sensual indulgence to reveal himself as a stronger and more complex figure than he at first appeared" (Manning 201). Kean's Richard also reveals himself to be stronger – though not necessarily more complex – than the Shakespearean character. Although the play begins with Richard as an authoritarian king who abuses his divine authority, Bolingbroke explicitly turns into a bold conspirator, moving the audience's sympathy away from him and towards Richard.

In Shakespeare's text, Aumerle is accused of treason against the new King Bolingbroke by his own father, the Duke of York, who calls him a "villain", "traitor" and a "slave", after reading the secret document hidden in Aumerle's coat. The secret paper was most likely a reference to the Epiphany Rising, a failed plot to kill Henry Bolingbroke. Although this scene was recurrent in eighteenth-century illustrations of

the play, such as in John Bell's 1774 Acting edition and in his 1788 Literary edition, which emphasise Aumerle's submission to the new king, Aumerle's treasonous behaviour is completely omitted in Wroughton's text. Both York and Aumerle appear to remain inwardly truthful to Richard, but the given circumstances allow them no choice. Aumerle exclaims: "[...] these days are dangerous! / Virtue is choak'd with foul ambition, / And charity chac'd hence by rancour's hand. / For subordination is predominant, / And equity exil'd this once happy land", an extract borrowed from *Henry VI – Part 2*. The Duke responds: "To Bolingbroke are we now sworn subjects, / Whose state and honour I for aye allow. / Therefore let's hence;— what cannot be avoided / 'Twere childish weakness to lament, or fear". Father and son only change allegiance because it is inevitable. Once York and Aumerle step to Bolingbroke's side, they remain loyal to the new king, although lamenting Richard's fall. Wroughton's *Richard II* makes no mention of a treasonous plot. We can only speculate on the reasons for deleting this particular part of the play. It could be argued that it is easily cut, since it does not affect the development of the play directly. It could also be that a plot against the new king could be censored by the Lord Chamberlain, but that argument fails since the whole play revolves around Bolingbroke's usurpation of the crown. Perhaps what is at stake here is not the treasonous plot, but the subsequent display of submission to the new king. Showing the deference that was due to Richard being bestowed on another person would undermine the magnanimous depiction of Richard that Kean portrays.

Despite Bolingbroke's exultation at the victory over Richard, Wroughton's ending to the play disavows the new king's happiness and adds a melodramatic tone befitting the period's sentimental farces. Bolingbroke complies to the queen's moving request to see her husband one last time before leaving to France. What follows would surprise the spectator familiar with the Shakespearean text – curiously, it was not noticed by Hazlitt. Bolingbroke repents his actions after having seen the miserable young woman leave the stage in tears:

These miseries are more than may be borne—
 Why, Richard, have I follow'd thee to this?
 Sated ambition! Nature's powerful voice
 Arrests thy arm, and thou must now submit.
 I'll follow to the Tower the wretched queen,
 And there with joy, with pleasure, will resign.
 The rich advantage of my promis'd glory,
 If by the deed I can alleviat.

The bleeding sorrows of the royal pair,
 And, by restoring them their crown and dignity,
 Atone in small degree for all the horrors.
 Which, O shame! they have endur'd through me. (Wroughton 65–66).

At the very end of the play, Wroughton completely transforms the character of Bolingbroke from the evil plotter into the suffering repentant. The new king curses his royal pretensions – perhaps a reference to Napoléon’s ill-fated ambition as well. Wroughton’s Bolingbroke resolves to restore the crown and dignity to the former king and queen, wishing to do so “with joy” and “with pleasure”. His (until then) unshaken ambition yields to the young queen’s demonstrations of feelings. However, the queen reaches Richard too late. In Wroughton’s version, she enters the stage right after Exton kills Richard, intensifying the tragedy of her being just too late. Had she arrived a moment earlier, she might have acted to save her husband. Kean’s production emphasises even more the tragedy. Kean’s notes on the promptbook add that Richard was still alive when the queen asks offstage: “Where is my Richard?”. The former king replies: “Oh, my queen! My love!”, and, according to the stage directions, “makes a feeble effort to rise & meet her, but sinks and dies”. Kean thus adds a short last verbal exchange between Richard and his queen before she enters the stage to find his dead body and faints. The heightening of romantic feelings and the queen’s melodramatic reaction add to the production’s sensationalism.

As the queen revives, she speaks King Lear’s words when carrying his dead daughter’s body: “Oh, you are men of stones. / Had I your tongues and eyes, I’d use them so / That heaven’s vault should crack. O, [S]he’s gone forever”. In the same way as Lear, the queen collapses on stage after speaking: “Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life, / And thou no breath at all? Oh, thou’lt come no more, / Never, never, never! / Pray you, undo my lace. – Thank you. / Do you see this, look on him, look on his lips, / Look there, look there!”. Wroughton’s original text directs that the queen “falls”. Kean, however, adds: “Queen dies – and the Lords let her gently to the ground”. Manning sees this addition from *King Lear* as a “transformation of Shakespeare’s king into martyred saint” (198–99), associating Richard with the pious and innocent Cordelia. Furthermore, Kean highlights the tragic elements in the play with the death of the two lovers à la *Romeo and Juliet*. In reality, the historical queen returned to France and remarried years later.

Wroughton's version still contains a final speech of regret and grief by the repentant Bolingbroke, ending with a warning: "Thus instructed, / By this example, let princes henceforth learn, / Though kingdoms by just title prove our own, / The subjects' hearts do best secure a crown". Kean crossed out the new king's final words, ending his staging with the queen's death on stage, followed by "slow music as curtain descends", as his handwriting directs. The warning would have added a didactic tone to the performance, despised by Hazlitt and Keats, which Kean decided to avoid. A warning for rulers to prioritise their subjects' hearts as a way to secure their position in government is a way to understand the period's political ideals after the first fall of Napoléon. As Wollstonecraft wrote in 1790, "the succession of the King of Great Britain depends on the choice of the people, or that they have a power to cut it off" (19). The doctrine of hereditary rule was no longer regarded as "indefeasible", to quote Wollstonecraft once again. The 'spirit of the age' allowed for a new Bolingbroke that would break the hereditary chain of monarchy – as long as the current monarch was not fulfilling his duties, and as long as the monarch had their subjects' hearts in mind. Nevertheless, Kean's production presents a different version of Richard and of Bolingbroke, with the latter as the explicit villain who causes the fall of a king. Wroughton's warning exposes Richard's inability to perform his role as the king, hence Kean's deletion of the text as it would undermine his heroic conception of Richard II.

5.5 Conclusion

When Kean brings Richard II back to the stage in 1815, he recreates the character in consonance with the political debates of his time. Unlike the Shakespearean Richard II, Kean performs a heroic monarch, aided by Wroughton's textual adaptation which emphasise moments of the king's authority and omits instances of Richard's fickleness. Kean's heroic and energetic acting led Hazlitt to criticise his approach to the character. The critic believes that Shakespeare's Richard is an embodiment of pathos, that is, of feeling combined with weakness, whereas Kean delivered an acting of passion, of feeling combined with energy. For Hazlitt, the consequence of such portrayal of the king would hinder the conveyance of the play's emotions to the spectator

It is important to understand Wroughton's text and Kean's performance within the political context of their age. As we have seen, Wroughton considered the absence of Richard II from the theatres in the previous eight decades as *Theatrical Treason*. The term appears in italics and with capitalised letters, which suggests that Wroughton adds a particular significance to these words, magnifying their meaning. Wroughton hints that there is something potentially distinctive in Richard II. He proposes a new textual adaptation, suited to the spirit of his age, an age that had witnessed George III's mental collapse and the consequences of a weak authority in England, as well as the failure of the Revolutionary project in France and Napoléon's two depositions after the downfall of his larger-than-life political ambitions.

Bonaparte was a controversial figure as depicted in English print culture and visual representations, seen as a tyrant by some, but as a hero by others. For instance, Byron revered Napoléon's role in attacking the old system of hereditary monarchy. This example demonstrates that Napoléon became a myth, a fabricated image to advance republicanism. Kean's heroic and masculine portrayal of Richard II on stage, in combination with the actor's associations with the French military leader in contemporary print, connected Kean's Richard with Bonaparte. Furthermore, the deposition of a ruler on stage would recall the recent deposition of Napoléon before his exile to Elba in 1814 – a matter that regained topicality after his escape from the island in February 1815, weeks before Kean's production. At the same time, Kean's energetic acting weakened the parallel between Richard II and George III, avoiding the implications of connecting the theme of deposition with the monarch of his time.

In this context, Kean's staging of Richard II raises interesting possibilities of interpretation. Was Napoléon's deposition, mirrored on the Drury Lane stage, a victory or a disappointment? If Kean's Richard embodies Napoleonic radicalism, his deposition can be read as a disappointment, the moment when the hero yields (perhaps too easily, as Byron had it) the crown and is sent to exile – Napoléon to Elba and Richard to Pomfret Castle. Bonaparte would manage to escape and attempt to retake the power during the Hundred Days until the final defeat at Waterloo, whereas Richard's end at Pomfret was inescapable. Kean's personification of Napoléon and his deposition on stage can also be read as a victory of monarchy over radicalism. Despite Richard's heroic portrayal at the beginning of the play, he is easily manipulated by Bolingbroke, who steals the crown to become Henry IV, starting a new line of hereditary kingship. In a similar manner, after Napoléon's final

deposition, King Louis XVIII (1755-1824), the brother of Louis XVI, is restored to the French throne, giving continuity to the Bourbon dynasty. Nevertheless, Bolingbroke's awareness of wrongdoing at the end of Wroughton's adaptation depicts him as repenting his actions, undermining the triumph of the crown. The possibility of drawing these political parallels enhance the topicality of the play as it was staged at Drury Lane in 1815.

Finally, after looking at the evidence of explicit or indirect references to the Middle Ages in Wroughton's text and Kean's productions, it is possible to conclude that the medieval setting functioned both as a mirror to contemporary political concerns and as a frame to provoke emotions in the spectator. The costumes used by Kean demonstrate a historical awareness of the medieval period, contextualising Kean's Richard as a medieval king. However, their main function is to emphasise the noble appearance of the protagonist on stage. Richard's authority is evidenced by the use of royal regalia, such as the crown, mantle and the livery collar in the beginning of the play; and the helmet adorned with a crowned lion when he returns from the Irish campaign, confident in the divine right of kings. Richard's loss to Bolingbroke is vindicated by the new king's open regret for his actions, curtailing his pride in victory. Therefore, Kean's production manifests an interesting combination of perceptions of the medieval past in the early-nineteenth century. Although Richard's power as a medieval king is enhanced by Kean's acting, Hazlitt's reviews demonstrate that such approach to the character was not ideal. Hazlitt understands the medieval past evoked by Kean's Richard II, as well as by Scott's *Ivanhoe* or Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, as a setting to accentuate the emotions felt by the characters and, in consequence, by the spectator or reader.

In a review of Kean's Richard III at *The Morning Chronicle*, Hazlitt complains about the introduction of ghosts through the trap-doors of the stage, which he wished would be altogether omitted. He affirms that "these sort of exhibitions are only proper for a superstitious age; and in an age not superstitious, excite ridicule instead of terror" (Hazlitt, Vol. V, 184). For the critic, the Middle Ages were but a superstitious age, distant both temporarily and intellectually from the 'enlightened' early nineteenth century. The concern when staging Richard III should not be in creating a medieval supernatural atmosphere, but in conveying the right emotion – that of terror, and not of ridicule.

In his *Character of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817), Hazlitt returns to *Richard II*, a play “in which ‘is hung armour of the invincible knights of old,’ in which their hearts seem to strike against their coats of mail, where their blood tingles for the fight, and words are but the harbingers of blow” as a “state of accomplished barbarism” (Hazlitt, Vol. IV, 273). The critic looks back at this age as a time when words were used as an announcer for a blow, emphasising the crude physical violence of the ‘Dark Ages’. However, he believed that words should not be used to evoke a physical but an emotional response. That is why Hazlitt sees beauty in Bolingbroke’s speech about “the breath of kings” and in Mowbray’s complaint of exile when meditating on foregoing his native English language. Hazlitt understands these moments as exceptions in the barbaric age of old, because they are “affecting”, a word the critic uses to refer to the emotional capacity of an artistic object. In other words, Bolingbroke’s and Mowbray’s poetic imageries add gusto to the medieval combat scene.

As we have seen, Hazlitt despised the undramatic spirit of his age, which was concerned with national affairs in detriment of the personal and individual experience. Hazlitt’s reviews demonstrate his stance in praising art that affects the beholder. However, despite the reviewer’s reluctance to accept the political potentiality of the theatre or art in general, it is inevitable. In addition to being moved by passion or pathos, the audience is invited to reflect on the contemporary political discussions of the time, on the effects of power, weakness and ambition – issues that regained topicality with the deposition of Napoléon. Moreover, the play shows how these elements (power, weakness and ambition) are in turn occasions for passion and pathos themselves. Kean’s *Richard II* is, therefore, also a demonstration of the theatre as place for the public exchange of political ideas, and as a public and social sphere. The actor is key in this process, functioning as a mediator, embodying history with flesh and bones, and conveying “strong-felt passion” that touches the mind, as the poet Robert Lloyd has put it.

CHAPTER 6: A NATION PURER THROUGH THEIR ART: THE ACTOR-GENTLEMAN, NATIONAL THEATRE AND WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY'S *RICHARD II*

*Farewell, Macready, since to-night we part;
Full-handed thunders often have confessed
Thy power, well-used to move the public breast.
We thank thee with our voice, and from the heart.
Farewell, Macready, since this night we part,
Go, take thine honours home; rank with the best,
Garrick and statelier Kemble, and the rest
Who made a nation purer through their art.
Thine is it that our drama did not die,
Nor flicker down to brainless pantomime,
And those gilt gauds men-children swarm to see.
Farewell, Macready, moral, grave, sublime;
Our Shakespeare's bland and universal eye
Dwells pleased, through twice a hundred years, on thee.*

"To W. C. Macready" (1851), Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)

In December 1850, the actor-manager William Charles Macready (1793-1873), fifty-seven years old at the time, staged Shakespeare's *Richard II* for one night only, the play that had been absent from the London theatrical scene since Edmund Kean's portrayal of the title role more than three decades earlier. The performance was part of Macready's farewell season to the stage at Haymarket Theatre, filled with Shakespearean revivals and which culminated with *Macbeth* on 26 February 1851 at Drury Lane. As we approach the middle of the nineteenth century, it becomes evident that there is a different approach to *Richard II* and its depiction of medieval royal power. The Romantic appreciation of the character's *pathos* gives way to a Victorian concern with Richard's flaws and immoral behaviour. It was also a moment of intense change in the theatrical milieu in London, especially after 1843 with the dissolution of the Theatre Licensing Act of 1737. Macready had been in favour of the royal monopoly of the patent theatres early in his career, when he believed that royal support would elevate the theatrical business and the profession of the actor. However, despite Queen Victoria being a constant visitor at

Drury Lane when it hosted the lion tamer Isaac van Amburgh (1808-1865), the theatre did not receive the encouragement that Macready expected from the sovereign.⁵⁸

Disillusioned with the state of the theatre during his lifetime, Macready dedicated his career to the establishment of a National Theatre, in the process repositioning the actor as a gentleman. For this purpose, Macready turned to Shakespeare, bringing the original Shakespearean text back and rejecting eighteenth-century and early-nineteenth-century textual adaptations of the plays. Shakespeare's plays formed the bastion of Macready's theatrical revolution. He wanted the Shakespearean text to be accessible to all, but also to be a means to authenticate the integrity and morality of the theatrical business. The question about whether theatre could be moral dates back to Shakespeare's own time and the anti-theatricals, who believed that the theatre was a corruptive art that appealed to the senses. In order to present an appropriate version of Shakespeare, one that could be seen by respectable families, Macready omitted religious allusions in the text, as well as any morally inappropriate content, such as references to sex or infidelity, or passages that incite violence – a project that recalls the Bowdlers' *The Family Shakespeare* (1807). Moreover, he excluded passages of comic relief, perhaps with the aim to render the text more serious.

Richard Schoch compares Macready with Charles Kean, the theatrical heir of Edmund Kean. Schoch concludes: "if Charles Kean's goal was to use Shakespeare to represent history, then Macready's was to use history to represent Shakespeare" (*Shakespeare's Victorian Stage* 3). While Kean's focus was on history represented on stage aided by Shakespeare's word, as I discuss in Chapter 7, Macready's centre of attention is the Shakespearean text, enriched by historical representation on stage. The medieval theatre set in *Richard II* is therefore a mere decoration to adorn Shakespeare's original text, whereas the poetic text should be the focus of attention. Although throughout his career Macready demonstrates a concern with historical accuracy in his productions of Shakespeare's history plays, this concern is rather a side-effect of his main purpose to render theatre a serious business. The visual depictions of medieval scenery and costume take advantage of the new possibilities

⁵⁸ Queen Victoria's enthusiasm for van Amburgh was evident. The queen commissioned a painting to the artist Edwin Landseer (1802-1873), depicting van Amburgh in a fearless position with his animals in a cage, including lions and tigers. The piece forms a part of the Royal Collection Trust archive.

that early-Victorian stagecraft permitted, but without falling into the trap of relying on extravagant pageantry at the expense of the dramatic text.

In contrast to William Hazlitt's understanding of Shakespeare's King Richard as a character that combines feeling with weakness, the mid-nineteenth century views the title role as a morally flawed character. Richard receives divine punishment for dishonouring the truth and reason demanded of a sovereign. The approach taken by the German critic, Hermann Ulrici, exemplifies this stance. Ulrici analyses Shakespeare's play to reflect on the *legal* right of kings. He affirms that the legal right of a monarch is established by man, and that it only has validity as long as the king's conduct is based upon morality. Viewed through a moralising Victorian perspective, Richard's state was a rotten garden because of the lawlessness of its sovereign.

Within this context, Macready presents *Richard II* as one of the touchstones in his farewell season, a restatement of his career-long project to elevate the national theatre. My argument in this chapter is that Macready appropriates Shakespeare's name to legitimise his project of a National Theatre, one that would add respect to the profession of the actor. In his adaptation of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, Macready omits or softens the instances of immoral behaviour and accusations of the sovereign's ill conduct. Although alterations are few, the result is a version of *Richard II* that is more suitable to early-Victorian moral concerns. The theatre could be thus regarded as a safe and principled place, where entertainment is combined with instruction.

6.1 The London Theatrical Scene Pre-1843

In 1843, the theatrical monopoly of spoken drama held by the royal playhouses Drury Lane and Covent Garden was finally dissolved. Until then, the minor theatres outside the Lord Chamberlain's jurisdiction in London were forced to adapt their performances, adding musical accompaniments or turning them into burlettas,⁵⁹ in order to be permitted on stage. Macready was initially supportive of the

⁵⁹ According to *The Methuen Drama Dictionary of the Theatre*, a burletta is "a type of comic opera or musical farce that provided a legal loophole for unlicensed theatres in the mid-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Under British law, any three-act play with a minimum of five songs was considered a burletta and could be performed in an unlicensed theatre. Playwrights thus took any drama, including Shakespeare's works, adapted the length and added enough songs and dances to meet the criteria. The burletta disappeared from the playbills when the minor theatres were freed from strict licensing laws by the 1843 Theatres Act" (Law 83).

theatrical monopoly. The *Report from the Select Committee on Dramatic Literature, with the Minutes of Evidence*, a publication that resulted from the conference of twenty-four members of the British Parliament in the House of Commons in 1832, details in over 250 pages the evidence from thirty-nine witnesses on the state of the London theatrical sphere at the time. It includes “the minutiae of theatre management, playwriting, theatre finances, London audiences, and views on the regulation and legitimacy of the contemporary theatre industry” (Newey, ‘The 1832 Select Committee’ 141). The committee was established by a motion proposed by the novelist and playwright Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803-1873), who wished to ‘reform’ the theatre. According to Newey, Bulwer-Lytton was then a radical MP “elected on the tide of reformist enthusiasm in 1831” (145). He believed theatre was in decline, hence his goal to improve the way drama was written and performed. Despite their effort, the House of Lords eventually rejected the Bill in the subsequent year.

Macready was one of the witnesses called to testify on the need for theatrical reform. He was asked to speak on the possibilities of acting well in a small theatre. He responded: “I feel it to be much easier to act in a small theatre than in a large one, and I should say that for merely domestic scenes and for simple dialogue, where there is nothing of the pomp or circumstance attending it, I should prefer a small theatre; but for Shakespeare’s plays, I should think very few of them can be found which can have due effect given to them in a small theatre” (*Report* 132). In fact, Macready believed that it would be financially beneficial for the theatrical business if legitimate drama were allowed to be staged in the minor theatres as well as in the patent playhouses. That would offer more business opportunities for those involved, especially for the actors. However, he believed it would be disadvantageous to the public. The actor-manager points out that the small theatres “would offer so many markets for talent, that they would take those [actors] as nightly auxiliaries that ought to be stationary actors in large theatres” (132). Macready felt that the consequence would be the existence of “a great many plays tolerably done”, preventing the spectators from seeing good productions on stage.

Furthermore, the actor believed that the small theatres could not offer the spectator the necessary distance from the action on stage, especially for the tragedies. This highlights the difference between the modern and the Elizabethan theatres; while the latter required the engagement with the audience, the former

created the separation of the 'fourth wall', adding to the illusion of a fantasy world on stage alternative to the real world outside the theatre. In the audience, the spectators would find themselves in-between these two worlds. The small theatre offers thus a paradox: while the audience is too close to the stage, they could see through the artificiality of the medium, causing the illusion to be broken; at the same time, the closeness to the performance could enhance the immersion of the spectator, rendering the action on stage more real and, therefore, more affective.

In 1832, Macready's solution for the theatrical crisis was "to define the rights of the minor theatres, and not to allow them to perform the legitimate drama". Macready follows the convention of "what has been considered as the rule hitherto", understanding legitimate drama as the traditional five-act play (*Report* 134).⁶⁰ All Shakespeare's plays would fall into this category, and these should therefore not be allowed to be staged in the minor theatres. The actor-manager's words demonstrate his conviction that Shakespeare belonged wholly to the large theatres, where the main actors of the day were supposed to perform. He declared: "if you retain Shakespeare as the property of the large theatres, the leading actors in general would prefer to be in the theatre where Shakespeare is played, and therefore it would prevent that competition for the actors, which I think would be a great injury to the large theatres, by dispersing their companies" (134). Restricting Shakespeare to the large theatres would ensure that the great actors remained in their acting companies, and would prevent the competition with the small playhouses. Moreover, the Shakespearean repertoire would guarantee a full house, asserting that the large capacity of the big theatres would be filled.

By 1843, Macready had changed his mind about the theatrical monopoly, understanding that it actually hindered the practice of Shakespearean performance. During his speech at the end of his management at Drury Lane in 1843, the actor-manager spoke about how theatrical laws gave exclusive control of the stage to "persons utterly unacquainted with the drama, and all appertaining to the dramatic arts" (*The Times*, June 15, 1843). This complaint no doubt recalls his earlier

⁶⁰ *The Methuen Drama Dictionary of the Theatre* describes 'legitimate drama' as "serious theatrical work as distinguished from other stage presentations or from the output of such mass media as the cinema and television. The distinction originated in the eighteenth century, when unlicensed playhouses grew up all over London to compete with the two patent theatres, Drury Lane and Covent Garden. These avoided the letter of the law by combining music, dancing, and other forms of entertainment with the drama they presented. The term 'legitimate drama' arose by contrast to describe the straight presentations of serious full-length plays offered by the patent theatres." (Law 286).

altercations with Alfred Bunn (1796-1860), the profit-driven lessee of Drury Lane from 1833 to 1835 (and later from 1843 to 1850). Macready claims that he had suffered previous abuses from the manager, but the feud that acquired national coverage and circulated in several periodicals of the time happened during Bunn's last year of his first management at Drury Lane. The fight originated when Bunn requested Macready to act as Richard III in a production of only the three first acts of the play (in fact, it was Cibber's adaptation of Shakespeare's text and not the original text), which would be followed by two small operas (Ziter 25–26). Macready was infuriated with the thought of mutilating Shakespeare's text in this way, and of having the play share the stage with a minor entertainment. The public was sympathetic with Macready's plight, resulting in a popular approval of the actor's beliefs and a consequent rebuke of Bunn's approach to the theatrical business.

While the minor theatres were prohibited to perform legitimate drama, the people working for the holders of the theatrical patents, such as Macready, struggled to offer quality Shakespeare for the London stage. Simultaneously, the audience was restricted to watch 'legitimate' Shakespeare only at Covent Garden and Drury Lane. Macready also felt that the state of decline of the theatre at the time was a consequence of the lack of funding, and of royal support. Macready was disappointed that Queen Victoria preferred lowbrow entertainment, being a frequent visitor at Drury Lane to watch van Amburgh's animal show, but not on Shakespearean nights (Ziter 45). In 1843, *The Times* published Macready's plea: "May I not ask for what public benefit such a law is framed? Or for what good purpose is persisted in?" (*The Times*, June 15, 1843). Whether or not influenced by Macready's appeal printed in the periodicals at the time, Parliament passed the Theatres Regulation Act of 1843 two months later, abolishing the theatrical patents and opening up the theatrical scene. As a consequence, the Act allowed the possibility of a wider audience for Shakespeare's plays.

6.2 Victorian Pictorial Theatre

'Pictorial' is a key word in understanding Victorian Shakespeare. Charles Knight's *Pictorial Shakespeare* was crucial in the visual interpretation of Shakespeare's words. It also had a clear didactic purpose, that of combining entertainment with instruction, especially as regards history plays. As we saw in

Chapter 4, the series was published in fifty-six monthly instalments from 1838 to 1843, and later reprinted in seven volumes with a supplementary eighth book on the life of Shakespeare. Knight, a member of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK), saw in his publications a way to circulate information to a wider public, in which the comprehension of the written text was aided by the addition of illustrations.

Knight's editorial projects are illustrative of the Victorian preoccupation with knowledge and self-improvement. The young protagonist Pip in Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1861), for example, realises the importance of education in his path to leave his rural childhood behind to become a gentleman in London. According to Schoch, Victorian culture was devoted to popular education: museums, exhibitions, galleries, dioramas, panoramas, public gardens, amongst others, spread around the city, enlightening those who could not afford to buy books or travel (*Shakespeare's Victorian Stage* 58). *The Illustrated London News*, founded in 1842, was the world's first illustrated weekly periodical, offering information about popular entertainment, literature reviews, politics, international affairs, and others, decorated with images.

The Victorian pictorial tradition was felt with greatest intensity in the theatre, since it offered a space for the audience to connect with the materiality of the three-dimensional image on stage. Schoch explains that "pictorial staging meant not only highly elaborate scenery, but also detailed costumes and properties, spectacular effects, and the frequent use of *tableaux vivants* – a static pose held by the acting ensemble at a climactic moment which made the stage look as if it were a painting" ("Pictorial Shakespeare" 58–59). The *tableaux vivants* transposed the two-dimensional image from the canvas to the stage, where the action acquired a third dimension – that of living bodies. Although *tableaux vivants* remain static poses, emphasising the artificiality of the illusion created on stage, they also give the spectator time to read the image and absorb its details. This could engage the viewer into a temporary illusion of frozen time, detached from past *and* present.

