

**“But I Say ‘Tis True”: Marriage, Writing, and Truth in
Shakespeare’s *King John***

By

Graham Simon Grafton

**A thesis
submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of**

MASTER OF ARTS

**Department of English
University of Manitoba
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Abstract

Shakespeare's history plays often use images of family trees to describe the relationship between a king and his son or heir. These images represent a certain conception of how truth moves from one age to another. In *King John*, Shakespeare abandons these images and considers alternative conceptions of how truth can move from age to age. Marriage and writing become the focus of the play and how the two institutions create and maintain truth. These discoveries lead Shakespeare away from truth as fact and the genre of history into the genres of tragedy and romance where he is not hindered by factual truth.

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Chapter One: "The Sequence of Posterity"

Othello: When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
 Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,
 (Othello, V.ii.341-42¹)

Richard [to Queen]: In winter's tedious nights sit by the fire
 With good old folks and let them tell [thee] tales
 Of woeful ages long ago betid;
 And ere thou bid good night, to quite their griefs,
 Tell thou the lamentable tale of me,
 (Richard II, V.i.40-44)

King John lies dead and his son Henry, soon to be king, questions "What surety of the world, what hope, what stay, / When this was now a king, and now is clay?" (King John, V.vii.68-69). Henry's presence on stage begins to answer his question: heirs provide what Henry calls a "hope" or a "stay," but Othello's and Richard's last requests also offer an answer to the young prince's question. Story affords another "surety" or continuity between past and present. In Shakespeare's histories, however, conflicts often arise around heirs and the stories they use to defend their titles. The focus of these struggles is often on the word "true."

¹ All quotations from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 1st ed. (Ed. G. Blakemore Evans. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), except for *King John: King John* (Ed. A. R. Braunmuller. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989).

Othello's and Richard's petitions at first may appear similar, but the men expect contradictory responses from their audiences. These different responses are a result of their requests relying on conflicting forms of truth. Othello's command "nothing extenuate" demands factual accuracy when his listeners later relate his "unlucky deeds." Richard also insists on truth from his audience, but not necessarily the factual or concrete truth Othello requires. Instead, Richard provides a framework in which his listeners must tell his tale: the tale must be "lamentable." Richard charges his Queen to be true to his conception of his life. Unlike Othello, Richard does not necessarily ask for factual accuracy (Othello's "nothing extenuate"), only that the tale be "lamentable." Richard uses a sense of true that implies truth as principle, not necessarily truth as fact. These two aspects of "a true tale" complicate Hamlet's last request of Horatio:

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity a while,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story.

(Hamlet, V.ii.346-49)

Hamlet's simple request, "To tell my story," becomes increasingly complicated if Horatio considers the different ways he could tell a true story: Othello and Richard present two very different alternatives.

In *King John*, England and France struggle over the identity of England's true king, yet both support a true king depending on the definition of "true." France's ambassador Chatillon addresses his opening speech to John, whom he sees as "the majesty, / The borrowed majesty, of England"(I.i.3-4). John later defends his title, referring to his "strong possession" and his "right"(I.i.39), which draws Eleanor's quick correction: "Your strong possession much more than your right"(I.i.40); but imagine briefly that Horatio was telling the story of John's life and not Hamlet's. John would be a "true king" if Horatio were to speak of John, in Othello's words, "as I am." Horatio could not deny that John was a true, in the sense of a fact, king of England.

Another true king exists in *King John* however, one who possesses Richard's sense of truth. A form of truth, primogeniture, dictates that Arthur is England's true king even though he may never be England's king in fact. Arthur firmly reveals his relationship with the late King of England, Richard I, when thanking the Duke of Austria: "God shall forgive you Coeur-de-Lion's death / The rather that you give his offspring life"(II.i.12-13). Arthur is Richard's nephew, not son, but Shakespeare blurs this distinction, presenting Arthur as Richard's heir. John and Arthur possess separate forms of truth and this difference assumes great importance for a storyteller

(Shakespeare perhaps) attempting to relate the story, especially the truth, of John's reign.

Othello, Richard, and Hamlet all demonstrate a concern with story, but really this interest is with the notion of "posterity." Posterity involves the relationship between past, present, and future, and in Shakespeare's histories takes two basic meanings: an individual's offspring, and, more broadly, the times following an event. King Philip chastises Arthur's "unnatural uncle, English John," defining one meaning of the word:

But thou from loving England art so far
That thou hast underwrought his lawful king,
Cut off the sequence of posterity,
Outfaced infant state, and done a rape
Upon the maiden virtue of the crown.
(II.i.94-98)

Philip sees the crown descending from father to son in a predetermined sequence. King Henry IV demonstrates a similar impression of kingship when, concerning his crown, he assures his son, "To thee it shall descend with better quiet" (2 Henry IV, IV.v.187). Richard III provides the other variation in the meaning of the word. Philip's attack on John resembles a discussion between Prince Edward and the Duke of Buckingham:

Prince Ed. I do not like the Tower, of any place.
Did Julius Caesar build that place, my lord?
Buckingham He did, my gracious lord, begin that place,
Which since, succeeding ages have re-edified.
Prince Ed. Is it upon record, or else reported
Successively from age to age, he built it?

Buckingham Upon record, my gracious lord.
Prince Ed. But say, my lord, it were not registered,
 Methinks the truth should live from age to age,
 As 'twere retailed to all posterity,
 Even to the general ending day.

(III.i.68-78)

Prince Edward and King Philip have similar conceptions of the "truth." Edward believes "the truth should live from age to age" resembling Philip's belief that kingship forms a sequence moving from father to son. Both believe, or wish to believe, that truth moves from age to age without human intervention. Their understandings of posterity help answer Prince Henry's questions "what surety of the world, what hope, what stay?": "The sequence of posterity," or heirs, and "retail'd to all posterity," or story, link past, present, and future. Edward's "methinks the truth should live" however, leads to questions about how this "sequence" is formed.

Actions in *Richard III* and *King John* demonstrate that the truth does not live from age to age according to the visions of King Philip or Prince Edward. Edward questions how the story of Caesar's tower reached his time, resembling Philip's concern about how John became king: "How comes it then that thou art called a king?" (II.i.107), Philip asks. Edward speaks of a factual truth ("Did Julius Caesar build that place?"), while Philip speaks of a principle; but the Bastard's simple eulogy over Arthur's body punctuates the death of Philip's "sequence of

posterity": "From forth this morsel of dead royalty, / The life, the right, and truth of all this realm / Is fled to heaven"(IV.iii.143-45). By "truth," the Bastard certainly does not mean that "facts" have left the realm. Instead, he views Arthur's death as signifying the death of a different type of truth, in this case, truth as principle. Edward's innocent question ("Did Julius Caesar build that place?") clearly demonstrates that factual truth does not live from age to age of its own accord either.

Arthur's death emphasizes the temporary reality of the body, while Edward's "methinks" stresses the passing nature of story. If truth does not live from "age to age," then institutions must exist to determine true from false. "True from false" may not be the correct phrase, instead "legitimate from illegitimate" may be more accurate. Accusing a successor of bastardy is a favorite tactic among competing heirs in Shakespeare's histories:² the question is not so much truth as legitimacy. Philip Faulconbridge claims "I am I, howe'er I was begot," but he must choose between two possible "begettings": one legitimate, the other illegitimate. His brother Robert similarly declares "truth is truth," but two possible truths also exist in Shakespeare's

² In Gloucester's struggles to become king, he uses this manoeuvre to discredit his closest competitors for the throne: "Infer the bastardy of Edward's children. / ... / Yet touch this sparingly, as 'twere far off, / Because, my lord, you know my mother lives"(Richard III, III.v.75, 93-94).

histories: again, one legitimate and the other illegitimate. Heirs and stories compete and many claim truth, but only some are legitimate.

This thesis will examine the institutions available in Shakespeare's histories that allow characters to determine legitimate from illegitimate heirs, which may then become a metaphor for how characters determine legitimate from illegitimate stories.

Chapter Two: "I am I"

King John struggles with the problem of who should rule as the rightful king of England. Bolingbroke overthrows Richard II, Henry IV must contend with the Percies, Henry V with their descendants, Henry VI with the Duke of York, while King John defends his throne against France: all of these actions clearly demonstrate that struggles over kingship are endemic to Shakespeare's histories. In *King John*, the Citizen of Angiers summarizes this dilemma: "he that proves king, / To him will we prove loyal"(II.i.270-71). The Citizen demands proof, but he does not clarify what he will accept as proof. He leaves unanswered the question: how do Shakespeare's historical characters decide who is England's true king, or, on what grounds do they base truth?

Shakespeare's early histories often use the image of a family tree when discussing England's true king. *King John* however, is Shakespeare's only history play that abandons the image of the family tree. In *King John*, Shakespeare considers what institutions allow truth, both as fact and principle, to move from age to age. This chapter will look at images of family trees in Shakespeare's first and second tetralogies and stress the absence of these images in *King John*. Shakespeare rejects

these images and explores what institutions create legitimate and illegitimate children, or what institutions discriminate between different types of truth.

In *King John*, characters open new possibilities for the roles of women by re-imagining the relationships between mothers and children. The French Count Melun associates heaven or the afterlife with truth: "Why should I then be false, since it is true / That I must die here and live hence by truth?" (V.iv.28-29). Melun's question echoes the Bastard's earlier response to allegations surrounding his paternity: "But for the certain knowledge of that truth / I put you o'er to heaven and to my mother" (I.i.61-62). Not surprisingly, both men connect heaven and truth, but of greater importance, the Bastard associates his mother with "that certain truth": his father's identity. The Bastard's beliefs represent a fundamental revision of women's roles in Shakespeare's history writing.

In Shakespeare's first tetralogy (1-3 *Henry VI*, and *Richard III*) recurring patterns of imagery often deny women active involvement in creating children. Wolfgang Clemen's study *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery* argues: "In Shakespeare, an image often points beyond the scene in which it stands to preceding or following acts; it almost always has reference to the whole of the play. It appears as a cell in the organism of the play, linked with it in many ways" (3). An image can also

point beyond the play "in which it stands" however, to preceding or following plays. Unlike Clemen, I will not focus on the development of an image, but instead on where certain images do and do not occur to demonstrate changing conceptions of women.

