

SHAKESPEARE AND THE DRAMA OF POLITIC STRATAGEMS

by

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To my wife, Melinda, for all of her love and support,  
and to John Baxter, my teacher and supervisor.

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## ABSTRACT

“Shakespeare and the Drama of Politic Stratagems” focuses on how Shakespeare dramatically explores strategic issues similar to those discussed by Machiavelli and other early modern politic authors. The thesis is structured in order to tackle the diverse nature of strategy while developing and expanding on its most essential issues. The first chapter deals with the amoral and dangerous political world of the first tetralogy, a world in which one must be strategic in order to survive. Since not every strategist engages in the same kind of strategy or even agrees about what the best strategy might be, the second chapter outlines the different characteristics of Shakespeare’s strategists. These strategists can sometimes achieve success on their own, but no one can survive alone indefinitely, and the third chapter thus outlines the importance of strategic alliances and the dangers of making the wrong alliance. The fourth chapter deals with the numerous kinds of enemies that a strategist must contend with. Not all enemies fight in the same way, so a strategist must be on guard against an enemy’s deceptions, the focus of the fifth chapter. Even if these obstacles are overcome, even the most successful strategists will almost inevitably fail at some point or another. That failure may be due to some flaw in their schemes, or it may be due to the extreme difficulty of achieving success indefinitely. The final chapter deals with the perennial conflict between *virtù* and *fortuna* and thus the limits of politic stratagems.

Machiavelli’s works can be seen as an epicenter of strategic thinking in the early modern period, and so they act as a guide through complex, contradictory, but ultimately rewarding issues of strategy and their consequences. Machiavelli serves as both analogue and foil, for while Shakespeare dramatizes similar strategic ideas, his dramatizations reveal greater truths about what is at stake when one explores the nature and consequences of politic stratagems. This thesis demonstrates the multiple factors that make strategy so dynamic and useful to a young dramatist in the process of discovering his own interests in the art of politics and the art of drama.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

<i>1 Henry VI</i>	<i>1HVI</i>
<i>2 Henry VI</i>	<i>2HVI</i>
<i>3 Henry VI</i>	<i>3HVI</i>
<i>Richard III</i>	<i>RIII</i>
<i>The Prince</i>	<i>P</i>
<i>The Discourses</i>	<i>D</i>
<i>The Florentine Histories</i>	<i>FH</i>
<i>The Art of War</i>	<i>AW</i>
<i>The Life of Castruccio Castracani</i>	<i>CC</i>
<i>The Mandrake</i>	<i>M</i>
<i>How Duke Valentino Killed the Generals Who Conspired Against Him</i>	<i>DV</i>
<i>A Caution to the Medici</i>	<i>CM</i>
<i>Discourse on the Affairs of Germany and Its Emperor</i>	<i>DG</i>
<i>Discourse on Pisa</i>	<i>DP</i>
<i>On How to Treat the Populace of Valdichiana</i>	<i>PV</i>
<i>On the Nature of the French</i>	<i>NF</i>
<i>Private Letters</i>	<i>PL</i>
<i>Letters</i>	<i>L</i>



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 SHAKESPEARE, DRAMA AND STRATAGEMS

*Shakespeare and the Drama of Politic Stratagems* focuses on how Shakespeare dramatically explores strategic issues similar to those discussed by Machiavelli and other early modern politic authors. The thesis is structured in order to tackle the diverse nature of strategy while developing and expanding on its most essential issues. The first chapter deals with the amoral and dangerous political world of the first tetralogy, a world in which one must be strategic in order to survive. Since not every strategist engages in the same kind of strategy or even agrees about what the best strategy might be, the second chapter outlines the different characteristics of Shakespeare's successful and unsuccessful strategists. These strategists can sometimes achieve success on their own, but no one can survive alone indefinitely, and the third chapter thus outlines the importance of strategic alliances and the dangers of making the wrong alliance. The fourth chapter deals with the numerous kinds of enemies that a strategist must contend with. Not all enemies fight in the same way, so a strategist must especially be on guard against an enemy's deceptions, which is the focus of the fifth chapter. Even if these numerous obstacles are overcome, even the most successful strategists will almost inevitably fail at some point or another. That failure may be due to some flaw in their schemes, or it may be due to the extreme difficulty of achieving success indefinitely. The final chapter deals with the perennial conflict between *virtù* and *fortuna* and thus the limits of politic stratagems.

This study explores important insights about political strategy and its inherently dramatic potential. Machiavelli's works can be seen as a focal point of strategic thinking in the early modern period, and so they act as a guide through complex, contradictory, but ultimately rewarding issues of strategy and their consequences. Machiavelli serves as both analogue and foil, for while Shakespeare dramatizes similar strategic ideas, his dramatizations reveal greater truths about what is at stake when one explores the nature and consequences of politic stratagems. This study also explores how strategy affects how Shakespeare begins to think about drama at this early stage of his career. The first tetralogy (*Henry VI, Parts 1, 2, and 3*, and *Richard III*) is the place where Shakespeare first launches a prolonged exploration of politic strategy, concluding with the dramatic success of *Richard III*, a play that most skillfully interweaves the issues of strategy and drama explored in the earlier plays. Strategy can be best understood on the grand scale, for that allows the smaller tactical moves—deployed by minor as well as major characters—to be seen in relation to the whole. This study thus focuses on many scenes and characters which have generally been given perfunctory attention or none at all and shows just how dramatically rich these often overlooked—and sometimes dismissed—plays truly are. Even seemingly honest characters, such as Humphrey (Chapter 1), Henry (Chapters 2 and 4), and Talbot (Chapter 4), can sometimes engage in duplicitous strategy. Other even more heavily charged strategies include scenes such as York's maneuverings against his seemingly more Machiavellian enemies (Chapters 2 and 4), Warwick's volte-face against Edward (Chapter 3) and Buckingham's against Richard (Chapter 5), Clarence's often overlooked duplicitous betrayal of both Edward and Warwick (Chapter 3), Edward's possible manipulation of his brothers (Chapter 4), and especially Stanley's

often unnoticed quiet deceptiveness, which allows him to emerge as one of Shakespeare's greatest strategists (Chapter 5). Shakespeare is nevertheless conscious that strategies have their limits, and that the ends, while they may seem to justify the means, do not necessarily justify themselves (Chapter 6). This thesis demonstrates the multiple factors that make strategy so dynamic and so useful to a young dramatist in the process of discovering his own interests in the art of politics and the art of drama.

Strategy in Shakespeare's plays is certainly enlivened and enhanced by dramatic representation, for Shakespeare does not merely state that the ends justify the means; instead he dramatizes the means by which those ends are achieved and explores the nature of the ends being sought. By doing so he shows the dramatic potential of strategy. It is worth recalling Thomas Nashe's famous description of the first tetralogy in *Pierce Penilesse* (1592), in which he declares that the historical Talbot would have been pleased

to think that after he had lain two hundred years in his tomb, he should triumph again on the stage, and have his bones embalmed with the tears of ten thousand spectators at least (at several times) who in the tragedian that represents his person, imagine they behold him fresh bleeding. (qtd. in Taylor, Oxford *IHVI* 2)

This passage, which Michael Taylor contends "begins the business of Shakespeare criticism" (Oxford *IHVI* 1), has been discussed by numerous others, but they often overlook another important feature of the passage: Nashe's contention that "in plays . . . all stratagems of war . . . are most lively anatomized" (qtd. in Martin, Oxford *3HVI* 35).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Michael Hattaway notes that Nashe "bear[s] witness to the way history plays stiffened the sinews and summoned up the blood of Englishmen" ("The Shakespearean History Play" 14-15), while Rackin argues that Nashe believed that "the function of these plays was the preservation of a historical legacy that was as masculine as it was English" ("Women's roles in the Elizabethan history plays" 74). Given what happens to England in the first tetralogy, such an interpretation truly makes one wonder. For a more skeptical view of the effect of Nashe's *Pierce Penilesse*, see Christopher Pye, "The Theater, the Market, and the Subject of History."

What is the nature of these stratagems? How are they anatomized? How does drama enhance that anatomization?

This process of dramatization is often overlooked by critics who have focused on the dramatic analogies between Shakespeare and Machiavelli. For example, Bernard Spivack is more inclined to study Shakespeare's conception of the stage Machiavel as a character rather than as a strategist, while John Roe and Leon Craig, who are interested in strategy, tend to look at the two writers largely in ethical and philosophical terms, respectively. Others have opted for dissecting the relationship in order to find out what it indicates about the early modern political landscape. Although all of these approaches are worthwhile, they sometimes fail to appreciate the nuances and complexities of Shakespeare's dramatic explorations of the strategic issues that also troubled Machiavelli.

John Cox points out that

one could defend power and emphasize its inherent limitations, as Augustine did (and as medieval drama did implicitly), or one could analyze it, as Machiavelli did in *The Prince* and Shakespeare did from the beginning in his history plays. (*The Dramaturgy of Power* 103)

Shakespeare actually does both, and it is drama in particular that allows him to do so.

Unlike most strategists, Shakespeare dramatizes how and why strategies succeed or fail instead of merely offering advice to that end. This exploration explores the contours of strategy and its many permutations while also involving the audience in it:

[we] get a penetrating look at how politics is practiced. Shakespeare treats us to an inside view of the ambition and fear and desire for justice and glory that move his political actors. We see their errors and share in their successes. We second-guess, we condemn and applaud, and so in a sense become participants in the political action ourselves. (Spiekerman 153)

To put it simply, my contention is that Shakespeare's first tetralogy explores the dramatic potential of politic stratagems.

Although the relationship between Shakespeare and Machiavelli has been explored by other critics such as Catherine Alexander, John Cox, and Robert Watson, they have often focused primarily on *The Prince* and *The Discourses* to the exclusion of such important works as *History of Florence*, *The Art of War*, and Machiavelli's letters, particularly those to Francesco Vettori. Shakespeare put many similar ideas about politics and strategy to the test in his own plays. As Tim Spiekerman notes:

While no direct evidence exists that Shakespeare read Machiavelli, or, if he did, that he was responding to him, critics have frequently tried to locate Shakespeare's politics in relation to Machiavelli's, a project that is defensible if only because Shakespeare's political actors often resemble the kinds of men Machiavelli celebrates. Like Machiavelli, Shakespeare is preoccupied with the acquisition and maintenance of power. And . . . the ambition for power often entails violence and deceit, machination, calculation, and ruthless villainy. (158-59)<sup>2</sup>

All of the things which such ambition for power entails are also dramatic. The aim here then is not to delve into Shakespeare's possible sources or outline his political affiliations so much as it is to show the degree to which the first tetralogy enhances strategic thought by showing strategy in action and exploring and testing its dimensions. The first tetralogy provides wonderful examples of such exploration and testing. Other critics have discussed Shakespeare and Machiavelli in relation to the second tetralogy, but the first has received far less attention. All three books that have been written about

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<sup>2</sup> In *The Foreign Sources of Shakespeare's Plays*, Guttman argues that "it is uncertain whether S[hakespeare] had direct access to Machiavelli's writings," but she does point out that several parts of *The Prince*, such as Chapter 18, "may be considered a commentary"—written before the fact—"on S[hakespeare]'s play" *Richard III* (117-18). One should perhaps take a similar approach to the one that Hugh Grady takes in regards to Shakespeare and the possibility that he read the works of Montaigne: "there is much possibility, little certainty, when it comes to how much, when, and in what language Shakespeare might have read Montaigne" (51). Such lack of certainty is unfortunate, but it should not close us off to the possibilities and potential gains of looking at the dramatic analogies between two writers who explored many of the same ideas. Such possibilities and potential gains are also cited by Grady as he looks at the ways that analogies can be made between the works of Shakespeare, Montaigne, and Machiavelli, and argues that such an analysis is becoming more common:

. . . I think it is fair to say that linking Shakespeare with Montaigne, as with Machiavelli, was common in earlier times, suppressed during the heyday of the Modernist Shakespeare, and is now being revived within our era's Postmodernist paradigms. (52)

Shakespeare and Machiavelli during the past ten years—Tim Spiekerman’s *Shakespeare’s Political Realism: The English History Plays* (2001), Hugh Grady’s *Shakespeare, Machiavelli, and Montaigne: Power and Subjectivity from Richard II to Hamlet* (2002), and John Roe’s *Shakespeare and Machiavelli* (2002)—focus primarily on the second tetralogy, with additional attention given to *King John*, *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*.

I focus on Shakespeare’s English History plays that depict the reigns of Henry VI, Edward IV and Richard III, for they have often been overlooked by critics and because these are the plays with which Shakespeare first begins to explore the nature of political strategy, an exploration that will continue to engage and intrigue him throughout his writing career. They also provide several examples of strategy, both in theory and in practice. The first tetralogy allows us to see how strategy evolves over the course of four plays. Strategy is better appreciated on a grand scale; for example, Nicholas Grene argues that York’s story can only be properly comprehended over the course of the three plays in which he appears, for they dramatize

a human career across three plays from young manhood to death on the battlefield. However it may be construed in individual performances, we are shown in succession the young hothead quarreling in the Temple Garden, the Regent at war in France, the patriarch father of the three fierce sons who back him in his claim to the throne, the captured soldier in defeat facing torture and execution. To follow through these vicissitudes of a stage figure is to engage with a human life in action, to see it change and take shape. (108)

It also offers one the chance to engage with Shakespeare’s dramatic engagement with the issue of strategy. York offers an interesting problem, for one wonders whether he is shaped by his maneuvers or whether the circumstances are shaping him and his actions. Does strategy inform character or does character inform strategy? G. K. Hunter wonders



this in regards to Margaret, for he notices that each play offers us “a different Margaret . . . operating in terms of a different range of relationships and effects” (“The Royal Shakespeare Company plays *Henry VI*’ 93). Likewise, Larry Champion argues that Henry also changes radically from play to play (*Perspective* 39), while E. Pearlman insists that Richard’s behaviour seems to change radically throughout *3 Henry VI* until 3.2, when “the familiar figure of Richard begins to emerge” (45). Are these changes due to their character, or are they due to their reactions to the constantly changing political climate, a climate that necessitates constant evaluation and reevaluation of one’s strategy? Are strategy and character two sides of the same coin or are they different?

In the end the aim is to showcase the ways in which Shakespeare can be seen as a strategic thinker and the ways that he dramatizes strategy in action. Buckingham brags to Richard that he can use drama to “grace [his] stratagems” (*RIII* 3.5.10). In many ways this point underlies and is central to my thesis as a whole. As Chapter 5 and others will show, drama can clearly be used to grace one’s stratagems, but how do stratagems grace Shakespeare’s drama? Shakespeare is clearly aware of the fact that strategy is inherently dramatic, but how does he present that awareness on the stage? Does the failure of some of these characters indicate a criticism of their strategies or a criticism of their inability to see them through? For example, does Buckingham fail because he is a bad man or because he is not bad enough, or is his so-called failure actually redefined by Shakespeare’s dramatic exploration? Kenneth Burke argues that Machiavelli’s maxims “are all variants of . . . the scene-act ratio; and they say, in effect: ‘Here is the kind of act proper to such-and-such a scene’ (the ruler’s desire for political mastery being taken as the unchanging purpose that prevails throughout all changes of scene)” (*A Rhetoric of*

*Motives* 162). However, Shakespeare's drama differs from this, for it shows that characters' purposes are never that constant; in fact, his characters' purposes and motivations are constantly being changed, discarded, amplified, and realigned. This awareness of the multiplicity of motivation comes about as a result of his dramatic exploration of these issues. My thesis explores what is at stake—politically, ethically and otherwise—when one begins to explore the dynamic nature of political stratagems. Strategists often pursue selfish ends, but how do they make use of alliances? In what ways is deception central to strategy? In what ways does Shakespeare present the limits of strategy, and at what point do Shakespeare's strategists out-strategize themselves?

## 1.2 THE RECEPTION OF THE FIRST TETRALOGY

It is safe to say that the first tetralogy has not always received the ringing endorsement given by the Chorus of *Henry V* (Epilogue.13) or sounded by many critics who note that the plays were an early "triumph" for Shakespeare (Bevington, "Shakespeare the Man" 14).<sup>3</sup> Although *Richard III* has retained its popularity over the years, the other plays of the first tetralogy soon became the most overlooked and abused in the entire canon. For example, Wolfgang Iser's study of Shakespeare's English History plays ignores the first three plays in the first tetralogy and uses *Richard III* alone to compare and contrast with the second tetralogy (44). Such treatment began early, from Ben Jonson's dismissal of the plays' depiction of "fight[s] over York and Lancaster's

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<sup>3</sup> Brian Walsh points out that "while *Henry V* stands today as one of Shakespeare's best-known history plays, and the earlier *Henry VI* plays among his least known, this discrepancy did not obtain in Shakespeare's lifetime" (*Shakespeare, the Queen's Men* 109). Likewise, Grene notes that the first two known allusions in print to Shakespeare's presence in the London theatre (Nashe's *Pierce Pennilesse* and Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit*) are both from 1592, and both refer to what were already evidently the very successful *Henry VI* plays. (7-8) For more on the latter allusion, see D. A. Carroll, "Greene's 'Vpstart Crow' Passage: A Survey of Commentary." For more on the early stage history of the first tetralogy, see Lawrence Manley, "From Strange's Men to Pembroke's Men."

long jars” (*Every Man In His Humour* Prologue.12) to Maurice Morgann’s description of the plays as “Drum-and-Trumpet Thing[s]” (164).<sup>4</sup> There are numerous examples of this view that the first tetralogy represent “the least of [Shakespeare’s] accomplishments” (Pearlman 23), but in the interest of space I will content myself with a few of the more notable ones. In his bestselling *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (1998), Harold Bloom relegates all three of the *Henry VI* plays to a single chapter of eight pages. Bloom is so underwhelmed by the three plays that he suggests that it is probably just as well that the *Ur-Hamlet*, which dates from the same period, is lost to us:

Something of the likely inadequacy of that inaugural *Hamlet* can be deduced from . . . *The First Part of King Henry the Sixth* . . . . Shakespeare’s play is bad enough that perhaps we should not lament the loss of the first *Hamlet*, which I suspect would have been just as crude. (43)

Bloom also suspects that much of the work that has been done to discover how much or how little Shakespeare wrote of the play is really a rather poor attempt to spread the blame:

Attempts by critics to ascribe much of *Henry VI, Part One*, to Robert Greene or George Peele, very minor dramatists, do not persuade me, though I would be pleased to believe that other botchers had been at work in addition to the very young Shakespeare. (43)

Finally, Bloom argues that the only worthwhile aspects of the three plays are “Joan, Jack Cade, and Richard,” and that they are of value only as a “laboratory” for Shakespeare’s later experiments (50). Stephen Greenblatt also describes the first tetralogy as being “crude, especially in comparison with Shakespeare’s later triumphs in the same genre” (*Will in the World* 195). As Rackin notes, this charge can also be found in many other discussions of the first tetralogy:

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<sup>4</sup> The first tetralogy appears to have been popular enough to be revived in 1599, the same year that both *Henry V* and *Every Man In His Humour* are believed to have first premiered.