Schoch connects the Victorian pictorial tradition mainly with the Shakespearean revivals, fostered after the Theatre Act of 1843, led by the dominant theatre-managers of the period: "Macready, Samuel Phelps, Charles Kean, Henry Irving and Herbert Beerbohm Tree", who "were all committed to a pictorial *mise-en-scène*" (Schoch, "Pictorial Shakespeare" 59). Shakespeare's historical plays particularly offered the stage managers an opportunity to create a visual

representation of the past, aided by the use of props, costume and scenery appropriate to that specific time period. Schoch defines it as “antiquarian pictorialism”, which emerges from the Romantic picturesque and is closely associated with theatrical historicism (*Shakespeare’s Victorian Stage* 18). The popular dioramas and *tableaux vivants* function as examples of the meaningful interweaving of the theatrical with the pictorial. Dioramas were scenic reconstructions of a painting or historical event without actors; these sets were usually in life-size proportions, with a canvas on the background. Special lighting and use of transparency gave the whole a three-dimensional effect. On the other hand, *tableaux vivants* were scenic representations of a static scene with motionless and silent actors dressed in costume. They would be arranged in specific poses to reconstruct a famous painting or historical event. Both dioramas and *tableaux vivants* made use of three-dimensional images and bodily corporeality (in the latter case). However, they lacked voice and movement. In this sense, the illusion to recreate the past on stage fails, because the audience cannot form an emotional connection with the action or event performed.

In a production of *Henry V* at Covent Garden in 1839, Macready engaged the painter Clarkson Stanfield (1793-1867) to create a moving diorama to illustrate the Chorus’ words at the beginning of the play. Alan Downer explains that “the muse of Stanfield ascended to heights of invention to convey the vasty fields of France within Covent Garden’s great wooden O” (247). Macready explains his choice with a note in the playbill: “To impress more strongly on the auditor, and render more palpable these portions of the story which have not the advantage of action, and still are requisite to the Drama’s completeness, the narrative and descriptive poetry spoken by the Chorus is accompanied with PICTORIAL ILLUSTRATIONS from the pencil of MR. STANFIELD” (Downer 247). The word *pictorial* features capitalised in Macready’s note, a term no doubt associated with illustrations of Shakespeare since the publication of the first volume of Knight’s *Pictorial Shakespeare* the year before. In fact, Knight would later dedicate the eighth volume of the series to Macready in 1851, the year the actor retired from the stage (Ziter 56). Macready’s insistence on materialising on stage what Shakespeare commands the audience to imagine illustrates the Victorian commitment to visual pleasure. Downer emphasises that Macready’s innovation was greatly admired by the public; *Henry V* reached twenty-one performances between 10 June and 16 July of that year (248).

Pictorial scenography and *tableaux vivants* were, according to Schoch, “the dominant modes of illustration” of the Shakespearean text. The combination of costume, set and props “intended either to simulate a recognizable painting or, more frequently, to appear *as if* they were a painting” (*Shakespeare’s Victorian Stage* 98). As an example, Schoch writes that a reviewer from the *Critic* felt that the historical details of Charles Kean’s production of *King John* in 1852 were so perfect that the author of *Engraved Illustrations of Antient Armour* could have been responsible for the costume (98–99). The critic legitimises Kean’s success by comparing the costume design with the images from a nineteenth-century illustrated historical book. It indicates that the association with a print or painting was the highest praise for a theatrical production at the time.

Certainly, there was also a danger to an iconographical approach to Shakespeare in the mid-nineteenth century, which was an emphasis on the image at the expense of the spoken word. Schoch mentions that a critic from *The Literary Gazette* “dismissed Kean’s *The Winter’s Tale* ‘as a series of striking dramatic tableaux strung upon’ Shakespeare’s text”, and the *Leader* reviewer of Kean’s *Henry VIII* saw it “as a ‘diorama’ of ‘living figures in superb costumes’ into which ‘[s]ome speaking of Shakespeare’s poetry was introduced’” (qtd. in Schoch 99). Macready was aware of the danger of sacrificing Shakespeare’s original text for the sake of pageantry. Downer adds that Macready read a review of Kean’s revival of *The Winter’s Tale* in 1856. It described “every detail of setting, decoration, costuming, grouping, and color [in Kean’s production] [...] with almost no mention of any acting”. Macready was taken aback by the fact that the reviewer only mentioned the visual features of Kean’s *The Winter’s Tale*, without referring to the quality of the text or acting. He “concluded with a sigh that [in Kean’s production] the accessories had swallowed the poetry and action” (Downer 251):

‘Do you know [...] why I take it so much to heart? It is because I feel myself in some measure responsible. I, in my endeavour to give Shakespeare all his attributes, to enrich his poetry with scenes worthy of its interpretation, to give to his tragedies their due magnificence, and to his comedies their entire brilliancy, have set an example which is accompanied with great peril, for the public is willing to have the magnificence without the tragedy, and the poet is swallowed up in display. When I read such a description as this of the production of a great drama, I am touched with a feeling something like remorse. Is it possible, I ask myself. Did I hold the torch? Did I point out the path?’ (qtd. in Downer 251–2).

Macready chastises himself for calling attention to the need for historical accuracy and visual adornment to Shakespeare's words on stage. He was indeed a pioneer in this approach, but he had been careful to leave set and costume in the background, placing Shakespeare's language and poetry in the forefront. His successors in the second half of the nineteenth century, especially Charles Kean, approached historical theatre in a different manner, allocating greater importance to historical authenticity and pageantry, as I discuss in Chapter 7.

6.3 The Last of the Romans: Macready's Shakespeare and the Project of a National Theatre

The "last of the Romans", or the "Eminent tragedian", as he was commonly known at the time, Macready was responsible for a new wave of Shakespearean interest in the mid-nineteenth century. Unlike the critic Hazlitt a few decades before, Macready believed in the power of performing Shakespeare on stage, rescuing him from the pages of printed books. The actor-manager placed himself as "a sacrifice to the immortal Shakespeare" (13), as Ziter puts it, rejecting previous stage adaptations and restoring Shakespeare's original texts. For instance, Macready replaced Nahum Tate's *King Lear*, Thomas Shadwell's opera version of *The Tempest*, and John Philip Kemble's *Julius Caesar* with Shakespeare's original texts (Ziter 15).

In a speech to commemorate his management of the Covent Garden in 1839, Macready asserted: "I have only been the officiating priest at the shrine of our country's greatest genius", a declaration which was received with "immense cheers" from the listeners (*The Examiner*, 28 July, 1839). Macready was convinced of his role in re-establishing a 'fidelity' to the Shakespearean canon, a task Thomas Carlyle described as "Herculean" (Archer 118). In this way, Macready – and Carlyle, who had a similar approach to the Shakespearean text – "stand as extensions of Romantic era bardolatry even as they contradict the Romantic fascination with a personalized Shakespeare whose works thwart public performance" (Ziter 16). At the same time that they maintain a reverential attitude towards Shakespeare's original text, the mid-Victorians exemplified by Macready and Carlyle challenge the Romantic assumption that Shakespeare was better experienced through individual reading.

When Macready was contracted to manage the rival Covent Garden for a period of two years in 1837, the drama critic in the *Examiner* – Macready's friend,

John Forster (1812-1876) – announced it as “the only resource that can now save that theatre, and with it, for a time, the English drama itself from utter destruction” (*The Examiner*, 23 July 1837). *The Weekly True Sun* shares the new manager’s views and commends his responsibilities in such an undertaking to improve “the actual circumstances of the National Stage”:

The decline of the Drama as a branch of English literature is a matter of public notoriety. The distressed state, and direct losses of those whose profession is the stage, if less generally known, are more severely felt. Under these circumstances he [Macready] has become the Lessee of Covent-garden Theatre, with the resolution to devote his utmost zeal, labour, and industry to improving the condition of that great National Theatre, and with the hope of interesting the public in his favour by his humble but strenuous endeavours to advance the Drama as a branch of national literature and art. It will be his study to accomplish this object by the fidelity, appropriateness, and superior execution of the several means of scenic illusion. (“Multiple Classified Advertisements”. *The Weekly True Sun*, 24 September 1837).

The same message circulated in other periodicals throughout the week, showing Macready’s intent in communicating his plan to a wider audience. Certain words from the text reveal Macready’s preoccupations: ‘improvement’, ‘fidelity’, ‘appropriateness’ and ‘execution’, all in favour of the establishment of a National Theatre. The manager’s project echoes the 1789 Preface to *The Pictures in the Shakespeare Gallery Pall-Mall*, in which Boydell explains the design to establish an English School of Historical Painting, as discussed in Chapter 4. While the late-eighteenth-century national historical project was manifested through paintings, the early-Victorian nationalistic project transposed it to the stage. It was no doubt an elitist venture, since the new manager at Covent Garden also proposed alterations in the theatre structure “with the view to consult the convenience and the respectability of the audience”. The change consisted of a new private lobby for the first circle of boxes, “so that parties who may choose to occupy that part of the house will not be exposed to intrusions hitherto justly complained of as offensive” (*The Weekly True Sun*, 24 September 1837), a clear allusion to the earlier presence of prostitutes in certain parts of the theatre. A change in admission price was also “found absolutely necessary”, creating a wider social gap between the attendants at the Covent Garden and the minor theatres.⁶¹

⁶¹ For the sake of comparison, the *Morning Advertiser* of 27 January 1836 promoted a “grand performance of sacred music, on an unprecedented scale of magnitude and expense” for the following rates of admission: Boxes, 4s.; Pit, 2s.; Gallery, 1s.; and Upper Gallery, 6d. On 26 September 1837,

Shakespeare was the legitimising authority of Macready's defence of a National Theatre. It was also a way to promote the prestige and respectability of the theatrical milieu in the 1830s. The opening production of his management was *The Winter's Tale*, followed by *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*, and *As You Like It*. By the end of the last season, there had been 118 nights of Shakespeare's plays (Downer 185). The productions were applauded by the critics mainly for their "textual authenticity, respect for a disciplined ensemble that included lead actors, praise (sometimes begrudged) for accurate costuming and scene painting and enthusiasm for English music" (Ziter 34). The history plays were not initially prominent in Macready's repertoire. The only one acted during his management of Covent Garden was *Henry V*, for which he commissioned the moving dioramas mentioned above.

Macready's *Henry V* also illustrates the ambiguous early-Victorian desire both to restore the Shakespearean original text and to decorate it with pompous theatrical designs. The modern stage offered many more possibilities than the Elizabethan stage, and the managers were keen on awing the audience with the most recent technology. For example, Macready's *Coriolanus* at Covent Garden in 1838 brought a large number of supernumeraries on stage. It was praised by *The Spectator* as "a triumph of the art", as "the most perfect and impressive classic spectacle ever seen on the stage", because "the true uses and value of costume, scenery, and other aids of dramatic illusion, are demonstrated to the fullest in this instance" and "make palpable the life and spirit of the antique world". The critic thought that Coriolanus' victorious return and reception by the crowd was "the most imposing display of classic pageantry" (*The Spectator*, 17 March 1838). The *Evening Chronicle* praised not only the fact that Shakespeare's text was restored and that the scenery and costume were faithful to the period of Republican Rome, but that Macready "for the first time realizes the pictorial conceptions and imaginings of Shakespeare's mind" (*The Evening Chronicle*, 14 March 1838). Victorian theatre had now the possibility to materialise what during Shakespeare's time was only conceivable in the playwright's imagination. What the Elizabethan and Jacobean bare stage could only evoke, the Covent Garden stage could *show*.

after Macready's change in admission prices, the *Morning Post* advertised *The Winter's Tale* for the following rates: Boxes, 5s.; Pit, 2s. 6d.; Lower Gallery, 1s. 6d.; Upper Gallery, 1s. In contrast, the admission to the 'illegitimate' drama *Cyril Woodbine; or, The Old Elm Grove* was: 2s. in the Boxes; 1s. in the Pit; and 6d. in the Gallery (*Weekly True Sun*, 09 April 1837).

There were also critics who disagreed with such graphic representations of Shakespeare's text. *John Bull's* review of Macready's *Henry V* at Covent Garden in 1839 condemns that the actor-manager "has attempted to realise that which Shakespeare left to the imagination; and by the attempt, has not only destroyed the images conjured up by the poet, has not only made his gorgeous verse a blank letter, but has destroyed the scenic effects of which he might legitimately have availed himself" (*John Bull*, 16 June 1839). What the critic mainly rejects is Macready's illustration of the Chorus' words in-between the acts with dioramas, because such effect "shows the weakness of mimic skill when wrestling with a majestic thought". The mere mirroring of Shakespeare's words on stage results in a waste of the potential of scenic effect to move the audience and to pull them into history in action. For example, when the Chorus asks the spectators to imagine a siege, Macready adds an "actual representation on the stage by means of crowds of armed men, and the usual panoply of the scene on these occasions – which strikes the eye as tame, poor, and lifeless" (*John Bull*, 16 June 1839). By contrast, the critic suggests a different manner to materialise the Chorus' words, one that would give life to history:

Suppose the breach in the embattled walls visible to the audience, but ramparted and filled up by men-at-arms, the files of the English stretching in long and well-grouped array, and so trained as to manifest the various and changing emotions producible by the trumpet sound of *Harry's* speech – the whole scene having burst on the view at once, at the rising of the green curtain. (*John Bull*, 16 June 1839).

The critic's suggestion would not evoke a hollow picture, legitimised by accurate costume or setting. Instead, the focus would be on expressing emotions and conveying *life*.

After Macready's management of Covent Garden ended in 1839, he signed a contract to manage the rival Drury Lane from 1841 to 1843. He continued his national and personal project to reinstate the original Shakespearean text and broadened the repertoire he had already covered at the Drury Lane, staging *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *As You Like It*, *Othello*, *King John*, *Cymbeline*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Julius Caesar*, and *The Winter's Tale*.⁶²

⁶² According to Janice Norwood's reference guide to performances of Shakespeare's plays in nineteenth-century London (Norwood 377–378).

Macready received positive criticism on his reconstruction of thirteenth-century England in *King John*. The *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* judged it a “most brilliant success”, and “perfect” as a spectacle”. The critic adds that “the gorgeousness of the dresses is only equalled by the fidelity of costume”. In addition, the setting “produced an apparent reality exceeding in effect any thing we have before seen of the kind” (*Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 29 October 1842). *The Illustrated London News* adds that “if Shakspeare himself were to revisit us he could not but be pleased with the idolatry paid to his poetry at the present day, and applaud like a father, as he is, of the drama, the struggles of his legitimate sons in the cause of even new-framing his pictures of life!”. The periodical includes an image of the last scene of the production, in which King John dies, surrounded by Hubert, Essex and Prince Henry, the heir to the throne and future Henry III (See figure 44). The critic notices the group of caparisoned figures in solemn distance in the background, and “the beautiful orchard of the picturesque abbey of Swinted beyond” (*The Illustrated London News*, 29 October 1842).

The pageantry of setting and pomposity of costume in this scene are not merely decorative or a mirror of Shakespeare’s words, as with the Chorus in Macready’s *Henry V*. Instead, they enhance the effect of the scene in arousing the spectator’s feelings. As the critic puts it, Macready

wisely sees that the glorious pageantry which interweaves itself among the fine depictions and imaginings of the immortal bard give true and beautiful aid to the living stream of poetry that rolls so lavishly along: that scenes of historic grandeur or natural magnificence or loveliness aid all the realities of the poet, when they are brought palpably before the eye; and that although illustration can never supply the place of acting, or compensate for its want of excellence, yet it may be made greatly to aid what *is* excellent, and makes beautifully perfect the grand illusions of the play. (*The Illustrated London News*, 29 October 1842).

It is thus a combination of pageantry with life, of historical authenticity with beauty, and of reality with imagination.

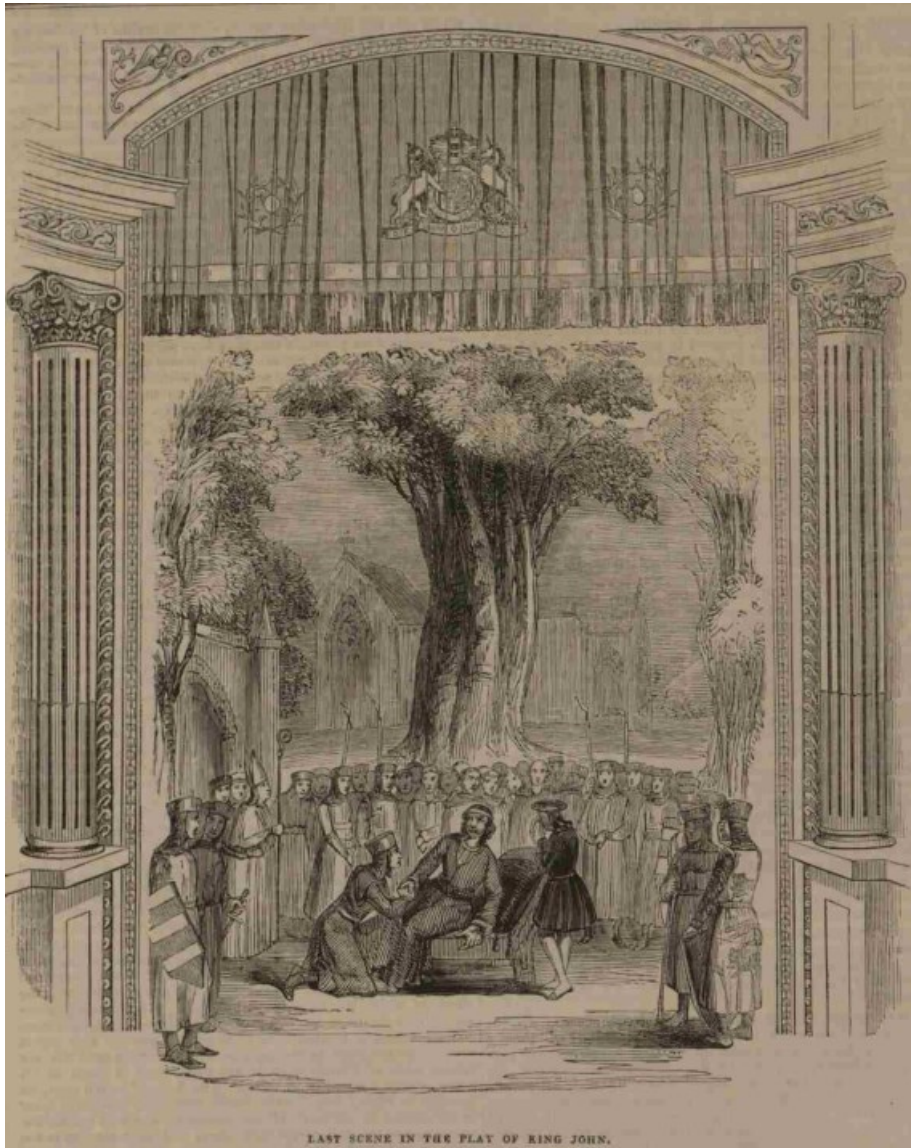


Figura 44 - Macready's *King John* at Drury Lane in 1842

After polemic tours in America,⁶³ Macready returned to England for a farewell season before retiring from the stage. He committed to two engagements at Haymarket in 1850 and 1851, where he acted mainly Shakespearean roles: Hamlet, Othello, Lear, Macbeth, Henry IV, Wolsey, King John, Shylock, Brutus, Cassius, Benedick, and Richard II (Ziter 51).⁶⁴ It was the first time that Macready performed the role of Richard II in London, having done it before only during his provincial tours at the beginning of his career: first, in Newcastle in January 1813, a production that was reproduced in Glasgow in June of the same year; subsequently, three productions in Bath, Dublin and Bristol in 1815, the same year that Edmund Kean brought it to the Drury Lane stage; and, finally, one in Bristol in 1829 (Barker 95). As Kathleen Barker puts it, Macready was “certainly the most enthusiastic proponent of

⁶³ Macready developed a personal grudge with the American actor Edwin Forrest (1806-1872), apparently over who could perform Shakespeare better. Forrest blamed Macready for his bad reception on the English stages, and when the English actor crossed the ocean, he believed his American rival had taken the effort to discredit his reputation on American soil. It eventually became a broader clash between monarchist (Macready) and republican (Forrest) discourses, which circulated in print in both continents. The English press in its majority took Macready’s side, while the American papers supported Forrest. The climax of the feud took place at the Astor Opera House in New York on 10 May 1849, when Macready was to perform a Shakespearean role. There was a riot in front of the theatre, where an organised mob had gathered to voice their protests. Over twenty rioters died. The occurrence marked negatively Macready’s career and became known as the Astor Place Riot.

⁶⁴ Although Ziter mentions the roles Henry IV, King John, Shylock, Brutus *and* Cassius, and Benedick, Janice Norwood’s compilation of the productions at Haymarket only include *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *King Lear* in October 1849, *Othello* in November 1849, and *Richard II* and *Henry VIII* in December 1850. There is no mention to productions of *Henry IV*, *King John*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Julius Caesar* or *Much Ado About Nothing* in this period of time. Norwood’s reference guide indicates a production of *The Merchant of Venice* in January 1850, and a staging of *Julius Caesar* in February 1850, both at Drury Lane, but Macready was not part of the cast. However, *The Era* of 26 January 1851 reports Macready’s final appearance as Cassius at Haymarket.

the play in the first half of the nineteenth century” (95). In fact, he revived this neglected Shakespearean play for the Newcastle audience two years prior to Edmund Kean in London.

Macready refers to his early productions of *Richard II* in his *Reminiscences*, published in conjunction with a selection from his personal letters and private journal entries in 1875, two years after his death. In this text, the actor looks back at the beginning of his career, retrospectively associating early events with later circumstances, when he was already an established artist. He wrote that *Richard II* was “a play of the performance of which there is no record since Shakespeare’s time, with due omissions. I had prepared it for representation, and it was produced with all the scenic effects that the limits of the theatre would admit of” (Macready 48). The production in Newcastle was a success and “proved the attraction of the season”. Despite the audience’s applause and the appreciation of Shakespearean critics, Macready laments that the play “has not kept the stage” (48).

The actor acknowledges the poetic richness of the text, but he cannot appreciate its protagonist:

Richard’s acts are those of idle, almost childish, levity, wanton caprice, or unreflecting injustice. He is alternately confidently boastful and pusillanimously despondent. His extravagant persuasions of kingly inviolability, and of heavenly interposition in his behalf, meet with no response in the sympathies of an audience. His grief is that of a spoiled, passionate boy; but the language in which it is expressed is in the loftiest strain of poetry and passion. (Macready 48).

Macready does not share Hazlitt’s opinion on the powerful pathos of Shakespeare’s Richard. Instead, he finds him a capricious and childish character that elicits no sympathy from the audience. As I discuss in Chapter 5, Hazlitt criticised precisely the lack of pathos in Edmund Kean’s performance of Richard in a review published in 1815, two years after Macready’s premiere in Newcastle. The older Macready who writes the *Reminiscences* is familiar with Kean’s approach to the role. He wrote that “in none of his personations did the late Edmund Kean⁶⁵ display more masterly elocution than in the third act of ‘Richard II’; but the admiration he excited could not maintain a place for the work in the list of acting plays among the favorite dramas of Shakespeare” (Macready 48). The third act of the play brings Richard back from Ireland to the English shore. That is when the king learns about

⁶⁵ Edmund Kean died in 1833, which confirms the fact that Macready wrote these thoughts on *Richard II* at a later stage in his career.

Bolingbroke's betrayal and the dispersal of his Welsh army, but still has faith in the divine power of his anointed kingship.

The main fault that Macready finds with Shakespeare's *Richard II* is the lack of purpose and will in the play, not only with regard to Richard, but also Bolingbroke and York. Unlike other Shakespearean characters, such as Macbeth, Othello, Iago, Hamlet and Richard III, whose plots are motivated by action, the cast of *Richard II*, in Macready's view, "do little else than talk" (Macready 48). In this context, I wonder: if this is how the eminent tragedian felt about Shakespeare's *Richard II*, why would he choose this specific role to act, particularly when the play had not been staged for almost eighty years and could therefore not guarantee a full house?

Barker explains that Macready's *Richard II* in Newcastle "was well puffed for its novelty value and the 'new splendid Scenery, dresses, decoration, &c.'" (95). The contemporary newspapers praised the historical accuracy of Macready's dress as the title character, and the splendour of the scenery and decoration, although one critic reprehended "the display of a landscape clearly Asiatic in character", which was explained as a "mistake of the scene-shifters" (Barker 96). Based on the critic's comments on the dispensability of staging Aumerle's plot and the "burlesque" throwing down of gloves in 4.1, it is possible to infer that Macready attempted to maintain Shakespeare's original text. The result was likely a long production.

Barker studies the list of sceneries for the production at Glasgow in June, a re-staging of Newcastle, which conveys an interesting overview of how Macready chose to illustrate the play. There are seven in total: the court of King Richard for 1.1; the Lists at Gosforth Green for the combat between Bolingbroke and Norfolk in 1.3; a view of the sea with a vessel at anchor for 3.2; the return of King Richard from Ireland also for 3.2; the courtyard of Flint Castle for 3.3; Westminster Hall for the trial and deposition of Richard in 4.1; and the Tower of London with the procession of Richard to the prison in Pomfret Castle in 5.1 (Barker 96). The last one indicates that Macready chose to stage York's description of Richard's and Bolingbroke's entrance into London. It is hard to imagine that any one of these could display "a landscape clearly Asiatic in character", so the comment in the *Newcastle Advertiser* could indeed refer to a mistake by the scene-shifters, who perhaps inserted the backdrop of another play by accident. In any case, the backdrops for Macready's *Richard II*

emphasise the medieval setting of the play, materialising to the audience the court, the lists for a medieval combat, and Pomfret Castle.⁶⁶

Downer believes that one of the reasons why Shakespeare's Richard II appealed to Macready as an attractive role despite his personal dislike of the character was the possibilities it offered the actor to explore the powers of his voice. As Downer explains, "from the beginning, Macready's voice was his principal asset" (Downer 31–32). George Henry Lewes describes it as "powerful, extensive in compass, capable of delicate modulation in quiet passages [...] and having tones that thrilled and tones that stirred tears" (Lewes 33). Lewes adds that Macready had "a tendency to scream in violent passages" (33). Hazlitt considered it a fine and heroic voice, but one that could also work to the actor's disadvantage if its "melodious declamation" were used in exaggeration (Downer 32).

A Newcastle critic pointed out that Macready's Richard II seldom "gets into the declamatory monotony, which at first usurped in his acting the place of pathos" (qtd. in Barker 97). The "passionate violence of his action and gestures", as Downer puts it, in combination with a declamatory heroic voice could result in an artificial acting style, undermining the powerful pathos of the Shakespearean character. However, the emotional reaction of the audience indicates that that was not the case. Barker writes that the audience was especially moved during "the actor's transitions between hope and despair in the same scene, which reduced his audience to tears" (97). One example was Macready's performance in the deposition scene, which combined both dignity and indignity. Despite Macready's personal negative evaluation of Shakespeare's Richard II in his journal, the reception of his performance in the role indicates that he managed to combine moments of feeling with moments of weakness, embodying the pathos of the Shakespearean character.