In *The First Part of Henry VI*, Warwick uses an image that excludes mothers from the relationship between a father and a son. He connects the Duke of Suffolk with Edward III, passing over any involvement by a woman: "His [Suffolk's] grandfather was Lionel Duke of Clarence, / Third son to the third Edward, King of England. / *Spring* crestless yeoman from so deep a root?" (II.iv.83-85, emphasis added). Richard of Gloucester uses similar imagery and Warwick's exact word to describe his brother Edward's body in *The Third Part of Henry VI*: "Would he were wasted, marrow, bones, and all, / That from his loins no hopeful branch may *spring*, / To cross me from the golden time I look for" (III.ii.125-27, emphasis added). Warwick's and Gloucester's images are examples of what Phyllis Rackin calls "patriarchal history": "Patriarchal history is designed to construct a verbal substitute for the visible physical connection between a mother and her children, to authenticate the relationships between fathers and sons and to suppress and supplant the role of the mother" ("Anti-Historians," 337) Rackin writes. Richard further "suppresses and supplants" women as he envisions the many branches between himself and "the golden time" he looks for:

"Clarence, Henry, and his son young Edward, / And all the unlook'd-for issue of their bodies"(3 Henry VI, III.ii.130-31) must be removed if he is to be king. Richard imagines children "issuing" or "springing" from a male, and his harsh treatment of Clifford's body after the Battle of Towton emphasizes not only his brutal nature, but a pattern of imagery used throughout Shakespeare's histories:

Revoke that doom of mercy, for 'tis Clifford,
Who, not contented that he lopp'd the branch,
In hewing Rutland when his leaves put forth,
But set his murth'ring knife unto the root
From whence that tender spray did sweetly spring,
I mean our princely father, Duke of York.
(3 Henry VI, II.vi.46-51)

Richard will hack and hew the many branches that stand in his path, and his use of imagery continues what Mary Beth Rose calls a "long tradition" stretching to Greek and Biblical story: "As myths of Athena popping out of Zeus' head and Eve emerging from Adam's side remind us, Western culture includes a long tradition of reluctance to accept the obvious"(299). "The obvious" refers to women's roles in procreation and Shakespeare's male characters consistently marginalize these roles.

Shakespeare's second tetralogy (*Richard II*, 1-2 *Henry IV*, and *Henry V*) employs imagery that follows the patterns of the first and imagines sons springing from fathers. Several images from the opening scenes of *Richard II* reinforce patterns of imagery first developed in the early histories, further excluding

women from an active hand in the creation of sons. John of Gaunt's sister-in-law, the Duchess of Gloucester, chastises Gaunt for not avenging the death of his brother Woodstock:

Finds brotherhood in thee no sharper spur?
Hath love in thy cold blood no living fire?
Edward's seven sons, whereof thyself art one,
Were as seven vials of his sacred blood,
Of seven fair branches springing from one root.
(I.ii.9-13)

Gaunt's son Bolingbroke reinforces the Duchess's imagery after his banishment from England: "Then England's ground, farewell, sweet soil, adieu; / My mother, and my nurse, that bears me yet!" (I.iii.306-07). John of Gaunt's death will bring Bolingbroke home and lead to the fall of Richard II, but before Gaunt dies he continues a long pattern of imagery begun in *The First Part of Henry VI*: "This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England, / This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings" (II.i.50-51). The final effect of these images removes mothers from the stage: Henry V's mother never appears on stage and barely in reference.

Henry V contains several references to Henry's genealogy, but all exclude his mother.¹ The French King warns his lords to fear Henry because Henry "is a stem / Of that victorious

¹ Hal mentions his mother once in *1 Henry IV*: "Give him as much as will make him a / royal man, and send him back again to my mother" (*1 Henry IV*, II.iv.290-91): or, "get rid of him permanently" glosses *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Hal's mother never appears in the play, and had been dead for some time in factual history.

stock,"(II.iv.62-63) Edward III. Henry's ambassador Exeter also refers to Henry's ancestry to validate the threat Henry poses to the French:

He sends you this most memorable line,
 In every branch truly demonstrative;
 Willing you overlook this pedigree;
 And when you find him evenly deriv'd
 From his most famous of ancestors,
 Edward the Third ...

(II.iv.88-93)

Again, the family tree is the primary image. The second tetralogy is a world dominated by men, resulting in what Katherine Eggert calls a "near total relegation of women to marginalized roles"(79). The first contains warriors like Joan Pucelle and Queen Margaret, a "tiger's heart wrapp'd in a woman's hide,"(3 *Henry VI*, I.iv.137) but the Battle of Agincourt has none of these vibrant women; only Henry's "band of brothers"(IV.iii.60). In *Henry V*, Katherine serves merely as Henry's bride to guarantee peace between England and France. The image of the root, trunk, and branch confines women but also represents a particular conception of how truth moves from age to age.

Images of roots and branches suggest a continuity between past and present and a belief that truth streams from age to age in the manner that sap flows from a root to a branch. In *King John*, the King of France argues for such a continuity accusing John, "But thou from loving England art so far / That thou hast

underwrought his lawful king, / Cut off the sequence of posterity" (II.i.94-96). *Richard III's* Prince Edward anticipates Philip's use of posterity, applying the concept more generally. The young prince questions Buckingham about London Tower:

Prince. Is it upon record, or else reported
 Successively from age to age, [Caesar] built it?
Buck. Upon record, my gracious lord.
Prince. But say, my lord, it were not regist'red,
 Methinks the truth should live from age to age,
 As 'twere retail'd to all posterity
 Even to the general all ending day.
 (III.i.72-78)

The family tree imagery used so frequently in the history plays surrounding *King John* is a metaphor for Edward's and France's concept of "posterity": the belief that truth lives from age to age, or "springs" to follow Gloucester's expression. But if Edward's beliefs are correct (that truth "dies"), then institutions must exist to discriminate between different versions of truth. Between the two tetralogies² a lone history play stands that offers other possibilities in image and thought.

King Philip's "sequence of posterity" is the only example of what Phyllis Rackin calls a "verbal substitute" in *King John*. The words "root," "trunk," "branch," "leaf," and "tree" almost never appear in *King John*, which is striking considering the

² A. R. Braunmuller's Oxford edition can only "suggest" a date for *King John's* composition: "metrical, stylistic, and critical observations suggest that in Shakespeare's career *King John* follows such works as *Lucrece* and *Richard III*, and belongs to the period of *Romeo and Juliet* and, among the histories, *Richard II*" (15). I will assume that *King John* stands between Shakespeare's first and second tetralogies.

importance of these words and the images they create in plays like *The Third Part of Henry VI* and *Richard II*. Instead, the opening scenes of *King John* abandon these images and focus on mothers. Chatillon addresses his opening speech to "The borrowed majesty, of England here" (I.i.4), but John's mother Eleanor interjects, "A strange beginning - 'borrowed majesty'?" (I.i.5). John's gentle correction accentuates her importance at his court: "Silence, good mother; hear the embassy" (I.i.6).³ Early in the play, with John's power unquestionable, his use of "good mother" reveals to all Eleanor's status. Juliet Dusinberre touches upon the importance of Eleanor's brash interjection: "Chatillon's strange beginning ... is not so strange to the audience as Eleanor's intervention protesting against it" (41). John even views his crown as a joint possession and assures his mother, "Our strong possession and our right for us" (I.i.39, emphasis added), but is quickly corrected by Eleanor, "Your strong possession much more than your right, / Or else it must go wrong with you and me" (I.i.40-41, emphasis added). With the possible exception of Margaret in the *Henry VI* trilogy, no other woman has as much influence on an English king as Eleanor on King John.⁴

³ Louis the Dauphin offers a strong contrast with John. Louis commands "Women and fools, break off your conference" (II.i.150), ending a scolding match between Eleanor, Constance, Austria, and the Bastard.

⁴ John stumbles upon hearing of his mother's death: "What? Mother dead? / How wildly then walks my estate in France" (IV.ii.127-28), and never regains the vigour he showed before her death.

King John presents a vastly different world than that of *Henry V*, with which *John* has much in common.

King John and *Henry V* both begin with disputes over rightful claims to French provinces, yet no woman supports Henry or his French enemies in *Henry V*. When the Archbishop of Canterbury produces the French Law that bars Henry from the French throne, "*In terram Salicam mulieres ne [succedant]; / No woman shall succeed in Salique land*" (*Henry V*, I.i.38-39), he makes one of the few references to women in the opening scenes of *Henry V*. Henry does base his claim on descent through a female, but, unlike John, no female appears to support him. Eleanor's intervention would be more than "strange" in Henry's court, it would border on treason. Hostess Quickly serving at The Boar's Head is the only woman to appear in *Henry V* until Katherine and her gentlewoman Alice humorously mangle English in III.iv; and these three women have little impact on their courts. Males also dominate the French court of *Henry V* and no women appear to disrupt the men's debates, but the French court of *King John* contains a woman as powerful as Eleanor.

After Eleanor and Lady Faulconbridge enter with their sons, Constance and Arthur join the French King before Angiers to defend Arthur's claim. Arthur's dependence on his mother at

least equals John's,⁵ and the power of Constance emerges from her influence on the French king. Eleanor makes clear to John the true force behind the French threat:

Have I not ever said
How that ambitious Constance would not cease
Till she had kindled France and all the world
Upon the right and party of her son?⁶

(I.i.31-34)

Constance stirs the French King to battle and Eleanor, "An Ate"(II.i.63) according to Chatillon, fights alongside the English host; but the French battlefields of *Henry V* possess none of these vibrant women. John's tolerance of Eleanor's interjection "borrowed majesty" finds a counterpart in Constance's check of King Philip's hand before Angiers: "Stay for an answer to your embassy, / Lest unadvised you stain your swords with blood"(II.i.44-45, emphasis added). Eleanor and Constance correct and restrain their kings, actions unthinkable in *Henry V*, with the two women eventually meeting and upstaging their kings:

⁵ Richard III and Henry V have very different relationships with their mothers. Gloucester's mother curses: "O my accursed womb, the bed of death! / A cockatrice has thou hatch'd to the world"(*Richard III*, IV.i.53-54), while Henry V's mother never appears: only in *King John*, where women are so important, is such dependence possible.