The *Henry VI* plays have often been faulted by critics for their loose, episodic structure, variously explained as a result of authorial collaboration, as the product of the youthful playwright's inexperience, as imitative of the episodic quality of his chronicle sources, or as expressive of the disorderly state of the world they depict. ("English History Plays" 198)<sup>5</sup>

Although I agree that some of the ideas Shakespeare originally pursued in the first tetralogy do find more challenging and fruitful modes of dramatization in the later plays, I disagree with any suggestion that the first tetralogy can only be enjoyed on the basis of what came later. One should avoid falling into the trap of seeing Shakespeare's early plays merely as apprentice pieces and keep in mind A. P. Rossiter's assertion that "'early work' is an evasive, criticism-dodging term" ("Angels with Horns" 69). The first tetralogy includes wonderfully dramatic and dynamic explorations of strategy, and these explorations actually give the plays a very particular kind of dramatic unity. These plays are not "shapeless and unfocused [or] . . . a hodgepodge of competing actions" (Pearlman 24), or if they are, it is this very element of competitiveness that gives the plays their strength.<sup>6</sup> In this regard I would agree with critics who argue that the plays are not as disharmonious as some might think and that "whatever might appear chaotic and episodic is by design" (Bevington, "*1 Henry VI*" 318).<sup>7</sup> This idea can also be found

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<sup>5</sup> The critical commentary on the authorship issue is quite vast. The best place to begin is by looking at the Arden and Oxford editions of the plays: for *1 Henry VI*, see Edward Burn's 2000 Arden edition (73-84), Michael Taylor's 2003 Oxford Shakespeare edition (75-77), and Gary Taylor, "Shakespeare and others"; for *2 Henry VI*, see Ronald Knowles' 1999 Arden edition (111-26), and Roger Warren's 2003 Oxford Shakespeare edition (78-87); for *3 Henry VI*, see John D. Cox and Eric Rasmussen's 2001 Arden edition (44-49), and Randall Martin's 2001 Oxford Shakespeare edition (106-12). Although there are numerous textual considerations when it comes to *Richard III*, the authorship question has not been one of them. For more on these arguments, see Wells and Taylor, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* and John Dover Wilson's Cambridge editions of *Henry VI*. Wilson's arguments have proved influential, a summary of which can be found in Robert Ornstein, *A Kingdom for a Stage* (33-35).

<sup>6</sup> This is a charge similar to that made by Samuel Johnson that the first tetralogy does not "have . . . sufficient variety of action, for the incidents are too often of the same kind" (612).

<sup>7</sup> Although it is not germane to my own discussion, it is worth pointing out that recent critical opinion places the writing of *1 Henry VI* after *2 Henry VI* and *3 Henry VI* and before *Richard III*. . ." For more on

in Champion's *Perspective in Shakespeare's English Histories*, in which he argues that the perpetual discord between the characters actually helps to give the plays an effective kind of coherence and dramatic unity (12-53). Likewise, Bevington notes that despite all the charges of being episodic, the plays have often failed in production as a result of producers cutting scenes that initially seemed extraneous ("1 Henry VI" 320). In "The Frame of Disorder" Brockbank argues that the dramatic unity of the plays derives from their inherent disorder (55-56), while Rossiter argues that *Richard III* is unified by its seeming paradoxes ("Angels with Horns" 82-84). I agree that the seeming disunity of the plays is illusory, but my conception of the plays' unity is different, for I argue that it derives from the presence and dramatic exploration of political strategy. This unity is shaped by the plays being filled with strategists who are all trying to achieve their own strategic goals. Their attempts to achieve these goals may run at cross purposes and may keep the plays from focusing on any particular character or action, but they do give the plays a strong structure and dynamic power.<sup>8</sup>

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this issue, see Wells and Taylor, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (111-13). When it comes to chronological over compositional grouping, John Wilders argues, as I do, in favour of the former, for the *First Part* ends with the arrangement of the royal marriage which then takes place in the *Second Part*; this play ends with young Clifford's resolution to avenge his father's death and York's decision to pursue the King, both of which reach their outcome in the *Third Part*; this in turn concludes with the spurious tranquility of Edward IV's ascension and the concealed ambition of Richard of Gloucester with which *Richard III* begins. (20)

Larry Champion argues on behalf of dramatic quality, insisting that "whatever the order of composition, structurally *2 Henry VI* is a significant advancement over part 1," an argument that suggests that discussing the plays chronologically offer the potential for greater critical insights (*Perspective* 37-38). However, not all critics are pleased with the chronological grouping of the plays of the first tetralogy. For example, Jean E. Howard is critical of what she sees as "a restricted set of categories" and an attempt to standardize and "homogenize[]" something that cannot be contained by such efforts ("Shakespeare and Genre" 301-02).

<sup>8</sup> They also give the plays a kind of energy similar to that described in Paul Jorgensen's account of Machiavelli's conception of warfare:

the ideal of war as a harmoniously ordered institution in which armies move as in a dance. Machiavelli argued typically that just "as he that daunseth, proceedeth with the tyme of the Musick . . . , even so an armie obeiyng, and movyng it self to the same sounde, doeth not disorder." (4)

Despite this focus, there is a glaring omission in my discussion of political stratagems in the first tetralogy. Although Richard III is generally seen as being the most overtly Machiavellian character in the canon—so much so that Jan Kott writes that he is the “Machiavelli’s prince” (*Shakespeare our Contemporary* 292) and Robin Headlam Wells contends that he is “probably the most vivid example in English Renaissance drama of the Machiavellian villain” (*Shakespeare’s Politics* 34)—there are two very important reasons why Richard is only marginally discussed throughout my thesis. Richard has been discussed by so many critics that I would be covering much of the same territory. At the same time, the large focus on Richard has resulted in several other characters from the first tetralogy being largely overlooked. Richard’s dynamism makes this understandable, but it is unfortunate nonetheless, particularly since Shakespeare actually “distributes dramatic interest equitably among multiple figures” (Martin, Oxford *3HVI* 2). In this regard I agree with René Girard, who argues that Richard is far from being the only calculating strategist in the first tetralogy:

We are in a world of bloody political struggles. All adult characters in the play have committed at least one political murder or benefited from one . . . the War of the Roses functions as a system of political rivalry and revenge in which every participant is a tyrant and a victim in turn, always behaving and speaking not according to permanent character differences but to the position he occupies at any moment within the total dynamic system. Being the last coil in that infernal spiral, Richard may kill more people more cynically than his predecessors, but he is not essentially different. (362)

While he is not essentially different in terms of his aims and methods, Richard’s dynamic qualities on the stage do mark him from those around him. Commenting on Richard’s dramatic energy as a character, Champion argues that

Richard is a creation of the dramatic imagination. Like contemporary figures such as Aaron, Barabas, Tamburlaine, and later Iago and to some

extent Edmund and Iachimo, he is stylized in his commitment to self and power. Yet like Gentillet's Machiavelli he captures the spectators' fancy in his appalling ability to subordinate every facet of his personality to the accomplishment of his self-serving goals, temporarily numbing the viewers' ethical sensibilities with his sinister machinations. More important in the development of Shakespeare's historical perspective, he, as a character through whom the spectators observe and respond to the events on stage, provides a focal point for much of the action. (*Perspective* 43-44)<sup>9</sup>

Champion is certainly right to point out that Richard represents that focal point, but one should not allow this focal point to detract attention from the other strategists in the plays. Although Isaiah Berlin notes that Machiavelli was primarily seen by "the Elizabethans, dramatists and scholars alike, . . . [as] a man inspired by the Devil to lead good men to their doom, the great subverter, the teacher of evil, *le docteur de la scélératesse*, the inspirer of St Bartholomew's Eve, the original of Iago" ("The Originality of Machiavelli" 35), the distinction I will make below between the Machiavel and Machiavelli is worth keeping in mind. Richard is a Machiavel *extraordinaire*, and yet he is also at times a keen strategist who is able to out-manuever his enemies. Because strategists often work in the shadows and by duplicitous means, their actions are not always immediately clear to the audience. It may be true that this lack of clarity robs them of dramatic intensity,

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<sup>9</sup> A similar point is made by Robert Ornstein, who insists that Richard's soliloquy in 3.2 completely overrides all other scenes that follow in the play:

The perfunctory quality of some of the plotting in *Part III* makes one suspect that Shakespeare is more interested in developing Richard as a Machiavellian conspirator than in chronicling the final events of the civil war. He also seems less concerned with creating a satisfying dramatic form in *Part III* than with laying the groundwork for Richard's brilliant scheming in *Richard III*. (53)

It is an interpretation that is influenced by the assimilation of *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III*:

Such assimilation is symptomatic of the tendency to view *3 Henry VI* as an induction to *Richard III* . . . . The plans Gloucester lays out at the end of his soliloquy in 5.6, and his threatening asides in the final scene, both anticipate the coming action. But critics have sometimes pitted the success of *Richard III* against the difference of fortunes in Part Three, speculating that Shakespeare was bored when writing it. (Martin, Oxford *3HVI* 47)

As Martin argues, such interpretations ignore the incredibly rich exploration of politic stratagems that is offered in these plays. They also place too narrow a focus on Richard who, despite his dramatic complexity, is simply not the only character in the first tetralogy.

but it also reveals something quite striking and dynamic about politic stratagems. Strategic behaviour might not be especially intense, but there is something quite fascinating about watching all of this deception taking place just under the surface, building here, receding there, and finally revealing itself in a host of truly fascinating ways. The Machiavel may grab all the attention, but the true Machiavellian is not quite as willing to take centre-stage.

This study also aims to show the way that all characters are trying to pursue strategic objectives of one kind or another. Sometimes the results are quite surprising. For example, my study of *Richard III* suggests that Stanley, not Richard, might be the play's most successful strategist. Given this, my discussion of seemingly minor characters actually serves to cast Richard's own strategy in a different light. Richard is able to achieve temporary power, but he also gains everyone's hatred and he lacks the ability to maintain his throne. In other words, you can fool some people some of the time, but you cannot fool all people all of the time. Francesco Guicciardini argues that while it can be infinitely useful to seem better than you are, such false impressions do not last forever, especially if you are not good: "Fate ogni cosa per parere buoni, ché serve a infinite cose; ma perché le opinione false non durano, difficilmente vi riuscirá el parere lungamente buoni, se in veritá non sarete" (*Ricordi* C.44).<sup>10</sup> In a similar vein, Machiavelli criticizes Agathocles for his excessive cruelty, a flaw that is also shared by Richard: "we cannot define as skillful killing one's fellow citizens, betraying one's friends, and showing no loyalty, mercy, or moral obligation. These means can lead to

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<sup>10</sup> All subsequent translations of Guicciardini are my own.



power, but not glory” (*P* 8.34).<sup>11</sup> The nature of Richard’s strategy ensures that he cannot remain powerful for long: “after each successful murder . . . [Richard] is less able to preserve his appearance of honest piety” (Wilders 49-50). Once that is gone Richard is finished, for, as Blunt says before the Battle of Bosworth, Richard “hath no friends but what are friends for fear, / Which in his dearest need will fly from him” (*RIII* 5.2.20-21).

As Alexander Leggatt notes:

Behind the theatrical point there is political thinking. It is appropriate for an intriguer to be a solitary, but a king, whatever final privacy he maintains, must be the centre of a whole network of social and political relationships, and Richard simply cannot function in that way. Ironically, the role he has sought so long is the one role he cannot effectively play. (*Shakespeare’s Political Drama* 36)<sup>12</sup>

Thus I agree with Michael Manheim, who notes that duplicitous strategies are not confined to a single character in the first tetralogy, for a “majority” (92) of the characters display such behaviour. Manheim also notes that “while in some of” the later “plays [the characters’] Machiavellianism might be of minor importance, in *Henry VI* it is of fundamental importance” (80). I agree, and so I must disagree with critics who insist that “the stage seems dull, flat, and unprofitable whenever” Richard “is not present” (Garber,

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<sup>11</sup> In the original Italian Machiavelli does not use the word “skillful,” but “virtù,” a word that he uses again in this context throughout his writings (*Prince* 24-25). At another point in *The Prince* Machiavelli notes that “Antoninus was feared even by his own entourage, which resulted in his being killed by a centurion in the midst of his own army” (*P* 19.77). Likewise, Maximinus was so hated that the people “arose from fear of his ferocity . . . [and] killed him” (*P* 19.78). For more on tyranny and the perils of fortresses, see Mikael Hörnqvist, *Machiavelli and Empire* (208-10). Love may be based on false information about the prince’s true nature, but it is vitally important that the people think that the prince is good. Richard does temporarily fool some of the other characters in the play, but his deceptions are never sustained enough to bring him true success and glory:

[Richard III’s] complaint, ‘there is no creature loves me’ is self-pitying but is a comment on his failure as a politician. Richard is not even a good Machiavellian: he ignores Machiavelli’s advice to the ruler to ‘conciliate friends’ and make himself ‘loved by his subjects’. Contrary to his beliefs, he can teach Machiavelli nothing. (Wilders 50)

<sup>12</sup> The ultimate privacy of the king is perhaps best expressed by Henry V on the night before the Battle of Agincourt (*Henry V* 4.1.212-66), although his own father’s lament runs a close second (*2 Henry IV* 3.1.4-31), a lament that ends with the famous phrase “uneasy lies the head that wears the crown” (*2 Henry IV* 3.1.31).

*Shakespeare After All* 138), or that the play “takes on an entirely different quality when Richard is absent and when less colorful characters take center stage” (Pearlman 60). It may be a different quality, but that does not mean it is a lesser one. In fact, these seemingly less colorful characters have a few tricks of their own to play, tricks that are actually aided by their lack of ostentation. Thus I do not agree that Richard is Shakespeare’s “first finished theatrical character,” an assertion that would mean that everyone else on the stage is somehow unfinished (Greene 120). Equally unsustainable is Nicholas Brooke’s argument that

Richard is set in a favourable light to other people’s disadvantage. It is not a question of whether he is better or worse than other people, but simply that he is more real. This sense of him makes everyone else mere actors in a play. (*Shakespeare’s Early Tragedies* 55)

While I agree with Manheim on several points, his description of the behaviour and strategies of the seemingly minor characters “water[ed down], inconsistent Machiavellianism” (86) is one that my thesis aims to refute. While there is no question that not all characters pursue their strategies as rigorously or as successfully as Richard, they are *all* pursuing their own individual agendas and ambitions.

Such a scenario seems to me to be far more dynamic than a single strategist out-manoeuvring a series of foolish dupes, a scenario that one often finds in productions of *Richard III* (Siemon, Arden *RIII* 115-18). It is a view that has been expressed by many critics, but this point by Rackin is representative: “[*Richard III*] has a large cast of minor characters, but rather than diffusing Richard’s dominance, they serve to reinforce it, for most of them could be listed as ‘assorted victims’” (*Stages of History* 56). In contrast to this, Jane Howell’s BBC production of the first tetralogy made great use of the numerous soliloquies spoken by a large number of the characters and showed just how dynamic

such a situation can be. While Leggatt notes that “none of” the characters “can keep either the political initiative or the theatrical focus for very long” (*Shakespeare’s Political Drama* 9), Champion notes that

the significant use of soliloquies within each of [the plays] produces a perspective which places the spectator in a vitally important position and carries Shakespeare . . . structurally beyond the accomplishments of any previous chronicle playwright. On the one hand, the multiple strands create a sense of breadth but at some obvious expense to the spectator’s focus and the intensity of his interest; on the other, the extensive use of internalization tends to encourage the spectator’s emotional commitment to the character . . . [and] at least momentarily narrows the spectator’s focus. (*Perspective* 22-23)

It also encourages the impression that all of the characters are pursuing their own ends rather than merely being the victims of a single character’s designs. These numerous and varied pursuits, and their successful or failed outcomes, will thus be one of the prime focuses of my thesis.

### **1.3 MACHIAVELLI IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND**

While there are other politic authors, such as Guicciardini, More, and Holinshed, who will be utilized and referenced throughout my thesis, the most important of these is undoubtedly Machiavelli. However, even though my aim is to show the dramatic analogies between Shakespeare and Machiavelli rather than any direct or indirect influence, there is still the matter of defining just which Machiavelli I am referring to. Berlin once asked if any “other writer — and he not even a recognised philosopher — has caused his readers to disagree about his purposes so deeply and so widely?” (“The Originality of Machiavelli” 36).<sup>13</sup> In a similar vein, Benedetto Croce argues that the

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<sup>13</sup> Berlin gives a wonderful summation of some of these interpretations in “The Originality of Machiavelli” (25-36). For more on these diverging interpretations, see Eric W. Cochrane, “Machiavelli: 1940-1960,” Joseph Femia, *Machiavelli Revisited* (8-11), and Richard C. Clark, “Machiavelli: Bibliographical Spectrum.”

questions Machiavelli raises, as well as the question of Machiavelli himself, will never be closed: “Una questione che forse non si chiuderà mai: la questione del Machiavelli” (9). Just as the seemingly inexhaustible possibilities for interpretation have never deterred students of Shakespeare, so too has Machiavelli never lacked in having people more than willing to attach any number of different opinions and positions to him, and it was not long before Machiavelli, who had been commissioned by Pope Clement VII to write a history of Florence, had his works placed in the *Index librorum prohibitorum* by another pope, Paul IV.<sup>14</sup> Although there is no question that Machiavelli’s notoriety meant that he was known more by reputation than by direct access to his writings, Orsini argues that printers in Italy, England, and throughout Europe found numerous ways of getting around the bans on Machiavelli’s works:

a famous Elizabethan printer, John Wolfe, had evaded the ban on Machiavelli by printing the original text in London with a false Italian inscription. Wolfe was following the same device which Italian publishers, who had to cope with a similar Papal condemnation, resorted to after 1559. They continued to print the works of Machiavelli, but they kept the date of a former edition, 1550, complete with the license which an earlier Pope had seen fit to grant in 1531. In England as well as in Italy, the official ban only made Machiavelli’s works more eagerly looked for. Wolfe found it worth while to print not only the *Discorsi* and the *Prince* in 1584, but also three other volumes of Machiavelli’s writing in the following years, 1587 and 1588. (“Elizabethan Manuscript Translations” 313)<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> While over a century old, Pasquale Villari’s *The Life and Times of Niccolò Machiavelli* still offers one of the best discussions of Machiavelli’s complex reputation in Italy.