The clergyman and theatre historian John Genest (1764-1839) writes about the 1815 production in Bath in *Some Account of the English Stage* (1832). He states that the play had not been acted since 1735, but he adds an addendum with the correct information: "it should have been not since 1738" (491).⁶⁷ Genest compares Macready's adaptation with Richard Wroughton's, the one used by Edmund Kean in his staging at Drury Lane in the same year. According to the author, Macready made

⁶⁶ In the early nineteenth century, the audience would only have access to the ruins of Pomfret Castle, which was partly destroyed after three sieges in the 1640s. However, on the stage the castle could be reconstructed to its former medieval grandeur.

⁶⁷ As we have seen, *Richard II* was last performed in London at Covent Garden in 1738.

fewer alterations than Wroughton, except for “the lines about Bolingbroke’s affectations of popularity” that “were improperly taken from the king, and given to Aumerle” (492). This is an interesting exchange that is not recorded in Macready’s promptbook, a printed edition of 1825 annotated by the actor’s own hand. This could suggest that the change made in Bath was not successful, and that Macready reconsidered it for his productions in 1829 in Bristol and in 1850 in London.

Genest also compares the scene at the Lists with the way it was staged at Drury Lane in February 1738, although he could not have seen it for himself since he was born twenty-six years after that. His conclusion is that both were “well managed”. The Bath production “produced a good effect in representation”, it “was gotten up at some expense and was well acted – it was however performed but twice, and that to bad houses” (Genest 492). The *Bath Journal* of 30 January emphasises Macready’s acting and the emotional response from the audience. The critic praises how the actor “delineated the sorrows and misfortunes of the unhappy King, with much powerful pathos and natural feeling, as to melt the audience into tears of sympathy” (Barker 98). The words in the *Bath Journal* anticipate Hazlitt’s evaluation of Kean’s acting over a month later. Macready, however, seems to have been able to perform the character’s pathos in a manner different from Kean. Even though Macready condemned the passivity of Shakespeare’s Richard II, his opinion on the lack of action in the play did not thwart his poignant embodiment of the role.

The playbill to the 1829 production in Bristol provides authoritative information about the use of scenery, sixteen years after Macready’s premiere at Newcastle. The advertisement for 18 March promises new dresses and Classical Scenery (Bristol Archives). It also gives an overview of the sceneries, which are in total nine, elaborated by Mr. Henry: a new palace of the Corinthian order for 1.1; the Lists in the neighbourhood of the city of Coventry for 1.3; Berkeley Castle, which is “faithfully represented by A NEW SCENE of Mr. Henry’s” for Act 2; “Mr. Henry’s Picturesque Prospect of Conway Castle”, followed by a strong encampment and a courtyard adjacent to Flint Castle, for Act 3; a “Grand Scene” for Richard’s trial, resignation and deposition in Act 4; and, finally, Mr. Henry’s “grand design” for Windsor Castle and the Prison at Pontefract for Act 5. The sets were therefore expanded since the 1813 production. Furthermore, the playbill adds that this play is “founded on Interesting and Historical Facts, about the end of the year 1400”, which

raises the spectator's awareness to watching history performed on stage (Bristol Archives).

It was over twenty years after his last performance of *Richard II* at Bristol that Macready had the opportunity to stage the play again, this time during his farewell season at the Haymarket. The season lasted from October 1849 to February 1851, and included *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, *Richard II* and *Henry VIII* (Norwood 383–84). Macready's very last appearance on stage was in *Macbeth* at Drury Lane on 26 February 1851, one year after his twenty-year old daughter Christina died (24 February 1850). Lewes writes about his own experience attending Macready's very last performance at a completely full theatre: "what a sight that was! How glorious, triumphant, affecting, to see every one starting up, waving hats and handkerchiefs, stamping, shouting, yelling their friendship at the great actor, who now made his appearance on that stage where he was never more to reappear!" (Lewes 40). As the actor stepped on stage to receive the applause and bid farewell to his profession, Lewes notices his "crape hat-band and black studs" that symbolised the mourning for his late daughter. "It made me forget the paint and tinsel, the artifice and glare of an actor's life, to remember how thoroughly that actor was a man – one of us, sharer of sorrows we all have known or all must know", wrote Lewes (41). Standing on stage as himself and not as one of his characters broke the illusion of fantasy and distance that the fourth wall of the stage offers. Lewis was suddenly aware of the actor's own humanity and ephemerality, in a similar manner to the way in which Richard faces his mortality after the deposition scene in Shakespeare's play.

The *Theatrical Journal* reported Macready's speech given at the banquet organised to honour his career after the farewell season. 610 people attended, including Charles Kemble, John Forster, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Charles Dickens. In this speech, Macready reinforces his lifelong purpose for the advancement of the national theatre, and puts forth his hope for the future: "[I am] under the conviction that our drama is the noblest in the world, and that it can never lose its place from the stage while the English language shall last, I would venture to express a parting hope, that the rising actors would keep the loftiest look, and would hold the most elevated views of the duties of his calling" (*Theatrical Journal*, 12 March 1852, 78).

6.4 Macready's Middle Ages

Richard II was performed on the Haymarket stage on a single night on 2 December 1850, during Macready's farewell season to the stage. For my analysis of this specific production, I will refer to the promptbook held by the Victoria & Albert Museum. It is a printed edition of *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare*, edited in eleven volumes by William Pickering and printed in 1825. This is the acting copy owned by Macready and contains his handwritten annotations to the text. It is not clear when these annotations were made, but since the edition was published in 1825, it is possible that Macready wrote the notes for the 1829 productions in Bath, Dublin and Bristol, and reused it for the one-night revival in 1850.

Instead of using Wroughton's textual adaptation as Kean had done in 1815, Macready remained true to his project to reinstate the Shakespearean original text for performance, making few alterations. In Act 1, Scene 1, Macready eliminates Mowbray's confession of having plotted against John of Gaunt's life.⁶⁸ Any allusion to Mowbray's murderous thoughts against Gaunt, which would compromise the Duke's case to the king, are thus eliminated in Macready's production. Another omission of lines that refer to cunning and deceiving is the symbolic exchange between the king and Mowbray about lions being able to tame leopards but not to change their spots. Macready's annotations also indicate that his production eliminates or softens expressions of vengeful thoughts. For example, during the conversation between Gaunt and the Duchess of Gloucester in 1.2, Macready deletes the Duchess' grievance over her husband's death "by envy's hand, and murder's bloody axe" (1.2.21), as well as her plea to Gaunt to revenge Gloucester's death. These examples demonstrate that Macready was conscious of the language being spoken on stage. He eliminates instances of Shakespeare's violent passages in order to render the whole acceptable by a moralising Victorian audience. This is an approach also taken by sanitised editions of Shakespeare's works, including *The Family Shakespeare* (1807).

⁶⁸ These are the lines that were cut: "For you, my noble lord of Lancaster, / The honourable father to my foe, / once did I lay an ambush for your life. / A trespass that doth vex my grievèd soul, / But ere I last received the sacrament / I did confess it, and exactly begged / Your grace's pardon, and I hope I had it" (1.1.135-140).

Gaunt's iconic speech in Act 2 is considerably diminished. The extract about England as a "teeming womb of royal kings / Feared by their breed and famous by their birth, / Renowned for their deeds as far from home / For Christian service and true chivalry / As is the sepulchre in stubborn Jewry / Of the world's ransom, blessed Mary's son" (2.1.51-56) is removed. Gaunt's words could potentially revive an idealised image of a Roman Catholic past, which would conflict with the Protestantism of the Hanoverian dynasty. The references to Adam and Eve in the garden scene are likewise omitted, perhaps for similar reasons. Macready's edited version of Gaunt's speech diminishes the contrast between a nostalgic glorification of England's medieval past with the present. Significantly, the line stating that England "hath made a shameful conquest of itself" (2.1.66) is deleted, weakening Gaunt's powerful criticism of his age. In this manner, Macready protects his production from possible accusations of referring to his own present time in Victoria's reign. The removal of other instances of Gaunt's recrimination of Richard's role as king strengthens this hypothesis. For example, Gaunt's criticism to "sleeping England" and to Richard's role in shaming the land is excluded, as well as the old man's condemnation of Richard's guilt in Gloucester's death. In conclusion, Macready's version of Gaunt's speech loses its original political strength.

There is an interesting alteration at the turn of the second to the third acts. Macready crosses out Scene 4 in Act 2, and renames it Scene 1 of Act 3. He subsequently completely excludes Shakespeare's original first scene of Act 3. These pages of the promptbook have been sealed together. What follows is Shakespeare's scene 2 of Act 3, which takes place at the coast of Wales. Macready thus deliberately omits the scene in front of the castle in Bristol, when Bolingbroke accuses Bushy and Green and demand their execution. As we have seen, this is an instance in the play in which Bolingbroke takes over the sovereign's role, taking into his own hands the fate of the prisoners Bushy and Green, the king's favourites. In this manner, Macready palliates Bolingbroke's insubordination and cruelty. Moreover, Macready crosses out Bolingbroke's complaint of his "unthrifty son", the future Henry V, and his "unrestrained loose companions" in Act 5, Scene 3, avoiding the judgment of royal behaviour on stage.

The changes Macready made to the Shakespearean text are thus relatively few. There was certainly a concern with the total duration of the play, hence the cutting of lines to render it shorter. The scene of Aumerle's confession of treason in

Act 5 was also significantly shortened. Perhaps Macready had learned the lesson after reading the critic's comment in the *Newcastle Advertiser* complaining about the irrelevance of the plot in the 1813 production. My conclusion is that the omissions in Macready's annotated text follow mainly five categories: first, religious allusions, such as the mention of Christ in the deposition scene or the reference to Adam and Eve in the garden scene; second, implications of death or cruelty, like the full removal of Act 3, Scene 1; third, allusions to immoral conduct, for instance, the Duchess of York's words condemning York's suspicion of her infidelity and accusing Aumerle of being a bastard; fourth, the reduction of comic relief in order to render the whole more serious, such as cutting the throwing of gages in 4.1 and York's incongruous search for his boots while he accuses his own son of treason; and, finally, a reduction of lines spoken by the female characters, especially the Queen and the Duchess, resulting in shorter scenes for the actresses. For example, the emotional parting between Richard and his former queen is significantly reduced, and their final kiss is omitted. These changes can be explained as part of Macready's bigger project of a serious National Theatre that would elevate the status of the theatrical business. For that purpose, the theatre should be regarded as a safe cultural and edifying space for all, including women. Therefore, no indecorous or violent subject matter should be allowed on stage.

Lewes writes about Macready in his *On Actors and the Art of Acting*, comparing him to Edmund Kean. While he considered Kean a "genius", he saw Macready "only as a man of talent, but of talent so marked and individual that it approaches very near to genius" (32). While Kean was for Lewes "indisputable superior[...] in the highest reaches of his art", nonetheless he was "inferior to Macready in that general flexibility of talent and in that range of intellectual sympathy which are necessary to the personation of many and various parts" (Lewes 32). Lewes identifies Macready's strength in performing characters such as Werner, Richelieu, Iago and Virginius, while Kean was greater in representing "the great Shakespearean hero" (33). The reason for this, concludes Lewes, is the fact that Macready's characters "were domestic rather than ideal, and made but slight appeals to the larger passions which give strength to heroes" (Lewes 34). For example, in *Macbeth*, Macready offered a bodily depiction of a wavering conscience, but failed to represent a great criminal. Lewes writes that Macready's Macbeth "stole into the sleeping-chamber of Duncan like a man going to purloin a purse, not like a warrior

going to snatch a crown” (35). In *Othello*, he acted the irritability of the character but not the grandeur of his agony; and his Hamlet was intelligent, but “lachrymose and fretful”. Nevertheless, Lewes acknowledges that with Richard II “all his great qualities were displayed” (35).

The critic in *The Illustrated London News* (7 December, 1850) refers to Macready’s *Richard II* as “the theatrical event of the week”, despite the play being Shakespeare’s “least dramatic” work. The critic shares with Macready a similar opinion of the play’s lack of action: “Sentiment and diction are called in as substitutes for character and action. The scenes throughout want one element of tragedy – they are inspired with Pity, but not with Terror. The experiment is powerfully made, but serves only the more to establish the conclusion, that Pity alone is insufficient to support an effective drama” (“Haymarket”, *The Illustrated London News*, 7 December 1850, 441). Interestingly, the critic assumes a complete opposite approach to the Shakespearean play than Hazlitt had over three decades earlier. For Hazlitt, the lack of action, the focus on sentiment and the character’s weakness were the main attributes of *Richard II*, whereas the critic in 1850 sees those same elements as the play’s pitfalls. It is noticeable here a change in mindset – the Romantic importance ascribed to feeling is set aside for a preference for action.

Despite “the delinquency of the hero” in Shakespeare’s original, *The Illustrated London News* acknowledges that “the sudden fall of the King from power to dependence is an incident so skilfully managed by the poet, that it smites and pierces the heart strongly and deeply” (*The Illustrated London News*, 7 December 1850, 441). He analyses how Macready performs this affecting representation of fall from power in the iconic deposition scene. According to the critic, the scene “afflicted us with a distress so poignant to the utmost point of endurance. If in this scene the poet was marvellous, the actor was admirable” (441). The article is decorated with an illustration of Macready in the title role (See figure 45). He stands holding a mirror and looking at his own reflection. His head is bare, emphasising his figure as a mortal man, while the other characters in the scene wear either hats or helmets. The artist captures the look on Macready’s eyes and the wrinkled forehead as he faces his own reflection, bereft of majesty. The drawing gives an idea of how the actor may have conveyed the pathos of this scene. On his right side, Northumberland clad in armour holds the document with the formal accusations against Richard that he refuses to read in the scene, and next to him Henry Bolingbroke looks at Richard with

impatience. On Macready's left side, the old Bishop of Carlisle looks with disgust at Bolingbroke and Northumberland, who were bold enough to challenge the divine right of kingship.

Figura 45 - Macready as Richard II at Haymarket, *The Illustrated London News*, 7 December 1850

The Illustrated London News thanks Macready for the opportunity of seeing *Richard II* staged, given that it had not been done in London since Edmund Kean's production. Although "wanting in interest as the drama itself", the reviewer praised Macready's acting as "one remarkably well suited to his genius and style" (*The*

Illustrated London News, 7 December 1850, 441). He hopes that the actor's success in the role should



be enough to "command the town for many representations". However, that was

not the case; *Richard II* was performed but once during Macready's farewell season. The critic praises, specifically, how Macready represented all the phases of character "with wonderful force and precision":

The recklessness and arrogance of the spendthrift and unscrupulous Monarch – his boundless confidence in the divine prerogative – his right royal method of thinking on all occasions, even when acting wrongfully – his filial love and reverence for his native soil – his exultation on returning to it – his pride, his dejection, his humiliation – his grief, and wrath, and utter destitution. (*The Illustrated London News*, 7 December 1850, 441).

The critic's words reveal how the character was perceived negatively by Victorian moral standards. Richard was not the model of a monarch that should be followed, quite the contrary. Nevertheless, Macready's acting was a model to be followed, especially for his engagement with the Shakespearean text: "Clear it was that he [Macready] had given to the character the most profound study, and exhausted on it all the resources of his histrionic talent" (*The Illustrated London News*, 7 December 1850, 441). By intensive study and commitment to the Shakespearean original, Macready attempted at elevating the status of the professional actor and the theatrical business. It was an activity that demanded dedication, effort and study.

Although there is no mention of historical accuracy in *The Illustrated London News*, Macready's care in materialising a credible medieval past is noticeable in the visual records of the production. The figure mentioned above shows Northumberland in medieval armour, holding a triangular shield, giving the ensemble a distinctive medieval atmosphere. Furthermore, the attention given to the actors' haircuts and beard styles is noteworthy. For instance, Bolingbroke has chin-length hair and a pointy beard. The aforementioned engraving held at the National Portrait Gallery shows Macready as Richard II in the final prison scene, when the former king is reflecting on his own mortality just moments before his own death (See figure 39). Macready wears black and sits on a chair next to a wooden table in an otherwise empty room. The immense columns and high arches emphasise the grandeur of the place, contrasted with the darkness in the background. The chain attached to the column in the forefront symbolises Richard's captivity, as well as the bars in the small halfmoon window. Richard's prison is a dark medieval cell, impregnated with ominous violence and death. The extract from Act 5 quoted below the image raises the possibility of comparing this medieval cell to the world – either Richard's own

fourteenth-century world, Shakespeare's world in the late sixteenth century, or also the contemporary world of Macready and his spectators.

The German literary scholar Hermann Ulrici (1806-1884) published a book on Shakespeare in 1839, which was translated and published in English in 1846. It was later expanded into a two-volume new English edition published in 1876 as *Shakespeare's Dramatic Art. History and Character of Shakespeare's Plays*. Ulrici's ideas on Shakespeare's *Richard II* were therefore circulating in England even before Macready's last production of the play. The German critic proposes interesting ideas regarding the right to kingship, which may shed light on how the character Richard was perceived in the mid-nineteenth century, and how it differed from understandings of the play in the century's opening decades. Ulrici writes that "the fixed formula of external legal *right* established by man, it regards as nothing but a formula; it values a right which is truly just only in so far as it is founded upon *morality*" (223). Therefore, although Richard has a born right to the throne, he forfeits this right the moment he disrespects it. As Ulrici puts it: "even the right of majesty *by the grace of God* loses its title as soon as it breaks away from its foundation, the grace of God, whose justice acknowledges no legal claims, no hereditary or family right in contradiction to the sole right of truth and reason" (223). After abusing his royal prerogative, interrupting the medieval combat between Mowbray and Bolingbroke, spending state money to gratify his favourites, confiscating the Duke of Lancaster's property to finance his Irish wars, and being inconsistent when proclaiming sentences, King Richard renounces the power invested in him via a contract that requires justice and honesty in return. Ulrici even concludes that "small as is the truly moral spirit exhibited by the man afterwards King Henry IV, he seems a hero of virtue compared with the unworthy, most unkingly Richard" (223).

After being sent to prison and facing his own sins and fears, Shakespeare's Richard changes. Ulrici believes that "the resignation with which he [Richard] bears his fate, his contrite repentance of his transgressions, his in general dignified conduct, and the courage which he maintains even in his last moments, atone for his faults, and compel us to feel sincere pity for him" (226). Despite his transgressive youth, Richard becomes a true repentant after being stripped of his royal self and forced to contemplate his own humanity. Ulrici thus sees in the Shakespearean play a moral lesson, a cautionary narrative against the presumption of a man who believed himself above God's preached virtues of truth and reason. According to

Ulrici, Shakespeare understood the importance of showing the audience a glimpse of Richard's immoral conduct in the beginning of the play, even though his dethronement was the main historical event in the monarch's life. That is precisely to justify God's own punishment of Richard's misbehaviour, since if a monarch "acts contrary to his calling, its divine nature will not protect him" (Ulrici 226). One example is Richard's return from Ireland just one day too late, which Ulrici explains as "God's guidance and dispensation of things" deciding against Richard (224).

It is possible to draw parallels between Ulrici's understanding of Shakespeare's *Richard II* and Macready's representations of the play on stage. Mid-nineteenth-century England is a period preoccupied with instruction and morality. Different from the Romantic appreciation of Richard's pathos and the poetic tragedy of his fall, Victorian responses to the character focused on criticising the king's flaws as a monarch. As Ulrici points out, Richard forfeits his divine right to rule the moment he rejects the morality and honesty attached to the role of monarch. Richard is punished by God for having betrayed God's trust. In this context, Macready offers a version of Shakespeare's text that softens immoral expressions of deceit, unfaithfulness, revenge and blasphemy. In this manner, Macready's Richard is more acceptable to the Victorian audience. At the same time, a more principled version of *Richard II* aids Macready in his broader project of elevating the theatre as a legitimate art.

6.5 Conclusion

After producing *Richard II* in the provinces in the beginning of his career, Macready returns to the play during his farewell season to the stage in 1851 in his first and only performance of the play in London. The actor-manager, "the last of the Romans", devoted his career to promote the theatre as high art and as a respectful profession. *The Era* of 26 January 1851 reports on Macready's final appearance on the stage. As the advertisements to *Julius Caesar* emphatically noted, the actor-manager played Cassius "for the last time". According to *The Era*, "the play was loudly cheered, and Mr. Macready, when called for at the close, bowed his farewell as 'the last of the Romans'" (*The Era*, 26 January 1851). In Shakespeare's play, Brutus refers to Cassius and Titinius as "the last of the Romans", since they were the last remaining noblemen true to the principles of the Roman Republic. In the

theatrical sphere, Macready was – according to the periodicals of the time – the “last of the tragedians” to remain true to Shakespeare’s principles. That was not necessarily the case. Charles Kean, for instance, continued Macready’s plight to bring respectability to the theatrical milieu, as we will see in the following chapter.

In order to create a National Theatre that would go against the profit-driven choices of the patent theatres, Macready engaged in rescuing the original Shakespearean text, rejecting earlier textual alterations from the previous century. In contrast to the Romantic Hazlitt, who advocated Shakespeare as an individual reading experience, Macready believed in the power of *performing* Shakespeare, of bringing Shakespeare’s poetry to a wide audience. However, both Macready and Hazlitt shared a reverential attitude towards the playwright, locating the Shakespearean genius in his poetic language. In Macready’s case, he believed in the use of pictorial illustration as a means to *enhance* the power of Shakespeare’s poetry, not as a substitute for it. As we have seen, the attempt was not thoroughly successful in his production of *Henry V* at Covent Garden in 1839 with the illustration of the Chorus’ words on stage, but he managed to harmoniously combine text and image in his *King John* at Drury Lane in 1842 and *Richard II* at the Haymarket in 1850. In a way, Macready simultaneously expands and rejects the Romantic devotion to Shakespeare’s text, re-placing the playwright’s genius on the stage, embodied by the actors and not in the reader’s imagination.

Macready’s nationalistic project reinforces the early-Victorian commitment to visual pleasure. Whereas the late-eighteenth-century Boydell Gallery had visually represented Shakespeare in paintings, Macready transposes to the stage the campaign for a national culture. The theatre was thus a place where the Victorian pictorial tradition was intensely manifested. Following Knight’s *Pictorial Shakespeare*, the actor-manager materialised the past as reimagined by Shakespeare’s history plays on the nineteenth-century stage. The visual potential of performing Shakespeare’s history plays and providing a sense of living history to the audience is what Schoch calls “Antiquarian pictorialism” (*Shakespeare’s Victorian Stage* 18), epitomised by the popular dioramas and *tableaux vivants* that filled the English stage in the mid-century. Macready understood the power of such theatrical realisations, as his 1839 *Henry V* illustrates, but only as long as the spectacle of the scene did not distract the listener’s attention from the poetic genius of Shakespeare. Furthermore,

Macready moves beyond the static artificiality of the dioramas and *tableaux vivants*, exploring voice and action to enhance the illusionistic capability of the stage.

Macready's *Richard II* and his return to the Middle Ages are therefore part of a bigger project, one that is not mainly concerned with materialising the past on stage, but, especially, with using Shakespeare as a means to elevate the national theatrical scene pre- and post-1843. The lack of action in the play bothers Macready, who does not consider *Richard II* an example of Shakespeare's best writing abilities. However, reviving a play that was not usually part of the London repertoire demonstrates Macready's industrious engagement with the whole Shakespearean tradition. His effort in omitting from the original all extracts that could be considered inappropriate for a highly moralised Victorian audience exemplifies his care in offering respectable and serious content for the English playgoers. This pursuit of respectability encompassed the actor, the theatre, and Shakespeare as a national symbol, all advancing the idea of a national English identity rooted in history and culture. As Schoch points out, Macready used history as an asset to represent Shakespeare. Charles Kean would reverse the tables as the nineteenth century progresses, turning to Shakespeare as a medium to materialise the past on stage.

CHAPTER 7: ILLUSION'S WEDDED TRIUMPHS: HISTORY AS SPECTACLE, ANTIQUARIANISM AND CHARLES KEAN'S RICHARD II

*For ill can Poetry express
Full many a tone of thought sublime,
And Painting, mute and motionless,
Steals but one glance from Time;
But, by the mighty actor brought,
Illusion's wedded triumphs come,
Verse ceases to be airy thought,
And Sculptures to be dumb.*

"Valedictory Stanzas to J. P. Kemble, Esq.", 1817,
Thomas Campbell (1777-1844)

In June 1817, after a successful career as actor and manager at the two main playhouses in London, Drury Lane and Covent Garden, the actor John Phillip Kemble (1757-1823) took leave of the stage. Edmund Kean's rising popularity probably led to his retirement. The poet Thomas Campbell (1777-1844) wrote verses to honour Kemble, "whose image brought th'heroic age / Revived to Fancy's view" (ll. 3-4). The critic in *The Era* 12 April 1857 recalls this poem, but uses it to comment on Charles Kean's Shakespearean revivals at the Princess's Theatre. For him, Kean's "revivals have literally fulfilled the noble words of Campbell". The critic evokes the names of the great Shakespeareans of the past: Garrick, "no doubt, was a great actor", but "in *Richard the Third* he wore the armhole cloak of Henry the Eighth, as shown in Hogarth's picture; and at the Garrick Club his portrait as Macbeth shows him clad in powdered wig, red cloak, and knee breeches"; John Kemble, "also a great actor", was "more correct" than Garrick; however, "scenery was still used which did not belong to the period, and modern Court dresses often crowded processions which had walked into their graves centuries before"; Macready, "another fine actor and distinguished manager" went "far beyond his predecessors in the march for improvement", but "he went but little in advance of times". Finally, the critic believed it was to Charles Kean "certainly due the highest merit of rendering the stage a faithful mirror of the past". *The Era* provides an interesting overview of the history of London's theatrical celebrities from Garrick to Kean, which parallels an aesthetic

move in the theatre towards realism and historical authenticity. According to the critic, this movement had reached its peak with Charles Kean.

In Richard Schoch's study of Charles Kean's productions of Shakespeare's historical plays, he writes that "the mid-Victorian theatre was uniquely poised to ensure the material continuity of the past" (*Shakespeare's Victorian Stage* 2). By means of scenarios, costumes and stage props, the past could be reconstructed on stage. In Stephen Bann's study *The Clothing of Clio*, the author explores literature as expressive of England's nineteenth-century historical thinking; however, he does not refer specifically to the theatre. It is important to make a distinction between theatre and print culture, since the theatre is not only the readable dramatic text, but it also encompasses the performed action on stage, and should therefore receive a different research approach than that of the historical literary text. The theatre has been a powerful medium employed to create a sense of *lived history*. As we have seen, certain elements help to traverse the bridge between past and present via material vestiges of the past, such as architecture, ruins, stones and nature. When an individual has contact with one of these elements, the feeling of *touching* and *living* history is significant. In a similar manner, the theatre provides the spectator the chance to *look at* the past. Although the actors on stage are not material vestiges of the past but present-day embodiments of historical figures, and the action performed on stage is a reconstruction of historical events, the spectators within the theatre also get a feeling of *lived history*. By means of acting and performance, they witness and may even, in some sense, participate in the past.