⁶ Eleanor's warnings may seem fanciful, but Pandulph later produces the arguments that spur Louis's invasion of England:

For even the breath of what I mean to speak
Shall blow each dust, each straw, each little rub,
Out of the path which shall directly lead
Thy foot to England's throne.

(III.iv.127-130)

Constance's speech could also lead to Philip supporting Arthur's claim of the English throne.

Eleanor scolds young Arthur "There's a good mother, boy, that blots thy father"(II.i.132), prompting Constance's reply "There's a good grandam, boy, that would blot thee"(II.i.133). The women's actions have the colour of Iago's and Brabantio's street slanders rather than the decorum of royalty in the presence of their kings. Eleanor's and Constance's garrulousness may reveal weak French and English kings,⁷ but more importantly, I argue that their actions demonstrate the unique characterization of women in *King John*.

Constance again overshadows her king after Philip has agreed to the marriage of Louis to John's niece Blanche. Philip, with some degree of relief, stresses how little control he has over his subject: "Is not the Lady Constance in this troop? / I know she is not, for this match made up / Her presence would have interrupted much"(II.i.541-43). John and Philip cannot quiet Constance's and Eleanor's voices and the kings would have as much difficulty dismissing Juliet Dusingberre's evaluation of the play's first three acts: "What is clear from reading [*King John*] - and Deborah Warner's 1988 production reinforced this impression - is that up till the end of Act 3 the dramatic action is dominated by the women characters"(40). *King John* experiments

⁷ Gloucester and Winchester dominate Henry VI's appearance in *1 Henry VI*, leading to Henry's weak exclamation: "Pray, uncle Gloucester, mitigate this strife"(III.i.88). Gloucester's and Winchester's "strife" emphasizes Henry's weakness as a king, but Eleanor's and Constance's insults do not serve the same dramatic purpose.

with new conceptions of how children are created and therefore new conceptions of how truth is created: children do not "spring" from fathers and truth does not form a sequence that lives from age to age.

In *King John*, the Bastard never refers to a family tree; instead the arguments surrounding his heritage represent Shakespeare pondering what it means to be a true child. Phyllis Rackin argues that Lady Faulconbridge enters to reveal the identity of her son's father:

In Holinshed, Coeur-de-Lion recognizes his bastard son ... In the *Troublesome Raigne*, the Bastard guesses his true paternity even before he asks his mother. Only in Shakespeare is [the Bastard] required to receive his paternity from the hands of women.

("Anti-Historians," 342)

The Bastard does not receive his "true" paternity from female hands however because he possesses two true fathers. His factual father is Richard I while Sir Robert is his true father by marriage: both fathers are true. The Bastard does question his mother "let me know my father" (I.i.249), but by this point he has already named himself "Sir Richard" (I.i.185) and "disclaimed Sir Robert and [his] land" (I.i.247).

What Rackin fails to see is that the Bastard possesses two true paternities, one legitimate, the other illegitimate. John declares the Bastard Sir Robert's "legitimate" (I.i.116) son, yet he also eyes the Bastard and proclaims: "Mine eye hath well

examined his parts / And finds them perfect Richard"(I.i.89-90). The Bastard now lies caught between two forms of truth and must decide if he will follow his factual father (Richard I) or his father by principle (Sir Robert). In this sense, he must also struggle with the difficulty of telling a true tale. Both Horatio and the Bastard must navigate between variations in the meaning of true. Eleanor summarizes the Bastard's difficult choice:

Whether hadst thou rather — be a Faulconbridge
And like thy brother to enjoy thy land,
Or the reputed son of Coeur-de-Lion,
Lord of thy presence, and no land beside?
(I.i.134-37)

The Bastard handles the situation with his usual aplomb, choosing the repute of Coeur-de-Lion. He then greets his grandmother Eleanor: "Madam, by chance but not by truth, what though?"(I.i.169). Robert C. Jones clarifies the Bastard's statement: "As Cordelion's illegitimate son, he is actually (truly) Elinor's grandson, but is not rightly (truly) so"(398).

The Bastard has little understanding of his position however. He boldly declares "I am I, howe'er I was begot"(I.i.175). The Bastard's confidence in himself and how he was "begot" does not apply to his brother's heritage however: "Brother adieu. Good fortune come to thee, / For thou was got in the way of honesty"(I.i.180-81). The Bastard acknowledges that some "gettings" or "creations" are honest and that some therefore

are dishonest,⁸ although both may be true. This encounter is a radical departure from the genealogical claims that are so common in the first and second tetralogies, and represent Shakespeare struggling with how truth moves from age to age.

Marriage creates criteria that allow Shakespeare's characters to differentiate between a legitimate and an illegitimate child, or, to differentiate between variations in the meaning of true. Robert Lane emphasizes this role of marriage in Shakespeare's age:

The *narrative* of continuous *bloodline* was premised on the preservation and transmission of lineage through legally valid marriages. Birth outside that context was universally regarded as interrupting that line.
("Sequence of Posterity," 467)

Lane makes an interesting connection for the purposes of this paper: he connects narrative and bloodline, or story and birth. Lane argues that bloodlines are preserved and transmitted "through legally valid marriages," not the images of roots, trunks, and branches so often used in Shakespeare's histories. But what about narratives themselves? What preserves and transmits narratives from age to age?

In *King John*, Blanche's marriage produces an image that distills the tension often present in Shakespearean marriage.

⁸ Peter Hyland writes in "Legitimacy in Interpretation: The Bastard Voice in *Troilus and Cressida*": "to deny legitimacy to another is a means of asserting one's own legitimacy, for what is illegitimate cannot define itself or exist of itself, since it is defined by and in relation to what is legitimate" (4).

Lady Blanche follows, for reasons the play does not explain, the English forces to France only to become Louis the Dauphin's bride. After her marriage, King John and France return to their warring ways and Blanche must decide if her loyalties lie with her king or her husband. Her lament introduces an image that will appear again and again in Shakespeare's future work:

Which is the side that I must go withal?
 I am with both, each army hath a hand,
 And in their rage, I having hold of both,
 They whirl asunder and dismember.
 Husband, I cannot pray that thou mayst win;
 Uncle, I needs must pray that thou mayst lose;
 Father, I may not wish for thy fortune thine;
 Grandam, I will not wish thy wishes thrive:
 Whoever wins, on that side shall I lose;
 Assured loss before the match be play'd.
 (III.i.327-36)

Blanche resembles none of Shakespeare's previous female characters, but her words are echoed by several who follow her. Henry V's future bride Katherine strangely echoes Blanche's words: "Is it possible dat I should love the ennemie of France?" (V.ii.170). Octavia almost repeats Blanche's words as she watches her husband Antony and her brother Ocatavius fall to arms:

A more unhappy lady,
 If this division chance, ne'er stood between,
 Praying for both parts.
 The good gods will mock me presently,
 When I shall pray, "O, bless my lord and husband!"
 Undo that prayer, by crying out as loud,
 "O, bless my brother!" Husband win, win brother,
 Prays, and destroys the prayer, no midway

'Twixt these extremes at all.⁹

(*Antony and Cleopatra*, III.iv.12-20)

Despite the novelty of Blanche's "Which is the side that I must go withal?" and how her sentiment surfaces in Shakespeare's later work, she has drawn little serious critical interest.

Phyllis Rackin argues that Blanche stands "in the archetypally feminine role of a medium of exchange between men" ("Patriarchal History," 82), and in *Stages of History* she writes "Blanche is cast in the traditional feminine mold" (180). William H. Matchett anticipates Rackin's views. He believes that Blanche "is hardly more in this scene [III.i] than a formalised image of the dilemma of loyalties" (241). It may, however, be more fruitful to consider Blanche's "dilemma of loyalties" as a metaphor.

Following Robert Lanes's earlier connection of narrative and bloodline, if marriage transmits bloodline, how might marriage be metaphorically connected to the transmission of narrative?

Marriage distinguishes between different types of truth with respect to children, and writing distinguishes between different types of truth with respect to narrative or story. King Philip asks John, "How comes it then that thou art called a king?" (II.i.107). John can only answer with another question:

⁹ In his edition of *Othello*, E. A. J. Honigmann argues "[in *Othello*] Shakespeare divided himself between hero and villain ... For the Iago-Othello relationship is one of a series ... and represents something deeply embedded in the dramatist" (105-06). Following Honigmann's argument, the divided woman represents something "deeply embedded in the dramatist," and Blanche is the first "one of a series."

"From whom hast thou this great commission, France, / To draw my answer from thy articles?"(II.i.110-11). John's avoidance of Philip's pointed question recalls Eleanor's "Your strong possession, much more than your right" and prompts the question "What does John possess?"

John obviously possesses the crown; in Shakespeare's histories the crown is tied to writing. John does not possess Arthur's "continuous bloodline" or what King Philip calls "the sequence of posterity." Instead, John possesses something more powerful than Arthur's "posterity." In Act V, John agonizes over the fever that will soon overcome him, revealing on what ground he bases his legitimacy: "I am a scribbled form, drawn with a pen / Upon a parchment, and against this fire / Do I shrink up"(V.vii.32-34). John's self-analysis, "I am a scribbled form," reveals the institution that determines the legitimacy of a story in Shakespeare's histories. I have argued that the history plays written before and after *King John* frequently use the image of the family to relate father and son; but characters in these plays also consider how to differentiate legitimate from illegitimate story.

When Prince Edward asks Buckingham the question "Is it upon record, or else reported?" (or, is the story written or spoken) he introduces the two main ways that knowledge can move from age to age. Edward also marks the line between illegitimate and

legitimate story in Shakespeare's histories: writing divides the legitimate story from the illegitimate tale. Scrivener in *Richard III* demonstrates the importance of written documents in Shakespeare's histories:

Here is the indictment of the good Lord Hastings,
Which in a set hand fairly is engross'd
That it may be to-day read o'er in St. Paul's.
And mark how well the sequel hangs together:
Eleven hours have I spent to write it over,
For yesternight by Catesby was it sent me;
The precedent was full as long a-doing,
And yet within these five hours Hastings liv'd,
Untainted, unexamin'd, free, at liberty.
Here's a good world the while! Who is so gross
That cannot see this palpable device?
Yet who['s] so bold but says he sees it not?
(III.vi.1-12)

The "palpable device" refers to the conspiracy against Hastings, but the "palpable device" also alludes to the Scrivener's written document. The written document determines the truth, or, more importantly, the legitimacy of the charge against Hastings. The Scrivener clearly believes in Hastings' innocence, and his writing emphasizes an important institution that distinguishes between different types of truth in Shakespeare's histories. The next chapter will look at several contexts in which legitimacy shifts between various groups and how those groups relate to written records and the spoken word.