<sup>15</sup> Silvia Ruffo-Fiore disagrees with this date and argues that it was actually 1584 (139-40). John Roe argues that “a number of [English] manuscript translations of [*The Prince*] circulated in London in the 1580s, presumably inspired by [John] Wolfe’s Italian version of 1584” (“Shakespeare and Machiavelli” 359), while Joseph Khoury—who also insists that the works were published in 1584—points out that Wolfe was a friend of Gabriel Harvey and that Christopher Marlowe may have been made directly familiar with the works of Machiavelli while he was studying at Cambridge (330-31). Anglo notes that the demand for Machiavelli was high, both at Cambridge and elsewhere, and that Wolfe was an “enterprising Elizabethan printer . . . who recognized and seized the unique business opportunities offered” by that demand (*Machiavelli—The First Century* 174). As Raab notes: “no one copies, translates and illicitly prints a writer if people are not interested in reading him. And here the evidence is abundant” (52). This can be seen from the fact that there were over two hundred printed editions of Machiavelli’s works in the sixteenth-century alone (Kahn, “Machiavelli’s Reputation” 242). For more on the intense interest in

Orsini argues that the pioneering work by Adolf Gerber, who “set [it] out in detail” in his “monumental bibliography of Machiavelli’s works in manuscript, in print, and in translation,” should settle the issue (“Elizabethan Manuscript Translations” 313).<sup>16</sup>

Orsini also points out that “five MS. Translations of the *Prince* and three of the *Discourses*” in English still exist from this period (“Elizabethan Manuscript Translations” 313).<sup>17</sup> In regards to these translations, Roe makes the point that the “five of them [which] have survived . . . show some differences from each other, which suggests that more than one translator had tried his hand at translation” and that “the interest and activity sparked by Wolfe’s crafty initiative was keen” (“Shakespeare and Machiavelli” 359). Likewise, Raab argues that

manuscripts and printed books are like snakes: for every one you see there are a hundred others hidden in the undergrowth. The multiplicity of editions and translations thus indicates an interest in and demand for the works of Machiavelli. For these texts, manuscript and printed, were not produced without trouble and cost; nor, in the case of Wolfe’s illicit editions, without risk. (53).

And so, while there is no direct evidence that Shakespeare read Machiavelli, there is much evidence that the Florentine’s works were widely read all over Europe, so much so that Russ McDonald describes *The Prince* as “one of the most influential books in sixteenth-century Europe” (*Bedford Companion* 334).<sup>18</sup> England was no exception.

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Machiavelli’s works in England during this period, see Christopher Morris, “Machiavelli’s Reputation in Tudor England.” For more on the number of printed editions during the early modern period outside of England, see Sergio Bertelli and Piero Innocenti, *Bibliografia machiavelliana*.

<sup>16</sup> For more on this, see Gerber, “All of the Five Fictitious Italian Editions of Writings of Machiavelli and Three of Those of Pietro Aretino.”

<sup>17</sup> For more on arguments supporting direct or indirect familiarity with Machiavelli’s works, see Lily B. Campbell, *Shakespeare’s ‘Histories’* (321-6); Leslie Freeman, “Shakespeare’s Kings and Machiavelli’s Prince”; and Barbara J. Baines, “Kingship of the Silent King.”

<sup>18</sup> For more on Machiavelli’s immense influence in early modern Europe, see Sydney Anglo, *Machiavelli—The First Century*; Giuliano Procacci, *Machiavelli nella cultura europea dell’età moderna*; Robert Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince*; Victoria Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric*; Claude Lefort,

Despite Innocent Gentillet's claim in *Contre-Machiavel* (1576), that "the infectious Machiavellian doctrine, hath not breathed nor penetrated the entrails of most happy England" (qtd. in Wells, *Shakespeare's Politics* 108), the evidence shows that Machiavelli's works were as widely known in England as they were on the Continent, particularly by the mid-sixteenth century:

Machiavellian political philosophy was commented upon by a number of writers in the 1540s and, outside the Italian editors in the hands of a few privileged Englishmen, *The Prince* became available . . . in Latin as early as 1560, and in English by 1585. (Khoury 330-31)<sup>19</sup>

The extent of Machiavelli's influence in England has been debated by some, but as Felix Raab notes,

the answer does not lie in Wyndham Lewis's extravagant assertion that 'Machiavelli . . . was at the back of every Tudor mind'. But E. M. W. Tillyard's judgment that 'his basic doctrines lie outside the main sixteenth-century interests' will not do either, for Niccolò interested Tudor Englishmen in almost as many ways as they spelled his name. (67)

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*Le travail de l'oeuvre Machiavel*; and Rodolfo De Mattei, *Il problema della ragion di Stato nell'età della Controriforma*.

<sup>19</sup> This contention is very much in keeping with the one made later by E. M. W. Tillyard that Machiavelli's ideas were too out of the ordinary to have much of an impact on early modern England:

Such a way of thinking was abhorrent to the Elizabethans (as indeed it always has been and is now to the majority), who preferred to think of order as the norm to which disorder, though lamentably common, was yet the exception. (21)

Despite such claims, Tillyard nevertheless suggests that Machiavelli provoked a large degree of ambivalence and confusion for those who encountered his works either directly or indirectly:

I am [not] trying to prove that the educated man of Shakespeare's day did not know or heed him [Machiavelli], or that the semi-educated did not distort his image in a very queer way. What I mean is that the age, while making use of certain details of his writing, either ignored or refused to face what the man fundamentally stood for. It may even be that the whole fraudulent edifice of anti-Machiavellianism, based on a misunderstanding of his meaning and on a wrenching of his maxims from their contemporary context, was the unconscious means of punishing him for a fundamental heresy men hated too much to face and attack openly. (22)

However, this ambivalence and unwillingness to face what Machiavelli was believed to have stood for does suggest that many people were not ignorant of Machiavelli's works, for such a strong reaction must have been the result of more than simply just superficial knowledge of "certain details of his writing." One has to have at least some awareness of what one is refusing to face.

This reference to spelling also acknowledges the fact that while Machiavelli's works were often read in the original, they were just as likely to be read in one of the rising number of manuscript translations that were beginning to appear.<sup>20</sup>

This should not be surprising, for the early modern period saw scores of translations—both in manuscript and in book form—of writings from across the Continent, translations that were becoming more and more widely available:

From the 1560s onwards, a gigantic industry of translation revolutionizes what is possible for the English to read. Though the dramatist's familiarity with passages in the original is often demonstrable, Shakespeare's plays would scarcely have been possible without: Hoby's Castiglione (1561), Adlington's Apuleius (1566), Golding's Ovid (1567), North's Plutarch (1579), Harington's Ariosto (1591), Chapman's Homer (1598, in part), Holland's Livy (1600), Fairfax's Tasso (1600), and Florio's Montaigne (1603). To say that is, of course, to return to 'small Latin and less Greek': as a reader, Shakespeare was pretty much like most of us who have a reasonable command of a foreign language. Faced with the bulk of something like *Orlando Furioso*, we would still prefer a reliable trot; and the chances of our experiencing the whole work and of going back to it in the original are vastly increased by the existence of a good translation . . . . As Shakespearian reading, these works function in a variety of ways, ranging from idle perusal, to direct use as source, to material for minute verbal plagiarism. All the while they were putting him in touch with contemporary and past masterpieces, as well as with the phenomenon of multiple languages in the same space. (Barkan 41-42)

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<sup>20</sup> As Raab notes, these translations of Machiavelli's works rose with increasing frequency during the latter decades of the sixteenth century:

the *Arte of Warre* (trans. Peter Whitethorne who dedicated his work to Queen Elizabeth). 1563, 1573 and 1588; and Thomas Bedingfield's translation of the *Florentine Historie* (dedicated to Sir Christopher Hatton) in 1595. (52-53)

While Raab notes that "of *The Discourses* and *The Prince* . . . there were no printed translations until the Dacres translations of 1636 and 1640 respectively" (53), he also notes that we should pay particular attention to the word "printed," for these dates do not tell the whole story:

There were also manuscripts; seven of *The Prince*, probably representing three separate translations into English, and three of *The Discourses*, two of them incomplete. To all these should be added a French translation of *The Prince* (1553) dedicated to James Hamilton, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Arran, as well as Latin and Italian editions of Machiavelli's works which English travelers must have picked up abroad. (53)

One of the more famous descriptions of such travelers abroad is Roger Ascham's *The Scholemaster* (1570). Even though he was only in Italy for nine days, Ascham infamously remarked that he saw more than enough to convince him of the proverb "the Englishman Italianate is the devil incarnate" (qtd. in Salingar, "Tourneur" 438).

Barkan's point, as well as his partial list of texts, can certainly be expanded outwards to include a wider array of texts. This helps to explain why so many in early modern England seemed to be aware of Machiavelli despite *The Prince* not being translated into English—although it should be noted that many of his other works were translated before this—until 1640 (Raab 53). Andrew Hadfield has pointed out that Simon Patericke's 1603 translation of Gentillet's *Contre-Machiavel* contained "a translation of *The Prince* that included extracts from the *Discourses*" (Hadfield 214). If this is so, a reader of Gentillet would also be a reader of Machiavelli, not merely of Machiavelli as interpreted by Gentillet. At the same time, Gentillet's descriptions of Machiavelli's main ideas are so precise that the whole issue does seem to miss the mark. At numerous times throughout *Contre-Machiavel* Gentillet prefaces a point by noting that Machiavelli said it. He even paraphrases large sections of *The Prince* throughout the work, so any reader of the work would certainly be aware of more than just the caricatured image of Machiavelli. Whatever Gentillet's disapproval of Machiavelli, he has clearly read the Florentine quite intently, and this reading is strongly passed on to the readers of Gentillet's book.

In any case, Edith Simon notes that the

book was read all over Europe, and within 75 years the word "Machiavellian" had entered the speech of Italy, England, France, and Spain. Elizabethan dramatists, while professing to loathe Machiavellian principles, were fascinated by them. (67)<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Speaking of the French connection, Machiavelli is mentioned three times in the *Essais* of Michel de Montaigne. Of particular interest are the dramatic possibilities opened up by Montaigne's contention that Machiavelli's arguments . . . were solid enough for the subject, yet it was very easy to combat them; and those who did so left it no less easy to combat theirs. In such an argument there would always be matter for answers, rejoinder, replications, triplications, quadruplications, and that infinite web of disputes that our pettifoggers have spun out as far as they could in favor of lawsuits . . . . For the reasons have little other foundation than experience, and the diversity of human events offers us infinite examples in all sorts of forms. (497)



This note is seconded by Felix Raab's contention that Machiavelli was seen by many to have anticipated many of the political changes that were taking place in early modern England:

The period of Tudor rule . . . a period when events themselves were shaking the ideological structure in terms of which men saw the world. This Machiavelli, himself a product of an earlier phase of the same process of change, caused some Englishmen to nod or shake their heads very vigorously, according to their temperaments and the degree to which they were prepared to accept the new world. Others closed their eyes, but very few shrugged their shoulders. (67)

McDonald points out that whatever Machiavelli's reputation, "much of Elizabeth's maneuvering might have come from the pages of" *The Prince* (*Bedford Companion* 311). Rackin points out that these changes were not taking place solely at the court and amongst the nobility, for "the Machiavel" also "represented the threats to traditional order posed by emergent capitalism," an association made "explicit in Thomas Heywood's satiric pamphlet, *Machiavel as He lately appeared to his deare Sons, the Moderne Projectors* (1641)" (*Stages of History* 73-74). Likewise, Manheim argues that it is "clear" just "how imbued were Elizabethans with the new political ethos, even those who might most vociferously condemn the Machiavel" (12).<sup>22</sup> This ambiguity can be found in John Wolfe's strong personal reaction to Machiavelli's writings:

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Such an "an infinite web of disputes," with "infinite examples in all sorts of forms," could not but be intriguing for a dramatist. This is not to say that Shakespeare became aware of Machiavelli through Montaigne, for there is no evidence that Shakespeare encountered Montaigne before John Florio's 1603 translation, but it does suggest not only that such ideas were "in the air" but that such ideas must have seemed ideal for dramatic exploration. For more on this connection, see Hugh Grady, *Shakespeare, Machiavelli, and Montaigne*.

<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere Manheim argues that

the influence of Christian humanists in sixteenth-century political life and institutions gave way to more sinister descendants. It was the Machiavellian brand of the new humanistic spirit which grew in influence following Henry VIII's divorce in the 1530s and was widespread by the end of the century. (91)

Despite the spread of Machiavelli's ideas, few were willing to claim direct knowledge of the Florentine (Ruffio-Fiore 141). Such a scenario is in keeping with the Machiavel's declaration in *The Jew of Malta*

The more I read, the more they pleased me, and to speak truly, every hour I discovered new doctrine in them, new sharpness of wit, and new methods of learning the true way of drawing some utility from the profitable reading of histories, and, in brief, I realized that I had learned more from these works in one day about the government of the world, than I had in all my past life, from all the histories I had read. (qtd. in Kahn, “Machiavelli’s Reputation” 243)

Wolfe was not alone in his fascination. Whatever their public pronouncements to the contrary, many early modern readers had similar reactions to Machiavelli’s works. As C. W. R. D. Moseley notes:

Machiavelli’s was one of those books of which everybody professes horror—and reads under the bedclothes; his very name became an English noun, the Machiavel, signifying an utterly amoral, clever villain. The policies of a number of Tudor politicians—Thomas Cromwell, Cecil, Leicester—were influenced in some degree by it, and Francis Bacon, Walter Raleigh and Christopher Marlowe all made some intelligent use of it, even if occasionally gingerly. (22)<sup>23</sup>

This blending of public scorn and private attraction—which is quite Machiavellian in and of itself—finds wonderful expression in the plays of Shakespeare’s contemporary Christopher Marlowe, who is also believed by some to have read Machiavelli’s works.<sup>24</sup>

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that those who damn him most are those who actually read him most thoroughly. However, the historian G. R. Elton disputes the belief that Thomas Cromwell and others like him read *The Prince*, arguing instead that such a knowledge of politics and strategy could come as much from observation as from any book:

By now, general opinion has accepted Thomas Cromwell as a ‘Machiavellian’, though it is doubtful if he ever read Machiavelli and certain that he did not learn his statecraft from any book. (*England Under the Tudors* 128)

It is possible that Shakespeare also picked up his interest in politic stratagems from observation and experience rather than reading. As Guicciardini notes, experience is a greater teacher of politics than books, for the rules and conduct they preach will always clash with the reality of the situation: “Non si può in effetto procedere sempre con una regola indistinta e ferma . . . rade volte si impara tanto che basti con la esperienza; co’ libri non mai” (*Ricordi* C.186). For more on Elton’s intriguing views of Cromwell and his penchant for maneuver and counter-maneuver, a penchant that ultimately ended in his out-maneuvering himself, see “The Political Creed of Thomas Cromwell.”

<sup>23</sup> As Paul Siegel notes, there were nationalistic reasons for such demonization: “what Machiavelli called a “ragione di stato” and what English political observers in later ages called a “raison d’etat” and “Realpolitik”—[were] foreign phrases used to refer to what the English preferred to regard as un-English” (63).

<sup>24</sup> Although the question is “much debated” and is probably impossible to prove (Cheney 15), it should be remembered that Gabriel Harvey wrote that Machiavelli “was much read at the universities” (Tillyard 22). As Joseph Khoury notes, Harvey was speaking specifically about Machiavelli at Cambridge in 1579, the

Likewise, his fellow at Cambridge, Gabriel Harvey, had written in a letter from the 1580s that Machiavelli was already widely known in the universities:

sum good fellowes amongst us begin nowe to be prettely well acquayntid with a certayne parlous booke callid, as I remember me, *Il Principe de Niccolo Machiavelli*, and I can peradventure name you an odd crewe or tooe that ar as cuninge in his *Discorsi sopra la prima Deca di Livio*, in his *Historia Florentina*, and in his *Dialogues della Arte della Guerra* tooe.” (qtd. in Hadfield 17)<sup>25</sup>

How well was Machiavelli known outside of Cambridge? A translation of Machiavelli’s *Art of War* was presented to Elizabeth I by Peter Whitehorne in 1579, and while this was for the court, it is clear that awareness of Machiavelli was quickly spreading (Jorgensen 196-97).<sup>26</sup> Marlowe clearly felt confident enough that Machiavelli was at least somewhat known to his audience, for in *The Jew of Malta* the character of Machiavel walks out onto the stage to make a defiant declaration:

To some perhaps my name is odious,  
But such as love me guard me from their tongues,  
And let them know that I am Machiavel,  
And weigh not men, and therefore not men’s words.  
Admired I am of those that hate me most.  
Though some speak openly against my books,  
Yet will they read me and thereby attain  
To Peter’s chair, and, when they cast me off,  
Are poisoned by my climbing followers . . . .  
Many will talk of title to a crown;  
What right had Caesar to the empery?  
Might first made kings, and laws were then most sure  
When, like the Draco’s, they were writ in blood. (Prologue.5-21)<sup>27</sup>

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year before Marlowe began his studies there (330-31). For more on this connection, see T. H. Jameson, “The ‘Machiavellianism’ of Gabriel Harvey” and Irving Ribner, “Marlowe and Machiavelli.”

<sup>25</sup> Aside from *The Prince*, the other works referred to by Harvey here are *The Discourses*, *The Florentine Histories*, and *The Art of War*.

<sup>26</sup> For more on the plethora of books on military strategy that appeared during this period, see Jorgensen, *Shakespeare’s Military World* and Nick de Somogyi, *Shakespeare’s Theatre of War* (21-24).

<sup>27</sup> Robert Weimann and Douglas Bruster distinguish between Shakespeare’s Machiavellian villains, who appear to them as genuine dramatic characters, and the more self-consciously artificial Machiavels of convention:

However isolated and rhetorically complete such an utterance [the Machiavel’s] may seem, it possesses what we would call an internal dialogue, one conducted between the actor and his role. For here the actor delivering the prologue surely displays, in his

As S. Schoenbaum notes, Robert Greene's famous *Greene's Groatsworth of Witte* (1592) not only attacked Shakespeare as an upstart crow, for Greene leveled several accusations against Marlowe as well: "[Greene] rebukes the 'famous gracer of tragedians' – Marlowe—for atheism and for discipleship of Machiavelli" (*William Shakespeare* 153). Such charges may have been baseless, but why would Marlowe use such a figure if he did not expect audiences to understand whom he was depicting? Nevertheless, as dramatically arresting as such a representation is, it indicates that by Shakespeare's time the image of Machiavelli had already begun to resemble that of a caricature, a "stock character" (Rackin, *Stages of History* 51), or a "fantastic illustration[]" (Richmond 160).