As Schoch puts it, "in the theatre, above all, the past was not dead. It was not even sleeping. It was alive and well and appearing nightly" (*Shakespeare's Victorian Stage* 2). The stage was the place where the past could come back to life on a daily basis. Schoch identifies the theatrical gap in Bann's study and proposes to work "where Bann leaves off" (2), delving into the lavish productions of Shakespeare's history plays put together by Kean during his management at the Princess's Theatre between 1850 and 1859. Schoch's study has set the groundwork for my own research in this chapter, which aims at narrowing down Schoch's scope, exploring specifically Kean's production of *Richard II* in 1857 within the context of the Medieval Revival, the popularisation of sensation drama, the potential of art to instruct, and the illusionistic essence of theatrical historical reconstruction.

When comparing Macready with Kean, Schoch writes that while the former used history to represent Shakespeare, the latter followed the opposite path: Kean used Shakespeare to represent history (*Shakespeare's Victorian Stage* 3). Kean's focus was to bring history back to life on stage by means of Shakespeare's words, aided by carefully chosen sets, costumes, props and music. Kean's preoccupation with historical accuracy can be placed within a broader context of Victorian antiquarianism and popular extravagant entertainment. I argue that instead of completely rejecting the popular drama that was highly criticised by the intellectual elite of the time, Kean used theatrical strategies from the fashionable extravaganzas to convey historical knowledge to a broader audience and elevate the prestige of the London theatrical scene. In his *Richard II*, he created sets and costumes that were based on historical research as well as indebted to earlier illustrated editions of the play, creating a connection between page, picture and stage. Kean's efforts to combine amusement with instruction resulted in lavish productions that relied on a minute attention to detail to convey realism, producing a sense of lived history.

Schoch's central preoccupation in his work is with the performance of history in theatre, whereas my main concern lies in interpreting Kean's reconstruction of the Middle Ages on stage. As we have seen, two opposing outlooks regarding the Middle Ages developed in the late seventeenth century: a romantic versus a grotesque Middle Ages. This distinction also coheres with D'Arcens' debated differentiation between medievalism of the 'found' and the 'made' Middle Ages (D'Arcens 2). These two outlooks on the medieval past are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they coexist in a double-voiced medievalism, and can be found simultaneously in artistic representations, such as the theatrical sphere.

For the analysis in this chapter, I explore the promptbook (kept at the Folger Library) which belonged to George Ellis, Kean's stage manager, and which contains handwritten annotations by both Ellis and Kean. I also make use of the printed *Shakespeare's Play of King Richard II, arranged for representation at the Princess's Theatre, with historical and explanatory notes, by Charles Kean, as first performed on Thursday, March 12, 1857*, published by John K. Chapman and Co. The copy held at the Folger Library was owned by Kean and presented to Thomas Willement (1786-1871), a stained glass artist and Kean's close friend. It was the manager's thank-you gift for Willement's help with insight into medieval architecture, which was useful for his theatrical reconstructions of the medieval past. This copy contains

handwritten annotations made after the publication of the book, thus after the 1857 production at the Princess's Theatre. The annotations may have been written by Kean for a later staging, perhaps for the fall season that same year.

7.1 Kean's management at the Princess's Theatre

The extinct Princess's Theatre,⁶⁹ originally named Royal Bazaar, British Diorama and Exhibition of Works of Art, and re-named in homage to the princess and future Queen Victoria in 1836, was located on 73 Oxford Street. As Schoch points out, "if not especially grand, [the Princess's Theatre] was at least fairly modern, having been built in 1830 and renovated in 1836 and 1842. Though the theatre itself was larger than the Haymarket, the street frontage [...] was a modest twenty-one feet. [...] [It] was but one of many family-run shops which lined the teeming West End thoroughfare" (*Shakespeare's Victorian Stage* 27). Although a minor theatre in a popular location, the Princess's Theatre rose to prominence with Charles Kean's Shakespearean revivals during his management in association with the comedian Robert Keeley (1793-1869). Keeley was the first actor to play the created role of Fritz in Richard Brinsley Peake's *Presumption; or, the Fate of Frankenstein* (1823), the first theatrical adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818/1831). Their management at the Princess's Theatre (1850-1859) brought back to the stage a wide variety of historical plays:

In only nine seasons, Kean recreated not merely the medieval and Tudor England of Shakespeare's history plays, but also Assyria (Byron's *Sardanapalus*); Peru (Sheridan's *Pizarro*); Renaissance Italy (*The Merchant of Venice*); medieval France (*Louis IX*), Magna Graecia and Bithynia⁷⁰ (*The Winter's Tale*); and Periclean Athens (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*). (Schoch, *Shakespeare's Victorian Stage* 4).

⁶⁹ The theatre closed permanently in 1902 after its last success, *The Fatal Wedding*, a play written by the German playwright Theodore Kremer (1871-1923). The building became a warehouse, and was later demolished in 1931.

⁷⁰ According to *The Illustrated London News*, "great use is made throughout the performance, of *tableaux vivants*, which serve to inaugurate the sustained scheme, and present the manner of life among the Greeks and in Asia Minor, as we have already stated, adopting the suggestion of Sir Thomas Hanmer. Mr. Kean, instead of Bohemia, has accepted Bithynia as the place intended by the poet and the novelist – a good suggestion on many accounts, and enabling the manager to present the pastoral peculiarities and social condition of that primitive state" (*The Illustrated London News*, 3 May, 1856). Kean thus uses Hanmer's edition of Shakespeare's work as basis for his adaptation of the plays.

Kean's work at the Princess's Theatre illustrates a new style of theatrical management. As Crone explains, "unlike the Patent Theatres which, relying on an established tradition of cultural patronage, were dependent upon rich aristocratic subscribers, new theatres were largely built and managed by local entrepreneurs with amateur theatrical connections who recognised their commercial potential" (126). Kean, however, was no amateur, as he was born into a long-standing theatrical family and had worked as an actor since the age of sixteen. Despite not being part of the fashionable West End District, the Princess's Theatre gained great visibility and critical attention during Kean's management. Schoch interestingly adds that "to this relatively unassuming venue came some of the leading figures of the mid-nineteenth century: not just Victoria and Albert, but also Dickens, Palmerston, Gladstone, Hans Christian Andersen, Lewis Carroll, the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, and even Mlle Rachel,⁷¹ who promptly kissed the reserved actor-manager on her visit backstage after a performance of *Macbeth*" (Schoch, *Shakespeare's Victorian Stage* 27–28). The broad range of patrons listed here highlights the vital role the Princess's Theatre played in the mid-century London theatrical scene.

In addition to welcoming important literary and political figures of the time, the Princess's Theatre gained in popularity by its proximity to one of the major entertainment venues for the Londoner or visitor in 1851: The Great Exhibition, "a sumptuous display of British and imperial products" (Randle 116). As Schoch emphasises, the theatre was "only a short carriage ride away from Hyde Park", which would allow the Exhibition visitors to spend an evening watching Kean's most recent production after an afternoon at the Crystal Palace (Schoch, *Shakespeare's Victorian Stage* 28). Schoch also points out that it can be no coincidence that "Kean leased the Princess's scarcely six months before the day Prince Albert opened the Great Exhibition in May 1851. As Douglas Vander Yacht⁷² has shown, Kean reaped his greatest profits – £7,700 between the two partners – in the 1850-1 season, which suggests that the theatre benefited enormously from the economic multiplier effect of the Great Exhibition" (Schoch, *Shakespeare's Victorian Stage* 28). If we take into account the approximate number of daily visitors to the Great Exhibition, the number

⁷¹ Elisabeth Félix, or Mademoiselle Rachel (1821-1858), was a prominent French actress and controversial figure in French society. She was notably the mistress of, among others, Napoléon III and the illegitimate son of Napoléon I.

⁷² Vander Yacht, Douglas R. "Queen Victoria's Patronage of Charles Kean, Actor-Manager." Unpublished dissertation. Ohio State University, 1955.

of prospective playgoers is immense. According to Hermione Hobhouse, “*The Times* recorded over six million visits in all, nearly 110,000 in one day, with the greatest attendance at any one time being 93,224” (Hobhouse 81). These visitors could just as easily have gone from Hyde Park to other places in London, no doubt. However, the large profit of the season 1850-1 could indeed point to the influence of the number of visitors in relative proximity to the theatre at the time.

7.2 Victorian Antiquarianism

Philippa Levine writes about the paradox of Victorian culture that simultaneously revered the past and commended their own present age (1). This concurrent attachment to both past and present led to an increasing desire to know and understand the past by means of comparisons with the present, as the works of Augustus Pugin and Thomas Carlyle exemplify. This was also reflected in the development of historical scholarship throughout the nineteenth century. As Levine explains, antiquarian, historical and archaeological studies attracted a wide range of devoted enthusiasts who were involved full time or during leisure hours with groups of members who wished to build and share historical knowledge (7). Several steps were decisive in strengthening the role of historical pursuit at the time. These would include, for instance: the printing clubs from the 1830s,⁷³ such as the Camden Society (1837) that later merged with the Royal Historical Society (1868) in 1897; the foundation of special organisations devoted to historical research in the 1840s, such as the British Association of Archaeology (1843); government projects for the archiving of records in the 1850s; and the establishment of history courses at university level. Levine’s study demonstrates that the majority of this intellectual elite were male graduates of Oxford and Cambridge universities, Anglicans, connected to religious or legal professions, and a few were members of Parliament. They were thus predominantly middle-class men (9).

One common interest amongst the members of such intellectual societies was the collection of historical objects, which would normally be bequeathed to

⁷³ Printing clubs were also known as book clubs, record societies or text publication societies. These were learned societies whose goal was to publish scholarly editions of old works of historical or literary interest, or archival documents. The members would pay an annual subscription, and in return they would receive a copy of each volume published by the club, or a discount to purchase them for a lower price.

museums or other educational institutions after their owner's death. One intriguing case is that of the London merchant Thomas Layton (1819-1911), a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, whose collection included "11,000 books, 3,000 prints and maps, 3,000 coins, tokens and medals, 9,000 pottery and glass vessels and tiles and 2,600 [assorted] antiquities" (Levine 15). Layton is only one example of the various cases of intellectual pursuit at the time, which demonstrates the period's passion for [or interest in] historical knowledge and a desire to understand the past. Moreover, it points towards a deeper engagement with material culture and material history. Physical vestiges of the past in the form of art objects, architectural remains and manuscript books bridged the gap between past and present as objects with a continuous existence across different periods of time. These were authentic materials that had in fact withstood time while the human beings who interacted with them were long gone. The theatre, on the other hand, *creates* a material past. Although not genuinely a physical relic from a previous moment in history, the stage offers an illusion of bridging the gap between past and present, embodying historical figures and displaying, as Schoch puts it, "historicism in action" (*Shakespeare's Victorian Stage* 8).

Albeit not a university graduate, Kean was also an enthusiast antiquarian. He was educated at Eton until his father cut him off and removed him from the school. Edmund Kean had refused to grant £300 annually to Charles's mother, which led to their disagreement. Nevertheless, Kean maintained the aristocratic connections formed during his Eton years throughout his life, and pursued his scholarly inclinations (Wilson, 'Charles Kean: Tragedian in Transition' 46–47). In 1857, he was elected to the Society of Antiquaries in acknowledgment of his devotion to historical research for his theatrical productions. One of Kean's goals was to bring the aristocracy back to the theatres and to elevate the theatre as a means for instruction as well as entertainment. In his farewell speech on his retirement from the management of the Princess's Theatre in July 1859, he spoke about his principles of theatrical management: "I have always entertained the conviction that, in illustrating the great plays of the greatest poet who ever wrote for the advantage of men, historical accuracy might be so blended with pictorial effect, that instruction and amusement would go hand in hand" (Cole 379). In its assessment of Kean's Shakespearean revivals, *The Era* 12 April 1857 refers to the Princess's Theatre as "a

school which never closes its nightly lectures”, comparing the performance of a history play to a classroom experience.

The ‘pictorial effect’ mentioned by Kean refers to the visual materialisation of the past on stage, which provides the audience with a sense of engagement with living history. As Schoch puts it, theatrical medievalism is “the recovery and transmission of the Middle Ages as a *lived experience*”⁷⁴ (*Shakespeare’s Victorian Stage* 18), which is indeed something only the theatre could offer – a possibility to feel immersed in the medieval past, albeit still as a spectator rather than a participator. In the Preface to *Shakespeare’s Play of King Richard II arranged for representation at the Princess’s Theatre* (1857), Kean writes that “surely an attempt to render dramatic representations conducive to the diffusion of knowledge – to surround the glowing imagery of the great Poet with accompaniments *true* to the time of which he writes – *realizing* the scenes and sections he describes – exhibiting men as they once lived – can scarcely detract from the enduring influence of his genius” (Kean viii). The words emphasised by Kean – ‘*true*’ and ‘*realizing*’ – summarise the actor’s approach to historical theatre: he believed that the truthful depiction of the past on stage was not only desirable, but possible. In this sense, Kean’s project was similar to Knight’s didactic pictorial editions of Shakespeare’s works. The main difference is that the theatre could provide the fourth dimension that enhances the illusion of lived history, which could not be achieved on page. The action on stage can make use of time, sequence, narrative, developing plot and physical movement in a way that a static picture cannot. In the case of an image, the viewer would have to create the moving sequence elicited by the fixed image in their own imagination.

In the same abovementioned speech, Kean also discusses the criticism he had received from people who thought that the focus on the visual would hinder the appreciation of Shakespeare’s words, a debate that goes back to Hazlitt’s preference for an individual reading experience to grasp the value of Shakespeare’s poetics. Kean found it “impossible to believe” that a plan to perform Shakespeare with attention to every historical detail could “in the most remote degree detract from the beauties of the poet” (Cole 379). On the contrary, Kean feels that “the accessories” with which he surrounded Shakespeare only add to the experience. He poses the following question after his final production of *Henry VIII* at the Princess’s Theatre:

⁷⁴ Original emphasis.

I would venture to ask if, in the play of this evening, you have lost one jot of the dramatic interest, because in the ball-room at York Place, and at the *Queen's* trial at Blackfriars, every incident introduced is closely adopted from the historical descriptions recording those very events as they actually occurred above three hundred years ago? I would ask, I repeat, whether the fall of *Wolsey* has been thereby rendered less effective, or the death of *Katherine* less solemn and pathetic? I would also venture to add, that I do not think you would have been more impressed with the address of *King Henry V* to his army at Agincourt, had it been delivered to a scanty few, incorrectly attired, and totally undisciplined; instead of a well-trained mass of men, representing the picture of a real host, clothed and accoutred in the exact costume and weapons of the time. (Cole 380).

Kean alludes to the historical inaccuracies prevalent on the English stage until then and proposes to combine the possibilities offered by the new available technology to materialise the past on stage with a thorough basis in historical research. And that, he emphasises, should be done without forgetting that the ensemble has to work as theatre – it has to amuse and move the audience.

Schoch argues that “Kean’s antiquarian dramaturgy was not a naïve fascination with historical accuracy – not interior decoration with a vengeance – but historicism in action” (*Shakespeare’s Victorian Stage* 8). It was a conscious effort to impart visually an understanding of the past through entertainment. In the case of Shakespeare’s history plays, it entailed a decisive engagement with the medieval past, which also fuelled the Victorian fascination with the Middle Ages in the Medieval Revival, as set out in Chapter 2. In this context, Schoch raises the following question: if the Victorians strove to reconnect with the medieval past, why did they choose Shakespeare instead of actual medieval plays, which were no doubt available at the time? He answers that “while liturgical tropes, morality plays, and Corpus Christi cycles could be the objects of genuine historical interest and even of sympathetic appreciation, they could not join the repertoire of the Victorian theatre because they remained morally bankrupt instruments of a Catholic social order” (Schoch, *Shakespeare’s Victorian Stage* 9). Staging Catholic narratives on a Protestant stage was not an easy religious conflict to overcome. Additionally, the religious basis of medieval drama and their archaic language would be at variance with the commercial drive of Victorian theatre. Furthermore, I think the Victorian interest was not necessarily in medieval beliefs and perspectives, but rather focused on how people lived, dressed, ate, and, especially, their human relationships. Shakespeare adds psychological depth to otherwise flat historical figures. In this case, the embodiment

of medieval characters by actors and the infusion of feeling would be much more effective than staging medieval Catholic philosophy.

Another appeal of the Shakespearean historical canon for Victorian theatre professionals and playgoers was its embeddedness in English national history. Although Kean also staged plays set in the Continental European Middle Ages, such as Charles Reade and Tom Taylor's *The First Printer* (1856) about Johannes Gutenberg's printing press, and Dion Boucicault's *Louis XI* (1855), these "lacked a strong narrative of national history" (Schoch, *Shakespeare's Victorian Stage* 9). As we have seen in the previous chapter, Macready undertook to elevate the theatrical business milieu by ascribing it to a national cultural project. Kean maintains this objective, but mainly in view to promote knowledge in national history. Playgoers would share a sense of collective origin by witnessing their past on stage, even though such imagined homogeneity is but an illusion. The plays themselves are intrinsically about dissension, conflict and contrariety. As Schoch puts it, "Kean's revivals of Shakespeare's history plays enacted a model of Englishness rooted in Victorian mythologies of medieval freedom and fraternalism" (*Shakespeare's Victorian Stage* 12); indeed, the theatre was the channel through which the audience could visualise an illusion of a communal home in the past.

7.3 Fairies, Clowns and Buffoonery: Popular Spectacle and the Mid-entury Theatrical Crisis

Spectacle became an important feature of Victorian theatre, well illustrated by Kean's Shakespearean revivals at the Princess's Theatre. Kean was one of the most prominent names in what became known as the theatrical Victorian extravaganza.⁷⁵ Russell Jackson writes that Victorian theatre was devoted to illusion: "the romantic, visionary definition of dramatic poetry demanded a stage that should contrive to lose its identity in the service of this absolute illusion and make the spectators forget – for as much as possible of their time in the theatre – that they knew a world more 'real' than that placed before them on the stage" (Jackson 1–2). During the time spent within the theatre, the spectator was taken into another reality,

⁷⁵ In the *Historical Dictionary of British Theatre: Early Period*, Darryll Grantley refers to James Robinson Planché (1796-1880) as the inventor of the extravaganza. According to Grantley, Planché described it as "the whimsical treatment of a poetic subject" (336). These productions usually included spectacular stage effects and elaborate costume.

and invited to forget about the hum-drum present. In Kean's case, that "other reality" was England's medieval past.

Illusion was also a key element in the general popular entertainment of the time, which abounded with magical plots, stage effects, musical shows, and mythological characters. The section on *The Drama* in the *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* of February 1856 reflects on the state of the drama. The critic, writing during Kean's period of management at the Princess's Theatre, refers sarcastically to the pantomime, "and all that it includes of burlesque and extravaganza" as "at present the great glory of the British theatre" ("The Drama", *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1856, 210). He writes that the theatres are packed every night, "no chance of getting a seat, even in the larger houses, if you happen to be half-an-hour late" (210). He is not an admirer of the superfluous entertainment of his day, and condemns its popularity.

The critic also comments on how the theatrical audience had changed, being now the choice for entertainment of people from different social and intellectual levels. He asserts that everyone would go to a pantomime: the "bald-headed old gentleman with the capacious waistcoat" at the stalls, the "prim old lady with a pursed-up mouth" in the boxes, and "that long-faced Grimshaw [...] peering with his ivory opera-glasses to his eyes" in the private box ("The Drama", *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1856, 210). It was a sort of entertainment that attracted all levels of society, from the stalls and galleries to the private boxes. *Blackwood's Magazine* writes that playgoing is not the Londoner's "business but his recreation", it is "a supreme delight" for all, "high or low, rich or poor" (*Blackwood's Magazine*, Jan-Jun 1842, 432). It is an amusing enjoyment, a place for chat and a source of gossip, where the Londoner can relax after a day of work.

According to the magazine, pantomime was "the only successful effort of the British drama", while "tragedy has become so very tragic that she has cut her own throat" and "comedy has been so very comical that she has choked herself with laughing" ("The Drama", *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1856, 210). As the playgoers understood the theatre to be a place for relaxation and social gathering, the less intellectually demanding pieces were more appropriate for such objective. Consequently, theatre managers were prone to offer what the audience demanded, since that would ascertain financial success. However, the *Blackwood's* critic does not approve of such cerebral laziness. He ironically states that all eras

have their own geniuses: in his age “Shakespeare has gone out; Planché has come in” (“The Drama”, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1856, 210). He refers to the dramatist and antiquarian James Robinson Planché (1796-1880), who wrote extensively in a wide range of genres, but mainly burlettas and melodramas. He is considered to be a pioneer in the extravaganza scene in mid-century. The *Blackwood’s* critic argues that Planché’s extravaganzas only worked as theatre but were unreadable in print, “they are meant to be acted, not read” (210). That is because those productions offered a visual spectacle, relegating the text to the background. The critic grieved that the shallow punning and rhyming of these pieces was “what the fast young men of London call brilliant writing” (211). He wittily encapsulates the common features of extravaganza plotlines to demonstrate their absurdity:

A strange life it is, that pictured in the fairy tales which are worked up into these extravaganzas, – a life in which trapdoors and invisible springs are as essential as patent-leather boots and gibus hats are to us, in which there is always a gutta-percha eagle that comes flying with a necessary key in its claws, and fish are poking their gills out of still lakes with lost rings in their mouths, a purse of gold lies on the ground just when it is wanted, beautiful witches in red-heeled shoes come hobbling down to the footlights; and in the last tableau of all, there are all the fairies in their fairy palace standing pyramidally one above the other. (“The Drama”, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1856, 212–213).

The critic condemns the artificiality of the genre, filled with improbable intricate plots and unnatural settings that, although entertaining, underestimate the audience’s intellect.

Another popular theatrical form intrinsically connected to the pantomime tradition and which followed a similar path to the extravaganzas was the harlequinade. While the Olympic Theatre was the main venue for Planché’s comedies, melodramas and burlettas, Covent Garden and the adjacent theatres staged the tricks of Harlequin, Columbine, Pantaloon, the Clown and Pierrot, the typical characters of *Commedia dell’arte*.⁷⁶ The *Blackwood’s* critic is confounded by the popularity of such pieces:

What an immense deal of laughter they manage to get out of that part of the body in which angels are said to be deficient. It is kicked, pins are stuck into it as into a convenient pin-cushion; Clown puts a live lobster into his comprehensive pockets, and jumps up with fearful grimaces. Then what pulling of noses; how they are flattened, how they are lengthened, how they are blackened with soot, how they are filled with snuff until the poor member sneezes and bleeds! And how the little fellows in the boxes laugh and crow

⁷⁶ The Olympic Theatre opened in 1806 and specialised in comedies. It was demolished in 1904.

over the practical jokes! ("The Drama", *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1856, 213).

Different from the fairy-tale oriented indulgences of the extravaganzas, the harlequinades relied heavily on physical comedy, on extracting laughter at the expense of fooleries that have no or little relation to a cohesive narrative.

Despite the critic's harsh judgment, he acknowledges that there are exceptions to this rule, and mentions examples of brilliant popular entertainment, especially those written by Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803-1873) (who fought alongside Macready for the elevation of the national theatre), James Sheridan Knowles (1784-1862), Douglas William Jerrold (1803-1857), and Charles Reade (1814-1884). The critic's opposition was against the formulaic amusement, "the wit [that] consists of punning; the humour [that] consists of practical jokes, horrible grimace, and elaborate buffoonery; the dialogue [that] is in the vernacular of the London taverns and caves of harmony; the plot [that] is not simply improbable, it is impossible and incomprehensible; the characters [that] are little better than marionettes, and their sentiments the sentiments of puppets" ("The Drama", *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1856, 229). In this sense, these pieces lack realism, they want a natural depiction of reality by means of natural acting.

The critic's thoughts parallel the ideas of the writer George Eliot (1819-1880) on realism in literature. Her sarcastic essay "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" was published on the same year as "The Drama" in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. In it, Eliot condemns the silliness that predominated in the majority of works written by lady novelists at the time, which she considered "frothy", "prosy", "pious" and "pedantic" (178). She mocks the novelists' lack of understanding of reality, referring, for example, to a character of a five-year-old child in a "story of real life", who speaks in an "Ossianic fashion", using an extremely unrealistic flowery vocabulary for a child (181). In opposition to the "snobbish worldliness and absurd incident to tickle the palate of pious frivolity" (183), literature – regardless if written by men or women – should paint a convincing depiction of reality without fanciful exaggerations or implausible coincidences. Eliot is convinced that "women can produce novels not only fine, but among the very finest", if only they will "pour in the right elements – genuine observation, humour, and passion" (203). These same elements would no doubt be approved by the *Blackwood's* critic in relation to theatrical productions at the time.

In a similar vein to the *Blackwood's* critic and George Eliot, Macready vehemently opposed the sort of superficial entertainment that impaired the reputation of the theatre, as we have seen in the previous chapter. He strove to elevate the theatre as legitimate art and to raise the respectability of the acting profession. It is in the same context of the mid-century theatrical scene in London that Kean proposes Shakespearean revivals grounded on historical authenticity and natural acting. The critic in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* presents a more favourable account of the spectacles at the Princess's Theatre. He affirms that Kean's theatre eclipses all others in the illustration of Shakespeare, making extensive use of stage effects to accompany Shakespeare's text. Different from what was happening in the other playhouses, "it is no vulgar brilliance of scenery, no clap-trap effects of green, red, and gold without meaning, that Mr. Charles Kean introduces to his audience. There is always something striking, something to remember, something wholly original and highly suggestive, sometimes even poetical in his scenic effect" ("The Drama", *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1856, 215). Kean's management did not use spectacle for the sake of spectacle, but in a conscious manner to aid the audience in visualising the past that Shakespeare recreated in words.

Kean's historical spectacles, the pantomimes and burlettas at the Olympic, and the harlequinades at Covent Garden all point to a deep engagement with the visual image. As the *Blackwood's* reviewer puts it, "praise it or blame it – the tendency to scenic illustration is the characteristic of the British theatre in its latest development" ("The Drama", *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1856, 215). He states that such pictorial impulse could be linked to the "present decline of the theatre", a matter that already concerned the Select Committee of 1832 and William Hazlitt decades before. However, the discontent with the state of the dramatic art is not exclusive to the nineteenth century. The *Blackwood's* critic writes that since the reopening of the theatres with the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 until his present day, "the cry has never ceased to be heard that the British drama is either dead or dying" (216). The critic perceives three main impediments to the success of British drama throughout this time: first, the moral debasement and licentiousness of the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, as witnessed in the works of William Wycherley (1641-1716), William Congreve (1670-1729), Sir John Vanbrugh (1664-1726) and George Farquhar (1677-1707); second, the turn to works written in

foreign languages, mainly in Italian, French and Spanish, which could lead to a religious apostasy; and third, plots borrowed from foreign authors, and translations from German plays. He adds that there was a renewed attempt to reevoke the British muse with Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), Charles Maturin (1780-1824) and Henry Hart Milman (1791-1868), but the author concludes that they were short-lived.