Chapter Three: "Truth is Truth"

Defending his suit before King John, Robert Falconbridge supports his claim to the Falconbridge inheritance with the argument "truth is truth"(I.i.105). Richard II and Othello clearly demonstrate however that Robert's proposition does not consider the complexities of the word true. How then does the concept "truth is truth" relate to story? How do stories become true? Phyllis Rackin draws a line between writing and speech that coincides with the boundary between the masculine and the feminine:

The protagonists of history plays, conceived both as subjects and writers of history, were inevitably male. The women who do appear are typically defined as opponents and subverters of the historical and historiographic enterprise – in short, as anti-historians. But Shakespeare does give them a voice – a voice that challenges the logocentric, masculine historical record.

("Anti-Historians," 329)

Rackin associates males with the pen and females with the tongue, one group an assembler of history, the other an underminer. Eleanor's voice also undermines this argument: "Your strong possession much more than your right, / Or else it must go wrong with you and me"(I.i.40-41) she whispers to her son. In Shakespeare's histories, a strong division does lie between those who write (and therefore read) and those whose only weapons are their tongues (and then their hands). This division does not

fall upon lines of gender however, instead the division divides legitimate and illegitimate heirs of the throne. The stories of the legitimate are written, those of the illegitimate are spoken. Prince Edward's simple question "Is it upon record, or else reported?" provides a glimpse of these two groups, while three conflicts in particular solidify the deep division between the legitimate heir and the illegitimate.

Cade's Death

Enter [one with] a Clerk

Smith. The clerk of Chartam. He can write and read and cast accompt.

Cade. O monstrous!

Smith. We took him setting of boys' copies.

Cade. Here's a villain!

(2 Henry VI, IV.ii.85-89)

King Henry. For you shall read that my great-grandfather
Never went with his forces into France
But that the Scot on his unfurnish'd kingdom
Came pouring like the tide into a breach,

(Henry V, I.ii.146-49)

Jack Cade and King Henry present profoundly different attitudes towards reading. Henry uses literacy to support his arguments and demonstrate his kingly abilities while Cade uses literacy to mark his enemies. The Clerk of Chartam's skill with a pen leads to his execution at the hands of Cade's followers:

"Away with him, I say! Hang him with his / pen and inkhorn around his neck"(2 Henry VI, IV.ii.109-10), Cade commands. How the Henry and Cade view writing represents a deep division in Shakespeare's histories: the divide between, not just the literate and illiterate, but also between the legitimate and the illegitimate.

In *The Second Part of King Henry VI*, Jack Cade and the Duke of York represent Shakespeare's first experiment with conflicts between the tongue and the pen. In many ways, Cade and the Duke of York stand against each other, yet, like Coriolanus and Aufidius,¹ they also share much: Marilynne S. Robinson sees Cade as York's "alter ego"(quoted in Hattaway, 23). York acknowledges he has "seduc'd"(2 Henry VI, III.i.356) Cade "To make commotion, as full well he can, / Under the title of John Mortimer"(III.i.357-58); a view that Michael Hattaway no doubt supports:

The wind that York blew through the kingdom, as Hall aptly puts it, provides one cause for popular insurrection, and this was the cause that was most widely propounded when [Cade's] rebellion was discussed in Shakespeare's time.

(24)

¹ Aufidius confesses to his old adversary Coriolanus:

Here I cleep
The anvil of my sword, and do contest
As hotly and as nobly with thy love
As ever in ambitious strength I did
Contend against thy valor.

(Coriolanus, IV.v.109-13)

The two men both challenge Henry VI's rule on the battlefield with neither ultimately victorious. I argue that the great difference between the two rebellions however, involves what one group can read and what one cannot.

Although both claim the throne by "Edmund Mortimer," Jack Cade's rebellion becomes a struggle between what Cade can say and what his opponents can read. Cade comes to London with the bold challenge "I am rightful heir unto the crown," (2 Henry VI, IV.ii.131) tracing his ancestry to the Mortimer family. Michael Hattaway argues that "Cade's genealogy is a parody (4.2.31ff.) of the genealogy of York" (26), but Cade's avowal is more than a simple "parody" of York's. Cade bases his rebellion upon what Prince Edward calls a "report":

Cade. ... Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March

Married the Duke of Clarence' daughter, did he not?

Staf. Ay, sir.

Cade. By her he had two children at one birth.

Bro. That's false.

Cade. Ay, there's the question; but I say, 'tis true.

(2 Henry VI, IV.ii.136-141)

Cade's story about "Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March" is one that he can only support with "but I say, 'tis true." Discussions about the House of York's lineage follow a decidedly different line.

The most powerful weapon that the House of York carries with its armies is the word "read." Despite its prevalence in Shakespeare's histories, rebellion is rarely taken lightly.

York's advocate Salisbury narrates a story attempting to sway Warwick to join the rebellion. The story is similar to the one Cade tells, but with one subtle difference:

This Edmund Mortimer,² in the reign of Bullingbrook,
As I have read, laid claim unto the crown,
And but for Owen Glendower, had been king,
Who kept him in captivity till he died.

(2 Henry VI, II.ii.39-42)

York continues the appeal to Warwick:

His [Edmund Mortimer] eldest sister, Anne,
Married Richard Earl of Cambridge, who was
To Edmund Langley, Edward the Third's fift son,
By her I claim the kingdom.

(2 Henry VI, II.ii.43-47)

The men's arguments lead to Warwick's final conclusion: "What plain proceeding is more plain than this?" (II.ii.53). Warwick's approval stands in strong contrast with Stafford's brother's quick rejection of Cade's narrative: "That's false" he claims. Richard Wilson believes that Shakespeare "metamorphosed" Cade from a man "whom Hall respects as 'a yongman of godely stature and prengaunt wit' ... into a cruel, barbaric lout" (167). Rather than focussing on Wilson's vehement attack on Shakespeare the writer, I believe it may be more fruitful to consider why the

² Although York claims the throne by "Edmund Mortimer," York and Salisbury "fuse" two Edmund Mortimers, one the 5th Earl of March, the other the 4th. The 4th Earl was said to be Richard II's heir while Anne is the sister of the 5th Earl. The Edmund Mortimer Cade speaks of is the 3rd Earl of March. Gilian West clearly lays out the relationship between the three earls in "Shakespeare's 'Edmund Mortimer.'" "

rebellions of Cade and York are so similar, except for their opposite attitudes towards literacy.

Jack Cade's final conflict with pen and parchment occurs in London when he and his followers meet and later execute Lord Say. When Cade captures London, he commands "burn all the records of the realm, my mouth shall be the parliament of England" (2 Henry VI, IV.vii.13-15). Cade's "mouth" destroys, in Rackin's words, the "historical and historiographic enterprise" of his adversaries. Cade then turns his fury upon the nearest symbol of literacy, Lord Say:

Thou hast most traitorously corrupted the youth of the realm in erecting a grammar school; and whereas, before, our forefathers had no other books but the score and tally, thou hast caus'd printing to be us'd
(2 Henry VI, IV.vii.32-36)

Lord Say answers Cade's charges and again emphasizes the gulf between him and his assailant: "Hear me but speak, and bear me where you will. / Kent, in the Commentaries Caesar writ, / Is term'd the civill'st place of all this isle" (2 Henry VI, IV.vii.59-61). Predictably, Say's defence has little effect on the rowdy mob following Cade, yet again Cade confronts forces that refer to written records that he openly despises and cannot administer. Cade and York both abuse literacy for their own political purposes - to the point that Cade even destroys his own allies - but how York's reading is associated with "truth"

and Cade's "I say" is associated with what is "false" is more relevant, especially in light of two other examples.

Cade's rebellion is the first context in Shakespeare's histories in which struggles over legitimacy centre on what certain groups can read and what their adversaries can only say.³ The Bastard is a true son of both Coeur de Lion and Sir Robert Faulconbridge: marriage marks him as either legitimate or illegitimate. Cade and York claim their stories are true, but I argue that York's legitimacy stems from his references to written records while Cade's illegitimacy is a product of his illiteracy.

The Bastard's illegitimate birth parallels his illegitimate relation to truth: like Cade, he can only rely on what he can say. R. B. Pierce argues for a strong similarity between the two: "Looking at the externals of the play, one can make a case for [the Bastard] as another Jack Cade, a representative of the New Men who try to rise above the station in life prescribed by medieval orthodoxy" (141). Like Cade, the Bastard meets and is overwhelmed by forces that invoke reading.

³ Geoffrey Treasure emphasizes the gap between the literate and the illiterate in Shakespeare's age: "In the seventeenth century only about one in five of the adult population was able to read and write. ... Nothing in the records more poignantly suggests the powerlessness of the ordinary man, or the gulf that separated his world of custom and precedent from that of the lawyer or official, than the cross or token of calling, such as a roughly drawn pitchfork or hammer" (8).

The Bastard's "Present Time"

Moody E. Prior begins the second chapter of *Drama of Power* with the simple claim: "historical drama begins with the historical record"(14). In Shakespeare's case, Holinshed's *Chronicles* often form the springboard for his historical drama. According to Holinshed, John attempted to persuade Arthur to abandon his French alliances and follow him: "But Arthur, like one that wanted good counsell, and abounding too much in his owne wilfull opinion, made a presumptuous answer; not onelie denieng so to doo, but also commanding king Iohn to restore vnto him the realm of England"(8). Holinshed's Arthur differs radically from Shakespeare's well-meaning but fragile child, whose "powerless hand"(II.i.15) Shakespeare envisions reaching for Austria's aid.