Perhaps this is why John Wilders insists that "it is likely that Shakespeare was familiar with the teachings of Machiavelli either at first hand or by report" (48). There are three direct references to Machiavelli in Shakespeare's works. In *1 Henry VI* Joan insists that Alençon is the father of her child, an insistence that produces the following exclamation from an incredulous York: "Alençon, that notorious Machiavel?" (5.3.74). This reference produces no editorial response from Edward Burns, while Michael Taylor merely describes it as a "nonchalant anachronism" to "a famous political writer in the sixteenth century" (Oxford *IHVI* 239). He goes on to insist that while Rackin has described "the world of" the play as "Machiavellian," the reference has little to do with the Florentine and more to do with negative English attitudes towards the marital intentions of the French Duke of Alençon who tried to marry Elizabeth I in 1579 (Oxford

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performance of the role, some awareness of its artificial nature – multiply aligned as it is, not only through its function as formal, presenting prologue, but also through the dramatic tradition of Vice comedy and the full freight of Machiavelli's caricatured reputation. (188)

By engaging with the issue of strategy and its impact on drama, Shakespeare's first tetralogy seeks to transcend such caricatures.

*IHVI* 239-40).<sup>28</sup> However, as my discussion of Alençon’s behavior and strategy will show, this reference is far less nonchalant than it appears. For now, suffice it to say that this “nonchalant anachronism” is spoken only a few lines before Alençon helps to duplicitously bring about a truce that will bring about the end of the Hundred Years’ War in France’s favour. The second reference is in *3 Henry VI*, as Richard proclaims his ability to “add colours to the chameleon, / Change shapes with Proteus for advantages, / And set the murderous Machiavel to school” (3.2.191-93). This reference clearly shows both an awareness of Machiavelli and a keen understanding of the dramatic quality of the strategies and deceptions he describes. Randall Martin argues that the line can be interpreted as one that expresses Richard’s desire to “become Machiavelli’s schoolmaster” (Oxford *3HVI* 245), a desire that does not suggest a mere nonchalant anachronism.

Nevertheless, some still insist that the issue of direct knowledge alone is what is important, and for them the jury is still out on whether Shakespeare was familiar with Machiavelli’s works or merely with the stage Machiavel of Marlowe and others. Felix

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<sup>28</sup> Innocent Gentillet dedicated *Contre-Machiavel* to the Duke (Hillman 168), opening the work with a letter describing—with an obvious slander against Catherine de’ Medici—the pernicious effect that Machiavelli had had in France during the past fifteen years. Gentillet accused Machiavelli of teaching bad monarchs how to be tyrants and good monarchs to disdain their own goodness:

Monseigneur, estant sur la point de sposer en lumiere ces Discours contre Machiavel, pour descouvrir aux gens d'entendement de nostre nation Françoise la source et les auteurs de la tyrannie qui est exercee en France depuis quinze ans et plus, par ceux qui ont trop abusé tant de la minorité que la bonté naïfve des roys: ils est advenu, par la grace de Dieu, que vostre Excellence a pris la protection des loix et du bien public du royaume, contre cete tyrannie. (19)

Brian Copenhaver and Charles B. Schmitt note that

Machiavelli’s status as a political philosopher suffered most of all from Huguenot critics in the 1570s who finally turned against Catherine de’ Medici, holding her responsible for St Bartholomew’s Day and knowing her to be the daughter of the Lorenzo de’ Medici to whom Machiavelli had dedicated *The Prince*. (51)

For more on Machiavelli’s influence on early modern French literature, see Heather Ingman’s *Machiavelli in Sixteenth-Century French Fiction*, E. M. Beame, “The Use and Abuse of Machiavelli: the sixteenth century French adaptation,” and D. R. Kelley, “Murdr’ous Machiavel in France.” For more on Machiavelli’s effect on the French monarchy as described here by Gentillet, see E. H. Dickerman, “Henry III of France: student of the Prince.”

Raab makes a rather convincing argument that although knowledge of Machiavelli had been somewhat limited in the mid-sixteenth century, by Shakespeare's time things had widened considerably: "Everything indicates that, at least from the middle 'eighties onwards, Machiavelli was being quite widely read in England and was no longer the sole preserve of 'Italianate' Englishmen and their personal contacts, as had been the case earlier" (52-53). More recently Anne Barton has even gone so far as to argue that "it would be more surprising if it could be proved that Shakespeare had managed to avoid reading Machiavelli than if concrete evidence were to turn up that he had" (122).<sup>29</sup> A discussion of this issue is provided by Andrew Hadfield, who notes that while "we can safely deduce that [Shakespeare] was interested in contemporary political events," it is difficult to determine "exactly what Shakespeare would have read or known" (14). Hadfield suggests that Shakespeare "could have accessed" the works of Machiavelli and others "in a more reader-friendly, abbreviated format, or searched out the required passages. In doing so, he would have been a typical rather than an unusual Elizabethan reader" (18-19). This same point is made by Robert S. Miola, who argues that "Elizabethans moved rapidly, eclectically, and associatively from text to text looking for

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<sup>29</sup> The evidence suggests that Shakespeare was at least familiar with some of these works. For example, William Painter collected and translated some of Boccaccio's tales from *The Decameron* for his *The Palace of Pleasure* (1567), a collection that helped inspire both *Romeo and Juliet* and *All's Well That Ends Well*. Likewise, Cinthio's collection of prose tales *Hecatommithi* (1565) helped to provide the inspiration for both *Othello* and—via George Whetstone's *An Heptameron of Civil Discourses* (1582)—*Measure for Measure*. In regards to *Othello*, Michael Neill points out in his Oxford edition of the play that Shakespeare seems to have read Cinthio in the original Italian, for the play's "verbal parallels overwhelmingly favour the Italian version" (21-22). Leonard Barkan also argues that Shakespeare had to have been aware of Cinthio in the original (43). Was Shakespeare able to read Italian, as Anne Barton also contends (78), or did he simply know people—like, for example, George Whetstone—who could? Does this example have any bearing on Shakespeare's possible knowledge of Machiavelli? Is it affected by Jonathan Bate's similar contention that Shakespeare must have had "a reading knowledge of Italian" in order to write *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* (*Soul of the Age* 141-42)? It is possible that he was familiar with one of the many manuscript copies described by Raab and others, but perhaps he had simply discussed Machiavelli with someone who was familiar with the Florentine. For more on this issue, see Robert S. Miola, *Shakespeare's Reading* and Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Renaissance Politics* (14-19).

connections, following impulses, working and playing” (*Shakespeare’s Reading* 4). Did Shakespeare read the kinds of abbreviated texts or anthologies described by Miola? If anything, this certainly shows that the issue of what works Shakespeare was or was not aware of is far from being settled. As Miola suggests, Shakespeare’s works indicate a kind of eclectic and associative thinking, something that may not be possible to pin down concretely but something that is nevertheless quite fruitful when one begins to look for dramatic analogies rather than direct quotations.

Do Shakespeare’s plays suggest only an awareness of Machiavelli’s name, or do they “display a multivalent complex influence of and reaction to,” directly or indirectly, numerous “Machiavellian themes” (Grady 44)? John D. Cox and Eric Rasmussen note that the reference to Machiavelli in *3 Henry VI* “perpetuates the Elizabethan demonic caricature of Machiavelli,” but go on to note that Machiavelli’s “real insights about power and influence are often embodied in Shakespeare’s history plays” (Arden *3HVI* 280). Whether this embodiment is a result of a direct awareness of Machiavelli or of Shakespeare’s encounters with similar ideas in the plays of Marlowe, the histories of Edward Hall and Ralph Holinshed or other politic historians, the fruits of direct experience, or some other source, it is clear that there are some very distinct analogies between Machiavelli’s exploration of strategy and Shakespeare’s.<sup>30</sup> The third and final direct reference occurs in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and while it may seem to be the most comic of the three, even it indicates an awareness of the Florentine and not just a nonchalant anachronism. The Host exclaims comically: “Am I politic? Am I subtle? Am I a Machiavel?” (3.1.84-85). While T. W. Craik is right to point out that the Host’s

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<sup>30</sup> For more on the reading of Holinshed during the early modern period by Shakespeare and others, see Annabel Patterson, *Reading Holinshed’s Chronicles*.

words here do not have their “usual sinister significance”—to the extent that they are “perhaps . . . a jocular allusion”—even here it is noted that the Host’s words are, jokingly or not, clearly in reference to Machiavelli, for Craik notes that the reference is not merely to the Florentine but also to ideas associated with “the political practices recommended in Machiavelli’s *The Prince*” (149).

The Host’s words are also in keeping with Orsini’s contention above that these words are all “almost the technical terms of Machiavellianism in England, to the extent that whenever they are found with that meaning in an Elizabethan text, a Machiavellian influence may be traced either directly or indirectly” (“Policy” 122).<sup>31</sup> Likewise, Spivack notes that the word “policy” came to be explicitly linked to Machiavellianism: “because of its . . . association with Machiavelli, *policy* characterizes the behavior of the villain who glories in the serpentine convolutions through which he pursues power, wealth, or revenge” (374).<sup>32</sup> This connection is also made by Rossiter (“Angels with Horns” 79-80), and Ronald Knowles, who describes “policy” as a “key Machiavellian word” for Shakespeare (*Arguments with History* 12). At the same time, there are numerous indirect

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<sup>31</sup> Likewise, as Manheim notes:

Political leaders [during the early modern period] . . . sincerely believed themselves true and devout Christians at the same time that they felt increasingly justified in ignoring Christian precepts in political dealings. What once might have been considered hypocrisy was coming to be thought of as *policy*. (80)

Discussing the Archbishop in *Henry V*, Andrew Hadfield makes the similar contention that the use of the word “policy” indicates a familiarity with both the nature of strategy and Machiavellianism: “he understands the world of political reality astutely, as his earlier use of the Machiavellian term ‘policy’ indicates” (57). In a similar vein, Mark Matheson makes note of the use of the word “statesmen” in *Othello* (1.2.100) and argues that the word should also be interpreted in regards to Machiavelli:

This is one of the earliest recorded uses of ‘statesmen’, a noun which evokes the republican setting of the Italian city-state . . . [and] a category of men typified by Machiavelli. (174)

<sup>32</sup> These words are also used with the same connotation by Hall and Holinshed. For example, Hall criticizes the “politike Pinces” who clambered around the young Henry VI in an effort to seize power (qtd. in Bullough 45), while also devoting much attention to York’s “pollitique[] handl[ing] of his business” (qtd. in Bullough 122). Likewise, Holinshed often refers to York in particular as being politic, for his stratagems were “so politikelie handled, and so secretlie kept, that prouision to his purpose was readie, before his purpose was openlie published” (qtd. in Nicoll and Nicoll 110).



references to some of Machiavelli's ideas in Shakespeare's works that are worth keeping in mind. To stress this I will look at two examples. The first is Machiavelli's argument that it is better to be feared than loved:

My reply is that one would like to be both, but as it is difficult to combine love and fear, if one has to choose between them it is far safer to be feared than loved. (*P* 17.65)<sup>33</sup>

This basic concept can be found at many different points throughout Shakespeare's writings. For example, Lucrece argues that "this deed will make thee loved for fear, / But happy monarchs still are feared for love" (*Lucrece* 610-11). In *Henry V*, the conspirator Cambridge reassures his sovereign that there "never was monarch better feared and loved / Than" he was (*Henry V* 2.2.25-26). In *Macbeth* Angus argues that "those [Macbeth] commands move only in command, / Nothing in love" (*Macbeth* 5.2.19-20), while in *Antony and Cleopatra* Octavius is told that his enemy Pompey "is beloved of those / That only have feared Caesar" (*Antony and Cleopatra* 1.4.37-38). All of these instances would seem to indicate a startlingly precise analogue to Machiavelli's famous question about whether it is better to be feared or loved. The second is Machiavelli's insistence that princes must make use of both the courage of the lion and the cunning of the fox (*P* 18.68-69). In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Demetrius mocks Snug as the Lion during the play-within-the-play by remarking that "this fellow is a very fox for his valour" (5.1.223), a joke that plays on the two dichotomies explored by Machiavelli. This dichotomy is also discussed at length by Timon:

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<sup>33</sup> Machiavelli was well aware of the power of fear, having been tortured by the Medici for his supposed involvement in a plot against them. Using the *strappado*, Machiavelli's torturers tied his arms behind his back and dropped him from a great height: "four drops on the rope were usually enough to subdue any body and any spirit, and if they did not suffice, the torture went on even though their limbs were dislocated and their flesh torn. Niccolò had six drops, which he bore with . . . courage and patience." (Ridolfi, *The Life of Niccolò Machiavelli* 64).

A beastly ambition, which the gods grant thee t'attain to. If thou wert the lion, the fox would beguile thee. If thou wert the lamb, the fox would eat thee. If thou wert the fox, the lion would suspect thee. (*Timon of Athens* 4.3.324-27)

The list could continue further. Do these verbal parallels indicate that Shakespeare was aware of Machiavelli's works, that he picked up the concept from other sources, or merely that he was concerned with the same questions and that this concern resulted in distinct dramatic analogies between their works?<sup>34</sup> One can never satisfactorily prove the former, but the latter is enough of a justification to explore the nature of the analogues and their implications.

#### **1.4 SHAKESPEARE'S READING OF OTHER POLITIC AUTHORS**

At this point it is worth stressing that, despite his notoriety, Machiavelli was not the only politic author available to early modern readers, for many politic writers emerged during this period, writers who will also loom quite large in my thesis. Many of these writers did read Machiavelli, and so their works present a kind of implicit version of Machiavelli's chief ideas and concerns, a version that suggests that Machiavelli's works can be seen as a sort of epicenter of political thinking in the early modern period. We are on much firmer ground that Shakespeare was familiar with these works, works that do show some kind of Machiavellian influence and which may have triggered Shakespeare's interest in politic stratagems. The issue of Shakespeare's reading has begun to receive much more attention in recent years, and critics such as Robert S. Miola have done much to show the degree to which "Shakespeare created his own art from his reading" (*Shakespeare's Reading* 1). Miola feels that Shakespeare made good use of the

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<sup>34</sup> Such as Holinshed, who notes that the allies of Warwick came to place Henry VI back on the throne with the two emotions foremost in their hearts: "other lords and gentlemen [came], some for feare, and some for loue" (qtd. in Nicoll and Nicoll 132). Likewise, Hall argues that followers came to Warwick "for feare, & some for love" (qtd. in Bullough 193).

abbreviated anthologies that were beginning to multiply all over London—particularly around St. Paul’s Cathedral—in the 1580s and 1590s, and that “the impulse to read analogically and collect parallels everywhere shows itself in [his] work” (*Shakespeare’s Reading* 4).

Can examples of this impulse be seen by exploring the dramatic analogies between Shakespeare and politic authors such as Machiavelli? Jonathan Bate argues that Shakespeare “had a restless imagination, not a Jonsonian predilection for mental hoarding. He would gut a book for its nourishment, then cast it aside” (*Soul of the Age* 134-35). Bate even goes so far as to suggest that Shakespeare’s library “contained no more than about forty volumes and possibly as few as twenty (excluding his own)” (*Soul of the Age* 135).<sup>35</sup> How much—or how little—did Shakespeare read? Jeff Dolven and Sean Keilen point out that the question has never been satisfactorily answered: we know that he read and we know about some of the books that he seems to have read specifically, but beyond that the issue begins to get muddy:

Subsequent opinion has had it that [Shakespeare] read everything and nothing, that he was polymath and philistine. Praising the lifelikeness of his plays, Ben Jonson, the poet’s friend, let slip that Shakespeare ‘had small Latin and less Greek’—the nativist Shakespeare most prized by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, an avid reader of Nature’s book. By contrast, the new scholars’ Shakespeare, the man of [T.W.] Baldwin’s *William Shakespere’s Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, sometimes seems to have read everything, adding to intuitive genius the achievements of scholarly enterprise. The truth must lie somewhere in between . . . . Shakespeare thought about reading in all its forms, all his life – thought back to his own schooldays, back to ancient Rome, and across the classes and professions of his native city. The result is a portrait of reading as a culturally central but rapidly transforming practice, made from the vantage of a theatre that was changing just as fast. (16)

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<sup>35</sup> For possible Shakespearean reading lists, see Robert S. Miola, *Shakespeare’s Reading* (16) and Jonathan Bate, *Soul of the Age* (131-46).

The question nevertheless troubles and perplexes us, particularly because it is difficult if not impossible to answer completely:

Warwickshire illiterate; supplier of story-lines to the groundlings; Renaissance polymath. You show me your Shakespeare, and I'll show you a hypothesis about the size and character of his library. We have no hard facts about Shakespeare the reader: no personal documents, no inventories, no annotated volumes with his bookplate. And though his . . . characters often turn up with books in their hands (sometimes merely *pretending* to read them), we have no . . . equivalent of the opening moment in Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*, where the struggling poet consults pages from his predecessor's work. The impossibility of answering the question only adds to its allure. (Barkan 31)<sup>36</sup>

We also have no direct evidence that Shakespeare read Sidney's works either, although it does appear that the subplot involving Gloucester and his sons in *King Lear* may have been inspired by Sidney's *Arcadia* (Miola, *Shakespeare's Reading* 112-13). Jonathan Bate speculates that Shakespeare probably "did possess and keep" a copy of *Arcadia* and that he may have seen "the (unauthorized) 1591 printing of" *Astrophil and Stella* (*Soul of the Age* 143-44). A suggestion for how we should respond to the issue of Shakespeare's reading is provided by Stanley Wells in his Oxford edition of *King Lear*, for while he does insist that Shakespeare probably read Sidney (26-27), his interest is in what he did with that reading, for Shakespeare ultimately created stories "of his own invention in spite of [these stories] having [their] origins" elsewhere (43). Machiavelli's writings offer a very helpful way of charting this territory and its central issues and concerns, but only to better help us understand and appreciate how Shakespeare made his way through it.

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<sup>36</sup> Sidney does seem to have been familiar with the works of Machiavelli, and John Hoskyns paraphrases a passage from *The Discourses* in "Sidney's *Arcadia* and the rhetoric of English prose" (c. 1599) (Vickers, *English Renaissance Literary Criticism* 421). For more on Sidney's knowledge of Machiavelli's works, see Campbell, *Shakespeare's "Histories"* (331-32).