The abolition of the theatrical monopoly with the 1843 Theatre Regulation Act permitted a larger number of theatres to stage spoken drama and limited the censoring power of the Lord Chamberlain. However, another consequence was the increased demand of new material and actors to supply the growing number of theatres. *Blackwood's* adds sarcastically that the dissolution of the monopoly "has distributed amongst a number of companies the histrionic talent formerly concentrated in two" ("The Drama", *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1856, 216), Covent Garden and Drury Lane. The lack of good plays and a consistent good cast fostered the attention paid to visual detail, which could camouflage the shortage of skilled professionals.

Despite the caustic commentary on "the iniquities and stupidities of the stage" ("The Drama", *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1856, 217), *Blackwood's* emphasises the importance of acknowledging the positive and promising aspects of his pictorial age. He stresses that spectacle was not an exclusive trait of nineteenth-century theatre. In fact, "in the days of James I., some of the stage properties were so very splendid, that we have read of certain lieges who were afraid lest the double-gilt magnificence of the tragedy-kings should cast the majesty of the real sovereign into shade, and so endanger the crown" (218). He mentions the masques and pageants as the precursors of nineteenth-century extravaganzas. What Kean thus proposes is not originality in spectacle, but its grounding on historical accuracy. In the playbill to Kean's staging of Lord Byron's *Sardanapalus* (1821) in 1853, Kean writes that his goal was to convey "to the stage a living picture of a bygone era", which he accomplished through extensive research on Assyrian architecture and costume. The same care was given to his lavish productions of Shakespeare's history plays.

The *Blackwood's* critic summarises the main features of Kean's management and its commitment to realism: "this magnifying of historical truth, this drifting from the open and trackless sea of fiction to the *terra firma* and unalterable landmark of fact – a strong tendency to REALISM, is the chief characteristic of Mr. Kean's

management” (218). The critic’s words demonstrate the shift away from the Romantic approach to staging Shakespeare, grounded on the experience of sentiment, towards a more natural acting style aimed at performing truthful and realist portrayals of history. It is important to emphasise that a natural acting style does not mean an absence of feeling, but that such feelings should be performed in a more convincing way, thus affecting the audience more strongly. The attention to detail is essential but without the exaggeration prevalent in the previous century.

The minute attention to realist detail was not exclusive to the London stage. *Blackwood’s* writes that a theatre in the provinces “announces a grand chivalric spectacle, ‘with seven hundred pounds’ worth of real armour!”; a play in New York is advertised as staged “with magnificent carpets, mirrors, and genuine silver plate!”, and a London playhouse publicises the melodrama *Hertfordshire Tragedy*, with “the very gig in which Thurtell drove his victim to be murdered, and the very table on which the pork-chops were afterwards devoured” (“The Drama”, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1856, 219).⁷⁷ These examples also indicate that the preciseness in detail for the sake of realism can reach an absurd degree, such as the use of real animals on stage or of crime scene objects as stage props. The level of such absurd realism is what led the critic from *Blackwood’s* to state that “for the sake of presenting a picture of perfect accuracy, these authors chose to turn the theatre into a Chamber of Horrors” (219). Nonetheless, these examples clearly illustrate what the audience of the time would consider as deserving a trip to the theatre.

It is worth remembering that the 1737 Theatre Regulation Act played a role in the simplification of the dramatic text, excess of caricatured gestures, scenic effects and stage decoration. As we have seen, the Act limited legitimate spoken drama to the patent theatres Drury Lane and Covent Garden, and, as a consequence, unlicensed theatres had to find alternatives to keep their doors open, either by playing with genres (tragedies and comedies were exclusive to the patent theatres) or by establishing themselves on the fringes of London, beyond the Lord Chamberlain’s jurisdiction. During the period between 1737 and 1842, it was thus ‘safer’ to revive plays from the past than to invest in contemporary dramatists, who

⁷⁷ John Thurtell (1794-1824) was an amateur boxer and sports promoter. He owed a gambling debt to William Weare, a London solicitor. Instead of paying the amount, Thurtell decided to murder Weare. The case attracted a lot of media attention at the time.

could cause trouble with topical references to contemporary politics. Furthermore, such restrictions led artists to explore imaginative realms and improbable stories that could be defended as 'mere fiction'.

The gap between high and low culture widened to such a degree that there emerged, as Jane Moody puts it, "an absolute opposition between authentic and spurious theatrical forms, an opposition which soon begins to be imagined as a nightmarish confrontation between quasi-ethereal textuality and grotesque corporeality" (12). This split permeated the whole nineteenth century, even after the Theatre Regulation Act of 1843. The monopoly was dissolved, and new buildings and licenses were permitted, but censorship remained. In order to make a living given the circumstances of the time, writers and actors had to conform to what was permitted.

One example is Planché's theatrical career. *Blackwood's* disapproves Planché's extravaganzas; however, the critic fails to acknowledge Planché's role in advocating historical accuracy in the theatre. Apart from being a writer of burlettas and farces, he worked as costume designer, production advisor, scenery supervisor and theatre manager (Reinhardt 524). Schoch refers to him as "the godfather of theatrical historicism" (*Shakespeare's Victorian Stage* 39). As an antiquarian, Planché was a pioneer in studying historical records for historical accuracy on stage. According to Paul Reinhardt, Planché's "costumes for Charles Kemble's revival of *King John* in 1823 are often cited as a landmark in this movement" (524). Reinhardt stresses that only the designs done by Planché prior to 1830 claimed to be historically accurate, and that "even these are not the literal copies of historical sources that they are often assumed to be" (524). Nonetheless, the project's validity does not lie in its success at faithfully copying historical sources, but in establishing historical research as foundation for theatrical practice.

Planché worked alongside Charles Kemble, the theatre manager at Covent Garden in the 1820s, where the former contributed as a playwright, translator and costume designer. Planché wrote about the importance of historical accuracy in dramatic costume in an essay published in *The Album* in August 1823.⁷⁸ This was the same year as Kemble's revival of *King John*, for which Planché was responsible

⁷⁸ According to Reinhardt, "the authorship of this article has never before been established. It is signed 'P,' a signature that appears after several of Planché's articles in the *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*. Planché was a personal acquaintance of both J. Andrews and Robert Sullivan, the publisher and the editor of *The Album*. The subject matter and proximity to Planché's costumes for the November, 1823, revival of *King John* would strongly indicate his [Planché's] authorship" (525, n.2)

for costume design. The playbill from Saturday 20 September announces Mr Young as King John, “with an attention to Costume never equalled on the English Stage. Every Character will appear in the precise HABIT OF THE PERIOD: The Whole of the Dresses and Decorations being executed from indisputable authorities, such as *Monumental Effigies, Seals, Illuminated MSS, &tc*”. The playbill from 5 April 1824 even adds a list of authorities for the costumes, including King John’s effigy in Worcester Cathedral, his Great Seals, and illuminated manuscripts in the British Library and Bodleian and Bennet College Library. According to Reinhardt, Planché justified the use of historically accurate costume to “attract audiences and instruct them in history”; he also felt that “historical costume would add theatrical effect to a production and that the study of history would supply the artist with more effective ideas than he could think up by himself” (528). It was thus a combination of instruction with entertainment, as Kean would later advocate.

Later on in his career, Planché associated with the actress and opera singer Lucia Elizabeth Vestris (1797-1856), more commonly known as Madame Vestris. Planché worked for her as costume designer and playwright in *The Olympic*, a theatre that offered mainly extravaganzas and burlettas for amusement. As a consequence, Planché moved away from historical costumes to contemporary and fantastical dresses. However, he still attempted at using historical research in the early productions for Madame Vestris. For instance, for *Olympic Revels* in 1831, “Planché believed it would be funnier if the actors were clad in historical dress which was not funny in itself. In this case the humour would derive from the incongruity between what the actor was saying and doing and the way he looked” (Reinhardt 541). Planché used historical anachronism as a source for humour, although its success would depend on the audience’s historical knowledge. As he turned to the more profitable popular theatrical genres – Planché’s major income came from the production of his extravaganzas –, he slowly abandoned the incorporation of historically accurate costume.

Kean had the advantage of working after the 1843 Theatre Regulation Act. As such, he could stage spoken drama at a minor theatre and put his theatrical ideas into practice. When Kean’s management at the Princess’s Theatre started in 1850, Planché was working at the Lyceum Theatre with Vestris and her husband, the actor Charles Matthews (1803-1878). Planché retired from the theatrical scene in 1852, although he still wrote occasional plays after that.

7.4 Pre-Raphaelitism and the Return to Realism

The actor Charles Matthews supposedly said that “in France the dramatic authors have free permission to distort history ingeniously, on condition of being gay and witty. In England, provided we are true to history, we have free permission to be dull and tiresome” (“The Drama”, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1856, 219). Matthews’ thought illustrates the two opposing poles of historical fiction – either as mere backdrop for the main purpose of entertainment, or as so attentive to historical details that it loses its function as art. In a way, Kean positions himself in-between these two poles, offering to combine amusement and instruction in sumptuous theatrical productions that do not lose sight of the fact that they are primordially *theatre*.

One of Kean’s strategies was to move away from the exaggerated and caricatured acting reminiscent of the previous century, and to move towards a more realistic and naturalistic performing style. The *Theatrical Journal* of 30 Mar 1864 condemns this modern approach as “the low art of Charles Kean”, distinct from the classical style and Goethe’s “ideal” (qtd. in Wilson 51). Wilson writes that Kean’s acting was wrongly charged with a “want of ‘ideality’, that aura of novel intellectuality that marked the traditional sense of classical and romantic elevation of style in heroic roles” (Wilson, ‘Charles Kean: Tragedian in Transition’ 51). For Wilson, Kean’s voice and demeanour agreed with a realistic more than a romantic approach to acting. Kean did not exaggerate even in the highly affecting scenes, “but retained a subdued and self-contained demeanour”, his “monotone delivery and impassive facial set suited this mode of performance well, while expressive eyes communicated the character’s inner motivations” (Wilson, ‘Charles Kean: Tragedian in Transition’ 53).

Wilson calls Kean “a tragedian in transition” between the old and new acting styles. The old style was epitomised by “the flamboyant romanticism of his father’s [Edmund Kean] acting” (‘Charles Kean: Tragedian in Transition’ 46) that moved Hazlitt, as we have seen in Chapter 5. The new style entailed a more realistic and less exaggerated performance, consonant with Diderot’s precepts in *Discours de la poésie dramatique* (1758). After a not very successful debut at Drury Lane in 1827 at

the age of 16 and a successful season in America in the 1830s, Charles Kean returned to England to work at Covent Garden in 1833. He played Iago to his father's Othello in Edmund Kean's last performance. The fact that he carried his father's name and fame worked both positively and negatively for Charles, since comparisons between father and son were inevitably made throughout his career. In the first decades of his theatrical history, however, the London stages were dominated by Macready, almost 18 years his senior. They were rivals working at the competing playhouses. In the season of 1838, Charles Kean was engaged at Drury Lane while Macready was the actor-manager at Covent Garden. Kean declined Macready's offer to act with him at Covent Garden, which created an enmity between the two actors that would not be reconciled. By the time Charles was 30 years old, he had already reached theatrical stardom, even surpassing his father. From 1835 to 1839, Kean "averaged 190 performances annually and £27 per night. In the 1838-39 season, he received £7274 for 225 nights" (Wilson, 'Charles Kean: Tragedian in Transition' 47), an exceptional amount. In 1842, Kean married the actress Ellen Tree, and the two acted together until the end of his career.

The rise of realism was not exclusive to the theatre in mid-nineteenth-century London. The aforementioned critic in the *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* of February 1856 connects what he considered to be the decaying state of the drama of his age more broadly to the state of the arts generally. He refers disdainfully to the 'Pre-Raphaelitism' of the time ("The Drama", *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1856, 218–219), which he also recognises on the stage. He sees it as a manifestation of the pictorial tendency of the age, sharing "the same symptoms of disintegration and decay" as well as "the same elements of promise" (220). He mentions the canvases in the exhibition rooms, the prominence of portraiture, and the photographic art, all of which move towards realism. He traces the history of art, placing the elder poets as committed to truth, credibility and realism, before the later poets "were snatched away to Elfland" (222), a clear criticism to the imaginative predisposition of the Romantics. He refers back to the old Provençal minstrelsy, the realism of the Egyptian mummy ("inglorious attempt to preserve the real thing") and the "shadowless" flat medieval pictures, which depicted the thing as it *is*, and not as it *appears* to the eye at a specific angle or light. He concludes that his contemporaries understood the image as a "representation; a memory, an imagination", while three

hundred years earlier, a picture was “a reality – the thing itself” (“The Drama”, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1856, 222).

The critic quotes Giorgio Vasari’s appreciation of Raphael’s Madonnas: “every touch of the pencil in the heads, hands, and feet of this work, has produced such effect that the parts seem rather to be of the living flesh than the mere colours of the painter”; Vasari believed that “the paintings of other masters are properly to be called paintings, but those of Raphael may well be designated the life itself” (“The Drama”, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1856, 223). Interestingly, the realism of the *cinquecento* paintings conveyed for the *Blackwood’s* critic an *illusion* of life. The more skilled the painter, the more intense the illusion would be. However, in his view, realism in art slowly gave way to conventional treatment and idealisation, which at its peak became allegory, risking stepping “from the sublime to the ridiculous” (“The Drama”, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1856, 223). Writing around three hundred years after Vasari, the theatrical reviewer perceived that the artists of his time were returning to realism, positioning themselves “against such bewildering allegory and algebraic generalisations, [and] the caricature of ideality” (223). Whether this was a sign of “the art of painting sinking into dotage” or “of painting renewing its youth”, he concludes it to be both: a symptom “of youth and progress” as well as “of decrepitude and ruin” (223–224).

As Elizabeth Prettejohn explains, the *nom de guerre* of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood has created confusion regarding the group’s artistic principles. Even the supporter John Ruskin wrote in a letter to the editor of *The Times* in May 1851 that he could not compliment them on their name choice (Prettejohn 1). According to Prettejohn, the name “refers to the art of an age not precisely before Raphael himself, but rather before his followers and imitators, the ‘Raphaelites’” (1). Therefore, the group not only looked nostalgically to a pre-Renaissance past as illustrative of art before the influence of Raphael, but they also emphatically rejected the idea of art as imitation, of following an established style or tradition.

Some contemporaries understood the Brotherhood’s aspiration of returning to a freer depiction of reality loose from convention as incongruent with the modernising impulse of the nineteenth century. Dickens, for example, ridicules the use of the prefix ‘Pre’, referring to it as a “great retrogressive principle” (Dickens 266), in his piece “Old Lamps for New Ones”, published in his magazine *Household Words* in June 1850. To demonstrate his point, Dickens ironically invents the ‘Pre-

Newtonian Brotherhood', "lately projected by a young gentleman, under articles to a Civil Engineer, who objected to being considered bound to conduct himself according to the laws of gravitation"; the 'Pre-Galileo Brotherhood', "who distinctly refuse to perform any annual revolution around the Sun"; and the 'Pre-Chaucer Brotherhood", who restored "the ancient English style of spelling, and weed[ed] out from all libraries, public and private, [...] those and all later pretenders, particularly a person of loose character named SHAKESPEARE", amongst others (Dickens 266–67). For Dickens, returning to a more rustic style of painting was counterintuitive and counterproductive. For him, authors should not reject the developments in painting and technology, but use them to their favour.

The first impulse of the Brotherhood was intrinsically connected with visual art, particularly painting. Four of the seven original members were painters: William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), John Everett Millais (1829-1896), James Collinson (1825-1881), and the also poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882); his brother, the poet William Michael Rossetti (1829-1919), the poet and sculptor Thomas Woolner (1825-1892), and the art critic Frederic George Stephens (1827-1907) were the other three. However, it expanded into the realms of literature and criticism. Jenny Graham explains that the Brotherhood and the consequent Pre-Raphaelitism were a product of the advancement of art history in the nineteenth century, exemplified by the rising number of specialised art publications and museum exhibitions, especially after the Napoleonic Wars advanced a "new continental culture of museums" (Graham 32).

The *Blackwood's* critic acknowledges that the "extravagance and presumption" of the Pre-Raphaelites was not admired by all. However, he adds that the faults placed on their style should not be regarded as "the results of mental paralysis", or of a return to a Romantic idealisation, but rather as "the faults of youth". They were young artists committed to representing reality, but to an optimistic version of reality. For instance, they would rather paint the delicacy of the leaves in spring, with "the tender veins and fibres in all their minute windings" than the "yellowing of the autumn" with "the detail of faded leaves and the curious reticulation of their skeletons" ("The Drama", *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1856, 227). This indicates that the Brotherhood's realism was not an objective and unfiltered representation of reality, but a subjective reconnection with a primitive past, anchored in a contact with nature, and liberated by a freer use of the brush. It was, in fact, a hopeful realism, combining historical truth with fantastical imagination.

The return to realism does not mean negating imagination. Quite the contrary, the *Blackwood's* critic affirms that imagination is what pieces the facts together, creating connections and narratives. He compares the effect of imagination to convey truth in the same manner that a palaeontologist such as Prof Richard Owen (1804-1892) attaches a narrative to a fossil: "Give to Professor Owen a single bone – even the single bone of an extinct animal, and he will determine the size and position of every other bone, and the entire structure of the bird or beast" ("The Drama", *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1856, 226). This is the sort of realism that should be pursued, and that which should be present on the Victorian stage, according to the critic. In contrast, "baneful realism", or the realism "of decrepitude and ruin", clings to such superficial details as putting on stage the same carriage where John Thurtell murdered William Weare. (227). These two opposing realist tendencies were both present in the London theatrical scene during Kean's management of the Princess's Theatre. The *Blackwood's* critic saw in Kean's projects an example of creating an illusion of reality on stage without falling prey to baneful realism. He stresses that he does not wish the lavish sceneries, dioramas, musicals and other stage illustrations to disappear. Instead, he pleads the dramatists of his age to "write up to them", to create written drama that is deserving of the current pictorial scene. As he puts it, "if they will write for the theatre, let them write something worthy of illustration, and be as realistic in their writing as Mr. Kean is in his acting and in his stage appointments" ("The Drama", *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1856, 228). Instead of condemning what the theatre and drama of the age lack, there should be an effort to offer positive substitutes. He adds that "until we have poetry in the sentiment, and true chivalry in the action, and that reverence which is implied in poetry and chivalry, it is not likely that the English people, as a whole, will ever look to the theatres" (229).

7.5 A Living Picture of a Bygone Age: Kean's *Richard II* and Medievalist Extravaganza

When Macready restored the Chorus in his 1839 revival of *Henry V* at Covent Garden, he interpreted it as Chronos, the Greek personification of Time, and based it on the character of Time from *The Winter's Tale*. Kean selected *Henry V* as the final production of his management career at the Princess's Theatre, for which he cast his

wife and lifelong theatrical partner Ellen Kean as the Chorus. In contrast to Macready, Kean presented the Chorus as an embodiment of Clio, the Muse of History. It is she who retells the medieval past of Henry V's battle, speaking from an even earlier Greek past, selecting and deciding which version of the past the nineteenth-century audience gets to see (Schoch, *Shakespeare's Victorian Stage* 140–41). With this choice, Kean magically intertwines classical antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the spectator's present time. Schoch sees Kean's personification of history as the zenith of his career: "What greater authority could be found for Kean's antiquarian productions than History herself, who does not simply sanction but actively produces theatrical versions of the past?" (141). Despite the critics and audience's mixed reactions to Kean's innovation, the actor-manager's legitimation of his historical revivals on stage by History herself illustrates his commitment to historical authenticity. Additionally, as I pointed out in Chapter 1, the Chorus exposes the inadequacy of the stage to represent history. It is the Chorus' supernatural essence that lends it the power to bring the past back to life.

When Ellen Kean embodies the Chorus as the Muse of History, she transmits her authority to retell history to the stage. As Schoch puts it, Clio "explains the terms under which the theatre legitimates itself as history and, consequently, as a respectable social institution" (*Shakespeare's Victorian Stage* 155). In this sense, historical theatre distances itself from the 'illegitimacy' of popular entertainment. However, despite Kean's efforts to support his productions with historical research and to adorn them with historically accurate sets, costumes and props, Kean's Shakespearean revivals were heavily dependent on the conventions of Victorian extravaganzas.

Kean's personification of the Muse of History in *Henry V* took its visual precedent from Hermione's statue in *The Winter's Tale*, a play staged at the Princess's Theatre three years earlier, in which Ellen Kean played the queen. As Schoch observes, Ellen Kean's Hermione "bears an uncanny resemblance to her subsequent portrayal of the Chorus in *Henry V*"; a similarity which the critics of the time also noted (Schoch, *Shakespeare's Victorian Stage* 156–57). In this work of "theatrical witchcraft", Kean merges the two figures, Clio and Hermione's statue, bringing awareness to the theatre's power to reincarnate the past. According to Schoch, "the crucial insight is that even when the theatre regards itself as history it still works through magic" (157); it is an illusionistic realism. Although there is no

personification of time or history in *Richard II*, Kean acts as a historical conjuror in evoking Richard's medieval past, embodying it on stage, where the audience can witness an extract of living history, being immersed in an illusion of past reincarnated.

Kean's combination of history and magic in the theatre is consistent with the wider context of Victorian antiquarianism. Schoch writes that the *Literary Gazette* of 12 April 1859 compared the first English antiquarians to medieval conjurors "who opened 'old British or Roman barrows' in quest of charms and amulets" (*Shakespeare's Victorian Stage* 157). Old artifacts were collected for their historical value, but also for mythically possessing magical powers, no doubt connected to the materiality of the past as preserved by such objects. According to Schoch, "the very process of historical recovery was regarded as a kind of magic trick that materialized the past – abracadabra – out of thin air" (158). It corroborates the idea that, although the past is irrevocably irretrievable, it is indeed possible to 'magically' recreate it through performance.

In Schoch's study of Kean's management at the Princess's Theatre, the author describes Kean as a magician. Similarly, when writing about Kean's acting as the title-role in Shakespeare's *Richard II*, J. W. Cole confirms Kean's theatrical magic: he "transferred to the scene the most graphic Shakespearean illustration that ever entered into the mind of actor or manager: an illustration that gave a reality to the play it was never supposed to possess" (209). Cole even goes on to state that had a British citizen from 1399 been magically transferred to the seats at the Princess's Theatre that evening, "he would have fancied that he saw a living repetition of what he once had taken a part in" (Cole 210). As Cole's example demonstrates, Kean had the power to bring the Middle Ages back to life, albeit temporarily, on stage. The theatre reviewer in *The Era* wrote about the same production on 15 March 1857:

From the moment we take our seat in the Princess's Theatre, to the period when reluctantly quitting it dazed and dazzled with the stage-wrought wonders that have been conjured before us, we relapse into the stern bustling reality of the modern gas-lit Oxford street, we are under the spell of a potent magician. A vail [*sic*] is dropped before our eyes, and the glamour of theatrical witchcraft enthral every sense. We are thrown back to the time of the fourteenth century. (*The Era*, 15 March 1857).

The review describes the illusionistic characteristic of Victorian theatre. As we have seen, Jackson considers illusion one of the four core principles of Victorian theatre. According to Jackson, the age favoured an illusionistic theatre, with "a

steady progress in the development of the techniques that would produce a completely convincing illusory world, in which any modern, fantastic or historical event or scene could be rendered with accuracy and conviction" (2).⁷⁹ Furthermore, *The Era's* review validates how Kean's perception of the possibilities of the theatre at the time and of his role as actor-manager imbued his adaptations of Shakespeare's history plays.

Kean's *Richard II* was a huge success, it ran for 86 consecutive performances starting on 12 March 1857, followed by 26 performances in the fall season, resulting in 112 performances in total (Wilson, 'Charles Kean's Production of "Richard II"' 42). Wilson claims that Kean's *Richard II* "was the only success for the play from the Jacobean times until the twentieth century, at least on the London stage" (41), although that can be disputed, as I have shown in the previous two chapters regarding Edmund Kean's and Macready's productions in London in 1815 and 1850, respectively. In the manner of previous Keanian productions of history plays, Kean's *Richard II* depended heavily on historical research, combining entertainment with education to offer historical knowledge for the audience. His production was accompanied by "an annotated and documented edition of his text [...] sold at performances along with an elaborate souvenir program which showed 15 of the 16 settings with characters grouped on them" (Wilson, 'Charles Kean's Production of "Richard II"' 42). His effort to recreate the fourteenth-century atmosphere included historically researched costumes, settings and even historically accurate music. Dawson and Yachnin write that "the combat scene featured lifelike, though inanimate, horses, and Kean invented a triumphal entry for Bolingbroke into London [...] complete with five hundred extras" (84). Kean created this visual interpolation; in the Shakespearean original Bolingbroke's entrance in London is only retold by York to his wife in Act V, Scene 2, and, therefore, not seen by the audience. Kean's exaggerated care with historical authenticity "led to jokes that even the playbills were printed on 'fly-leaves from old folio editions of the History of England'" (Bate and Rasmussen 130). Despite the criticism and mockery, Kean's effort to reconstruct the medieval past on stage marked the way theatre was made and influenced generations of Shakespearean productions afterwards.

⁷⁹ The other three core principles of Victorian theatre, according to Jackson, were the pursuit for and maintenance of the social respectability of the craft and its professionals; the theatre's expression as popular culture in a period of rapid urbanization; and the rise of an artistically unified theatre, concerned with an overall sense of composition in staging and performance (Jackson 2–4).

Kean's pictorial and spectacular style also received criticism for detracting the political potency of the play. As Forker puts it, "Kean emphasized the King's pathos at the expense of the play's political context" ('Introduction' 93). However, despite the focus on Richard's individual tragedy and on pictorial illustration on stage, the political undertone of the play did not go unnoticed. As Schoch puts it, "mid-Victorian critics and audiences found no difficulty in recognizing – and advocating – the political utility of theatrical *performance*"⁸⁰ (*Shakespeare's Victorian Stage* 116). The poignancy of Richard's fall and his human suffering is in fact heightened by its political associations. The critic in the *Morning Post* of 27 May 1857 writes:

It is not until the second act that the tyranny and rapacity of *Richard's* nature are revealed in their true colours, by unmanly insults to the dying *Duke of Lancaster*, and by the violent seizure of his plate, "his goods, his money, and his lands." These insolent and iniquitous proceedings fill up the measure of *Richard's* misrule, and mark him out as the victim of an avenging destiny. [...] Plume-plucked and crest-fallen, barren and bereft of friends, his sorrows are so overwhelming, his prostration so deplorable, his isolation so complete and absolute, that, for all his sins and follies, we cannot choose but pity one who is plunged into such abject misery. (*Morning Post*, 27 May 1857).