When studying sources of *King John*, critics must not stop with Holinshed however because the existence of the anonymous play *The Troublesome Reign* complicates any consideration of *King John* and its sources. A. R. Braunmuller writes: "Although Shakespeare has details from Holinshed not in *The Troublesome Reign*, his treatment of Holinshed generally parallels that in the anonymous play, and Shakespeare's 'handling of his source' then becomes one dramatist's reworking of another's play"(18). *The Troublesome Reign* presents an Arthur closer to Holinshed's vision

of the prince. He challenges the people of Angiers: "Ye citizens of Angiers, are ye mute? / Arthur. Or John? Say which shall be your king!" (Part One, sc. 4, 49-50). In sharp contrast with this vigorous prince, Shakespeare's Arthur more closely resembles the young princes of *Richard III*. Arthur greets the Duke of Austria before of Angiers: "I give you welcome with a powerless hand, / But with a heart full of unstained love" (II.i.15-16). Writing *King John* with Holinshed and *The Troublesome Reign* before him, Shakespeare's portrayal of Arthur must serve a larger purpose in the play.

Shakespeare presents Arthur as England's rightful king according to the principles of primogeniture, but Arthur's weak nature makes him a poor alternative to John. Shakespeare had already portrayed a feeble king in the *Henry VI* plays and the loss of France that accompanied Henry's weakness. In this light, Arthur is not a strong choice for England's throne. Robert Ornstein even judges that "Arthur's claim never seems substantial" (91). Ornstein's suggestion raises a complicated problem: if Arthur's claim is "unsubstantial," then an audience must reevaluate the Citizen's dilemma concerning the true king of England. In *King John*, Shakespeare sets out to identify the true king of England, but who will fill the vacuum that a weak Arthur and an increasingly frail John create?

The Bastard quickly dominates the stage and eventually eclipses King John himself, becoming the most vigorous character and the strongest leader in the play. E. M. W. Tillyard praises the Bastard's abilities:

It is because Shakespeare conceived him so passionately and gifted him with so unbreakable an individuality that all these kingly qualities⁴ take on a life that is quite lacking in the character who should have been finer still: the Henry V of the play which goes under that title.

(229)

William H. Matchett supports Tillyard's view, as do many in the audience: "With the death of Arthur, the failure and eventual collapse of John and, through the course of the play, the growth of the Bastard ... it would appear that the Bastard is being groomed to take over as the rightful king"(231). In Act I, King John anticipates Tillyard's and Matchett's conclusions confirming Eleanor's suspicions: "Mine eye hath well examined his parts / And finds them perfect Richard"(I.i.89-90). John then grants the Bastard a new heritage: "From henceforth bear his name whose form thou bearest: / Kneel thou down Philip, but rise more great; / Arise Sir Richard and Plantagenet"(I.i.160-62). Lady Faulconbridge further supports the impression that the Bastard may be able to solve the confusion concerning the identity of England's true king. The Bastard desires to know his father's

⁴ Tillyard believes a "genuine king" possesses three qualities: those of the lion, fox, and pelican; Or strength, cunning, and self-abnegation. (See *Shakespeare's History Plays*, 227-28)

identity and the Lady reveals "King Richard Coeur-de-Lion was thy father"(I.i.253). Act I begins with a struggle between John and Arthur, but ends with the Bastard's confirmation as Richard I's son.

Despite the conclusion of Act I, three more acts will pass before the Bastard approaches the royal position Act I suggests he might. The initial struggles between France and England place the Bastard on the periphery of the battle. King John and King Philip use argument, war, and even marriage in an attempt to win their ways into Angiers. Following the union of Blanche and the Dauphin, Constance turns her fury upon Limoges, shaming him: "Thou wear a lion's hide! Doff it off for shame, / And hang a calf's-skin on those recreant limbs"(III.i.128-29). The Bastard interrupts and John demonstrates to all the Bastard's lack of importance at this point in the play:

Austria. O that a man should speak those words to me!
Bastard. And hang a calf's-skin on those recreant limbs.
Austria. Thou dar'st not say so, villain, for thy life!
Bastard. And hang a calf's-skin on those recreant limbs.
King John. We like not this; thou dost forget thyself.
 (III.i.130-34)

The Bastard does not approach Eleanor's importance for John, nor has he come close to the status he will soon possess, leading Julia C. Van de Water to conclude that, at this time in the play, "Faulconbridge is really only a slightly concealed 'vice'"(141). The Bastard adds humour to grave battles and debates, but the

tone of *King John* changes in IV.i when Hubert attempts to blind Arthur.

Hubert's effort to blind Arthur signals the end of John's ability to function effectively as a king. In "Children and Suffering in Shakespeare's Plays," Ann Blake argues "It is in *King John* that the role of the suffering child, Arthur, assumes central importance"(303): Arthur's suffering leads to the unravelling of John's rule. After John's decision concerning Arthur's fate, "Death"(III.iii.66)⁵, John quickly loses his strength and resolve. Unlike Richard III earlier and Macbeth later, the oppression of his acts crushes his original vitality allowing the Bastard to begin his climb. Julia C. Van de Water sees his ascent as totally inconsistent with his earlier character:

We must first admit that he is two entirely different characters in *King John*, and if we try to fuse the two into one, we must automatically deny him credibility. The character is not developed; the vice is simply replaced by the patriot.

(146)

Her argument may be too extreme, but it highlights a metamorphosis the Bastard undergoes in the play.

The Bastard as "vice" and the Bastard as "patriot" differ drastically in both speech and influence with King John, and his change resembles Hal's later movement from the Boar's Head to the

⁵ John must have changed his command before IV.i because Hubert says he must only blind Arthur, later showing a written order from John (see IV.i.33).

palace. In Act I, The Dauphin moves to conquer England in Arthur's name throwing John into paralysis. The Bastard emphasizes his revamped role in the play challenging John:

But wherefore do you droop? Why look you sad?
Be great in act, as you have been in thought:
Let not the world see fear and sad distrust
Govern the motion of a kingly eye.

(V.i.44-47)

The challenge has little effect on John who resigns his power to the Bastard. John acquiesces: "Have thou the ordering of this present time"(V.i.77). The Bastard and John have undergone tremendous changes since John's commandment "We like not this; thou dost forget thyself." The Bastard rises even higher in importance as he declares before the invading Dauphin: "Now hear our English King / For thus his royalty doth speak in me"(V.ii.128-29). The Bastard's reformation resembles Prince Hal's, but like that of poor Bottom the Weaver (and unlike Hal), the change can only be temporary.

Unlike Hal, the Bastard can only control the "present" time. Irving Ribner argues that "The supreme point of [the Bastard's] rise comes at the very end when, instead of seizing the throne for himself, he pledges his allegiance to the new king, Henry III"(122). In Ribner's claim lies the dilemma of historical drama, or what A. R. Braunmuller calls Shakespeare's "two masters." Braunmuller suggests that "Most of the time, Shakespeare can serve two masters, the nominally factual

chronicle and the dramatization of that chronicle" ("King John and Historiography," 313). Shakespeare's dramatization appears to be moving to the moment when the Bastard could accept, or even seize the throne. The Bastard possesses the necessary kingly qualities but cannot usurp the throne because nowhere is it written that a Bastard took John's throne. Shakespeare's invention or "dramatization" meets Holinshed's "nominally factual chronicle" and the Bastard must lose out: "the Bastard finally disappears back into the same factual vacancy that permitted his creation" ("King John and Historiography," 315-16) continues Braunmuller. Shakespeare must banish the Bastard.

King John concludes with the same struggle that dooms Cade because, like Cade, the Bastard can only rely on what he can say. The Bastard echoes Cade's "there's the question; but I say, 'tis true" (2 *Henry VI*, IV.ii.141) when he assures his mother "And they shall say when Richard me begot, / If thou hadst said him nay, it had been sin. / Who says it was, he lies; I say 'twas not" (I.i.274-76). Cade's arguments fall to Salisbury's "As I have read" (2 *Henry VI*, II.ii.40) and the Bastard's "I say" meets a similar defeat in John's "I am a scribbled form, drawn with a pen / Upon a parchment." The Bastard and Cade find themselves in similar situations: in both contexts legitimacy lies with written records. David Scott Kastan attaches a different importance to John's "scribbled" metaphor however:

Shakespeare in *King John* discovers that all along his subject in the histories has been in a sense not history but fiction. Kingship and kingdoms, Shakespeare comes to see, are no less artifacts created and preserved by human effort and will than the plays that represent them.

(15)

Of more importance than "kingship and kingdoms," truth is "created and preserved by human effort." In *King John*, images of the family tree are abandoned. The absence of these images is replaced by a consideration of what human efforts conceive and define truth. The struggles of Cade and the Bastard demonstrate that legitimate truth often results from what Shakespeare's characters can read and write. In contrast, illegitimate truth is often a product of the spoken word or story.

Falstaff's Banishment

Falstaff and the Bastard at times share a detachment, often comic, from the world that surrounds them. Shakespeare inserts them into his histories allowing them to move through their plays adopting various roles. Historically, the Bastard has not had the same popularity with audiences as Sir John, but among several traits the two do share, one stands out: both must learn how to speak in the presence of royalty. During the conflict before Angiers, King John silences the Bastard: "We like not this; thou dost forget thyself"(III.i.134) while Hal also silences Falstaff

before Shrewsbury: "Peace, chewet, peace!" (1 *Henry IV*, V.i.29) after Falstaff has mocked Worcester. Falstaff is unaware of how to speak in the company of royalty: his speech being more appropriate to The Boar's Head. Even in the tavern Hal "deposes" Falstaff questioning him: "Dost thou speak like a King?" (II.iv.433). Early in *King John* the Bastard also does not know how to speak like a king, but Hal does not have such a luxury. Hal must learn to speak like a king, and how he speaks when he becomes king further reveals the relationship between legitimacy and writing in Shakespeare's histories.

In Shakespeare's world of history, "seeming" is a necessary act of kingship. Hamlet's objection "Seems, madam? nay, it is, I know not 'seems'" (I.ii.76) might suit Henry VI, but not rulers such as Richard III or Henry IV. Hamlet continues his defence against his mother's request to "cast [his] nighted color off": "For they are actions that a man might play, / But I have that within which passes show, / These but the trappings and the suits of woe" (I.ii.84-86). These objections would draw little sympathy from Henry IV. In fact, the first occasion that an audience sees Henry and his son together, the king gives Hal a sharp lesson on "being seldom seen" and how he came to wear the crown:

And then I stole all courtesy from heaven,
And dress'd myself in such humility
That I did pluck allegiance from men's hearts,
Loud shouts and salutations from their mouths,
Even in the presence of the crowned King.