However, Machiavelli is not the only possible source for Shakespeare's interest in politic stratagems. Some of the strategic ideas one finds in Shakespeare's works could have just as easily come from one of the many early modern sources on politic matters, including his main sources Hall and Holinshed (Brockbank, "The Frame of Disorder" 58). For example, Andrew Hadfield notes that Shakespeare's depiction of military conduct and strategy in *Henry V* could have been influenced by "the translation of [Machiavelli's] *The Art of Warre* published in 1560" or that he "could have gleaned" it "from a variety of contacts" that were readily available in English at the time (70). As Robin Headlam Wells notes, the increased interest in "politic" history during this period, an interest seen in the writings of some Shakespeare's sources like Edward Hall, Ralph Holinshed, and Thomas North, could have also found its way into Shakespeare's plays:<sup>37</sup>

As humanism came to influence every aspect of European thought . . . , historians turned to classical antiquity for their models . . . the new 'politic' historians concerned themselves, not with man's eternal salvation, but with the more immediate problems of his political survival. Elements of the new interest in human action can sometimes be seen in writers like Hall and Holinshed and their mentor Polydore Vergil (c.1470-1555). But it was not until the influence of Machiavelli and Francesco Guicciardini (1483-1540) made itself felt that historians began seriously to develop the political aspects of their material. The preface by Jacques Amyot (1513-1590) to his French translation of Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* contains an eloquent defence of the new pragmatic approach to history (the Plutarch that Shakespeare used was a retranslation of this edition by Sir Thomas North in 1579). (*Shakespeare's Politics* 155-56)<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The best work on this subject remains Geoffrey Bullough's *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*. For more on Shakespeare's use of sources for the first tetralogy, see "Volume 3: Earlier English History Plays." Equally helpful information on this topic can also be found in Selma Guttman, *The Foreign Sources of Shakespeare* and Kenneth Muir, *The Sources for Shakespeare's Plays*.

<sup>38</sup> Although Vergil has generally not received the same amount of scholarly attention as Hall or Holinshed, Dominique Goy-Blanquet notes that "Hall's *Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of York and Lancaster*, published in 1548, is to a large extent a wordy translation of Vergil's elegant Latin" history (62-63). Like Vergil, Machiavelli's fellow Florentine Guicciardini has also been largely overlooked, even though a translation of his *Storia d'Italia* (1537-1540) was completed by Geoffrey Fenton in 1579 (Foakes 108) and inspired both John Marston's *Antonio and Mellida* (1599) and Barnabe Barnes' *The Devil's Charter* (1606). The latter play even has "a presenter called 'Guichiardine'" (Cox, *The Devil and the Sacred in English Drama* 189-90). For more on Machiavelli and Guicciardini, see J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* (133-34).

Wells does not mention Tacitus, but the works of this ancient Roman historian also had a large influence on the writing of politic history, a form of history that went on to have a large influence on the first tetralogy, in which events “are explained in the Machiavellian terms of politic history” (Rackin, *Stages of History* 27), for “the writing of Tacitean ‘politic’ history is always linked to that of Machiavelli and Guicciardini” (Knowles, *Arguments with History* 181).<sup>39</sup>

Guicciardini writes in his *Ricordi* that Tacitus is a teacher both for tyrants and for those who must live under them (C.18), while Montaigne writes that Tacitus’ *History*

is not a book to read, it is a book to study and learn; it is so full of maxims that you find every sort, both right and wrong; it is a nursery of ethical and political reflections for the provision and adornment of those who hold a place in the management of the world. (719)<sup>40</sup>

As Shelby Foote notes in his introduction to *The Annals & The Histories*, Tacitus was also popular with the Florentine: “Machiavelli was accused of using Tacitus as his

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<sup>39</sup> Machiavelli makes several direct references to Tacitus in both *The Florentine Histories* and in *The Discourses*. William Hamlin argues that early modern discussions of Tacitus, be they by Justus Lipsius or Ben Jonson, were often indirect discussions of Machiavelli, who was much more likely to be censored and condemned (123). Paul Cartledge argues that “Tacitism . . . is a technical term for early modernists, referring to the . . . European conception and reception of Tacitus as a master of *raison d’état*, the politician’s wise adviser, in short a Machiavelli-substitute” (270). Such prohibitions did not exist in England, and as David Norbrook notes, this cross-over of influence can be found in many English early modern plays such as Ben Jonson’s *Sejanus* (182). For more on this, see Malcolm Smuts, “Court-centred politics and Roman Historians” and Paul J. C. M. Franssen, “Testing or Tempting?”

<sup>40</sup> Alexandra Gajda notes that Tacitus’ influence on Machiavelli’s friend Guicciardini was immense: Tacitus strongly influenced the colour, content and style of Guicciardini’s mature writings about politics . . . Guicciardini’s understanding of historical causation was the particularity of the interplay of human factors with Fortune, irresistible and unknowable. His depiction of the operation of power was relentlessly cynical: in his excoriating character portraits, statesmen and rulers are motivated by self-interest and ambition, rather than virtue or the public good. (255-56)

For more on Tacitus and Guicciardini, see Roberto Ridolfi’s excellent biography *The Life of Francesco Guicciardini* (5, 138). For more on the relationship between Machiavelli and Guicciardini, see Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini* and Federico Chabod, *Machiavelli and the Renaissance* (109-15).

connection with the devil” (xiii).<sup>41</sup> Robert S. Miola argues that Shakespeare was probably familiar with Tacitus (*Shakespeare’s Reading* 58), a view shared by Leonard Barkan (40).<sup>42</sup> Shakespeare’s conception of strategy may have come from Tacitus, or it may have come from one of the numerous historical works he consulted when writing his plays.<sup>43</sup> As Manheim notes, the behaviour that we would describe as Machiavellian was becoming more and more standard during the early modern period:

Men who sought to apply Machiavellian practices in political life, while personally remaining sincere men of faith, dominated government offices of the 1580s and 1590s and as a class were the likeliest models for the majority of characters in the history plays [of Shakespeare] . . . the men in positions of importance in Tudor politics increasingly had more the look of Thomas Cromwell than of Thomas More. (80-81)

This latter point is interesting, for while More’s career may not suggest a tremendous amount of strategic acumen, his writings on Richard III certainly do. These examples do show that a concentration on the analogies between Shakespeare and Machiavelli is quite

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<sup>41</sup> Norbrook notes that “Tacitism was in some ways a disguised Machiavellianism . . . Towards the end of the sixteenth century . . . Machiavellian ideas tended to be adopted under a classical disguise, in the form of commentaries on Tacitus” (172).

<sup>42</sup> Tacitus’ influence on early modern writers was immense. The best place to begin is probably Alexandra Gajda, “Tacitus and political thought in early modern Europe, c. 1530 — c. 1640,” followed by Kenneth C. Schelhase, *Tacitus in Renaissance Political Thought*. F. J. Levy links the interest with Tacitus to the followers of the Earl of Essex (251), and Martin Dzelzainis argues that

the histories in which Tacitus laid bare the treachery and corruption of Imperial Rome spoke powerfully to the court culture of the late sixteenth century . . . Tacitus initiated his readers into secrets of state (*arcane imperii*) . . . While the histories could be taken as a republican critique of the principate, the dominant reading . . . was that they taught subjects how to survive under a tyranny, and the tyrant how to set one up. (“Shakespeare and Political Thought” 107-08)

Malcolm Smuts argues that Francis Bacon was heavily influenced by Tacitus’ writings (30), a relationship that is also explored in Edwin B. Benjamin, “Bacon and Tacitus.” This interest was also strong in France, and “Italian émigrés at the court of . . . Catherine de’ Medici . . . became notorious . . . for their modish interest in Machiavelli, Guicciardini, and Tacitus” (Gajda 258). Montaigne was also interested by Tacitus’ writings, just as he was interested in Machiavelli. Montaigne contended that Machiavelli is best seen as a poser of questions, questions that are not as easy to answer as one might initially believe (497). For more on the link between Montaigne, Machiavelli, and Tacitus, see Martin Dzelzainis, “Shakespeare and Political Thought” (107-08).

<sup>43</sup> Knowles argues that Tacitean histories by Paolo Sarpi, Arrigo Caterina Davila, and John Hayward “explore[d] self-interest and reason of state and . . . self-interest . . . [in a] world [that] is full of hinted secrets, private counsels and politic conjectures, [and] predicated on the assumption of Machiavellian deception to achieve power” (*Arguments with History* 182-83). More on the history of politic history can also be found in Anthony Grafton, *What is History?* and F. J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (237-85).

reasonable, for Machiavelli's exploration of politic issues serve as a benchmark for similar explorations made by other politic writers of the period.

Almost all of the topics confronted by Machiavelli appear in their works, which suggests that the issues associated with politic stratagems were quite prominent in many early modern minds. As Edward Pechter suggests, there is a growing need to expand the conventional definition of source "beyond writing altogether (in the strictest sense) to cultural contexts—the ensemble of shared beliefs and assumptions with (and upon) which the play would have registered its impressions" (129). Such an ensemble does exist in the case of Machiavelli, for his works and the numerous politic works inspired by them caused a tremendous level of excitement and concern throughout the period. I make much use of other politic authors such as Tacitus and Holinshed, but I choose to look at Shakespeare's dramatization of strategy primarily in relation to Machiavelli because of this context and because Machiavelli is—with the possible exception of Sun Tzu and Carl von Clausewitz—the single most important writer on the subject. The subject of strategy is often complex and sometimes contradictory, so Machiavelli helps to act as a guide through difficult but rewarding terrain. Machiavelli's engagements with this subject also allows for numerous dramatic analogies with Shakespeare's own engagements. At the end of the day, "it is the analogous relationship between the texts that is important rather than an exact citation" (Hadfield 70). My thesis is concerned not with an exact citation but with that analogous relationship.

## **1.5 STRATEGY IN ACTION**

Shakespeare makes several direct references to strategy, although the words he uses to describe it are "politic" and "stratagem." "Politic" is defined in *The Shakespeare*



*Lexicon* as “prudent, wise, artful, and cunning” (879). In *A Shakespeare Glossary* we are offered the more bland definition of “dealing with political science” (203), but we are directed to two words that Shakespeare often used in connection with the word: “policy” and “politician.” “Policy” is defined as a “contrivance,” a “crafty device,” and a “stratagem,” while “politician” is defined as a “schemer” and “crafty intriguer” (203). Likewise, *Shakespeare’s Words* also defines the word “policy” by using words such as “stratagem,” “cunning,” “intrigue,” and “craft,” while also defining “politic” and “politician” in terms of shrewdness and craft (357). It is not surprising then that the *OED* also notes that during the early modern period the word was invariably associated with duplicitous behaviour.<sup>44</sup> The *OED* notes that the word derives from the French *politiques*, meaning simply political, while also noting that the English word first came to be associated with prudence and shrewdness in 1439, but that this usage continued throughout the sixteenth century. Likewise, it was during the mid to late sixteenth century that the word came to be defined in terms of craft and deceitfulness. The second word, “stratagem,” is defined in *The Shakespeare Lexicon* as “an artifice in war,” “a trick to deceive the enemy,” “any artifice or trick,” and “a dreadful deed,” particularly one that is violent (1133). In *A Shakespeare Glossary* the word is defined simply as a “deed of great violence” (270), while in *Shakespeare’s Words* we get a much fuller definition: “scheme,” “device,” and “cunning plan,” as well as “deed of violence” and bloody act” (445). Like the word “policy,” the word “stratagem” also began to emerge fully during

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<sup>44</sup> Here are some of the variants listed in the *OED* along with their dates of appearance: “policie” (?1406), “politic” (1427), “policye” (1430), “politicque” (1474), “politics” (1475), “politically” (1475), “polytyke” (c. 1475), “poley” (1477), “polycye” (1499), “polleci” (1500), “polytike” (1523), “political” (1529), “pollicie” (1555), “politick” (1568), “politique” (c. 1571), “politique” (1581), “politician” (1586), “pollecy” (1587), “politize” (1598), and “pollicye” (1599).

the early modern period.<sup>45</sup> The *OED* notes that the word derives from the Latin *stratēgēma*, which in turn derives from the Greek *στρατήγημα*, which relates to both generalship in war and trickery, particular by use of artifice and surprise.

These two words appear numerous times throughout Shakespeare's plays, and they generally denote the very meanings described above. For example, the word "policy" appears forty-four times in the canon, while the word "politic" appears twenty-two times. As mentioned above, the word "politic" is directly associated with Machiavelli in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, while in *1 Henry VI* it is directly linked to strategy, for Mortimer counsels York to bide his time and wait for the most opportune time to strike: "with silence, nephew, be thou politic" (*1HVI* 2.5.101). His advice serves York well, and he slowly builds support with Salisbury and Warwick while also giving Margaret and Suffolk the false impression that he is on their side in assassinating Humphrey. When the conspirators reward York's supposed loyalty by providing him with an army, he mocks his opponents' lack of politic sense: "well, nobles, well; 'tis politicly done, / To send me packing with an host of men" (*2HVI* 3.1.340-41). The word "policy" is also often used in a similar context. In *1 Henry VI* Joan instructs the French to take Rouen not by force but by "policy." Instead of storming the gates they should make use of theatre and pretend to be citizens of the town. Joan instructs the soldiers not in the ways of arms but in the ways of drama, for they must take heed to make their performance convincing: "Take heed — be wary how you place your words; / Talk like the vulgar sort of market men / That come to gather money for their corn" (*1HVI* 3.2.3-

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<sup>45</sup> Here are some of the variants listed in the *OED* along with their dates of appearance: "stratagem" (1489), "stratagemes" (1548), "stratagemical" (1585), "stratagematic" (1589), "strategian" (1601), "stratgemitior" (1602), "stratagemous" (1606), and "stratagematist" (1609).

5). The ruse is successful, and Charles is so delighted that he asks Saint Denis to “bless this happy stratagem” (*IHVI* 3.2.17).

Although it is their policy to remove Humphrey as a rival, the conspirators under Margaret advise Henry that “it is no policy” to keep someone so powerful so close to his “royal person” (*2HVI* 3.1.23-26). The conspirators do not realize that their conspiracy against Humphrey will be used against them by one of their own, for York has plans to take advantage of the murder for his own ends. York’s enemy Somerset sees this, but no one will listen to his warnings about York’s “far-fet policy” (*2HVI* 3.1.292). In a rather grim moment Richard, like Joan, mixes policy with acting, for he accuses the dead Clifford of only pretending to be so: “’Tis but his policy to counterfeit” (*3HVI* 2.6.65). However, the word is used in its more conventional sense when Oxford declares that Edward wants to strike the Lancastrian forces while they are still unprepared for war: “it is his policy / To haste thus fast to find us unprovided” (*3HVI* 5.4.61-62). Although the second word, “stratagem,” only appears fifteen times in the canon, each time it is used it denotes duplicity, artifice, and cunning. Buckingham brags to Richard that he can use theatre and drama to “grace [his] stratagems” (*RIII* 3.5.11), while Talbot will employ the more conventional usage when he reminds his son that he has “tutor[ed him] in stratagems of war” (*I HVI* 4.4.2). The Wars of the Roses as a whole are actually condemned by being equated with strategy when the father who has killed his own son condemns “this miserable age! / What stratagems, how fell, how butcherly, / Erroneous, mutinous and unnatural, / This deadly quarrel daily doth beget!” (*3HVI* 2.5.88-91).

But what exactly do I mean by strategy? Strategy is not rigid or systematic. Strategy is above all else an ability to plan ahead combined with the ability to respond to

circumstances as they appear, as the German general Helmuth von Moltke wrote in the nineteenth century:

[Strategy] is more than a science; it is the application of knowledge to practical life, the development of thought capable of modifying the original guiding idea in the light of ever-changing situations; it is the art of acting under the pressure of the most difficult situations. (qtd. in Greene, *The 33 Strategies* xvi)

One of the more persistent criticisms that have been made of Machiavelli is that he is not a systematic philosopher, but actually one of his greatest virtues is that his ideas are not fixed. His ideas are fluid, which is a quality that helps to make them so dramatic. It is a quality I also find in the works of Shakespeare, a quality that is wonderfully described by Nuttall when he writes that there is

no terminus to [Shakespeare's] thought. He was simply too intelligent to be able to persuade himself that the problems were completely solved, but it would be absurd to conclude that therefore nothing has been achieved; he gets further—much further—than anyone else I have ever read. And in his love of the “just-possible” he scores, over and over again, as a dramatist (as distinct from a sage). (382-83)

Both writers could be said to be equally interested in the “just-possible” of politics.

There is a marked lack of fixedness when it comes to the ways that Machiavelli describes and Shakespeare dramatizes, “in a continuous flux,” the many ways by which people get power, keep power, and lose power (Roe, “Shakespeare and Machiavelli” 385-86).

These are dramatizations that “prompt questions, rather than providing answers” (Smith, *The Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare* 138). They are not fixed because they are not meant to be, for these are ideas that are constantly changing and constantly coming into conflict with other ideas, contexts, and circumstances. Each character's situation will be different, so how they respond strategically will also be different and will vary and evolve as the plays progress.

Like Shakespeare, Machiavelli was educated in the rules of rhetoric, an education that encouraged him to take different sides of an issue so as not to tie himself to any single position:<sup>46</sup>

Machiavelli's writings display the rhetorician's desire to persuade and arouse his audience. Like other Florentines of his social standing, Machiavelli was steeped in the rules of Roman rhetoric; vivid imagery and an insincere (sometimes ironic) invocation of values or prejudices dear to the listeners' or readers' hearts were familiar and accepted techniques. No one expected every statement to be a literal expression of the author's beliefs. Of course, there will always be a degree of doubt about the true intentions or opinions of a thinker who indulges in rhetorical ploys and flourishes. This may help to explain why Machiavelli presents so many faces to students of his ideas. (Femia 11)<sup>47</sup>

Like Machiavelli, Shakespeare was also more than adept at rhetorical ploys and flourishes, and he too has managed to present many faces to the students of his ideas. As Joel B. Altman points out, rhetoric played a large role in shaping the nature of early modern drama, for it allowed the dramatists of the period to see drama not as a vehicle for raising questions, but as a question itself:

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<sup>46</sup> For a helpful discussion of the role that rhetoric plays in the first tetralogy, see R. Y. Turner, *Shakespeare's Apprenticeship* (15-50).

<sup>47</sup> This is also a feature of Machiavelli's writings that has been noticed by one of his most recent biographers and best critics, Maurizio Viroli, who argues that Machiavelli wrote as a rhetorician, not just in the generic sense that he composed his works elegantly, but in the more precise sense that he wrote them according to the rules of classical rhetoric. He wrote to persuade, to delight, to move, to impel to act—hardly the goals of the scientist, but surely the goals that an orator intends to achieve. He pursues truth, but his truth is always a partisan truth; always a truth coloured, amplified, ornate, and interested; and at times it is not truth at all . . . . Because he wrote as a rhetorician . . . he was able to compose *The Prince* to give advice to a prince on how to secure *his* state, and *The Discourses on Livy* to instruct his compatriots on how to order and govern a free republic. The great puzzle that has tormented so many interpreters is, in fact, no puzzle at all, if we read both works for what they are—namely, two exemplary texts of political rhetoric. (*Machiavelli* 3)

While one may not agree that Viroli's insistence that the rhetorical features of Machiavelli's dispel all puzzles surrounding the Florentine's works, it is nevertheless a compelling argument. As Brian Copenhaver and Charles B. Schmitt note, Machiavelli's mastery of rhetoric makes *The Prince* such a compelling read: "*The Prince* is frightening to read—or should be—because it is so seductive. The argument is direct, the language clear, the examples apt and compelling" (281). For more on this mastery of rhetoric, see Viroli, *Machiavelli* and Virginia Cox's "Rhetoric and ethics in Machiavelli."