The tyrannical misuse of royal power is the catalyst of Richard's personal tragedy. Although the king's human suffering evokes the audience's pity, enhancing the intensity of the character's *pathos*, it is the misuse of power that leads Richard to his downfall. It is not possible to dissociate Richard's misfortune from its political origin, no matter how decorated the stage and costumes are.

In 1840, therefore still prior to the Theatre Regulation Act, *Blackwood's Magazine* reflects on the manifestation of politics even on the popular stage. It contends to have "no wish to talk politics in talking of the theatres; and yet they come across us even in the midst of painted curtains, caged lions, and those not less hazardous and unruly appendages to the stage, called actors and actresses" (*Blackwood's Magazine*, July-December 1840, 235). Politics is inevitably part of the theatre, whether amongst the sensational entertainment of the minor theatres or the legitimate drama of the patent theatres. Schoch emphasises that recent scholarship on nineteenth-century Shakespearean productions has been "oddly depoliticized":

The well-known revivals of John Philip Kemble, William Charles Macready, Charles Kean, and Henry Irving have been widely interpreted as politically naïve because of an enduring critical misperception that antiquarianism, the

⁸⁰ Original emphasis.

dominant production aesthetic of nineteenth-century Shakespearean revivals, could not forge 'links between contemporary events and Shakespeare's plays'. (Schoch, *Shakespeare's Victorian Stage* 117).

Although the associations with contemporary politics were not necessarily spelled out in print, the audience could make the connections in the freedom of their minds. For instance, the *Morning Chronicle* of 12 March 1857 describes the political court dynamics during Richard's reign as depicted in Shakespeare's play:

We are presented with the intrigues and rivalries of those powerful barons, whose precarious allegiance was seldom secured unless the personal qualities of the monarch were as unexceptionable as his right to the throne was just. One rises at length more powerful than the others, who embodies the popular discontent, and who is supported from patriotism, treachery, or desire for change, till the "roi fainéant" is driven from the throne and his revolted subject reigns in his stead. (*Morning Chronicle*, 12 March 1857).

Although referring specifically to the events dramatised by Shakespeare, the piece in the *Morning Chronicle* could easily mirror the struggle for power between Whigs and Tories in Parliament, or recall other instances of the victory of popular demand over absolutism, such as the execution of Charles I or the French Revolution.

In the preface to the published edition of the adaptation of *Richard II* performed by Kean at the Princess's Theatre, Kean writes that after journeying to Ancient Greece with productions of *The Winter's Tale* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*, he "return[s] to the homestead of history, and offer[s] to the public one of those exciting dramas drawn from our own annals, in which our national poet has depicted the fierce and turbulent passions of our ancestors, and thus immortalised events of the deepest interest to every English mind" (Kean v). In his seventh year of management at the Princess's Theatre, he turns his antiquarian interests towards England's national history by means of the words of its national poet. What Kean appreciates in Shakespeare's *Richard II* is the combination of "accurate statement of fact with beauty of language". Kean writes that the play teaches "so terrible a lesson", exhibiting "the strength and weakness of humanity, the elevation of one king upon the ruin of another, the gorgeous pageantry of royal state contrasted with the dungeon and the assassin's stroke" (v–vi). Kean's words highlight the contrasts at the core of Shakespeare's play, which are intrinsically connected to a double-voiced medievalism: the idealisation of royal power and pomp, on the one side, versus the violent murder of a king, on the other. This complex disparity in representations of the

Middle Ages is precisely what Kean brings to the fore in his production at the Princess's Theatre.

In the preface, Kean also refers to Geoffrey Chaucer and John Wycliffe, two contemporaries of King Richard II, to exemplify the complex combination of light and darkness in the Middle Ages. He praises Chaucer's poetry, whose "elegant taste refined and smoothed our native tongue", but that simultaneously "imbibed the same atmosphere that was impregnated with the perjury and faithlessness of conflicting parties" (Kean vi). Kean's juxtaposition of a positive and a negative aspect of the period illustrates his double-voiced medievalist approach to the Middle Ages, blending an idealised and a grotesque perception of the medieval past. In reference to John Wycliffe, Kean calls him "the morning star of the Reformation", who "made himself heard amidst the angry roar of contending passions, and in the hearts of fiery and seditious men sowed the seed, which, after a growth of one hundred and fifty years, was destined to expand into the standard religion of our country" (vi–viii). Kean perceives the Middle Ages as a period of rebellion and contention, but also as the age that produced the man who would change the course of religion in England.

The medieval past was for Kean simultaneously the home of Chaucer and Wycliffe, but also of perjury, faithlessness, and seditious men. As Kean puts it, "it may be remarked that the same historical page which is blotted with the recital of 'murders, treasons, and detested sins,' preserves the memory of two illustrious men, whose light was undimmed by the dark clouds that obscured the political horizon" (vi). Kean's use of the opposition between light and darkness evokes the Enlightenment perception of the Middle Ages as the Dark Ages. However, Kean proposes a more nuanced perspective of the medieval past – at once grotesque and romantic.

Kean's goal in staging *Richard II* was "to produce a true portraiture of medieval history" (vii). For him that was possible as long as historical records formed the major inspiration for the theatre manager. For instance, Kean's costume and position in the photograph of himself in the title role bears a striking resemblance to the monarch's portrait in Westminster Abbey (See figures 46 and 47). All the sets in 1857 were actual restorations of monuments, effigies, castles and halls, or "represented in conformity with contemporaneous authorities" (viii). The realism conveyed by the scenery executed by seven artists is achieved through a combination of strategies, including a "diagonal placement of scenery, historical

accuracy of all visual elements, and three dimensional scenic details” (Wilson, ‘Charles Kean’s Production of “Richard II”’ 43). Kean dropped a green velvet curtain to mark the end of the acts but also to cover scene changes happening on stage. Covering the backstage movement would maintain the illusion of reality created on stage. This required a great number of professionals involved. Wilson points out that the cast included 26 members plus 227 extras, and 28 property men were employed to manage the sixteen sets (43). The consequent cost of such lavish productions was of course incredibly beyond what was normally spent in the theatrical business. Kean gives an example during his retirement speech at the Princess’s Theatre: “in this little theatre, where 200/. is considered a large receipt, and 250/. an extraordinary one, I expended, in one season alone, a sum little short of 50,000/” (Cole 383). He also provided labour for nearly 550 persons, on and off the stage. In fact, Kean acknowledges that he was not successful in a commercial sense, but that he felt victorious in fulfilling his theatrical objectives.

Figura 46 - Charles Kean as Richard II enthroned wearing crown and robes: photograph, 1858.



Figura 47 - Portrait of King Richard II, Westminster Abbey



In general terms, Kean's version of *Richard II*, as summarised by Wilson, omits 44% of the original text, simplifies the plot, puts greater focus on the central characters, and adds a rapid pace to the dramatic action. Wilson sees the production as an example of Kean's didactic antiquarianism ('Charles Kean's Production of "Richard II"' 42). Despite the textual cuts, the *Times* from 13 March 1857 informs that the production lasted "four hours with solid uninterrupted magnificence" (*Times*, 13 March 1857). These hours included changes of set, costume, and the addition of the visual interpolation in Act III. Furthermore, Kean included historically accurate music, based on his research. The overture, *entr'actes*, and other musical pieces were composed and adapted by John Liptrot Hatton (1808-1886). Kean gives examples of the detailed attention to historical accuracy: "The tune which accompanies the dance of Itinerant Fools, introduced in the Episode, for the purpose of amusing the expectant multitude, is adapted from an air said to be as old as the reign of Edward II", and "the ancient popular Welsh air of 'Sweet Richard', introduced in the overture, and again in the *entr'actes* preceding the third act and episode, is supposed to be the production of some contemporary bard, and served to keep alive the feeling of regret for King Richard's fate" (Kean ix). Kean stresses: the music serves to instruct *and* amuse "the expectant multitude" (ix). Undoubtedly, the music also functioned as a way to enhance the illusion of experiencing the past, exploring not only the visual sense but also the auditory faculties of the spectator. The fact that the audience would be listening to songs known and heard by fourteenth-century English men and women would bring together the two generations, connected by art and music.

The scene of the medieval combat at Coventry provides an interesting example of Kean's mixture of historical authenticity with theatrical extravaganza. The published text as it was staged at the Princess's Theatre is enriched with footnotes by Kean, in which he explains the research process behind the stage choices. For this scene, Kean describes the carefully designed costume for John of Gaunt: "his dress is taken from the Cotton MS., where he is represented in a long parti-coloured robe. White and red were the colours assumed by Richard II, as his livery, and were consequently much worn by the courtiers of his reign. White and blue were the colours of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster" (Kean 15). The Theatre collection at Harvard University holds a photograph of the actor Walter Lacy (1809-1898) dressed as Gaunt (See figure 48). The details are impressive, including the coronet, pointed beard, the livery collar, the ring and robes. *The Era* of 12 April 1857 writes that Kean

“is certainly the first manager who has plumbed to the depths of historic authorities, in order to clothe, as well as embody, the past”. Lacy’s photograph proves *The Era*’s words, showing how the actor *embodies* John of Gaunt, as well as how the appropriate attire *clothes* the past evoked by the character.

Figura 48 - Walter Lacy as John of Gaunt in *Richard II*: photograph, 1858



There are 20 surviving photographs of Kean’s *Richard II*, taken by Martin Laroche (1814-1886).⁸¹ These belong to the group of early Shakespearean photographs. The genre emerged in the 1850s, “a time when understandings of photography were being negotiated in relation to narrative, performance, and history”

⁸¹ Photographs of Charles John Kean and cast, 1856-1859 and undated. MS Thr 905. Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

(Barnden 68). According to Sally Barnden, the circulation of studio photographs of actors in costume as a souvenir of the production was common in mid-Victorian London (72). As Lacy's photograph above exemplifies, Laroche's series was mainly composed of portraits of actors in costume in a fixed – and artificial – pose. Different from the engravings in illustrated editions of Shakespeare at the turn of the nineteenth century, which favoured a sense of movement, Laroche's photographs are static. There are only three exceptions: the first, of Kean in the title-role, dressed in a monk's black habit and holding the crown. Richard holds the crown at arm's length in front of him, which could signal the movement of either crowning or de-crowning; the second, of John Ryder enthroned and crowned as Henry IV. Four children surround the new king, probably the king's four sons from his first marriage to Mary de Bohun (c.1369-1394), including the future Henry V.⁸² One of the children is playing the flute, adding a sense of movement to the photograph; and, lastly, one of Lacy as Gaunt in bed in his death scene. He holds his right hand to his forehead, while the left hand clutches the bed curtain, indicating pain and confusion (See figure 52). It is important to emphasise that Laroche's photographs required an exposure time of around 30 seconds (Barnden 90), which would compel the actor to remain still for a good-quality image. As Barnden puts it, commercial photography in the 1850s was still "backward-looking", "employing the compositions of old heirloom portraits and the props and costumes of historical drama" (79). While the book illustrations were increasingly experimenting with the reproduction of feelings, action and detail, as we saw in Chapter 4, photography – albeit a new medium – was initially quite conservative. This is not to say that Kean's stage techniques were conservative. Quite the contrary, the reviews in this section of the chapter point to Kean's *Richard II* as "a most marvellous achievement", throwing "into the shade all his predecessors" (*The Illustrated London News*, 5 December, 1857). Laroche's photographs are not a representation of the play *in performance*, but a series of framed moments.

The Kean-Laroche collaboration allowed the actor-manager to immortalise his reconstructions of the medieval past, using Shakespeare as the lens through which the viewer would see the Middle Ages. Kean was conscious of the determining factor of the physical remains of an ephemeral theatrical production, such as newspaper reviews, promptbooks, illustrations and – now – photographs in the

⁸² The couple also had two daughters, Blanche and Philippa, in 1392 and 1394, respectively.

production's future legacy. He published the texts as performed at the Princess's Theatre, sold souvenirs of the productions, and requested the series of photographs, demonstrating a concern with material vestiges of his work which would otherwise have 'vanished' after the curtain call.⁸³

Photography was then considered to be capable of an unfiltered and objective representation of reality. Kean borrowed this new medium's authority to stress the antiquarian approach of his theatrical practices, placing his Shakespearean revivals as accurate representations of the past. *The Illustrated London News* of 5 December 1857 praises the concrete historical foundation of Kean's *Richard II*: "the exquisite beauty of the scenery, the accurate arrangement of the groups, the archaeological illustration of the historical period by means of the countless accessories to the stage business, the original and elaborate historical episode of Bolingbroke's and Richard's entry into London, and the entire and careful arrangement of the action". For this purpose, Kean has "sought information from every quarter, and laid all the storehouses of knowledge under contribution. He has consulted the works of antiquaries, and unfolded the pages of ancient manuscripts. He has profited by old paintings, engravings, and missals for scenery, costumes, and accessories" (*The Illustrated London News*, 5 December 1857). The critic's praise is fundamentally grounded on the level of historical accuracy achieved by Kean's diligent research.

Kean strengthens his claim of accuracy and fidelity to reality by associating with the recent technology of the stereoscope. As Barnden explains, the stereoscope was first invented in 1838 by Charles Wheatstone (1802-1875), and "used binocular vision as a basis for producing a rudimentary three-dimensional effect, using two images representing the same scene from fractionally different angles" (69). When the viewer looks through the stereoscope, they experience the illusion of seeing one three-dimensional image. After the success of *Richard II* at the Princess's Theatre, Kean presented a series of Laroche's photographs to be viewed with a stereoscope. According to *The Illustrated London News*, "they are thirteen in number, and the scenes have been so judiciously chosen that portraits of the principal characters, in their elaborate costumes, are presented to the eye with a reality attainable only by the combined photograph and stereoscope" (*The Illustrated London News*, 5

⁸³ Others of Kean's Shakespearean revivals were photographed, including *Hamlet*, *Henry V*, *King Lear*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *The Winter's Tale*.

December 1857).⁸⁴ The three-dimensional effect of the stereoscope augments the reality of the image, adding an illusion of a corporeal past, beyond the flatness of the page.

Another of Laroche's photographs shows the actor John Ryder (1814-1885) as Bolingbroke, clad in armour for the lists at Coventry (See figure 49). In the Historical Notes to Act 1 in the published edition of the play, Kean refers to the historian Jean Froissart as authority, explaining that both the Duke of Hereford and the Duke of Norfolk took great expense to outshine the other: "The Duke of Hereford procured his armour from Galeazzo, Duke of Milan, who sent him the Chevalier François, and four of the best armourers in Lombardy" (Kean 28). In a note to Scene 3, Kean informs the reader that "the costume of Bolingbroke in this scene is copied from the illuminations of the *Metrical History*: the black cap and surcoat are supposed to represent him in mourning for the death of John of Gaunt, his father. Northumberland's dress is taken from the same authority" (Kean 36). Ryder wears the colours and symbols of the Plantagenet house: the golden fleur de lys and the three lions on a red field. The pomposity of Bolingbroke's clothes match with the grandiosity of the occasion, although the king makes sure that the tournament is interrupted and Bolingbroke's popularity contained. The "fidelity and truth" to historical sources is, according to *The Era* of 12 April 1857, "a new theatrical feature", it is "an optical treat as superior to anything the old stager can recall, as are the woodcuts of the *Illustrated London News* to those of a Dutch emblem book". The *Illustrated London News* was an emblem of modernity with sharp images printed by a machine and available to the public at a weekly basis. In comparison, a Dutch emblem book, printed in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, was condemned as old-fashioned and obsolete. Interestingly, Ryder's photograph combines the sharpness of the new technology with the oldness of the medieval armour.

⁸⁴ Kean, therefore, made a selection of 13 out of the total number of photographs.

Figura 49 - John Ryder as Bolingbroke, in armour in "Lists scene," in *Richard II*: photograph, 1858.



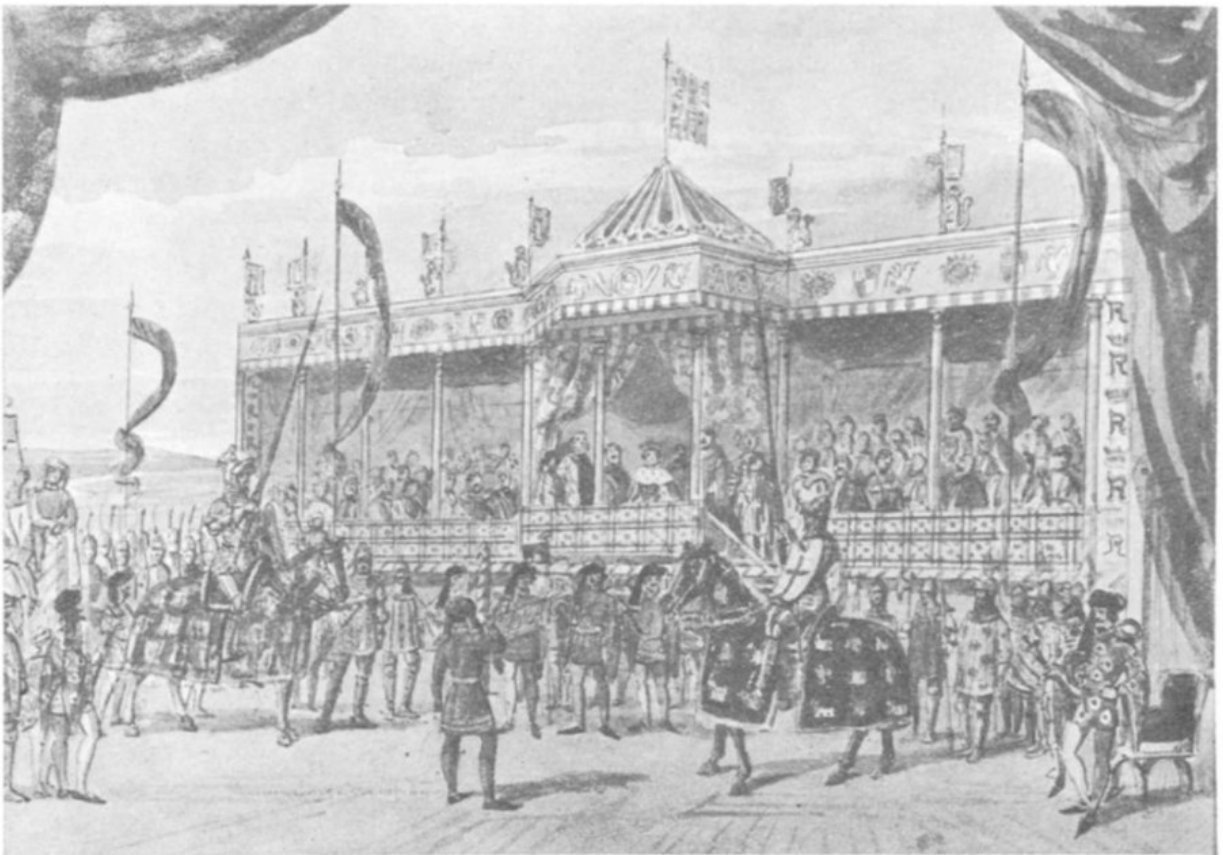
Wilson describes the setting used for the scene at the lists of Coventry. According to the researcher, the preceding painted backdrop was drawn off to reveal the set, of which the design is reproduced below (See figure 50). In the drawing, it is possible to identify the curtain on the two sides, which gives a good idea of the proportion of the objects and people on stage. According to Wilson, “at the Marshall’s signal, a trumpeter blew a call which was answered, after a slight pause, from under the stage at right to give the proper illusion of distance and direction” (‘Charles Kean’s Production of “Richard II” 44). Even within the constraints of the stage, the use of sound, pauses and silence created the impression of a far larger field. Another example occurs in Act 3, Scene 3, at Flint Castle. As Northumberland enters with Bolingbroke’s followers from the left, trumpets sound, which are subsequently answered from within the castle (Wilson, ‘Charles Kean’s Production of “Richard II” 47). Although the stage is one, such use of trumpet sounds coming from different directions creates the illusion of two separate environments, namely within and outside the castle.

In Act 1, while Bolingbroke and Mowbray on horses take the forefront of the stage, the king stands inside the royal pavilion, surrounded by an audience also watching the combat. The pavilion thus divides two sides of the set: the field and the inside of the pavilion. After the king has interrupted the duel, he retreats to confer with the other nobles inside the pavilion, and two pages lower the pavilion curtains, mirroring the curtains of the theatre. This creates a new stage within the stage, isolating the king and his court that discuss in private, while the audience can momentarily only see the others, including Bolingbroke and Mowbray, awaiting the king’s decision. The audience is thus put on hold along with the combatants. In this manner, the audience becomes a participant of the events, sharing the same hesitation with Bolingbroke and Mowbray. *The Era* of 15 March 1857 writes that “the strong impression of being *present*, not at the mimic representation, but at the event itself which it illustrates, here first forces itself upon the mind of the spectator”.⁸⁵ The reviewer emphasises the illusion of taking part in the past, a feeling impressed in the *mind* of the spectator, encouraged by the ensemble on the stage.

The pavilion at Coventry is fully decorated, the letter ‘R’ is seen in several places, which recalls Brown’s painting of the deposition scene for the Boydell Gallery,

⁸⁵ My emphasis.

discussed in Chapter 4. The Pavilion also evokes the print in William Dugdale's *The Antiquities of Warwickshire Illustrated* (1656), used as inspiration for Francis Hayman's illustration in Thomas Hamner's 1744 edition of Shakespeare's works. The ghosting presence of Brown's painting and Hayman's illustration is no coincidence, but confirms the claim in *The Illustrated London News* of 5 December 1857 of Kean's perusal of "old paintings, engravings, and missals for scenery, costumes, and accessories". In this manner, Kean creates an interconnection of visual representations of Shakespeare's medieval past, conferring legitimacy to his project



of being 'true' to history.

Figura 50 - Design, Kean's production of *Richard II*, Act I, Scene 3 (Wilson 1967, 44)

The London *Times* approved the originality of Kean's conception, affirming that "of theatrical convention in the contrivance of the groups and tableaux there is not a trace" (*Times*, 13 March 1857). The example above of the scene at Coventry illustrates the *Times*'s statement. The production required a large number of extras to

fill the pavilion's interior and the grounds in front of it – actors dressed according to the period, as exemplified by the photographs of Gaunt and Bolingbroke, that would fuel the illusion of reality. In addition to setting and costume, acting is a crucial element in performing history on stage. It is through the actor that long dead characters, such as Henry Bolingbroke and Richard, get a chance to 'live' again. The *Morning Chronicle* of 1 December 1857 refers to acting as “that rare executive talent by which alone the genius of the poet can be adequately reflected, and through which channel only the buried ages of the world are called into new existence, and passed in review as in a living panorama”. History thus acted out has the power to be “stamped on our memories with an enduring strength which mere reading or relation could never approach” (*Morning Chronicle*, 1 December 1857). *The Era* of 15 March affirms that Kean's foremost merit is “the embodiment of the masterly poetry of the stage in the mould and form and very vestments in which the creations of the poet would have spoken and acted, and giving back both to ear and eye – through the lapse of centuries – the historic personages as they lived and breathed, with all the vigour of action and the truth of a stereoscope” (*The Era*, 15 March 1857). The theatre enables the audience to create a bond with the historical figures that would otherwise look flat on a book page but that come alive on stage.

The Era found Kean's “depiction of the weak and erring monarch” as one of the actor's “most effective personations” (*The Era*, 15 March 1857). The critic affirms that Kean's acting demonstrates that he had studied thoroughly not only the historical records to render the pictorial illustration on stage, but also the psychological traits of the character. Kean was able to convey the complex paradox of being Richard: Kean “allows sufficient of the brighter side of Richard's character to become apparent in order to engage our sympathies, whilst he delineates the effect of wilful wrong-doing, coupled with that infirmity of purpose that arises from his vacillating temperament” (*The Era*, 15 March 1857). Interestingly enough, there are few and mainly short mentions to Kean's performance during the deposition scene. The majority of reviews elaborates on the grandiosity of the scenery, the admirable *mise-en-scène*, and the authenticity of the costumes, overshadowing the pathos of Shakespeare's climatic scene.

The set created for the first scene of Act II, that of Gaunt's death, adds another example of the extravagant style of the scenery and the attention to minute detail in Kean's *Richard II*. In a footnote in the published edition, Kean writes about

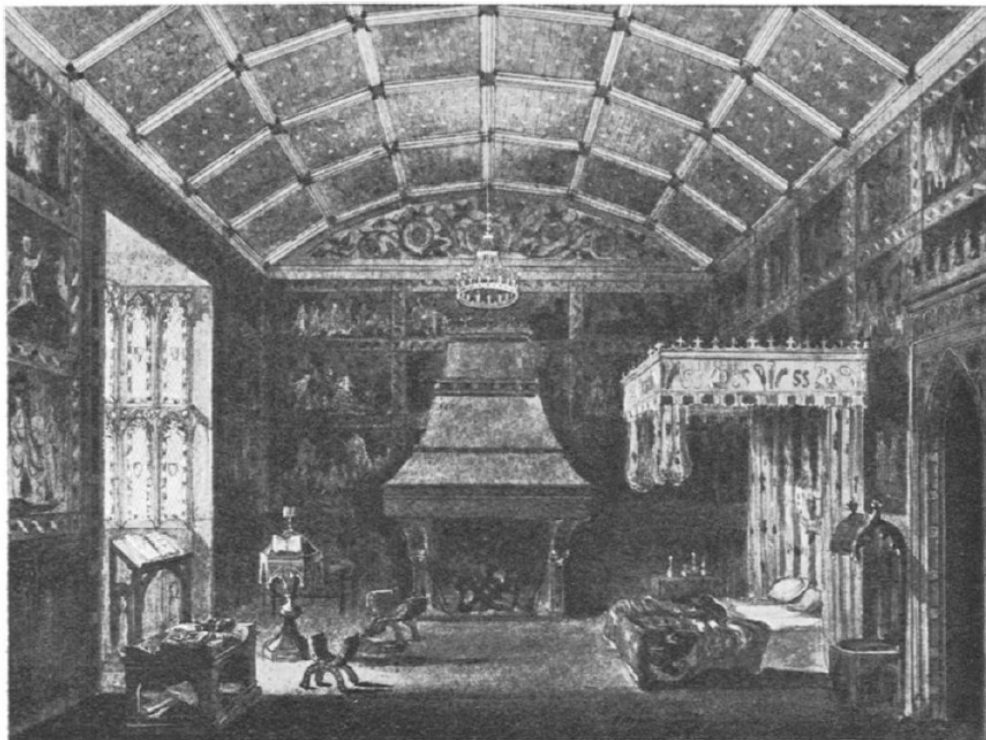
the sumptuous beds belonging to nobility in the Middle Ages, “usually embroidered with the arms and devices of the owners, in the most costly materials” (Kean 30). As the scene begins, Gaunt is ill in his bed. Kean explains:

In this scene the bearings of John of Gaunt are displayed on the coverlid. The head of the bed has in the centre his arms as King of Castille and Leon, in right of his first wife, surrounded with his own badge of the ostrich feather, on a ground of his livery colours, blue and white, powdered with his badges of S.S., and an eagle standing on a padlock, and essaying to open the same, as shown on one of his seals. The vallance is enriched with similar devices. (Kean 30).