(1 *Henry IV*, III.ii.50-54)

Hamlet and Henry present opposite views on how to "dress" in and for the public, but how shall Hal dress, and, more importantly, speak when he becomes king?

The Two Parts of *Henry IV* consider possible ways that Hal can speak when he becomes king. The plays consider various ways of speaking what is "true," in the manner that a prince may try on various "inky cloaks" wondering which will best suit him as a king. Warwick defends Hal's choice of friends standing before Henry IV near the conclusion of Part Two, arguing that Hal must learn their language:

My gracious lord, you look beyond him quite:
The prince but studies his companions
Like a strange tongue, wherein, to gain the language,
'Tis needful that the most immodest word
Be look'd upon and learnt, which once attain'd,
Your Highness knows, comes to no further use
But to be known and hated.

(2 *Henry IV*, IV.iv.67-73)

Warwick argues that Hal must "gain the language" of his companions, but Warwick fails to mention that Hal must also "gain the language" of a legitimate king: how will he speak when he is king?

Hotspur travels to Wales to sort out the details of his rebellion with Glendower, but *how* the two speak becomes as important an area of conversation as their rebellion itself. Glendower defends his English: "I can speak English, lord, as

well as you, / For I was train'd up in the English court"(III.i.119-120), he tells Hotspur. Despite Glendower's insistence on his ability with English, Hotspur has already given Glendower a sharp language lesson. Glendower offers, "Why, I can teach you, cousin, to command / The devil,"(III.i.55-56) to which Hotspur replies: "And I can teach thee, coz, to shame the devil / By telling truth, tell truth and shame the devil"(III.i.57-58). Hotspur does not believe Glendower's "conjurings" and challenges him to "tell truth," but the previous scene has already thrown a sceptical light on the relationship between truth, story, and Hotspur's simple claim.

Glendower's "conjuring" resembles Falstaff's earlier recollection of the Gadshill heist. Recalling the robbery over a cup of sack at the Boar's Head, Falstaff begins his account of the heist: "Two I am sure I have paid, two rogues in buckrom suits,"(II.iv.192-93) and then continues, "Four rogues in buckrom let drive at me - "(II.iv.196). Falstaff's story grows until Hal cries "O monstrous! eleven buckrom men grown out of two"(II.iv.219-20). Hal anticipates Hotspur's disbelief of Glendower's ability to conjure demons. Falstaff cannot "conjure" "eleven buckrom men" before the Prince's eyes any more than Glendower could conjure demons before Hotspur. Hotspur and Hal both deny the legitimacy of Glendower's and Falstaff's stories.

Falstaff, however, claims his story is true. Falstaff responds to Hal's "monstrous" challenge, echoing Robert Faulconbridge's statement "Truth is truth": "What, art thou mad? art thou mad? is not the truth the truth?"(II.iv.229-30). In *The Second Part of Henry IV*, the Lord Chief Justice emphasizes the difficulty of Falstaff's question however: "Sir John, Sir John, I am well acquainted with your manner of wrenching the true cause the false way"(II.i.109-11). Falstaff may tell truth, but much of his appeal results from his ability to pull truth a false way. The Justice recognizes that Hotspur's "tell truth and shame the devil" is much too simple a conception of truth for a man like Falstaff. Three consecutive scenes in *1 Henry IV* (II.iv, III.i, and III.ii) consider questions of truth and even "conjuring," if we consider that Henry, in dressing himself "in such humility," "conjures" an image of himself before his subjects. These scenes emphasize that Hal too will one day have to conjure himself in front of his subjects, and he must do so as a legitimate king, not as the "skipping King" Richard II, with whom Henry IV compares him(*1 Henry IV*, III.ii.94).

The First Part of Henry IV and *Henry V* begin with references to, in the first play, Hal, and in the second, King Henry: but in both plays the audience is presented with perceptions of the man, not the man himself. Henry IV tells the audience "riot and dishonor stain the brow / Of my young Harry"(*1 Henry IV*, I.i.85-

86), and fantasizes "O that it could be prov'd / That some night-tripping fairy had exchang'd / In cradle-clothes"(I.i.86-88) his Harry and the valiant Hotspur. *Henry V* begins with a similar pattern when the Archbishop of Canterbury presents Hal, now Henry V, to the audience; and the change of name represents a fundamental change in Hal:

The courses of his youth promis'd it not.
The breath no sooner left his father's body,
But that his wildness, mortified in him,
Seem'd to die in him;

(*Henry V*, I.i.24-27)

Canterbury continues, "Never was such a sudden scholar made; / Never came reformation in a flood / With such a heady currance"(I.i.32-34). Canterbury's observations contrast sharply with the beginning of *The First Part of Henry IV* and King Henry's regret, suggesting that Hal has finally learned to speak as a legitimate king.

The Archbishop's praise results from Hal learning how to speak like a legitimate king, which he demonstrates early in *Henry V*. Henry must decide if he should lead his armies to France, but cautions his supporters about their northern adversary:

King Henry. For you shall read that my great-grandfather
Never went with his forces into France
But that the Scot on his unfurnish'd kingdom
Came pouring like the tide into a breach,

(*Henry V*, I.ii.146-49)

"For you shall read," stresses his new-found legitimacy and provides one reason for the Archbishop's accolade. Henry follows Hotspur's advice, "Tell truth and shame the devil," but clarifies "truth" by appealing to a written record. Nina Levine argues that "Richard [III]'s dependence on women exposes the myth of patriarchal succession that power moves from father to son without women"(90), but the claims of Salisbury and Henry ("As I have read" and "For you shall read") or John's "I am a parchment drawn" demonstrate that truth moves from "age to age" according to what, in Prince Edward's words, is on "record."

The previous chapters have argued that marriage and writing create criteria that differentiate between various types of truth: either legitimate or illegitimate. The introduction however considered the differences between truth as fact and truth as principle. I have argued that in *King John* Shakespeare is caught between two forms of truth: as fact and as principle. I also argue that a tension exists in certain contexts in Shakespeare's histories between truths that are written and truths that are spoken. I would now like to consider if there is a relationship between truth as fact and principle, and legitimacy and its parallel illegitimacy.

Chapter Four: "The Forms of Things Unknown"

Robert Faulconbridge.

Shall then my father's will be of no force
To dispossess that child which is not his? 130

Philip Faulconbridge.

Of no more force to dispossess me, sir,
Than was his will to get me, as I think.

Queen Eleanor.

Whether hadst thou rather — be a Faulconbridge
And like thy brother to enjoy thy land,
Or the reputed son of Coeur-de-Lion,
Lord of thy presence, and no land beside?

Bastard. [Philip Faulconbridge]

Madam, an if my brother had my shape
And I had his, Sir Robert's his like him,
And if my legs were two such riding-rods, 140
My arms such eel-skins stuffed, my face so thin
That in mine ear I durst not stick a rose,
Lest men should say, 'Look where three-farthings goes',
And to his shape were heir to all his land,
Would I might never stir from off this place.
I would give it every foot to have this face;
It would not be Sir Nob in any case.

Queen Eleanor.

I like thee well. Wilt thou forsake thy fortune,
Bequeath thy land to him, and follow me?

King John, I.i.130-149

Eleanor's and Philip's (or the Bastard's) dialogue presents different possibilities for readers of *King John* than it does for an audience of the play. A reader may notice that Philip's name, or speech prefix, changes to "Bastard" before he actually chooses his paternity. For a reader, the prefix acts like an oracle revealing Philip's eventual choice, but Eleanor's questions make clear to an audience that his identity is still in doubt. The conflicts between reading and speaking of the previous chapter surface again in this speech prefix, but now the debate is not between two characters in a history play. Instead, this prefix moves discussion of truth beyond Shakespeare's historical characters to problems involved in writing historical drama itself.

Chapter Three analysed the struggle between reading and speaking in several clashes between competing parties in Shakespeare's histories. A similar tension also exists in the relationship between Shakespeare's written sources (Holinshed for example) and Shakespeare's presentation of those sources in an oral environment, the stage. Shakespeare must attempt to negotiate between two forms of truth, or what G. K. Hunter calls the "historical dilemma": the factual truth of history and also the more illusive truths of theatre and storytelling. This chapter will argue that the conflict between Cade and York dramatizes the conflict Shakespeare must endure while writing

historical drama. This chapter will also argue that Shakespeare abandons historical truth, or general agreement with historical fact (represented by Othello's "nothing extenuate") and pursues Richard's more liberal version.

Shakespeare creates the Bastard from the gulf between history books and the theatre's stage. Holinshed contains one account of Richard I's bastard child, simply mentioning a "Philip bastard sonne to king Richard," who "killed the viscount of Limoges, in reuenge of his father's death"(quoted in Braunmuller, 313). *The Troublesome Reign*, one of Shakespeare's sources, develops the Bastard's role from this single reference, but not to the extent of Shakespeare's presentation: the Bastard's powerful position in *King John* is Shakespeare's invention. John, as portrayed in *The Troublesome Reign*, does not yield complete power to the Bastard. Instead, *The Troublesome Reign* portrays a more vigorous John who rises to meet the Dauphin's invasion of England. The Bastard rouses the bewildered John: "Comfort, my lord, and curse the Cardinal! / Betake yourself to arms! My troops are prest / To answer Lewis with a lusty shock"(Part II. scene iv. 80-82). John's response emphasizes his continued strength however: "Philip, I know not how to answer thee: / But let us hence, to answer Lewis' pride"(Part II. scene iv. 89-90, emphasis added). Shakespeare's presentation of the scene follows the sequence he finds in *The*

Troublesome Reign until John's response. In *King John*, the Bastard challenges his king: "But wherefore do you droop? Why look you sad?"(V.i.44), leading John to respond weakly, "Have ~~thou~~ the ordering of this present time"(V.i.77, emphasis added). Shakespeare removes the more powerful John of *The Troublesome Reign* (represented by "us"), and replaces him with a weaker John who resigns his power to the Bastard (represented by "thou"). Shakespeare's creation leads A. R. Braunmuller to argue that "the Bastard is almost completely [Shakespeare's] dramatic invention"(313). Shakespeare can adapt his historical sources to fit his needs, but what are the limits of his dramatic invention, or how much can Shakespeare adapt his sources?