The origins of such a drama are to be found in the study of formal rhetoric, which in the sixteenth century was considered to be not only an art of persuasion, but also an art of inquiry, in which the methods of logic were employed with greater amplitude than that permitted the dialectician. Dramatists of the period were trained in the discipline from the early grammar school days. (2-3)<sup>48</sup>

According to Altman, “the evidence of this education can be found throughout their work” and “is manifested in the use of specific rhetorical forms . . . in a predilection for debate,” and “in frequently disconcerting shifts in viewpoint” (3). These manifestations raise a number of questions for Altman, questions that have a direct bearing on my thesis:

First, what happens to a mind conditioned to argue *in utramque partem*—on both sides of the question—as Renaissance students were trained to do? Surely one result must be a great complexity of vision, capable of making every man not only a devil’s advocate but also a kind of microcosmic deity . . . who can see all sides of an issue. Then, what kind of drama is this mind likely to create? Is its probable ambivalence and multiplicity of view to be regarded as an artistic virtue or shortcoming? Still more problematic, when a writer trained in sophistic rhetoric has assimilated various elements of composition taught in the discipline—speeches of praise and blame, arguments in defense of a proposition, sententiae confirming an argument, mimeses of persons in highly emotional states— . . . what will be the nature of the aesthetic experience he provides in the play he composes of them? (3-4)

For Altman, this experience can be difficult and problematic:

A rhetorical element designed to arouse passion may be placed beside one designed to investigate truth, which will perhaps be juxtaposed to another commanding assent. How will these parts relate to one another, and how will their collocation affect the auditor’s response? Here, we confront not simply the matter of intellectual consistency but also of formal unity and the continuity of imaginative participation on the part of the auditor. (4)

One hears here echoes of the complaints leveled against the first tetralogy of being episodic and loose (Ornstein 42), complaints that become less convincing once one

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<sup>48</sup> The subject of Shakespeare and rhetoric is a complicated one. In addition to Altman’s *The Tudor Play of Mind*, the best place to start in order to find out more would be Alison Thorne, *Vision and Rhetoric in Shakespeare: Looking through Language* and Trevor McNeely, *Proteus Unmasked: Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric and the Art of Shakespeare*. For more on rhetoric in Early Modern England, see Peter Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice*. For more on rhetoric in Early Modern Europe, see Heinrich Plett, *Rhetoric and Renaissance Culture* and Wayne A. Rebhorn, *Renaissance Debates on Rhetoric*.

begins to see the ways in which dramatic strategy gives the plays a genuine unity to which many if not all the seemingly disparate parts do relate and collocate.

In a very important sense, Altman's description of rhetoric's effect on drama is thus very much in keeping with the effect that strategy also has on drama. The "frequently disconcerting shifts in viewpoint" are worth keeping in mind as Shakespeare presents a number of characters all trying to achieve their very different strategic ends on the stage (3). At one moment the audience sees the strategic scenario through the perspective of York, then it is presented with Margaret's plans and objectives. As Champion notes, the plays strongly depict "the rotating ambivalence and the juxtaposition of antagonistic forces" in often bewildering ways (*Perspective* 53). This constant shifting can be disconcerting, but it can also be dynamic and exhilarating. As Cox argues when discussing Shakespeare's dramatization of Henry VI:

His Henry VI is not a heroic model of timeless perfection but a willful, foolish man with bad political judgment and an inability to command respect, and he appears in a series of plays that emphasize the process of history, not its static sacral archetypes. (*Shakespeare and the Dramaturgy of Power* 103)

This process can be best understood with attention to strategy, which helps reveal the truly dynamic quality of the first tetralogy and which can be found throughout the entire cast of characters that populate these plays. There is no single Machiavel working against a series of "dupes" (Manheim 86-87); instead there is a host of different strategists with a host of different strategies, all trying to do whatever they can to achieve and maintain power. Shakespeare's ability to argue "on both sides of the question" (Altman 3) allows him to present this power struggle from a variety of viewpoints and

through a bewildering array of different strategies and maneuvers. Edward P. J. Corbett points out that

*strategies* is a good rhetorical word, because it implies the *choice* of available resources to achieve an end. It is no accident that the word *strategy* has military associations, for this word has its roots in the Greek word for *army*. Just as a general will adopt those resources, those tactics, which are most likely to defeat the enemy in a battle, so the marshaller of language will seek out and use the best argument, and the best style to “win” an audience. (5)

In a similar vein, Burke argues that “Machiavelli’s *The Prince* can be treated as a rhetoric insofar as it deals with *the producing of effects upon an audience*. Sometimes the prince’s subjects are his audience, sometimes the rulers or inhabitants of foreign states . . . [and] sometimes particular factions within the state” (*A Rhetoric of Motives* 158). These descriptions of the interplay between rhetoric and strategy, along with the inherent drama of this relationship, supply the guiding principles for the discussion that follows.

Rhetoric provides for a “great complexity of vision,” for it allows Shakespeare to “see all sides of an issue,” be it emotional or strategic (Altman 3-4). This complexity produces a unique dramatic experience, one that has unsettled as much as it has enthralled. Martin notes above that such multiplicity has been interpreted as “randomness,” and that instead of allowing for Shakespeare’s depiction of these multiple viewpoints and strategies to grow in the audience’s minds, producers and directors have often “responded to the perceived fault by refocusing primary attention on just one or two of its main characters and their stories” (*Oxford 3HVI* 2). As Martin argues, this is to miss much of the dramatic experience of the play, for these numerous strategies and attempts to seize the crown do not diffuse the dramatic energy of the plays but actually enhance it. Everyone is playing the game, a game that keeps changing its rules as it goes



along and which offers no player the chances of achieving an easy victory.<sup>49</sup> As Robin Headlam Wells notes, “the successful prince must learn to beat the world at its own game” (*Shakespeare’s Politics* 108), while C. W. R. D. Moseley argues that politics is a “game” that “can have a plurality of players” (67-68).

Discussing the game of thrones that was the Wars of the Roses, More wrote that “these matters be kings; games, as it were stage plays, and for the more part played upon scaffolds” (qtd. in Weir, *Lancaster and York* vii).<sup>50</sup> The game analogy allows for a kind of unity, one that is in keeping with Emrys Jones’ description of the dramatic intensity of some of Shakespeare’s early plays:

When in the early plays Shakespeare is writing with deep creative involvement, a certain roughness or abruptness often shows itself. Stylistically this may appear in terms of disjunction, as if a massive collision of opposed viewpoints were taking place far beneath the perceptible verbal surface. An ordering conception may be glimpsed, but more immediately felt is a challenging incompatibility between the parts, invigorating in its suggestion of the fullness and complexity of the dramatist’s vision. (179)

Such intensity can be seen in the first tetralogy, and it is probably best understood through the lens of strategy. This “roughness or abruptness,” which “may appear in terms of disjunction,” actually suggests a very dramatic kind of “collision,” both “of

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<sup>49</sup> Although his use of the game analogy is different from mine, see Gregory M. Colón Semenza, “Sport, War, and Contest in Shakespeare’s *Henry VI*,” in which he argues that “sport figures for a metaphor for war itself,” and that “Shakespeare endicts modern warfare as a mere sport for ambitious and corrupt nobles” (1251). Likewise, it should be noted that Jane Howell’s production of the first tetralogy for the BBC Shakespeare conceived of the plays as “an elaborate, increasingly vicious and violent game” (Willis, *BBC Shakespeare* 171). Robert Weimann and Douglas Bruster contend that *Richard III* can be seen as a game in which the spectators are “invited directly to participate” (46). At the same time, Ridolfi points out that the Medici were successful in Florence because they knew how to play the game: “the Medici . . . in the first fifty years of their rule observed the complicated rule of this game, and the more closely they followed them the more successful they were” (*The Life of Niccolò Machiavelli* 5).

<sup>50</sup> For more on the “pervasive use of the *theatrum mundi* trope” in More’s *The History of King Richard III*, see Brian Walsh, *Shakespeare, the Queen’s Men* (162-65).

opposed viewpoints” and of opposed strategic ends and interests.<sup>51</sup> The parts may seem incompatible, but if one takes it as a whole and sees that the entire tetralogy is being governed by these dynamic strategic forces, “an ordering conception may be glimpsed” that truly does suggest “the fullness and complexity of the dramatist’s vision.”

Despite some key similarities, there is however a clear difference between the drama described by Altman and the drama I describe in my thesis: while Altman’s is a drama of words, mine is a drama of words and action.<sup>52</sup> As Burke notes, strategy is “concerned with the rhetoric of advantage . . . . The persuasion cannot be confined to the strictly verbal; it is a mixture of symbolism and definite empirical operations” (*A Rhetoric of Motives* 160-61). These “empirical operations” are the actions of the strategists on the stage in the dramatic setting they find themselves. This is the drama of *praxis*, for we see the way that strategy comes into being and we begin to understand and appreciate the process of strategy as Shakespeare explored it dramatically. While the characters I describe may be largely immoral rather than moral as Aristotle preferred (Whalley 167), the role that strategies play in the first tetralogy is nevertheless akin to his conception of *praxis*. According to George Whalley, “the *praxis* (action) of the play is defined by the *praxis* of the persons in the play, and the *praxis* makes the characters what they are as well as what they are becoming and will become” (26).<sup>53</sup> The strategies in the

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<sup>51</sup> As Cox notes, these plays are populated with “opportunists and educated courtiers who sap the nation’s strength while selfishly and sophistically pursuing their own interests” (*Shakespeare and the Dramaturgy of Power* 85). While such pursuits may not be in the nation’s interests, they do make for dynamic drama.

<sup>52</sup> Although his works have not had a major impact on the formulation of my thesis, here there is connection to Burke’s concept of “dramatism,” for “it invites one to consider the matter of motives in a perspective that, being developed from the analysis of drama, treats language and thought primarily as modes of action” (*A Grammar of Motives* xxii).

<sup>53</sup> As Whalley puts it elsewhere in his translation of Aristotle’s *Poetics*:

the ‘plot’ (*muthos*) is the sequence of events that allows the actor to trace out his *praxis*, the extended moral action that both makes and declares his ‘character.’ But the ‘character’ also shapes the *praxis*; the acts and decisions must be those that would be

first tetralogy are shaped by the strategists in the plays, whose strategies in turn influence both the strategists themselves and the characters around them. Moreover, the “various elements” of rhetorical training—“speeches of praise and blame, arguments in defense of a proposition, *sententiae* confirming an argument, mimeses of persons in highly emotional states” (Altman 4)—become in my reading of the first tetralogy acts of offense and defense, making and breaking alliances, using deception as a weapon, maneuvering and out-maneuvering and all the things that one associates with politic stratagems, for “struggles for advantage nearly always have a rhetorical strain” (Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives* 166).

#### 1.6 DRAMA GRACING STRATAGEMS, OR STRATAGEMS GRACING DRAMA?

In *Richard III*, Buckingham brags to Richard about his ability to use drama readily and at “any time to grace [his] stratagems” (*RIII* 3.5.10-11). As historians of the period have noted, Elizabethan and Jacobean politics were inherently theatrical (*Politics and Ideas* 31). As Garber notes, Elizabeth I and James I both “had an interest in the theater. Each of them reveled in theatricality. They understood the power of theatrical display—after all, *their* costumes and entourages were part of the theatricalization of power” (*Shakespeare After All* 24). It is this background as much as anything else that may have inspired Shakespeare’s view of politics and the dramatic nature of strategy. S. Schoenbaum describes this potential inspiration, for the world of policy and power

was all around [Shakespeare]. He found it chronicled in Plutarch and the Tudor historians. Machiavelli analysed it. Perhaps Shakespeare glimpsed it, as an observant bystander, when his company performed at Court, or were called upon to fulfill some ceremonial function . . . . These opportunities he seized upon . . . imaginatively, for the purposes of his art, in which we find depicted the world of policy and power. Here, behind

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presented to him and would be taken up for purposeful action by that person-being-what-he-is. (168)

the scenes of public confrontation, as likely as not another drama — concealed or only obliquely revealed — is going on. In that drama the issues may be graver than those overtly bandied about. Such moments show Shakespeare's sophisticated grasp of the workings of Realpolitik. ("Richard II and the realities of power" 102-03)

The deceptive strategists of the first tetralogy certainly showcase this point, for often the best strategists are those who play with their cards closest to their chests. Richard may be skilfull when it comes to grabbing the audience's attention, but there are others who are equally if not more skilfull at grabbing the reins of power. Shakespeare is equally interested in these characters, for they allow for a sophisticated probing of the nature of politic stratagems. On a similar note, Hugh Grady argues that the plays from 1595 to 1600

form a kind of 'Machiavellian moment' in Shakespeare's work. This moment is Machiavellian, not in the sense that Shakespeare necessarily read or took in the many facets of the complex body of work of this singular Renaissance humanist and harbinger of modernity, but in the sense that many of the plays written in this period take Machiavelli's most famous ideas on value-free realpolitik and use them as the starting point for multidimensional probings and conflicting interpretations of the cultural and political crises these ideas produce. Shakespeare was never 'a Machiavellian' in any straightforward sense—in fact, there is no direct evidence that he ever read a page of Machiavelli's works. Instead, *The Prince's* problematic was the political problematic of the day . . . . [problems] concerning the necessity of deception, immorality, and violence in politics in a world in which men are not good and he who would be good invites defeat. This is a doctrine which . . . seem[s] to [have] . . . challenged the imagination and rationality of William Shakespeare. (20-21)

This moment, if one can call it such, could be said to occur much earlier in Shakespeare's career than Grady suggests, for these challenging concepts can already be found in Shakespeare's earliest plays.

One does not have to wait for the second tetralogy to find a sophisticated grappling with the problems of deception, immorality, and violence in politics. The plays

of the first tetralogy “can be read as so many” dramatic “case histories of” politic strategy (Hortman 212). His plays thus offer a “concrete portrayal” of politic stratagems, although Shakespeare’s portrayals are not, again, as fixed as the term “concrete” might imply (Craig 38). Such concreteness can never be fully achieved, for strategic situations are constantly—and dramatically—changing all of the time, which in turns requires the strategist to be constantly adaptable. This quality is constantly on display in the first tetralogy, for Shakespeare dramatizes numerous strategists pursuing a bewildering number of strategies. Some are successful while some are not, but all soon realize that there is no key to success other than the ability to think on one’s feet and remain as flexible as possible. This ability to think on one’s feet is in keeping with Shakespeare’s dramatic approach to his subject, for the dramatic representation of politic stratagems requires a similar kind of openness.

Kermode argues that “Shakespeare was a *thinker* who did his thinking in dramatic dialogue. Of course the thinking is not of the sort that might be expected of a philosopher . . . . the probing of the philosopher is deliberate, the probing of a poet fortuitous” (*Shakespeare’s Language* 127). Such probing is anything but fortuitous; in fact, it is actually quite deliberate, for it explores how various seemingly fortuitous events are linked or shaped by various strategies. It is also philosophical, for Shakespeare’s dramatic exploration of strategy investigates its causes, effects, and implications. Shakespeare’s exploration charts strategy’s numerous shapes and contours in a way that underscores the almost balletic quality of the dance among the characters, a dance that is constantly changing as strategies formulate and come undone, strategists succeed and then fail, characters act and then react, and so on. In contrast to Kermode’s view of

Shakespeare's fortuitous probing, Nuttall's description of Shakespeare's thinking in terms of the "just-possible" (382-83) is more persuasive, for this openness allows him to explore politic strategy in such intriguing and dynamic ways. It is not lacking in fixedness, for, through the interplay of strategies, the characters do eventually fix or define themselves. Strategy is open-ended, but it also has restrictions, for strategists can and often do make mistakes. As a thinker, Shakespeare is thus both open-ended and deliberate. He opens up the various possibilities of strategy, but he also shows its probable or necessary outcomes as well as its limits.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE WAY THINGS ARE

#### 2.1 THE AMORAL WORLD OF POLITICS

The first thing that strategists must do to be successful is make a realistic appraisal of the world that they find themselves in. A successful strategist cannot afford to be idealistic; clear-sighted realism alone must be relied upon. In keeping with this premise, one should note the example of Machiavelli, who, far from trying to shock, believed himself to be simply describing the world as it really is:

Many have written about this, and I fear I might be considered presumptuous, particularly as I intend to depart from the principles laid down by others . . . . I find it more fitting to seek the truth of the matter rather than imaginary conceptions. Many have imagined republics and principalities that have never been seen or heard of, because how one lives and how one ought to live are so far apart that he who spurns what is actually done for what ought to be done will achieve ruin rather than his own preservation. A man who strives to make a show of correct comportment in every circumstance can only come to ruin among so many who have other designs. Hence it is necessary for a prince who wishes to maintain his position to learn how to be able not to be good, and to use or not use this ability according to circumstances. (*P* 15.59)<sup>54</sup>

Is this so? Is the world—and particularly the world of politics—as malignant as Machiavelli insists? As Chabod notes, Machiavelli’s point is not necessarily that it is malignant; merely that it just is the way that it is:

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<sup>54</sup> In the original Italian Machiavelli is far more explicit about how his work seeks to express “the truth of the matter.” Not only does Machiavelli seek the truth, but he seeks the real truth, the “verità effettuale,” and not that which is imaginary or unreal: “alla verità effettuale della cosa, che alla immaginazione di essa” (44). At the same time, whereas Constantine chooses to focus on “circumstances,” Machiavelli is actually far more focused on the need, or “la necessità,” and the utilitarian element, for a prince should not be good only when it is of use to him: “Onde è necessario a uno principe, volendosi mantenere, imparare a potere essere non buono, et usarlo e non usare secondo la necessità” (44). Rehorn notes that “Machiavelli cautions the prince to . . . focus on real problems, avoid abstractions and utopianism, and emphasize practicality . . . . History will not judge kindly dreamers posing as rulers” (*Foxes and Lions* 15).

only when Machiavelli arrives on the scene are we confronted with the theoretical affirmation – complete, clear and brutal – that politics are politics, apart from all other considerations; *only then*, in other words, does a practical truth become a theoretical precept, a law explicitly credited with a universal validity. (164-65)

The world that Machiavelli presents, far from being either moral or immoral, is actually amoral, for power—the ability to acquire it and the ability to hold onto it—are what count: “[Machiavelli’s works are] based upon [his] deeply rooted views of the true motivations of human conduct, and [they are] not so much immoral as remote from commonly held illusions concerning human behaviour” (Keeton 315).