Wilson reproduces the set design, originally at the Victoria and Albert Museum (See figure 51). All elements described by Kean are part of the set design, which is incredibly rich in thoughtful detail. An remarkable addition is the stained glass window on stage right, which, as Wilson points out, was enhanced by the use of limelight. According to the author, Kean established limelight for regular use on stage since his production of *Henry VIII* in 1855 (Wilson, ‘Charles Kean’s Production of “Richard II”’ 45). No doubt the light coming from the window, and perhaps also from the hanging chandelier, would enhance the illusion that what was happening on stage was real, transposing the audience to the moment of Gaunt’s death.

Figura 51 - Design, Kean's *Richard II*, Act II, Scene 1 (Wilson 1967, 45)

Laroche's photograph of the actor Walter Lacy in bed during this scene indicates how part of the set design was transposed to reality in Kean's production (See figure 52). Given the difference in proportion between the Princess's Theatre stage and Laroche's studio, Laroche focused on a detail of the scene, that of the actor's performance of Gaunt's death. Although the bed is not visible in its entirety, it is possible to notice Gaunt's blazonry symbols on the curtains and sheets. A wooden cross rosary lies on the bed, evoking England's medieval Catholic past, and the man in the back with a black hat could be a priest ministering the last rites. Given the set design reproduced by Wilson, the Princess's Theatre stage would be even more richly decorated, with a massive fireplace in the middle, a chandelier hanging from



above, and a set of stained glass windows on stage right. It is not clear how much of what had been initially designed for the set eventually made it on stage. *The Era* writes that the scene “realizes a perfect picture of an ancient London interior of the

better class with its carved and fretted wood-work and its ample arras hanging” (*The Era*, 15 March 1857). There is no mention of the fireplace, the chandelier or the windows, but the critic does mention a bedroom’s “interior”, which could indicate a broader space than only the bed. According to *The Era*, much of the “*vraisemblance* is due to the arrangement of the scenery, the use of ‘flats’ being obviated by the employment of drop scenes in front, and every ‘discovery’ being a set scene of the most elaborate and ingeniously artistic construction” (*The Era*, 15 March, 1857). Kean combined panels of painted scenery with detailed sets, evincing a dynamic change of scenarios that would impress the spectator.

Figura 52 - Walter Lacy as John of Gaunt in bed, in *Richard II*: photograph, 1858



Kean also used stage effects to create a sense of realism in addition to the carefully designed sets. For instance, the scene at Flint Castle in Act 3 included a

real drawbridge that would open and close; and the “Wilds of Gloucestershire” in 2.3 presented “a rustic bridge being literally built out across the stage and spanning a running stream over which advances Bolingbroke’s army with the cross-bows, hauberks, spears, helmets, vizored-bascinetts, and other personal appliances that illustrate the pomp and circumstance of the glorious wars of this period” (*The Era*, 15 March 1857). The constructed bridges add a third dimension to the set, offering a perspective that a flat backdrop does not. *The Era* also remarks the inclusion of foliage and interlaced boughs at the back of the stage, forming a leafy screen, that would convey depth and perspective. For the critic, this effect “may be mentioned as a triumph of scenic skill” (*The Era*, 15 March 1857).

As I mentioned earlier, Kean created a new scene for the entrance of Bolingbroke into London. Instead of following Shakespeare’s original text, in which the Duke of York recounts the event to his wife, Kean *shows* it to the audience. Kean states that his decision was grounded on a wish to “embody in action what Shakespeare has so beautifully described in the speech of York to his Duchess”, and to revive, “as far as possible, a scene that actually occurred in London upwards of four hundred and fifty years since” (Kean vii). Wilson refers to this historical interlude as “the most famous and spectacular scene in the production” (‘Charles Kean’s Production of “Richard II”’ 47). The responses to this “historical illustration”, as it was called by *The Era* of 15 March 1857, are significantly positive. The reviewers admit that “it is difficult to speak of this [added scene] with the ordinary coolness of criticism, the vivid and exciting impression produced being apt to betray the describer into eulogies that would seem to approach hyperbolical extravagance in the opinion of those who were not present to endorse the truthfulness of the praise” (*The Era*, 15 March 1857). The ensemble created by Kean “make up the most illusive picture of a great day of public rejoicing in the olden time that can be imagined” (*The Era*, 15 March 1857). The critic’s description is worth quoting in full, since it provides a good sense of the grandeur of the scene:

The dancing bear, the man with the pipe and tabor, the mountebank, the jongleur, the strong man, the posturer with his pole, are all there ministering to the amusement of the multitude, and represented with an opulence and accuracy of illustration that would have delighted the heart of old Strutt, *par excellence* the chronicler of the ancient sports and pastimes of the English. These incidental diversions are presently interrupted by a capital ‘dance of itinerant fools’, sustained by some fifty ladies of the ballet in the male parti-coloured dresses of the period; and who, to an old dance tune that itself

goes back to the time of Edward the Second, perform a clever characteristic 'morris', that, of course, provokes a complimentary encore. (*The Era*, 15 March 1857).

The chaotic – although extremely well-rehearsed – scene enlivened by music and even the presence of a dancing bear is no doubt reminiscent of the Victorian extravaganzas. However, instead of being used for the sake of pure illustration or shallow entertainment, as the critic in the *Blackwood's Magazine* condemned, Kean uses the conventions of popular drama to enhance the illusion of a living and breathing (and singing) past.

Unfortunately there are no photographic records of this scene (it would be too large to be re-enacted within a studio, and too chaotic to be captured in 30 seconds of exposure), but the set design gives a good idea of the majesty of the piece (See figure 53). The painted watercolour depicts the number of extras on stage at this moment: people in the streets, cheering in the stands, and curiously looking outside from the several windows of the buildings. It may seem that the action on stage was random and chaotic. However, all movements were pre-determined, and each actor played a concrete role, either as a mercer, grocer, fishmongers, goldsmiths, linen armourers, saddlers, bakers, amongst others (Wilson, 'Charles Kean's Production of "Richard II"' 48). Bolingbroke and Richard on horseback at the centre of the image evoke Northcote's painting for the Boydell Gallery, analysed in Chapter 4. Additionally, the right side of the design is reminiscent of the illustration in Knight's *Pictorial Shakespeare*, also discussed in Chapter 4, where the point of view is that of a spectator watching the pageant from the bottom of the wooden stand, with the houses visible on the other side of the street. *The Illustrated London News* of 28 March 1857 reproduced the historical episode, praising the "strict historical accuracy" of the procession. The choreography and "picturesque accessories" of the participants, such as the Dance of Itinerant Fools and the antics of mountebanks and acrobats, were based on Joseph Strutt's *The Sports and Pastimes of the English* (1801). The critic goes so far as to affirm that "such an interlude as this Shakespeare would himself have doubtless approved of, as a fitting illustration of historic fact" (*The Illustrated London News*, 21 March, 1857).

Figura 53 - George Cressal Ellis, ca. 1810–1875, Design for the Setting of Charles Kean's Production of *Richard II* at the Princess's Theatre on 12 March 1857, undated, Watercolor and gouache over graphite on paper

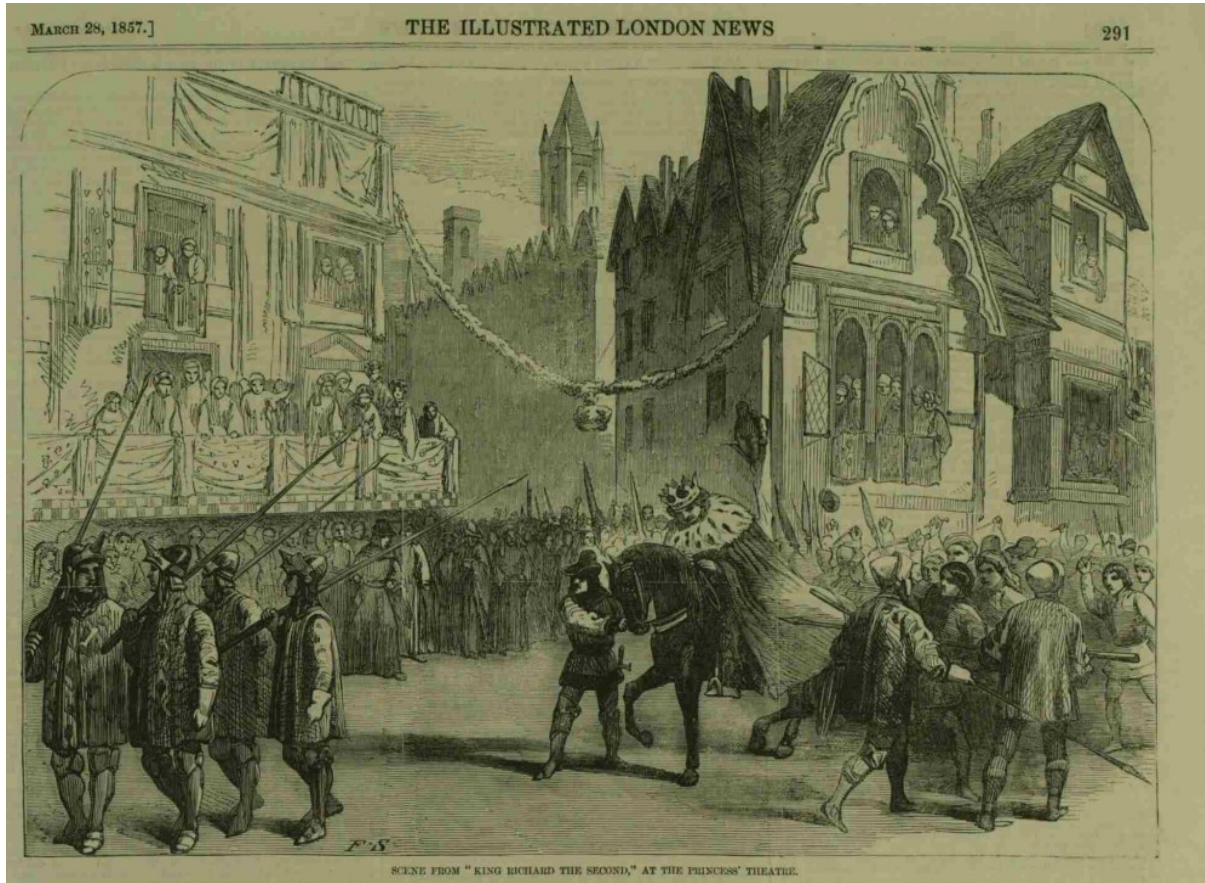


According to Wilson, five church bells sounded before the entrance of the old and the new king – a detail based on historical research. It struck the ears of the critic in *The Era* of 12 April 1857. The critic explains:

Now it is known, though not generally known, perhaps, that full peals of eight bells, comprehending the whole diatonic scale, were not known in England till the beginning of the sixteenth century; but, in the middle of the fifteenth, a peal of five was hung in King's College Chapel at Cambridge. It is quite possible, therefore, that five, but not eight bells, might have been rung in London at the end of the fourteenth century. (*The Era*, 12 April 1857).

This is for the critic an example of Kean's attention to "minute exactness". It is also another magical bridge to the past. Kean's use of auditory as well as visual stimulation in the recreation of the past increases the theatre's immersive potential, making the spectator feel transposed to fourteenth-century England, forgetting for a while their contemporary London.

Figura 54 - Entrance of Richard and Bolingbroke in Kean's *Richard II* at the Princess's Theatre. The Illustrated London News, 28 March 1857



Finally, I would like to mention the design created for the prison scene in the final act (See figure 55). The centre of the image depicts the king being assaulted by Sir Exton and his followers in an ensemble that is strikingly similar to Boitard's engraving published in Rowe's 1709 edition, shown in Chapter 4. This suggests that Kean looked for historical legitimation not only in medieval sources but also in later conceptions of the medieval past, such as eighteenth-century engravings. Kean's discourse of historical accuracy is therefore not necessarily founded on an exclusive engagement with *medieval* depictions of the Middle Ages, but on medievalist interpretations of it, creating a more complex web of different layers of historical context. As with Gaunt's death scene discussed above, it is not clear to what extent the set design actually reflects what was constructed on stage. *The Era* does not

describe it in detail, concluding that the two acts following the pageant of Bolingbroke and Richard's entrance into London feel like "an anti-climax" after "so brilliant an episode" (*The Era*, 15 March 1857). This was not because they lack in splendour, since "the scenic illustrations are not outvied by those that have preceded them", but because they lose in comparison to the peak of Act 3 (*The Era*, 15 March 1857). The *Morning Post* and *The Illustrated London News* likewise only mention the prison scene briefly, corroborating *The Era's* assertion that the second half of the staging was not as successful in engaging the attention of the audience. Whether all the elements in the set design for Act 5, Scene III, were present on the Princess's Theatre stage or not, the drawing demonstrates how illustrations of Shakespeare's work also influenced the way the plays were performed on stage, and not only the other way around – as John Bell's Acting edition from 1774 and James Halliwell-Phillipps' from 1850 exemplify.

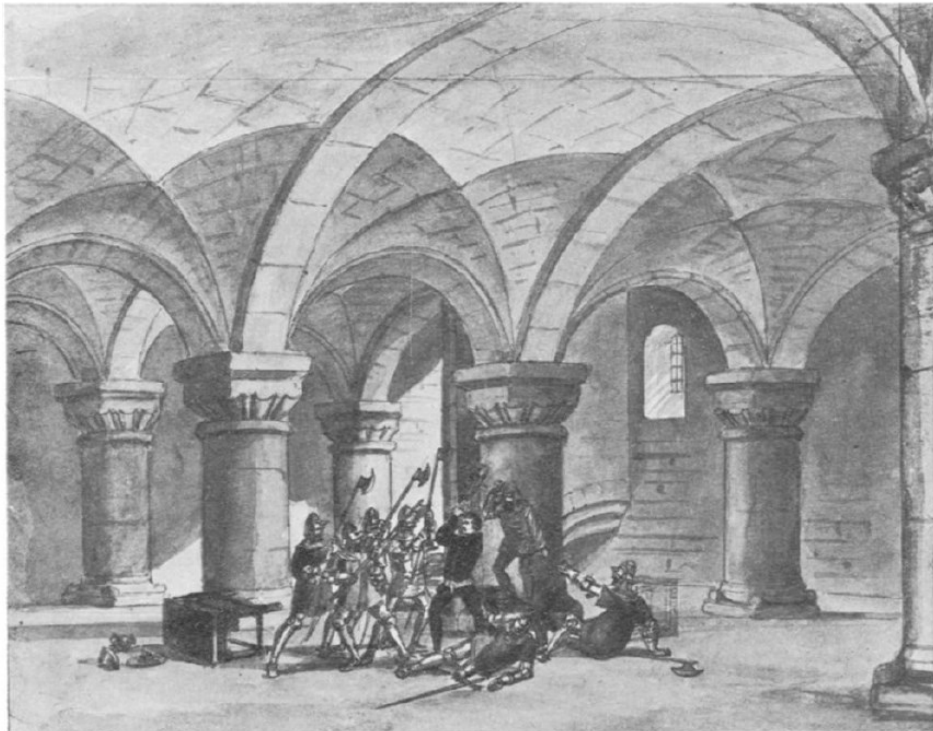


Figura 55 - Design, Kean's *Richard II*, Act V, Scene 3 (Wilson 1967, 49)

7.6 Photography and the Framed Middle Ages

Although photographs have been generally accepted as direct representations of reality, that is, of course, a false claim. Photography can be used to convey different *perceptions* of reality. As Sally Barnden explains, especially in the early decades since the invention of the technology, photography was understood mainly as a “new medium [...] strongly allied to the idea of an objective, scientific gaze: an opportunity for the process of representation to bypass any human intervention” (67). Photography could frame moments in the present, preserving it as it becomes the past. Laroche’s series of photographs of Kean’s *Richard II* provide a relevant example.

Lindsay Smith writes about the connections between the Pre-Raphaelite movement and the development of photography in mid-nineteenth century. According to the author, the main intersection involves a commitment to reality: “The medium of photography makes real models an aesthetic necessity, as painting for the Pre-Raphaelites is assumed to necessitate a process of referential verification” (Smith 38). After a visit to William Holman Hunt, one of the founders of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the painter and poet William Bell Scott (1811-1890) associated Hunt’s art style with the new technologies in photography, including the stereoscope:

Every moment has its genesis, as every flower its seed; the seed of the flower of Pre-Raphaelitism was photography. The seriousness and honesty of motive, the unerring fatalism of the sun’s action, as well as the perfection of the impression on the eye, was what is aspired to. History, genre, mediævalism, or any poetry or literality, were allowable as subject, but the execution was to be like the binocular representations of leaves that the stereoscope was then beginning to show. Such was my conclusion on thinking over that first visit to Hunt’s studio. (Bell Scott 251).

The impression of reality the Pre-Raphaelites sought in painting – and, in fact, which Charles Kean aspired to in his theatrical productions – could be associated with the “binocular” imprint of the stereoscope, which not only depicts reality but enlarges it, rendering the small details more perceptible to the human eye. Although the Pre-Raphaelites aimed at returning to a style of painting prior to Raphael’s influence, Bell Scott’s description of Hunt’s technique indicates that the movement was connected with the modern present as much as with an idyllic past. As Smith puts it, “particularly in early Pre-Raphaelite painting, the artistic brush emulates the camera’s supposed perfection” (205). The combination of the brush and the camera lens resulted in a provocative overlapping of past and present.

Working in the same time period as Kean, Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879) used the recent technology of photography to ‘frame’ the medieval past, recreating medieval myths and stories to be captured by the camera. Cameron challenged the objectivity of photography, exploring visual ambiguity and imprecision to propose an artistic use of the technology. In her only published poem, “On a Portrait”, Cameron refers to the “immortal face” that is memorialised by the portrait painter. She gives directions to the artist: “Oh, noble painter! more than genius goes / To search the key-note of those melodies, / To find the depths of all those tragic woes, / Tune thy song right and paint rare harmonies” (Cameron ll. 17-20). Comparing the human soul with musical harmony, she writes that the portrait painter should capture the depth of the sitter’s feelings, and imprint it on the canvas. As a photographer, she does the same, but she looks for the subject’s feelings through the lens of her camera.

In 1864, Cameron was 49 years old when she recorded her first photograph (Powell 12). By this time, Charles Kean had finished his engagement as manager of the Princess’s Theatre (1850-1859) and bidden farewell to the London stage.⁸⁶ Virginia Woolf, Cameron’s great-niece, wrote that Cameron’s son gifted her with a camera, which allowed her an outlet for her creative energy. According to Woolf, when Cameron became a photographer, “all her sensibility was expressed”: “the coal-house was turned into a dark room; the fowl-house was turned into a glass-house. Boatmen were turned into King Arthur; village girls into Queen Guenevere. Tennyson was wrapped in rugs: Sir Henry Taylor was crowned with tinsel. The parlour-maid sat for her portrait and the guest had to answer the bell” (Woolf 37). Her photographic art was thus rooted in imagination, and not on reality.

Since her earlier photographs, Cameron has used the technology to frame the imagination, especially in her photographic depictions of Bible scenes or literary works, including Shakespeare’s. Unlike Laroche’s, Cameron’s Shakespearean photographs do not depict actors that had represented the roles on stage. They were “ordinary” people, including her family, friends and servants. In *King Lear Allotting His Kingdom to His Three Daughters*, taken in 1872, the old king is seen in profile, wearing a crown over his long white hair and holding a sceptre. Behind him, Goneril and Regan whisper false flattery in their father’s ears, while Cordelia, on the king’s

⁸⁶ He and his wife still made theatrical tours in the provinces in the years after the end of their career at the Princess’s Theatre. Charles Kean died on 22 January 1868 at the age of 57.

left side, remains passive. Her plain clothes contrast with the dresses and jewellery worn by her sisters (See figure 56). Although the image is static, it conveys movement and emotion. The king is meditative while he listens to the older daughters' flattery, while Cordelia listens. Whereas the pose and facial expression of Goneril and Regan convey conspiracy, Cordelia's face, with her eyes lowered and her chin down, demonstrates innocence. In comparison with the artificial posing of Laroche's photographs of *Richard II*, Cameron's emphasise the subjectivity of the characters, depicting the depths of their "tragic woes". As Barnden explains, "Cameron had little interest in being consistent with her assignment of living faces to fictional, historical, or mythical characters"; for instance, "she photographed three different women as Ophelia and two different men as Lear" (115). Her focus was rather on expressing the feelings evoked by the character, with a greater emphasis on facial expressions than on setting or costume.

Figura 56 - *King Lear Alotting His Kingdom to His Three Daughters* (1872), Julia Margaret Cameron

Ages
Alfred
neighbour,
series of
illustrate a
*Idylls of
Passing of
1874,*



The Middle
inspired Cameron.
Tennyson, her
commissioned a
photographs to
new edition of his
*the King. The
King Arthur,* taken in
depicts William

Warder as the king, wearing a chain mail, a metallic crown and holding the hilt of the sword Excalibur, held in a scabbard (See figure 57). Cameron's sitter bears a striking resemblance to the actor John Ryder in the role of Bolingbroke, immortalised by Laroche's photograph. However, while Ryder's fixed pose enhances the artificiality of the image (the actor poses with his left arm on his hips, while the right hand holds the hilt of the sword, whose point touches the ground), Cameron's shot of Warder, focusing on his upper body, emphasises King Arthur's humanity. The right hand that clutches the sword, before Arthur orders Sir Bedivere to throw it into the lake,

symbolises the king's attachment to the mythical object. Furthermore, his eyes do not look directly at the camera, but to a point in the distance, accentuating his meditative state of mind.

Figura 57 - *The Passing of King Arthur* (1874), Julia Margaret Cameron



The study of Cameron's medievalist photographs in comparison to Laroche's photographic record of Kean's *Richard II* indicates a move in mid-century photography away from the objectivity of the stereoscope in its infancy towards a more artistic engagement with the possibilities created by the camera. As Cameron puts it in her autobiography *Annals of my Glass House*, "I longed to arrest all beauty that came before me" (48). While Kean sought to arrest time, Cameron aimed at framing beauty. Although the medieval past served as locus for both Kean and Cameron, Kean recreated it with minute historical accuracy, whereas Cameron

focused on the character's subjectivity, relegating costume and setting to mere accessories. Had Cameron chosen to depict Shakespeare's *Richard II*, perhaps she would have given priority to the character's pathos – the play's greatest accomplishment, according to Hazlitt – instead of to the details of his armour, dress, throne hall or heraldry. Finally, Cameron's Shakespearean and medievalist photographs indicate a shift towards subjectivity and interiority that mirrors the turn taken by Shakespearean illustrations at the turn of the nineteenth century, as I have explored in Chapter 4. The depiction of general themes of the play with characters dressed in contemporary dress and depicted in fixed poses, such as Boitard's engraving for Rowe's 1709 edition of Shakespeare's works, gave way to representations of moments of the character's meditation, such as Fuseli's depiction of Richard in his cell at Pomfret Castle for Chalmer's 1805 edition.

7.7 Conclusion

During Charles Kean's management of the Princess's Theatre from 1850 to 1859, he staged revivals of Shakespeare's historical plays that would mark the history of Victorian theatre. Placed within a tradition of antiquarianism and popular extravagant entertainment, Kean drew from the two apparently opposing practices to offer London playgoers a combination of entertainment and instruction. Instead of completely rejecting the conventions of popular entertainment, such as the inclusion of music, the use of stage effects and pictorial illustration, Kean adapted them in order to convey historical knowledge to a broader audience and to elevate the prestige of the theatrical business. The period's attraction to the visual image, exemplified by the increasing adornment of the stage, illustrated editions of Shakespeare's plays, illustrated periodicals, illustrated novels, and the rise of the photograph, points to a deeper engagement with material culture and, consequently, with material vestiges of the past. While old artefacts convey a sense of unity with the past – by means of the object that withstood time –, the theatre *creates* a material past. Aided by the use of historically accurate scenery, costume, props and music, Kean adorned Shakespeare's words with pictorial effect. Despite the meticulous care with historical legitimation, Kean affirmed that above all the final piece should work as *theatre*. It could not lose sight of its objective to entertain the spectator, transporting

them to another reality within the constraint of the theatre's four walls, making them forget about the reality outside for as long as the play lasted.

Realism was the goal of Kean's theatrical projects, hence his connection with the Pre-Raphaelite movement in art. However, Kean's is not a dry realism, but one combined with imagination. It is the power of imagination that glues the pieces of historical knowledge together, creating a narrative that moves the audience. The pitfall of realism on stage is its excess to absurdity, in which painstaking details are added for the mere sake of realism. In this context, Kean positions himself in-between the two extremities: he does not use history as a mere backdrop to the story, and he is not either so extensively attentive to detail that it loses its purpose as art. In relation to acting, Kean moves away from the exaggerated caricatured acting of the previous century and towards a more naturalistic style.

Working a decade after Kean's managerial appointment at the Princess's Theatre, the photographer Julia Margaret Cameron extended as well as simultaneously subverted the connection between imagination and realism. Using the recent technology of photography, until then a medium intrinsically associated with an impartial and objective depiction of reality, Cameron depicted biblical, mythical and Shakespearean characters to explore beauty and feeling. Different from Laroche's photographic records of *Richard II*, with actors in costume and mainly in static poses, Cameron photographed regular people, transforming them into characters. She chose to depict moments of characters' interiority, prioritising the facial expressions and dismissing the setting and costume to accessories, being not fundamental to her impression of 'reality'. In this context, the shift from artificial posing to emphasis on the character's feelings in mid-nineteenth-century Shakespearean photography parallels a move from objectivity to subjectivity in Shakespearean illustrations at the turn of the nineteenth century.

In the theatre, Kean is the Victorian historical conjuror, making use of the magic of stagecraft to create an illusion of *seeing* the past alive and moving on stage. The uncanny incarnation of long gone characters haunts Kean's theatre, where the past becomes the audience's present. He drew from medieval as well as later sources that reinterpreted the medieval past to construct a living picture of fourteenth-century England in *Richard II*. The use of real drawbridges, rehearsed crowd scenes, accurate historical costume and music, and extensively researched sets are the elements of Kean's spell with which he summons the past back to life.

Mesmerised by the spectacle of the scenes, the spectator would leave the theatre with a sense of enjoyment, but also with a feeling of having experienced something precious, a glimpse of what life was like in a bygone age. This escapism was newly urgent precisely because of a growing sense of distance and alienation from the past due to urbanisation, globalisation and industrialisation. In times of uncertainty, the nostalgia for the past becomes more pressing.