The Bastard's speech prefix exposes the limits of Shakespeare's dramatic creativity. The Bastard adopts several names during *King John* - Philip, Richard, and of course the Bastard - with three possibilities that concern just when Philip Faulconbridge "becomes" the Bastard: when he chooses (I.i.154), when King John knights him(I.i.161), or, I suggest, when Shakespeare changes Philip's prefix to "Bastard" (I.i.138).¹ The name has provoked some debate among critics, especially relating

¹ In *The Troublesome Reign*, the Bastard's speech prefix does not change until the second scene, Act Two of *King John*, well after Shakespeare's change.

to the stability of Shakespearean characterization,² leading

Randall McLeod (aka Random Cloud) to summarize:

All in all, the change from "Philip" to "Bastard" in Shakespeare's [sic] play is overdetermined. It reflects the source play (if *The Troublesome Reign* is a source play), this character's (and others') fervour that he cease to a be a Faulconbridge, the author's proleptic preoccupation with the character's choice of parentage, and the freeing up of the tag "Philip" for another character. Among these various microscopic considerations are reflected the major conflicts of state - of legitimacy, of title and succession.

(175-76)

McLeod argues that the "change from 'Philip' to 'Bastard'" reflects "the major conflicts of state," but the change of name also emphasizes struggles between writing and speaking in Shakespeare's histories. I suggest that when Shakespeare changes his speech prefix, Philip must invariably follow what has been written. The Bastard's name then is an example, in brief, of Shakespeare's relationship with his historical sources: both Shakespeare and Philip Falconbridge must inevitably follow the written word.

"For you shall read" demonstrates Henry V's kingly abilities, and in these words Shakespeare also reveals the limits of his historical drama. Thomas Nashe sees a sharp

² Stephen Orgel, writing of the fantastic in *The Winter's Tale*, sees Shakespeare's characters as dependent on the necessities of the play at a specific time: "What this [Hermione's "awakening"] means is not that at the play's conclusion, Hermione really is a statue come to life ..., but rather that Shakespearean drama does not create a consistent world. Rather it continually adjusts its reality according to the demands of its development"(36).

division between what he sees as the dull books of history and the excitement of the theatre. R. L. Smallwood summarizes Nashe's views, but also introduces Shakespeare into the fray:

The gulf which Nashe perceived between the reading of history and the theatrical reliving of it, between the 'wormeaten books' of the chronicles and the 'lively anatomized' immediacy of the stage, is something that Shakespeare must have pondered frequently as he mined the historians for theatrical material.

(145)

The conflicts between reading and speaking in Shakespeare's histories represent Shakespeare's dramatization of what Smallwood calls a "gulf." Smallwood further argues that "the theatrical creativity of the historical dramatist and of his creation is ultimately controlled by patterns decreed by history" (155). "Ultimately," Shakespeare must follow the stories he finds in chronicles like Holinshed if he is to write history, and what Nashe derisively calls "wormeaten books" form the limits of his historical invention. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Theseus explains to his wife Hippolyta how poets (and playwrights) see things beyond the realm of reason:

I never may believe
These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.

.....

And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to aery nothing
A local habitation and a name.

(V.i.2-6, 14-17)

Theseus draws a clear line between reason and imagination, but he also hints at the difficulty of writing historical drama: how does a dramatist reconcile "reason" with "aery nothing"? In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the two can mingle easily, but the two cannot coexist so comfortably in *King John*, or in any of Shakespeare's histories for that matter. An audience of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has few expectations about how the play may end, but *King John* must have a certain conclusion or it is not history: Prince Henry must take the throne. R. L. Smallwood writes of the ending an audience may imagine that is overcome by the necessities of history: "Our theatrical imaginations, freed from chronicle fact, are thus lured into foreseeing an ending quite different from the one which becomes inevitable the moment we learn that 'The lords are all come back, / And brought Prince Henry in their company'" (155-56).

The ending of *King John* clearly demonstrates that "reason" and "aery nothing" often exist uncomfortably in Shakespeare's histories. The Bastard has proven himself to be a suitable king of England, but Shakespeare must bring the unknown Prince Henry onto the stage to conclude the play. Shakespeare creates the Bastard, a "form of things unknown," but "cool reason" dictates that Prince Henry must succeed his deceased father. The world of reason or fact and the realm of imagination (as Theseus sees them) catch Shakespeare between two forms of "true" that are not

always reconcilable. How does Shakespeare resolve the conflict between a truth or historical fact - the Bastard is not a part of John's story - and the truth he is developing in *King John* - the Bastard's powerful role in the play? Shakespeare's solution to this dilemma is echoed in two areas: modern editions of his plays and some theories in recent historiography.

Much recent historiography debates the impact of the narrative form on what history writing attempts to convey. The basic debate is whether historians, in using the narrative form, link historical events that are unconnected or even random. Hegel's view that a "Historian [is] concerned with what actually happened"(25), and that the "sole end of history is to comprehend clearly what is and what has been"(26) has been challenged by many post-modern and writers. Lyotard's seminal essay *The Post-Modern Condition* presents an alternative to Hegel's view: "We have the Idea of the world (the totality of what it is), but we do not have the capacity to show an example of it"(78). Historical narratives cannot present or re-present an "example" of the world; instead a narrative presents only itself, subject to its own set of rules, not the rules or laws of history. Such theorists as Hayden White, Hans Kellner, and Michel Foucault have attempted to clarify the relationship between narrative and what historians attempt to narrate. Andrew P. Norman summarizes the current debate: "The concern

these days is whether 'narrative structure' is 'imposed' by the historian upon a 'pre-narrativized' past"(120). Hans Kellner goes further than Norman:

The longing for the innocent, unprocessed source that will afford a fresher, truer vision (that is, the romantic vision) is doomed to frustration. There are no unprocessed historical data; once an object has been identified as material for history, it is already deeply implicated in the cultural system.

(vii)

Kellner suggests a way of reading, "crooked" as opposed to "getting the story straight," that emphasizes the construction of a text, not its subject matter. Kellner continues: "Getting the story crooked, then, is a way of *reading*. It means looking at the historical text in such a way as to make more apparent the problems and decisions that shape its strategies"(vii).

Kellner's theories argue for a movement from a strict principle of truth as fact to an understanding of the "strategies" of a text, or truth as principle. Kellner's "crooked" reading strategies parallel a growing interest in Shakespeare studies about how editors create editions of Shakespeare's plays.

Recent critics have begun to argue that various printings of Shakespeare's plays often present very different conceptions of the same character. Steven Urkowitz's essay "Five Women Eleven Ways: Changing Images of Shakespearean Characters in the Earliest Texts" highlights that alternate versions of Shakespeare's plays often present radically different characters. In discussing

Hamlet, Urkowitz argues that the "variants [between the First and Second Quartos and the First Folio] make the Queen's character at once more intelligent and commanding, more poignant, and I believe for an audience more troubling [in the First Folio] than the equivalents in the First and Second Quartos"(302). Urkowitz introduces a problem that confounds Hamlet's request to "tell my story": how does an editor attempting to tell Hamlet's story deal with the various printings of *Hamlet* available to him or her?

Paul Werstine summarizes this dilemma:

We never had any grounds (besides aesthetic or practical ones) for choice between one printing of a play and another—between, say, a Folio *Hamlet* or a Quarto *Hamlet*. Since we do not know the provenance of the printer's copy for these early printed texts, we cannot know if the right thing to do is put them together (conflation) or keep them apart (versioning).
(52)

Werstine's dilemma, in many ways, is a product of Michael J. Warren's earlier arguments in "Quarto and Folio *King Lear* and the Interpretation of Albany and Edgar." Warren firmly argues: "Either Q[uarto] or F[olio]; not both together"(98). Warren continues: "Conflated texts such as are commonly printed are invalid, and should not be used either for production or for interpretation"(105). Warren argues that conflated texts are invalid, or "illegitimate," and holds to a strict principle of truth as fact. His conception of "Shakespeare" or Shakespeare's texts would follow Othello's "Speak of me as I (or the text) am;

nothing extenuate." Conflation, however, would follow Richard's more flexible version of the truth: "Tell thou the lamentable tale of me" or let the "facts" of the story fit an author's (or editor's) conception of the story. Warren's arguments have had such an effect that Kastan has observed, "*King Lear* became *King Lears*, the two texts now understood as largely self-sufficient and, in many regards, incompatible" ("The Mechanics of Culture," 32). Warren's argument, "Q or F," leaves little room for debate, but Shakespeare may have already provided an answer for his editors in how he handled a very similar problem.

Shakespeare did not have a single, coherent body of facts from which to create his histories. At times, Shakespeare's editors also do not have a single coherent source from which to create the editions of his plays. Holinshed's account of the death of Arthur hardly answers any questions:

Some haue written, that, as he assaied to haue escaped out of prison, and proouing to clime ouer the wals of the castell, he fell into the riuer of Saine, and so was drowned. Other write, that through verie greefe and langour he pined awaie, and died of naturall sicknesse. But some affirme, that king John secretelie caused him to be murthered ...

(*Shakespeare's Holinshed*, 63)

And so Holinshed continues, providing possible causes of Arthur's death, but nothing conclusive. John's pivotal act, his treatment of Arthur, is nothing but a rumour in Holinshed. Holinshed has no answer for Bigot's question "Who killed this prince?", but

Shakespeare's play does not have Holinshed's luxuries.

Shakespeare must confront the question: how did Arthur die? Or more generally, what is true? Editors of Shakespeare's plays must also confront a very similar problem: what did Shakespeare write? or more generally, what is true? Shakespeare must choose from several possibilities when writing Arthur's death, but on what grounds does he decide which alternative to include? The same problem arises for an editor of Shakespeare: on what grounds does an editor decide which alternative to include in cases where several printings exist?