Many critics have noted this lack of illusion in Machiavelli’s work, particularly as it relates to Shakespeare’s English History Plays, which present an equally amoral world. For example, Kott argues that for Richard III, as for Machiavelli, “politics is . . . a purely practical affair, an art, with the acquisition of power as its aim. Politics is amoral, like the art of bridge construction, or the practice of fencing” (*Shakespeare our Contemporary* 34-35). Roe agrees: “Machiavelli argues . . . in defense of breaking faith, that too many factors are lined up against a ruler at any one time to allow for the practice of orthodox morality” (“Shakespeare and Machiavelli” 364). This seeming disregard for ethics in politics is most famously summed up in what has become the most famous of all Machiavellian maxims: “the ends justify the means” (Moseley 22).<sup>55</sup> Ironically, for a writer so skilled at producing concise phrases that can be quoted—or misquoted—for scores of different interpretations, this most famous of all his phrases was actually not written by him. What he wrote was “e nelle azioni di tutti li uomini, e massime de’

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<sup>55</sup> Knowles argues that Machiavelli’s thinking along these lines is simplistic: everything is either/or — a binary ultimatum to take unilateral action . . . . Ironically, though condemned for his . . . cynicism, from another point of view the . . . Florentine is not too far removed from the . . . utopians he scorns. (*Arguments with History* 180-81) Knowles goes on to argue that Shakespeare’s dramatic mode is far more rewarding and as such that his “understanding of history” and politics is “more challenging” (*Arguments with History* 181).



principi, dove non è iudizio da reclamare, si guarda al fine” (52), or “in the actions of all men, and particularly the prince, where there is no higher justice to appeal to, one looks at the outcome” (*P* 18.70).<sup>56</sup> What matters are the results. As shocking as this conclusion might seem, the precedent for such an idea is quite ancient, for “the distinction between private and state morality which is at the center of the idea is as old as the state” (Prior 221) and was—although not always openly—acknowledged by many key politicians in early modern England (Elton, *England Under the Tudors* 399-400) and France (Dzelzainis, “Shakespeare and Political Thought” 107-08). This is what makes his ideas so intriguing, for few writers have ever been so open about exposing politics as it actually operates. As Durant grudgingly concedes, “there is something stimulating about Machiavelli’s forthrightness” (566).

Manheim argues that the world of the first tetralogy is governed by what he calls a “Machiavellian code”, a code by which power is the ultimate aim and for which the ends do seem to justify the means:

Out of the lives and actions of the contending nobility in *Henry VI* there emerges something like a perverse moral code . . . . The chief overriding good is the ability to take, and retain, power . . . . One must also be convinced that others are motivated by the same goals and are using the same methods. (81-82)

Likewise, Brockbank argues that the first tetralogy, particularly *3 Henry VI*, dramatizes a Hobbesian universe with clear similarities to this amoral world:

when argument fails men resort to force; when an oath is inconvenient they break it; their power challenged, they resort [to] violence; their power subdued they resort to lies, murder or suicide; their honour impugned, they look for revenge; their enemies at their mercy, they torture and kill them

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<sup>56</sup> As Prior notes:

It enhanced the notoriety of *The Prince* that it was written with detachment and in an aphoristic, quotable (and misquotable) style that makes it fascinating even today—it has something of the appeal of La Rochefoucauld’s maxims. (292)

and if a clash of loyalties occurs they resolve it in the interest of their own survival. (“The Frame of Disorder” 60)<sup>57</sup>

Just how much this is the case can be seen in relation to the issue of rightful legitimacy. There is a tremendous amount of discussion about right in the first tetralogy. Both the Lancastrians and the Yorkists make several arguments concerning their supposed hereditary rights. However, Shakespeare shows the self-interest underlying their claims to legitimacy by balancing the two arguments in such a way that both sides seem equally right, and equally wrong:

Richard:       The truth appears so naked on my side  
                  That any purblind eye may find it out.  
Somerset:      And on my side it is so well apparelled,  
                  So clear, so shining and so evident,  
                  That it will glimmer through a blind man’s eye. (*IHVI*  
                  2.4.20-24)

The use of similar language by the two opposing positions only seems to heighten the confusion. Neither side’s position is as evident as Richard and Somerset suggest, nor as their opposing descriptions of naked and shining truth ironically demonstrates. Who is in the right? At the end of the day these arguments are shown to be useless without the power to back them up. Even critics such as Pearlman, who is largely dismissive of *I Henry VI*, argues that this scene represents an “instance in which the young Shakespeare can be observed writing with unusual authority” (29).

It is also a situation that reveals much about the nature of politic stratagems and looks forward to events to come:

the quarrel prefigures even more dangerous conspiracies to come, for there is no sign of principle in the barons who jest cynically about law and who will accept no judgment except that rendered by the sword . . . . The

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<sup>57</sup> For more on the relationship between Machiavelli and Hobbes, see Wooton, “Thomas Hobbes’s Machiavellian Moments” and Rahe, *Against Throne and Altar* (249-72). For more on the Hobbesian elements in Shakespeare, see McAlindon, *Shakespeare’s Tragic Cosmos* (173-74).

Temple Garden scene takes us behind those facades as witnesses to the covert alliances and antagonisms which will surface only with the outbreak of civil war. (Ornstein 36)

In one sense, the situation is aptly expressed by Suffolk while he argues with Richard in the garden outside Temple Church: “I have been a truant in the law / And never yet could frame my will to it, / And therefore frame the law unto my will” (*IHVI* 2.4.7-9). This line of reasoning is explored further when Vernon announces that “he upon whose side / The fewest roses are cropped from the tree / Shall yield the other in the right opinion” (*IHVI* 2.4.40-42). Whoever has the most supporters, not whoever has the strongest lineage, will ultimately win the argument. Prior notes that in this scene, as throughout the first tetralogy, “legalities and claims of truth . . . are trivial and unimportant; what counts is the ability to bend the law to one’s will” (105). Similarly, Robert Ornstein points out that “what prompts the quarrel we never learn and need not know, because what is at stake is not a point of law but feudal enmity and ambition” (36).<sup>58</sup> Despite their earlier claims that the truth alone should be enough, Richard and Somerset both agree to Vernon’s suggestion to let brute force decide (*IHVI* 2.4.43-45). Clearly the law does not hold sway in the realms of power. Does might make right? As Manheim argues, “in . . . the Temple Garden debate, . . . “law” and “right” are first seen as only veneers of a raw, crude power-rivalry” (83). For example, when the lawyer who has been observing the argument—such as it is—announces his support for the Yorks, Somerset refuses to listen:

Richard: Now, Somerset, where is your argument?  
Somerset: Here in my scabbard. (*IHVI* 2.4.59-60)

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<sup>58</sup> Knowles also argues that since the dispute “is not specified,” the “argument becomes the issue of legality itself” (*Arguments with History* 20), while Walsh notes that “the scene revolves around a never-explained legal debate . . . a serious rift that will eventually contribute to the ‘civil broils’ of the Wars of the Roses” (*Shakespeare, the Queen’s Men* 121).

The law means little to Somerset in the end; what matters is the sword that supports the law.

Scenes such as this are often dismissed as just another example of brawling barons who are ridiculously cantankerous (Bromley 1-2). For such critics, these are largely of interest as an example of Shakespeare's attitudes about the nobility of his day:

In England, the virulent Dudley/Seymour and Leicester/Cecil rivalries, in France the murderous three-cornered war between the Guise, Montmorency and Bourbon lineages, in Spain the brutal backstairs struggle for power between the Alva and Eboli groups, were a keynote of the time. (Anderson 49)

Beyond such topicality, the gusto of such threats has often been played for laughs by some performers of the play, who tend to see it all as a kind of farce. This is certainly what one finds in Howell's BBC production, one that seems to concur with critics such as Pearlman, who argues that "the quarrel is about nothing" (29). Such attitudes do injustice to the disturbing implications of such scenes for the play—and the tetralogy—as a whole. The interactions may elicit some laughter from the audience, but they also show it the truth behind the truisms. In fact, there is really nothing ridiculous or funny about these threats, for they show the degree to which force is the only thing that seems to matter in the politic world of these plays, for Somerset revokes right and "reverts to the argument of right" (*Arguments with History* 21). Both sides are willing to use the law when it works in their interest, but they quickly resort to the sword to settle their disputes the moment that it does not. Far from diluting their seriousness, the quickness of these changes on the stage actually add a truly dynamic quality to the potentially bland maxim. This pessimistic picture—which has been described as Hobbesian (Brockbank, "Frame of Disorder" 60)—will be painted in darker hues as the plays progress.

### 2.1.1 The immoral approach

The world of politic stratagems, a world in which one must always try to remain one step ahead of one's enemies, can thus be seen in action at the very beginning of the tetralogy. The history of the Kings of England that precedes the action of *I Henry VI* is described by a dying Mortimer (*IHVI* 2.5.61-92) in "a history lesson worthy of a chronicler" (Walsh, *Shakespeare, the Queen's Men* 120).<sup>59</sup> Brought onto the stage in a chair, the frail Mortimer finds the strength to dramatically recall the conflicts of the past, a dramatic act which also prepares York—and the audience—for the conflicts to come. Mortimer's history lesson adheres quite closely to the amoral world of politic stratagems, a world in which "men can secure themselves only with power" (*D* 1.1.111). Walsh argues that Mortimer's retelling of English history "underlines the sense of loss and the desire for recuperation at the heart of historical narration" (*Shakespeare, the Queen's Men* 122). This may be true, but it also underlines something much more basic about the realities of power. As Mortimer describes the history of the English crown, York and the audience can see that legitimacy and morals had very little to do with the loss of Richard II's crown and the rise of the Lancastrians; this can be best seen in the story of how the Earl of Cambridge, Richard Plantagenet's father, met his end at the hands of those who wanted to keep him off the throne: "so fell that noble earl, / And was beheaded. Thus the Mortimers, / In whom the title rested, were suppressed" (*IHVI* 2.5.90-92).<sup>60</sup> While

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<sup>59</sup> In keeping with this, Rackin describes Mortimer as "an ancient vestige from another world" (*Stages of History* 169).

<sup>60</sup> While Wilders describes this scene as undramatic, he does stress its essential function for the first tetralogy as a whole:

political actions have consequences far beyond their immediate present and . . . we are the subjects of past as well as future time. This is one reason for the appearance . . . of the aged Edmund Mortimer, a lonely survivor in prison of the rebellion, generations ago, against Henry IV . . . . By a continuous sequence of actions and reactions, all of them

Prior argues that the first tetralogy “present[s] a comprehensive view in debate and in action of the legal and political aspects of the problems of legitimacy and power” (118), legitimacy—at least in this scene—does not seem to be winning the debate. For proof of this one need only look at the nature of Mortimer’s advice. Just as force was used to keep the Mortimers from the throne, so too does Mortimer counsel York to use force in order to gain what is his. Mortimer does not tell York to claim the crown on the basis of right, but to wait until the Lancastrians are too weak to hold the crown for themselves. “The house of Lancaster” is too “strong fixed” to be “removed” at the moment, but Mortimer assures York that the time will come for him to make his move (*IHVI* 2.5101-06). Such a lack of concern for right makes the “good deal of legal . . . terminology” in the play all the more ironic, something that does not abate as the tetralogy progresses (Hussey 41).

How does York respond to such politic advice? Grene notes that the Hall-Barton RSC production did much to emphasize York’s emergence as politic strategist in this scene: “an audience was left in no doubt that, with York, that meaner ambition was now to be translated into a grand major key” (104). Nevertheless, Grene also notes that the Howell BBC production saw York not as a contemptuous Machiavel but as an avenger out to right the wrongs committed against Mortimer by the Lancasters, an interpretation that also changed who it was that was associated with the meaner sort of ambition:

Bernard Hill, in the equivalent scene of Howell’s *I Henry VI*, was a very youthful York deeply moved by his dying uncle’s speech. A long-held close-up, while the dynastic claims of the Yorkists were enunciated, juxtaposed the white-haired, blind head of the aged Mortimer (Tenniel

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conceived by Shakespeare in human, psychological terms, the present is shown to be shaped by the past. (18-19)

They are also shaped by stratagems, both past and present, and their strategies in turn influence both the strategists themselves and the characters around them.

Evans) with the young face of York. At the moment of death, Hill turned to the camera with an expression of genuine grief and anger, unequivocally directed out towards those responsible for Mortimer's death . . . . The ambitions of the house of Lancaster were those of the 'meaner sort' extinguishing the light of the noble and true cause of the Mortimers, the cause descending to York as its heir. (104)<sup>61</sup>

Whatever York's feelings in this scene, by the opening of *2 Henry VI* he has fully accepted this more politic view of the world, for he confidently proclaims to the audience that since Henry VI has now become too weak to hold the crown, the time has come to seize it from him: "and force perforce I'll make him yield the crown, / Whose bookish rule hath pulled fair England down" (*2HVI* 1.1.255-56).

The issue for York is less Henry's legitimacy than his actual ability to hold on to the crown. Once that ability is gone, the crown is up for grabs. York thus begins to look around for allies, not to receive some kind of moral support, but to help him accomplish his "long-term plan[s]" and strategies (Knowles, *Arguments with History* 22). While trying to enlist the aid of Warwick and his father Salisbury, York retells Mortimer's tale of rebellion, treason, treachery, and murder:

Edward the Black Prince died before his father,  
And left behind him Richard, his only son,  
Who after Edward the Third's death reigned as king,  
Till Henry Bolingbroke, Duke of Lancaster,  
The eldest son and heir of John of Gaunt,  
Crowned by the name of Henry the Fourth,  
Seized on the realm, deposed the rightful king,  
Sent his poor queen to France, from whence she came,  
And him to Pomfret; where, as all you know,  
Harmless Richard was murdered traitorously. (*2HVI* 2.2.18-27)

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<sup>61</sup> For more on Jane Howell's production, see Holderness, *Shakespeare Recycled* (220-25) and Neil Taylor, "Two Types of Television Shakespeare" (86-96). In contrast to this view of York's character, one should note Berry's contention that "whatever sympathy may be generated by York's recital of his claim . . . is immediately dissipated by the nature of his plans to press it" (*Patterns of Decay* 44-45), and Walsh's that York's "awakening to a sense of family destiny" signifies "a perverted use of history to achieve personal goals" (*Shakespeare, the Queen's Men* 123).

Although the Lancastrians are illegitimate usurpers, they have been able to hold the crown, not by right, but by force: “whatever the legal rights, Henry IV and Henry V have turned a usurper’s slippery footing into a strong foundation” (Prior 107). Ironically, York is using this tale of politics stripped of legitimacy to enhance his own supposed legitimacy. This tale, which seems to decry such a sorry state of affairs, is actually being used by York in a politic effort to bring about a similar effect, only one that will benefit him instead. Both Mortimer and York do much to stress the importance of their royal pedigrees, but Shakespeare ironically shows such devices to be hollow.<sup>62</sup> Legitimacy seems to count for much less than the power and the ability to hold on to one’s crown.

What talk there is of morality and legitimacy in the plays is often little more than a shield that York takes advantage of by any means at his disposal. The plays show that the Yorkists can only succeed, as the Lancastrians did, as a result of force: “they [the Lancastrians] hold [the crown] by force and not by right” (*2HVI* 2.2.30). Henry Bolingbroke became Henry IV by “seiz[ing] . . . the realm” and “depos[ing] the rightful king” (*2HVI* 2.2.24), and Salisbury says that Henry IV forcefully kept the rightful claimant Edmund Mortimer locked up in the Tower until he died (*2HVI* 2.2.39-42). In order to make their own play for the crown, the Yorkists will have to be equally ruthless, or perhaps even more so. Oddly enough, this lack of concern for legitimacy is made more explicit by all of the false words everyone devotes to the subject. For instance,

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<sup>62</sup> This is in keeping with Shakespeare’s sources, for Hall notes that, despite being well aware of his claim from the outset, the historical York did not begin to press it until after the death of Humphrey, for that death had greatly weakened Henry’s hold on power:

Rychard duke of Yorke, beyng greatly alied by his wyfe, to the chief peres and potentates of the Realme, over and beside his awne progenye and greate consanguinitie, perceiving the Kyng to be a ruler not Rulyng, & the whole burden of the Realme, to depend in the ordinaunces of the Quene & the Duke of Suffolke, began secretly to allure to his frendes of the nobilitie, and privatly declared to them, hys title and right to the Crowne. (qtd. in Bullough 108)



York goes into a rather convoluted account of his descent from Mortimer and the strength of his claim on the throne (*2HVI* 2.2.34-52), an account which results in Warwick exclaiming: “What plain proceedings is more plain than this?” (*2HVI* 2.2.53). Knowles notes that “after the extensive exposition by York this seems almost a music-hall riposte” (Arden *2HVI* 214).<sup>63</sup>

### 2.1.2 The moral approach

If this is the kind of strategist one has to be in order to survive in such a politic world, what are the chances of York’s opponent, Henry VI? Machiavelli frequently insists in his works that morality plays no role in politics and that a prince ultimately cannot afford to be good: “I know everyone will maintain that it would be commendable for a prince to have all the qualities . . . that are held to be good. But . . . a prince cannot wholly have or espouse these qualities, as the human condition will not allow it” (*P* 15.60), or “le condizioni umane che non lo consentono” (45). If morality has no place in politics, there seems to be no place for moral leaders either. Henry VI appears to be a prince who has been schooled in the very works on politics that seem to be the polar opposite of Machiavelli’s: Cicero’s *De Officiis* or Erasmus’ *Institutio Christiani Principis*.<sup>64</sup> In regards to Erasmus, Meron argues that

although [*The Education of a Christian Prince*] was first translated into English only after Shakespeare’s death, Shakespeare probably knew

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<sup>63</sup> It also anticipates Canterbury’s rather ironical response to his own convoluted explanation of Henry V’s right to the French throne as a result of Salic law: “as clear as the summer’s sun” (*Henry V* 1.1.86).