CONCLUSION

When a theatre performance is over, the curtains are drawn and the spectators go home, the scenes that were so vividly represented on stage remain as a shadow, a ghost in the viewer's mind. It is this ephemeral quality of theatre that renders the moments shared by audience, actors and playwright, so precious. The theatre, in fact, exists only in the moment of performance, only in the present time. Although each performance is indeed unique, the idea of the ephemeral nature of theatre is in a sense an illusion. That is because a key element of the theatrical activity is repetition – every night, for a specific number of nights, the same action is re-enacted on stage. The performance becomes the *here* and *now* every time the ensemble is put together, creating an illusion of *presentness* in a loop. For example, every time Shakespeare's *Richard II* is brought to the stage, King Richard's presentness comes into relation with the audience's presentness, while the stage functions as an illusionistic bridge that connects past and present. In fact, the stage works as a sort of time machine, absorbing the audience and trapping them momentarily in an illusion of time travel.

Artistic engagements with the past become more prominent as the nineteenth century unfolds, a consequence of the increasing awareness and understanding of the past as different from the present, and, therefore, as exotic and intriguing; this is also a consequence of the development of new technologies, such as the daguerreotype and the photograph in the 1830s, which initially promised an impartial and objective depiction of reality. However, the objectivity of photograph is also an illusion. The camera catches a possible impression of reality, inevitably filtered by the artist.

In this dissertation, I have taken Shakespeare's *Richard II* as the starting point for my analysis of the interactions between past and present in textual, theatrical and visual adaptations of the play. In c. 1595, Shakespeare returns to Richard II's reign, recreating fourteenth-century England for the Renaissance stage. In 1793, the painter James Northcote paints a canvas for the Boydell Shakespeare Gallery, materialising Richard and Bolingbroke's entrance in London, an event that is not directly shown but only described in Shakespeare's play. In 1815, Richard Wroughton adapts Shakespeare's text, rescuing the play from its relative obscurity; the play is in turn performed by Edmund Kean at Drury Lane in the same year; and

later re-created in 1850 and 1857, when William Charles Macready and Charles Kean revive *Richard II* at the Haymarket and the Princess's Theatre, respectively. The examples discussed in detail in this thesis illustrate the interconnections between stage, page and picture in different moments of time, adding new interpretative layers to the reconstruction of Richard II's medieval past. I have shown how these productions elucidate the complexities of negotiating the past in art. Edmund and Charles Kean and Macready engage with the medieval past *through* Shakespeare, inevitably modifying and historicising the Shakespearean text for their time and audience. The result is a constant flow of rupture and continuities.

At the beginning of this study, I set out to explore the theatre as a place for political awareness, discussion and interaction in the first half of the nineteenth century. As the Chorus in Shakespeare's *Henry V* emphasises, the audience plays a significant role in recreating the past on stage and drawing associations with their contemporary time. This process is interpretative and creative at its core, and therefore dynamic, since the topicalities triggered by the play reflect the concerns of the age.

The theatrical audience is composed of a group of private individuals who, together, form a public circle of influence. Within the theatrical public sphere, they can feel free to "kindly judge" the play, along with the historical people and events it recreates. This freedom is allowed by the assumed fictionality of the stage. The theatre's potential for existing as a space for political discussion led it to be considered "dangerous" by Early Modern anti-theatricals and the government. In the case of *Richard II*, the threat is even more forceful, since the play stages a precedent for deposing a monarch if they fail to perform their duties to the kingdom and its subjects. However, despite the anti-theatricals' efforts to refrain the popularity of the theatre, it remained as one of London's main entertainment options in the first half of the nineteenth century, adapting its political capacities according to the demands of the age.

The increasing political freedom in Parliament after the Great Reform Act of 1832 was reflected on stage. There was an increasing gap between "high" and "low" art, and between "legitimate" and "popular" theatre, still reminiscent of the 1737 Theatre Licensing Act, which conferred the monopoly of spoken drama to the two patent theatres, Drury Lane and Covent Garden. As a result, there was an emerging counterculture in the minor playhouses in London in response to the monopolisation

of drama. These theatres were not allowed to stage tragedy or comedy, and were thus forced to incorporate sub-genres such as melodrama, burlettas or pantomimes, or to include musical or dance interludes, in order to avoid censorship.

Shakespeare's plays were intrinsically connected with the canon of legitimate drama. His name conferred authority and the status of a tradition of learning. However, his works were not exclusively shown at Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Minor theatres reinterpreted and adapted Shakespeare for their own purposes. They even used Shakespeare ironically to satirise the pretensions of the legitimate Shakespearean culture of the patent theatres. The marginal and local counter-culture of London's Southside theatres provided a space for oppositional political debate and public meetings, even a locus for selling radical newspapers and pamphlets. It became a "counter-public sphere" (Newey, 'Shakespeare and the Wars of the Playbills' 15).

I have demonstrated how theatre in nineteenth-century London was essentially commercial and central to popular culture, following the growth of the middle class and the urbanisation of the city. The revival of Shakespeare's history plays at the time made use of the techniques of sensation drama, such as exciting plots and special stage effects, to recreate the historical past on stage, offering an illusion of bringing the past back to life. In this context, this thesis has argued that nineteenth-century historical theatre – aided by the development of new technologies unavailable in Shakespeare's lifetime – functions, as it were, as a magic spell, evoking the past and embodying it temporarily on the wooden stage.

The play *Richard II* reconstructs the reign of the fourteenth-century monarch for dramatic purposes, and it demonstrates how Shakespeare engages with and imagines the medieval past in Renaissance England. With this thesis, I have explained how the Shakespearean history play reconstructs history and embodies the English monarchy on stage, interacting with questions of politics and ideology. Furthermore, stage adaptors inevitably add new layers of political and ideological discourses every time a play is performed. Within this context, Shakespeare should not be seen as a historian, nor his plays understood as history texts. Nevertheless, Shakespeare has contributed significantly to the circulation of ideas about England's history, encouraging reflection on the process of historical reconstruction through art.

Given the recurrent and interchained nature of history, looking at the past can also function as a way to understand the present. Theatre was the medium through

which Shakespeare compared his present to the past, and expressed his conceptions of the period we now call the Middle Ages. The playwright's engagement with the Middle Ages is illustrated by the plays he wrote that are set in the medieval past, based on medieval sources, linked to medieval philosophical concerns, consonant with medieval stagecraft or dramatic devices, or associated with a medieval aesthetic. I have argued that especially the manner with which Shakespeare has *selected* and *adapted* instances of English medieval history for dramatic purposes sheds light on his particular understanding of the medieval past. As we have seen, Early Modern theatre did not show a concern with historical accuracy – that only became the case in the second half of the eighteenth century. By contrast, Elizabethan theatre was more directed towards language and gesture. Shakespeare's Middle Ages are mainly *told* rather than *shown*, therefore the medieval past is recreated verbally rather than visually. The nineteenth century would shift the priorities, giving greater emphasis on the visual than the verbal.

Shakespeare's conception of the medieval past is not as straightforward as Petrarch's Dark Ages. On the one hand, the playwright emphasises the grotesque violence of political plotting, murder and tyranny. On the other, he accentuates the familiarity of human feelings, such as love and mourning. Especially in the case of the history plays, they also activate in the audience a sense of tradition and belonging. Therefore, at the same time that Shakespeare points at the differences between his own time and Richard II's reign, he also underscores the continuity of history.

In my analysis of Shakespeare's engagement with the medieval past in *Richard II*, I have looked specifically at three elements: ritual and pageantry; the arbitrary power of kings; and nostalgia. Courtly pageantry creates an illusion of royal legitimacy. It also reinforces the significance of symbolic fictions within society, which in turn is illustrative of society's needs and longings. It emphasises both rupture *and* continuity, as exemplified by Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. Ritual is in essence a connection with "pasts", either factual or fabricated for specific purposes, which are successively formalised by repetition. In the theatre, rituals receive a new layer of symbolism and repetition with each new production. They become a double performance: a performance of a performance, which exposes the artificiality and arbitrariness of rituals.

Shakespeare's *Richard II* also establishes a dialogue with the medieval belief in the divine right of kings, in the monarch being an indisputable representative of God on Earth, and in the king's two bodies: body natural and body politic. Richard's tyranny results from such belief. However, Shakespeare does not depict the arbitrary power of kings neutrally, but as the source of evil and weakness in the play. In addition, the portrayal of Richard as a mortal body embodying the immortal body politic emphasises the performative nature of kingship. A king plays a part just like an actor on stage. During the scene of his de-coronation, Richard paradoxically uses his own authority to strip himself of such authority.

Finally, I have explored how *Richard II* looks back at an earlier past with nostalgia. The past can function as an alternative for the realities of the present – either as a form of escape from the harshness of contemporary life, or as a vantage point from which to admire the achievements of the present. Shakespeare's *Richard II* combines both approaches in an example of a double-voiced medievalism. On the one end, Shakespeare depicts the idealised past of Richard I and the Crusades, embodied by John of Gaunt and epitomised by his speech in 2.1. On the other hand, Richard II represents the grotesque and tyrannical Middle Ages.

This study has explored the cultural movement that Alice Chandler names the Medieval Revival, which refers to moments of renewed attention to Britain's roots and its Middle Ages. The medieval past was established as the origin of English identity in contrast to the Classical principles of Ancient Greece and Rome. As we have seen, in the nineteenth century the revival reached its peak, affecting different areas, such as literature, visual arts, architecture, philosophy, etc. The idea of England's medieval past and of medieval romance was significantly affected by Edmund Spenser's epic poem *The Faerie Queene* (1590-96). It led to a summoning of the Middle Ages as a time and space that offered opportunities for adventure and fantasy, inspiring the Romantic imagination. Chivalry became a prevalent element, as exemplified by Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1820) and its several adaptations to the theatre, and the 1839 Eglinton Tournament that aimed at creating an (albeit failed) illusion of living the past to both role-players and spectators.

Based on my study of nineteenth-century medievalism in England, I have identified eight main reasons for which artists, architects, politicians, readers, and others, would feel the desire to return to a medieval past:

1. As a response to rapid urbanisation and industrialisation. There was a nostalgic longing to a simpler way of life in opposition to the increasingly alienating and materialistic culture of modern life.

2. A connection with the past through architecture. Pugin's Gothic Revival fostered an illusion of the possibility of erecting medieval buildings in nineteenth-century England, forging a link with an idealised Catholic past. Other architectural projects created an imagined vision of the medieval past, such as Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill and Walter Scott's Abbotsford mansion.

3. A fascination for material vestiges of the past, hence the interest in nature and ruins.

4. A return to ideals of medieval heroism. Thomas Carlyle referred to the moral and unselfish man concerned with the welfare of society as a whole as the medieval ideal of heroism.

5. A return to faith and belief, not necessarily linked to a specific religion. It promoted good deeds and charity, not a bondage to rituals and doctrines.

6. An appreciation of loyalty and generosity in opposition to the egotism of modern society.

7. A devotion to tradition, conservatism and feudalism in contrast to modern liberalism and progress.

8. A longing for imagination and emotion, challenging the rationalism of modern thought.

These elements recur in nineteenth-century reimaginings of the medieval past, although not necessarily simultaneously. In each particular case, it is fundamental to investigate the connections between the historical, cultural and political contexts of the time, in order to assess the relevance of each one of these elements. Furthermore, the investigation of these aspects allows for a better understanding of the connections between art and society, and the tension between *contrast* and *continuity* that underscores the medievalist approach.

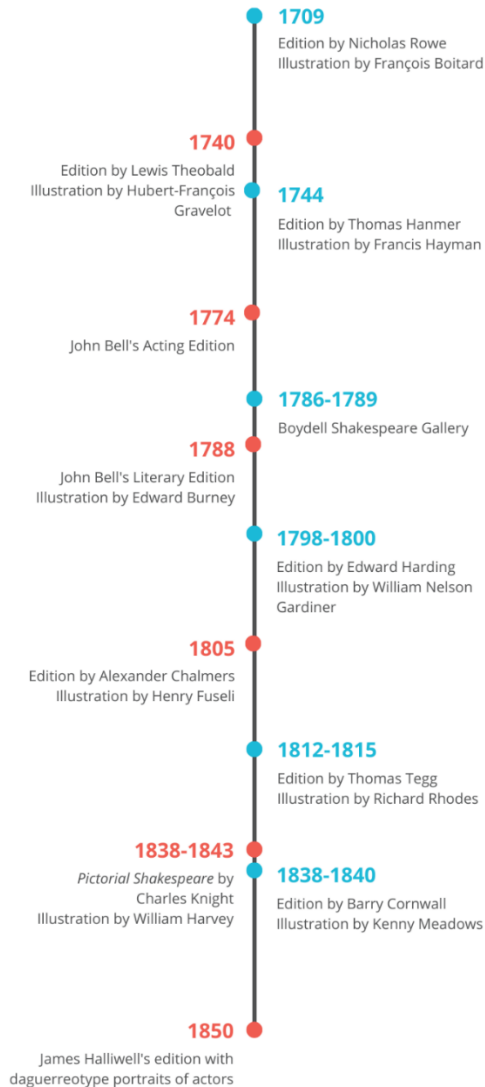
In his famous essay "Dreaming of the Middle Ages", the Italian medievalist Umberto Eco enumerates "ten little Middle Ages", referring to ten "types" of Middle Ages that permeated the late-20th-century imagination: The Middle Ages as pretext, the Middle Ages as the site of an ironical revisitation, the Middle Ages as a barbaric age, the Middle Ages of Romanticism, the Middle Ages of the *philosophia perennis* or

of neo-Thomism, the Middle Ages of national identities, the Middle Ages of Decadentism, the Middle Ages of philosophical reconstruction, the Middle Ages of occult philosophy, and the expectation of the new millennium regarding the Middle Ages (Eco 68–72). Different from Eco's listing of types of reconstructions of the medieval past, I have listed the reasons why there was a revival of interest in the Middle Ages in the first half of the nineteenth century, answering the overarching research question that guided this thesis.

This dissertation has also explored how illustrated editions of *Richard II* (since Rowe's in 1709 until Halliwell's daguerreotype actor portraits in 1850) (re-)interpreted and depicted the medieval past visually. The following timeline indicates the dates of these illustrated publications:

Figura 58 - Timeline of Illustrated Editions of Shakespeare's *Richard II*

Illustrated editions of Shakespeare's *Richard II*



The study of the prints has pointed out three main aspects of the illustrated Shakespeare tradition: an awareness of historical authenticity, an interest for depicting character's interiority, and a record of the change in theatrical conventions. Firstly, while early-eighteenth-century editions depict characters in contemporary eighteenth-century clothing, which created what we perceive as an anachronistic incongruence, Hanmer shows concern for historical accuracy in 1744, providing scholarly sources for Hayman's illustrations. Knight's *Pictorial Shakespeare* (1838-

1843), aimed at offering art as a means of instruction, includes extensive extra material and historical explanation. Secondly, Boitard emphasises the violent side of the medieval past in Rowe's edition, while Gravelot offers a more ambiguous representation in 1740, opposing light and darkness to contrast the fluidity and sensual texture of the Rococo style with a foreboding darkness. Cornwall's 1838-1840 edition takes another step in favouring imaginative reinterpretations through minimal expression, exploring emblematic images and symbols; and Harding in 1798-1800 and Chalmers in 1805 display a keener interest in depicting the interiority of Richard's character. Finally, the acting editions provide valuable insight into the changes in theatrical practices. Bell's Acting edition of 1774 includes portraits of actors in costume, based on the promptbooks from Drury Lane and Covent Garden. As the image of the actor Francis Aickin as Henry IV demonstrates, the actor embodying a medieval king wears contemporary eighteenth-century clothes. Halliwell's 1850 edition, the nineteenth-century counterpart, shows daguerreotype images of actors. In this edition, the use of historically plausible clothes and settings indicates that the past was understood as different from the actors' present.

As David Lowenthal describes in *The Past is a Foreign Country*, the past began to be regarded as different from the present only in the late eighteenth century (Lowenthal 4). The trajectory of illustrations of Shakespeare's *Richard II* confirms this statement. In addition, the study of the illustrations indicates a split of two concomitant paths at the turn of the nineteenth century: on the one hand, they became more concerned with the historical plausibility of the characters' and settings' representation; on the other, they embraced more emblematic depictions that relied on symbolic meaning. In either case, the past was depicted as a foreign country.

The theatrical study cases in this dissertation explore the expressions of medievalist thoughts through adaptations of Shakespeare's *Richard II* in London in the first half of the nineteenth century. Edmund Kean's, Macready's and Charles Kean's productions illustrate three major pillars of nineteenth-century theatre: the performance of emotions to foster parallels between the past represented on stage and contemporary political concerns; the authority of Shakespeare's name in conferring respectability and legitimacy to the theatrical business; and the combination of antiquarian knowledge with popular entertainment.

The first decades of the nineteenth century still felt the consequences of the failed radicalism of the French Revolution, suffocating the ideals of change and

freedom. In this context, the critic William Hazlitt felt that society at the time was too concerned with national issues, neglecting human individual emotions, which are the core of tragedy and comedy. Hazlitt disdained the rise of the “public man”, shaped by the generalising nature of the commercial press. Hence, he concluded that his time was not *dramatic*. In Hazlitt’s view, the theatre should function as a medium to explore human feelings, offering the playgoer the possibility to return to the local and individual, instead of the national and general. However, it is not possible to extricate the personal from the general. Moreover, the examination of human feelings, such as ambition or weakness, can contribute significantly to the understanding of broader political concerns. In this context, the theatre operates as a public space for the discussion of historical and contemporary events, raising the spectator’s awareness of participating in the public sphere.

In Hazlitt’s appreciation of *Richard II*, he emphasises the complexity of Shakespeare’s protagonist in its personification of *pathos*, of feeling combined with weakness. However, Edmund Kean acted the role differently in 1815 at Drury Lane, giving a performance full of energy and confidence. Instead of a character of *pathos*, Kean offered a character of *passion*, which greatly disappointed Hazlitt. The clash between a heroic and a weak king is what prompts the different political parallels between the Drury Lane stage and the post-Revolution political scenario. Kean used Wroughton’s textual adaptation of the play, which puts emphasis on the king’s display of authority and omits instances of Richard’s fickleness. In combination with Kean’s heroic portrayal of the king, his *Richard II* evokes the figure of Napoléon Bonaparte – seen as a tyrant by some, but as a hero by others, including Lord Byron. Richard’s deposition on stage would recall Napoléon’s recent deposition before his exile in 1814, a topic that regained attention in February 1815, when Bonaparte escaped from his confinement on the island of Elba, just weeks before Kean’s production. Napoléon’s deposition is thus mirrored on the Drury Lane stage, and the embodiment of Napoléon by Kean (advanced by earlier comparisons between the actor and the French military leader in contemporary print) raises at least two possible interpretations: One, that Richard’s deposition is a disappointment, representing the yielding of Napoleonic radicalism and a retrograde return to monarchy. The other possibility, the very opposite, reads Richard’s deposition as a victory, a celebration of monarchy over revolution, since Bolingbroke carries on the immortal body politic. However, Bolingbroke’s awareness of wrongdoing and

repentance at the end of Wroughton's adaptation undermines the triumph of the crown.

Edmund Kean reconstructs the Middle Ages in *Richard II*, reimagining the medieval past as a locus for feeling and emotion, an association already explored by Gothic writers in the 1790s. Kean uses costume and royal regalia to emphasise Richard's authority and his belief in the divine right of kings, which is challenged by Bolingbroke. However, the reconstruction of the past does not take centre stage in this production, since the Middle Ages are recreated rather as a mythical than as a historical site. The medieval past is conceived as a background to explore the inherent *gusto* of the Shakespearean play. Nevertheless, my analysis has demonstrated that the study of emotions can also contribute to the understanding of political parallels between the stage and the world.

Thirty-five years afterwards, Macready staged *Richard II* at the Haymarket as part of his farewell season to the stage in December 1850. This production offered a different approach to Shakespeare's *Richard II* and its depiction of medieval royal power. Contrary to the Romantic appreciation of the character's *pathos*, Victorians reassessed Richard as a morally flawed character. His punishment is thus justified by his disloyalty both to God, who anointed him king, and to his subjects. This dissertation has shown how Macready dedicated his career to establishing a National Theatre, repositioning the actor as a gentleman in Victorian society. In the London theatrical scene post-1843 Theatre Regulation Act, Macready used Shakespeare's name to legitimise his project, reinstating Shakespeare's original text and rejecting previously popular textual adaptations of the play. Furthermore, he omitted religious allusions and references to sex, infidelity, violence or any morally inappropriate content, as a way to reinforce the integrity and morality of the theatrical business. In this manner, the theatre could be regarded as a safe and moral public space, where entertainment is combined with instruction.

The case study of Macready's *Richard II* has demonstrated how the actor-manager used history to represent Shakespeare, his focus being on the Shakespearean text. The historically authentic sets and costume worked as mere decorations, accessory to Shakespeare's poetics. In addition, the visual representation of the Middle Ages on stage benefited from the new possibilities and technologies from early-Victorian stagecraft, but without sacrificing the dramatic text at the expense of pictorial extravagance. Lastly, Macready went beyond the static

pictorial tradition of dioramas and *tableaux vivants*, exploring voice and action to enhance the illusionistic capability of the stage, heightening the experience of lived history.

Cassius and Titinius are described as being “the last of the Romans” in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, for standing as the last noblemen true to the principles of the Roman Republic. Similarly, contemporary periodicals referred to Macready as “the last of the Romans”, the last tragedian of a generation to remain true to Shakespeare’s principles. However, that is not necessarily the case, as Charles Kean’s management at the Princess’s Theatre from 1850 to 1859 exemplifies. Similar to Macready, Kean also strove to confer respectability and seriousness to the theatrical trade. However, unlike Macready, Kean used Shakespeare to represent history. His focus was thus on the materialisation of the past on stage, which could be brought to life with every production.

According to *The Era* of 12 April 1857, Charles Kean earned the merit of rendering “the stage a faithful mirror of the past”. His project encompassed a combination of Victorian antiquarianism and popular extravagant entertainment. However, instead of completely rejecting the latter, Kean explored the strategies, techniques and potentialities of popular theatre to convey historical knowledge to a broader audience and elevate the prestige of the theatrical business, especially outside the patent theatres. Kean’s *Richard II* creates sets, costume, props and *mise-en-scène* based on historical research and on previous illustrations of the play, building a connection between stage, page and picture, with minute attention to detail in order to convey realism. Kean’s realism is not dry, but aided by imagination. It is, in fact, imagination that helps to make sense and create a cohesive narrative out of historical facts.

Finally, Charles Kean’s *Richard II* showcases the Mid-Victorian fascination with the visual image, also expressed in illustrated editions of Shakespeare, illustrated periodicals, illustrated novels, and exemplified by the increasing adornment of the stage and the rise of the photograph. These aspects point to a deeper engagement with material culture and material vestiges of the past, grounded on the desire to *see* and *experience* the past. In this sense, the theatre becomes a powerful tool, since it *creates* a material past. The physicality of the past is decisive for offering an illusion of seeing the past alive and moving on stage. It is, also, an escapist illusion, which allows the spectator to forget temporarily their own reality and

find another – and, perhaps, better – home in the past. Especially in moments of intense change and uncertainty, a nostalgic longing for the past becomes more urgent.

The deposition scene in Shakespeare's play poetically translates the paradoxical simultaneity of transience and permanence in performances of history plays. Embodied by an actor on stage, the king is endlessly deposed, murdered and revived at another production. As we bid farewell to Richard at Drury Lane in 1815, the king returns to the Haymarket in 1850, and is revived again on the Princess's stage in 1857, each time with a new conception, linked to the concerns and aspirations of the age. It is thus but a temporary parting. Shakespeare's text connects the present with different layers of pasts, offering the spectator a portal to different versions of the Middle Ages. As I have argued in this dissertation, the paradoxical simultaneity of rupture and continuity, and of realism and idealism, is the core of mid-nineteenth-century engagements with Shakespeare's pasts on stage, page or picture.

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SUMMARY IN DUTCH

In dit proefschrift neem ik *Richard II* van Shakespeare als uitgangspunt voor mijn analyse van de interacties tussen heden en verleden in tekstuele, theatrale en visuele bewerkingen van het stuk. Mijn doel is om te onderzoeken hoe het middeleeuwse verleden werd herschapen op het negentiende-eeuwse Londense toneel in drie producties van het stuk: door Edmund Kean in Drury Lane in 1815, door William Charles Macready in de Haymarket in 1850, en door Charles Kean in het theater Princess's Theatre in 1857. Dit proefschrift laat zien hoe deze producties de complexiteit van het onderhandelen over het verleden in de kunst verhelderen.

Edmund Kean enceneerde de afzetting van Richard II in de nasleep van Napoleon Bonaparte's afzetting en verbanning uit Elba, slechts enkele weken voor Keans productie. De afzetting van Napoleon wordt dus weerspiegeld op het podium van Drury Lane, en de belichaming van Napoleon door Kean roept tegelijkertijd een teleurstelling op over het falen van radicalisme en een viering van de monarchie.

In 1850, in tegenstelling tot de romantische waardering van het pathos van het personage, beoordeelden Victorianen Richard II opnieuw als een moreel gebrekkig personage. Zijn straf wordt dus gerechtvaardigd door zijn ontrouw zowel aan God, die hem tot koning heeft gezalfd, als aan zijn onderdanen. In deze context gebruikte Macready Shakespeare om zijn project te legitimeren om de status van het theatrale bedrijf te verhogen, waarbij de geschiedenis als achtergrond werd gebruikt om Shakespeare te vertegenwoordigen.

Uiteindelijk, in 1857, combineerde Charles Kean het Victoriaanse antiquarisme en de populaire extravagante cultuur om het publiek instructie en amusement te bieden. Kean gebruikt toneelkunst en verbeeldingskracht die gebaseerd zijn op uitgebreid historisch onderzoek om de toeschouwer een ervaring te bieden van het zien en beleven van het verleden.

Deze drie producties tonen verschillende manieren waarop theater zich met de middeleeuwse wereld bezighoudt via Shakespeare, die gebaseerd is op de paradoxale gelijktijdigheid van breuk en continuïteit, en van realisme en idealisme.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Fernanda Korovsky Moura was born in 1990 in São Bento do Sul, Brazil, where she graduated in Advertising and Communication at Positivo University in 2011, and in English and Portuguese Languages and Literatures at the Technological Federal University of Paraná in 2014. Subsequently, she began her studies at the Federal University of Santa Catarina, where she obtained her Master's degree in English Linguistic and Literary Studies in 2016. She completed her degree in one and a half years, and taught a course on Literature and Cinema under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Serravalle de Sá. In 2016, she was awarded the LExS Platinum Award for her exceptional academic record, allowing her to follow the Research Master's track in Literary Studies at Leiden University, which she completed within one year *cum laude*.

In 2018, Moura began her doctoral research at the Federal University of Santa Catarina in co-tutelle with Leiden University. She completed the required credits in courses and academic events under the supervision of Prof. Dr. José Roberto O'Shea. In January 2020, she moved to the Netherlands to complete the second half of her PhD research on medievalisms in 19th-century London productions of Shakespeare's *Richard II* under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Wim van Anrooij and Dr. Michael Newton at Leiden University. During the period between January 2020 and December 2022 she taught several courses in British, American and Brazilian Literature, and Academic Writing at Leiden University. She was also a member of the LUCAS PhD Council and of the organising committee of the LUCAS Graduate Conference 2024.