Holinshed presents several possibilities regarding Arthur's death (forcing Shakespeare to choose) and in a similar manner Shakespeare's *Henry V* also presents a number of possibilities for an editor to choose from. Gary Taylor's Oxford *Henry V* presents several variations between the Quarto and Folio of the play:

The most striking of these [variations] is Q's substitution in the scenes at Agincourt of the Duke of Bourbon for the Dauphin. No edition since 1623 has accepted Q's version (which happens to be historically accurate); yet Q's alternative is impossible to account for as an error of memory.

(24)

The First Quarto presents the following scene before Agincourt:

Constable: Tut, I have the best armour in the world.

Orleans: You have an excellent armour, but let my horse have his due.

Bourbon [Dauphin in Folio]: Now you talk of a horse, I have a steed like the palfrey of the sun, nothing but pure air and fire, and hath none of this dull element of earth within him.

Orleans: He is the colour of the nutmeg.

Bourbon [Dauphin in Folio]: And of the heat a the ginger.
 Turn all the sands into eloquent tongues, and my horse is
 argument for them all. I once writ a sonnet in the
 praise of my horse, and began thus: "Wonder of nature
 ..."

Constable: I have heard a sonnet begin so, in the praise of
 one's mistress.

Bourbon [Dauphin in Folio]: Why, then did they imitate that
 which I writ in praise of my horse, for my horse is my
 mistress.

Constable: *Ma foy*, the other day, methought your mistress
 shook you shrewdly.

(10.1-14)

The Folio presents a longer scene,³ including the Dauphin's boasts about his horse, "When I bestride him, I soar, I am a hawk." Taylor argues that the scene before Agincourt changes an audience's "entire dramatic impression of the French" (25), while Andrew Gurr believes that "Substituting Bourbon for the Dauphin reduces the force of this scene as contrast to the English scene" (New Cambridge Shakespeare, *Henry V*: 225). Both editors agree however that the decision of whether to include Bourbon or the Dauphin has a strong impact on the audience. In a similar manner, how Shakespeare scripts Arthur's death directly affects an audience's perception of John. An editor must make a choice that, I believe, resembles the decision Shakespeare must make when moving the story of King John from Holinshed to the stage: both decisions have important consequences for the two plays.

³ Comparing the Quarto and Folio, Andrew Gurr writes, "[The Quarto] cuts the total number of lines by a half, eliminating entire scenes and transposing others, and shortens or cuts all the longer speeches" (*The First Quarto of Henry V*, 1).

Gary Taylor and Shakespeare must both attempt to tell a story without all of the facts. Gary Taylor defends Bourbon's inclusion at Agincourt emphasizing that Shakespeare's "originals" do not exist:

wherever Q's variant is explicable as the result of a misreading in one text or the other, the choice between Q and F is not between a 'good' and a 'bad' text, but only between two contemporary witnesses to a scrawl of letters in a lost Shakespearian original.

(24)

All of "Shakespeare's originals" are lost as well, with only various "witnesses" of his plays remaining. Shakespeare must also cope with a similar situation: only witnesses of John's reign exist. There are no originals. Due to this absence of originals, choice becomes crucial for Shakespeare and his editors, with every choice having a consequence. W. Speed Hill writes:

Every practicing editor faces this issue of choice — and hence of authority — in every decision as to what the text will finally read and why, from determining 'where the comma goes' (Polk), to choosing which copy to photograph, because there are invariably rival authorities, multiple copies, and variant readings, even within the 'same' edition.

(43)

Hill's considerations are a result of a recent shift in editing away from the search for a true text, resembling the shift in perspective from Hegel's goals to the vision of Kellner. G. K. Hunter writes in his edition of *King Lear* that "The great difficulty in establishing a true text for *King Lear* arises from

the duplication of evidence, an embarrassment of witnesses, whose credentials can be investigated but not finally tested"(313). Hunter also refers to "witnesses," but witnesses whose evidence cannot be cross-examined or compared to any original. Hunter's early edition of *Lear* attempts to create a single, uniform, "true" text of the play, a practice abandoned by recent editors. He, like the Citizen of Angiers, struggles with the word "true" and variations of meaning in the word: Hunter attempts to present a type of truth similar to Othello's "nothing extenuate," but acknowledges the great difficulty in presenting what Shakespeare wrote. How can Shakespeare's editors present what Shakespeare wrote?

Shakespeare's editors have followed Shakespeare out of this dilemma by, in some ways, skipping the question. Urkowitz suggests that "we also look more carefully than we ever have at the fleeting experience of stage presentation,"(304) and several whole series (for example, Cambridge's *Shakespeare in Production*) attempt to capture this "fleeting experience." J. S. Bratton and Julie Hankey introduce the *Shakespeare in Production* series:

It is no longer necessary to stress that the text of a play is only its startingpoint, and that only in production is its potential realized and capable of being appreciated fully. Since the coming-of-age of Theatre Studies as an academic discipline, we now understand that even Shakespeare is only one collaborator in the creation and infinite recreation of his play upon the stage.

(x)

Many editors have abandoned the search for Shakespeare's "true text," or the factual truth of Shakespeare's writings. Instead, many "collaborators" exist in a play's "infinite recreation." These "collaborators" have adopted a sense of truth that would follow Richard's understanding, or a movement from truth as fact to truth as principle. Shakespeare also chooses a similar route. When writing historical drama, Shakespeare must banish Falstaff, or marginalize the Bastard. His solution to the struggle between historical fact and theatrical truth is to abandon historical drama itself. In this sense, Hal's banishment of Falstaff carries a tremendous amount of irony. Shakespeare moves from English history to dream, or from what Theseus calls "cool reason" to "aery nothing," each with their own very separate truths. Shakespeare also writes histories of Rome and of ancient Britain, but these plays address very different concerns than the English histories. This motion anticipates the movement from Hegel's historical goals to Kellner's "strategies" in historiography and the shift in focus from Hunter's "true text" to the idea of "infinite recreation."

Chapter Five: "No More Yielding But a Dream"

Peter Holland believes that "if we have responded to [*A Midsummer Night's Dream*] fully, we will share with Bottom the sense of vision, of something revealed from out there, from the world of fairy, not the false or trivial world of dream but a revelation of another reality"(21). Standing in opposition to this other reality, Holland sees Theseus and his "cool reason": "Bottom and the other 'dreamers' are all the more human for having dreamed, Theseus, in his rejection of the dream-world, all the more limited"(9). Theseus is not the only character of Shakespeare to reject a dream-world however. *Henry V* is in many ways a world that has banished dream and vision. In *The Second Part of Henry IV*, Hal abandons his famous friend: "I have long dreamt of such a kind of man, / So surfeit-swell'd, so old, and so profane; / But being awak'd, I do despise my dream"(V.v.49-51). Not only does Hal banish Falstaff, but I believe Falstaff's banishment represents Shakespeare deciding that truth as fact and truth as principle cannot be incorporated. Not the dream-visions of Richard III before Bosworth or Brutus before Philippi, but the dream-world of imagination Shakespeare creates so successfully in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Shakespeare realizes that the struggle that dooms Cade, writing versus speaking, must, in the end, doom his own historical writing. For all of Shakespeare's

imagination and dream, reason and fact must prevail when he writes historical drama: Prince Henry must become king.

Although Hal banishes Falstaff, like Bolingbroke in *Richard II*, the banishment may end more quickly than any anticipate: after *Henry V* Shakespeare never really returns to historical drama. The drama of his Roman plays, or his treatment of the reign of Macbeth differs considerably from the conception of his English histories.⁶ At the conclusion of *Henry V*, Chorus looks back to the beginning of Shakespeare's historical writing, not forward to any future history plays. He reminds his audience what followed Henry's victories:

Henry the Sixt, in infant bands crown'd King
Of France and England, did this king succeed;
Whose state so many had the managing,
That they lost France, and made his England bleed;
Which oft our stage has shown; and for their sake,
In your fair minds let this acceptance take.
(Epilogue 9-14)

The conclusion of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* clearly demonstrates many of the differences between the worlds of comedy and history, or what Theseus would call "antique fable" and "cool reason." Puck, like Chorus, hopes the audience will accept the play, but he refers to a very different world:

⁶ R. L. Smallwood argues that "history is an exploration of political power" (147). Power in the English histories lies with the king and, in theory, is transferred to his son. The relationship between father and son, or "the sequence of posterity," and past and present, or Prince Edward's "all posterity," is crucial and the main focus. In *Macbeth* the relationship between father and son assumes minor importance, as it does in the Roman histories. Consequently, the relationship between past and present assumes less importance than it does in the English histories.

If we shadows have offended,
 Think but this, and all is mended,
 That you have but slumb' red here
 While these visions did appear.
 And this weak and idle theme,
 No more yielding but a dream,
 (V.i.423-28)

Shakespeare cannot conclude his histories with a Puck or an Ariel: history demands a more concrete or serious reality. Shakespeare could not call Henry, "This star of England," (*Henry V*, Epil. 6) a "weak and idle theme."

The relationship between *King John* and history is a complicated topic. First we must consider what is the role of history? If history is to present truth or how an event took place, the concern of a "true tale" becomes paramount. How should Horatio tell the true tale of Hamlet? How does truth move from age to age? I argue that *King John* assumes that truth does not live from age to age, but must be created and maintained. The play deals with marriage and writing and how the two institutions create what I call legitimate truth. It is writing that forms the major concern for Shakespeare the playwright because writing inevitably has the greatest impact on his historical drama.

This thesis tried to answer King Philip's question: "How comes it then that thou art called a king?" In *King John*, Shakespeare considers how true children are formed which becomes a metaphor for the creation of true narrative: marriage and

writing, or human institutions, create and maintain truth. I believe that Shakespeare associates legitimate truth with written records and that in his histories legitimate truth overwhelms oral illegitimate truth. The same occurs with his historical drama: his written sources overwhelm his drama. For this reason, Shakespeare abandons these written records, or Othello's truth as fact, and pursues more flexible forms of truth that he can find in dream. His editors and some recent historians have reached similar conclusions: "Although anonymous and named editors over the centuries have laboured to produce an 'accurate' or 'true' text, their efforts plainly testify that there is no such thing, that texts exist in productions and readings, in actors and readers and editors, rather than marble" writes A. R. Braunmuller(Preface, *King John*, Oxford Shakespeare: v).

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