<sup>64</sup> Briggs notes that Machiavelli’s works were written in response to such books:

Handbooks for princes normally presupposed some form of monarchy, and followed Plato in assuming that a better society would be achieved through wiser rule . . . . The first book of Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516) . . . discusses the need for wise men to involve themselves in politics. In the same year, More’s friend Erasmus composed *Institutio Christiani Principis* . . . . According to Erasmus, the prince’s primary aim should be to act as a Christian, and a good Christian was also a pacifist . . . . (207-08)

Although *The Prince* predates many of these works, Machiavelli nevertheless seems to anticipate them when he complains of writers who have “imagined republics and principalities that have never been seen or heard of” (*P*.5, 59). For more, see Colish, “Cicero’s *De officiis* and Machiavelli’s *Prince*”

enough Latin to read the original. According to divine law . . . the prince is subject to earthly law and must obey it, even though his will has the force of law . . . Erasmus believed that “there can be no good prince who is not also a good man.” Our own private standards of integrity, morality and goodness should therefore govern our comportment as public officials and in the public domain generally . . . Erasmus argued that the prince must be religious, refrain from plunder and violence, and not let his personal ambitions override concern for the state. He should govern with “wisdom, integrity and beneficence.” (153)

Who would fit such a description? Meron feels that Henry V would be Erasmus’ ideal prince, while Brockbank argues that Henry VI seems at times to be a dramatization of Thomas Elyot’s *The Boke named the Governour* (“The Frame of Disorder” 63). Erasmus specifically espouses a Christian and pacifistic view of politics—a view that Machiavelli does much to criticize in Book II, Chapter 2 of *The Discourses* (Najemy, “Society, class, and state” 102)—and actually argues that it is better to be a just man than an unjust prince.<sup>65</sup>

Although it may be better for the individual to follow this line of reasoning, Machiavelli disagrees with such views, for he firmly believes that it would be disastrous for individuals in charge of the state. Femia seconds this when he notes that

where the restoration of order and safety of society are at stake, conventional vice might become political virtue, and conventional virtue might result in political ruin. In politics, it follows, we cannot draw a sharp line between moral virtue and moral vice: the two things often change place. (78)

It is very much in keeping with Machiavelli’s point that if people were good his advice would be bad, but since they are not it must be taken into account: “if all men were good, this rule would not stand. But as men are wicked . . .” (P.18.68-69).<sup>66</sup> Similarly,

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<sup>65</sup> Machiavelli’s position on the subject is wonderfully summed up in *The Art of War*: “Christianity does not impose on man the necessity to fight and defend himself that existed in ancient times” (AW 2.309).

<sup>66</sup> As Viroli describes it:

A person who does good, who serves the public interest with total dedication and

Guicciardini insists that if subjects were good and kind, those in authority would be good and kind to them and use less severity and more sweetness; however, since most are not good or kind, such sweetness would be a mistake on the part of rulers (*Ricordi* C.41).

One could say that Henry VI's virtue becomes misapplied, but does it turn to vice?

Similarly, is vice ever dignified by action? Machiavelli would probably answer in the

positive and insist that it is far better to know how to be cruel: "I will even be so bold as

to say that it actually does a prince harm to have . . . good qualities and always observe

them . . . he must not, if he is able, distance himself from what is good, but must also,

when necessary, know how to prefer what is bad" (*P* 18.69).<sup>67</sup> The distinction is

essential: one should be bad not as a matter of course but only as a necessity. It is a hard

truth to accept, something that Campbell notes when she quotes Charlton's grudging

declaration in *Shakespeare, Politics, and Politicians* that he is "forced to" acknowledge

[that] not only is politics a nasty business, but that a repugnant unscrupulousness is an invaluable asset in the art of government. That is the burden of the English History Plays. (13)

Such an acknowledgement can be a burden, but it also reveals its own important truth

about the amoral nature of politics.

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such a person should be esteemed and admired by his fellow citizens. Since people are largely envious and ignoble, however, the opposite is almost always the case . . . Honor and success accrue, instead, to those skilled at flattering, adulating, serving the powerful. (*Niccolò's Smile* 107)

Likewise, Roe notes that "Machiavelli is arguing that it is dangerous to trust men, as they will break the oath of loyalty as soon as look at it if they fear for their personal concerns or safety. What causes them to do this is something fundamental or inherent in their nature" ("Shakespeare and Machiavelli" 363).

<sup>67</sup> As Machiavelli explains elsewhere in *The Prince*:

I know everyone will maintain that it would be commendable for a prince to have all the qualities . . . that are held to be good. But because a prince cannot wholly have or espouse these qualities, as the human condition will not allow it, he must be wise enough to know how to evade the infamy of the qualities that are thought to be bad, which will cause him to lose his state. (*P* 15.60)

While Constantine opts for "wise," Machiavelli's use of the word "prudente" is actually more in keeping with his general connection between prudence and virtù (44-45).

## 2.2 DOES MIGHT MAKE RIGHT?

If this is so, does might make right? Grene argues that this conclusion is common in the chronicles by Hall and Holinshed that Shakespeare used as his primary sources:

“there is no attempt . . . to adjudicate on that ‘title and right’ itself” (105). Attempts at such adjudication are often heavily hypocritical. As Foakes argues,

the invocations of epic heroism and the lip-service paid to Christian values and beliefs in the play merely provide an ironic framework for the *Henry VI* plays in which ‘an overall pattern can be discerned of a falling into a world of brute force’. (50)

The problem for Henry VI is that he refuses to accept the reality of the political world he inhabits, and both he and England are forced to suffer as a result. Henry VI believes himself to be above such considerations for, despite the bloodshed that placed his grandfather on the throne, he feels that he rules not as a result of might but as a result of right.<sup>68</sup> This becomes clear when York later declares his intention to seize the crown by force, an intention Henry can only see as some form of madness: “a bedlam and ambitious humour / Makes him oppose himself against his king” (*2HVI* 5.1.132-33).

The issue of legitimacy is explored throughout the first tetralogy, but such questions seem to be discarded almost entirely by the time one gets to *3 Henry VI*. This is emphasized by the first scene in the play, in which almost every reference to right and legitimacy is coupled with might and force. This was certainly the case in Hall-Barton’s production of the play:

The Barton-Hall *Wars* made the entry of the Yorkists into Parliament house, the first scene of *3 Henry VI*, an equally important moment in the breakdown of social order. The scene opened (in the television production) with a shot of battering-ram forcing down the door of the palace. York is in full armour as he ascends the throne. Donald Sinden in the part filled the throne with a kind of authority that David Warner as

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<sup>68</sup> However, Henry VI will later acknowledge this bloody legacy in *3 Henry VI* (1.1.134).

King Henry never had, but in the parley between the two which followed, the armour was always there as a reminder of the force used to occupy the royal seat. War may be politics by other means, but those other means alter the nature of the politics. (Greene 86)

As Machiavelli puts it in regards to seizing and holding on to states, the one who has the strength to seize and hold on to the crown is the one who will be king, for power is “acquired either with the arms of others, or with one’s own” (*P* 1.7). Even the Parliament is not immune to this reliance on arms, for both Richard and Warwick say that they should occupy Parliament and kill everyone who does not take their side: “the ‘Bloody Parliament’ shall this be called, / Unless Plantagenet, Duke of York, be king, / And bashful Henry deposed” (*3HVI* 1.1.39-41). This sentiment is best summed up by York when he asks his men to stay close: “then leave me not; my lords . . . . I mean to take possession of my right” (*3HVI* 1.1.43-44). York needs his army, not parliaments or charters or genealogical tables or debates about legitimacy, to make his claim for the throne. It is important to note that while York calls his claim his “right,” he also says that he means to “take possession” of it. Kingship is dramatized here as something that must be taken by force. It is important to note that Shakespeare is not necessarily agreeing with this view of power, only that this is how power is often pursued by characters in the first tetralogy. In keeping with Tillyard’s conception of the Tudor Myth, one could say that all of this wanton power-grabbing has come about as a result of Richard II’s murder, but the first tetralogy is far less providential, for power is held by the one who has the will to seize it and hold onto it. Those who simply expect it to remain in their hands as a result of their position quickly fall victim to those who do not hold similar views. However, Shakespeare’s exploration of these issues also finds the very basic flaws to this

conception, findings that suggest that such a reliance on power alone may be ultimately self-defeating.

Nevertheless, as York sits on the throne surrounded by armed friends and supporters, the dictates of power politics still holds sway, and the audience can see the divergence between the rhetoric and the reality. York is not on that throne by virtue of his legitimacy; he is on that throne because of his power. Clifford points this out when he enters the stage, for he chides Henry by reminding him that York would not be sitting on the throne like this if Henry V was still king: “he durst not sit there had your father lived” (*3HVI* 1.1.63). This is an interesting point, for Clifford is not citing precedence and pedigree in order to argue in favor of divine right; instead, he is arguing that Henry V would have stopped the Yorkists with force. Also, there is the remarkable exchange between Henry VI and the Yorkists regarding the question of who is the real usurper, an exchange that begins with Henry’s declaration that he is their “sovereign” (*3HVI* 1.1.76) and ends with Warwick’s own declaration about what really determines the issue of sovereignty: “you forget / That we are those which chased you from the field” (*3HVI* 1.1.89-90). York concurs, arguing that the issue should be settled by arms in the field (*3HVI* 1.1.102-03). Again Henry tries to rely on precedent (*3HVI* 1.1.107-09), a reliance that is turned on its head by Richard’s “you lose” (*3HVI* 1.1.113). As dangerous as the Yorkists’ claims about the role of force may be, it is important to note that their claims are actually underscored by Henry’s own supporters, who openly acknowledge that their desire for revenge is much stronger than their actual belief in Henry’s claim to the throne. Such admissions on the part of these supposed supporters offer yet another exploration of how strategy affects these characters’ behaviour. For example, Clifford vows to “fight

in” Henry’s defense “be [his] title right or wrong,” for Clifford will never “kneel to him that slew [his] father” (3*HVI* 1.1.159-62). Brockbank argues that the death of Clifford’s father has turned him into a “nihilist, recognizing the virtues of chivalry and order[,] but dedicated to the defilement of both” (“The Frame of Disorder” 56-57). Exeter says that Clifford, Northumberland, and Westmoreland “seek revenge and therefore will not yield” to the Yorkists (3*HVI* 1.1.190). In other words, their desire for vengeance outweighs any concern they have about Henry’s actual claim to the throne. They do not care who is supposed to be king; instead, they want only their revenge.

In case there is any doubt about this, one should pay special attention to Warwick’s final threat to Henry and the way that Shakespeare uses the stage to underscore the meaning of this threat:

Do right unto this princely Duke of York,  
Or I will fill the house with armed men  
And over the chair of state where now he sits  
Write up his title with usurping blood.  
*He stamps with his foot, and the Soldiers show themselves.* (3*HVI*  
1.1.166-69)

This threat is backed up dramatically by the stamping of Warwick’s foot, with the arrival of troops on the stage. While dramatically exhilarating, this explores how force underlies all of the onstage talk of legitimacy and precedence. According to Knowles, the audience is witness to “no less than a *coup d’état*” (*Arguments with History* 41). Henry must “do right,” but Warwick also says that he is willing to use might to see that Henry does so, for he threatens to “write [York’s] title with usurping [Henry’s] blood.” As John Cox argues, York’s “precaution in concealing soldiers throughout the palace clearly signals his belief

that he can [only] make good his right by power” (*The Dramaturgy of Power* 94).<sup>69</sup>

Thus, all of this talk of rights and usurping means little, for the arrival of the troops on the stage will ultimately determine the issue. Cox and Rasmussen note that in O—the 1595 Octavo—Henry says that he will concede defeat once Warwick sends the troops away (Arden *3HVI* 197). Even if this is so, it still is done with the understanding that the troops can always be called back at a moment’s notice. In Martin’s opinion, the direct threat that the troops present to Henry is quite clear: “most modern productions . . . have the soldiers rush in holding pikes and ‘ambushing’ Henry” (Oxford *3HVI* 161). The reality of this threat is important to note, as is Henry’s reaction to it, for although he agrees to make York his heir, it is noteworthy that Henry asks Warwick, not York, if this compromise is permissible: “my Lord of Warwick, hear me but one word: / Let me for this my lifetime reign as king” (*3HVI* 1.1.170-71). The man with the troops, not the one with the better claim, is the real power on the stage. Perhaps in an attempt to assert his own authority, York is the one who responds to Henry’s suggestion, but this probably proves my point even more (*3HVI* 1.1.172-73). If precedence and pedigree are meaningless in the face of power, then it is dramatically fitting that the most powerful man onstage should not be Henry VI or the Duke of York, but Warwick himself, the Kingmaker.

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<sup>69</sup> This is in keeping with Hall’s description of the historical York’s seizure of the throne, for while the people of London seemed to support York, their support was clearly influenced by York’s military might. York arrived in London

with a sword borne naked before him, and toke his lodynge in the kynges awne palyce, whereupn the common people babbeled, that he should be Kyng, & that kyng Henry should no longer reigne. Durynge the tyme . . . the duke of Yorke with a bold countenance, entered into the chamber of the peres, and sat downe in the trone royall, under the clothe of estate (which is the kynges peculiar seate). (qtd. in Bullough 173)



This theme continues throughout the play, from Henry's contention that he was "enforced" to strip Prince Edward of his inheritance in favor of York (*3HVI* 1.1.228-34) to Warwick's description of what is needed to possess the crown:

this strong right hand of mine  
Can pluck the diadem from faint Henry's head  
And wring the awful sceptre from his fist,  
Were he as famous and as bold in war  
As he is famed for mildness, peace and prayer. (*3HVI* 2.1.151-55)

Warwick says that he could strip Henry of the crown even if he was "bold in war," but there is little doubt that Henry's "mildness" is actually what emboldens his enemies. Parliaments, legitimacy, and the like mean little to Warwick; what matters is that the Lancastrians are "thirty thousand strong" while the Yorkists have "five and twenty thousand" soldiers (*3HVI* 2.1.176, 180). Again, might appears to make right in these plays, a point that is reinforced by Prince Edward's contention that "if that be right which Warwick says is right, / There is no wrong, but everything is right" (*3HVI* 2.2.131-32). The importance of Warwick's support of Edward's claim is made clear later in 3.3, for Louis XI is only willing to support Edward if Warwick is willing to support him; the moment Warwick removes his support from Edward, Louis does the same. In 4.3 Warwick surprises Edward in his tent and takes the crown off his head. Edward is king, but if he offends someone who is more powerful than himself he will be king no longer. Even Shakespeare's choice of costumes in this scene indicate the role that kingship plays without the power to back it up, for the audience can see a powerless king in his bedclothes dominated by Warwick in his military armour. As the possessor of the larger army, Warwick believes that he can degrade the King if he displeases him: "when you disgraced me in my embassy, / Then I degraded you from being King / And come now

to create you Duke of York” (3*HVI* 4.3.32-34). Warwick explicitly states here that power is more important than legitimacy, for even if Edward is king, he is merely a “shadow” without Warwick’s power to back him up (3*HVI* 4.3.50).

Here one can see Shakespeare’s qualifies the maxim that might makes right, for it appears that right so gained is highly unstable. This “shadow” will of course later go on to defeat Warwick and win back his crown, but the truth of Warwick’s words are underscored by Edward’s pronouncement at the end of 3 *Henry VI* that the Yorkists are securely in power and that the Wars of the Roses are over as a result of the Yorkists successfully destroying their enemies:

Once more we sit in England’s royal throne,  
Repurchased with the blood of enemies.  
What valiant foemen like to autumn’s corn  
Have we mowed down in tops of all their pride!  
Three Dukes of Somerset, threefold renowned . . .  
Two Cliffords . . .  
And two Northumberlands . . . .  
With them two brave bears, Warwick and Montague . . . .  
Thus have we swept suspicion from our seat  
And made our footstool of security . . . .  
Young Ned, for thee, thine uncles and myself  
Have in our armours watched the winter’s night,  
Went all afoot in summer’s scalding heat,  
That thou mightst repossess the crown in peace,  
And of our labours thou shalt reap the gain. (3*HVI* 5.7.1-20)

It is important to note that Edward does not say that he is king as a result of legitimacy; instead, he says he is king because he has killed all of the other claimants to the throne. As Barbara Hodgson notes, Edward “revers[es] the terms of the usual after-battle report, which praises the deeds and valor of the winners,” and “de-forms the convention” by listing all of his slain enemies (*The End Crown Alls* 74-75). Edward also points out a very important fact about the world of the first tetralogy, and that is that the throne can

only be “repurchased with the blood of enemies.”<sup>70</sup> However, Edward is not aware of this instability, that there are other claimants in the room with him who are equally desirous of the crown, and that their desires will soon come into conflict with his own. Siemon links this speech with the action of *Richard III*, noting that it “could be read as an extended ironic commentary on the falsity of worldly hopes for security and stability amid courtly contentions” (“The Power of Hope?” 373). One should keep in mind Edward’s reference to the crops of corn that he hopes will soon grow, for Richard has already compared this crop to weeds that he hopes to remove. Clarence has already betrayed Edward, and Richard has also promised to do all that he can to seize the crown for himself, a promise that he will later fulfill in *Richard III*. Neither Richard nor Clarence has fought for the sake of Edward or his sons; they have fought for themselves. Edward believes that the deaths of his enemies have provided a “footstool of security” for both him and his sons, but the action of *Richard III* will show that this is simply not the case. Neither Edward nor the princes will live to “reap the gain.” One can perhaps agree with Machiavelli that might makes right, but then one must also agree that, once that rule has been established, one can never be truly secure. Machiavelli occasionally acknowledges this truth, but Shakespeare is far more aware of it and its implications. *Richard III* will powerfully showcase this awareness.

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<sup>70</sup> My interpretation of this scene differs from Howard and Rackin’s, who argue that the family reconstituted at the end of this play is nothing like the dynastic, male-centered families previously headed by Lord Talbot or by . . . Duke of York. Rather, what . . . Edward has created is a family centered on the husband’s affection for his wife and child, not on his command over a patriline . . . Addressing his wife and son . . . Edward seems devoted solely to his domestic pleasures . . . (*Engendering the Nation* 99)

However, Edward’s behaviour may be more strategic than one might think.

### 2.3 IS THE SITUATION REALLY THIS BLEAK?

Are things really this bleak? It would seem that the world of the first tetralogy really does have much in common with the bleak political landscape described by Machiavelli and other politic authors, but in Shakespeare things seem even bleaker, since the right might makes seems to have very little staying power. Machiavelli's most controversial pieces of advice for princes are predicated on his basic contention that "man's nature is ruthless and suspicious, and will not set limits to its aspirations" (*D* 1.29.178). Time and time again throughout his writings, Machiavelli insists that he would like to give advice that presupposes our basic goodness, but that his experience of the world simply will not permit it. Machiavelli's basic justification for his seemingly immoral advice stems from this very idea: "if all men were good, this rule would not stand. But as men are wicked . . ." (*P* 18.68-69). Many critics have noted that Shakespeare's plays also reflect a world in which evil is lurking just beneath the surface. In keeping with this, Foakes contends that the first tetralogy depicts a "world of brute force" stripped of "chivalry" and "Christian piety" (50). Many of Shakespeare's contemporaries and a number of historians during the early modern period were heavily interested in the writings of both Tacitus and Machiavelli and their view of humankind, a view that presupposes that people are more inclined to evil than to good, with some even presupposing that they are not inclined to good at all.<sup>71</sup> Can Buckingham's advice to

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<sup>71</sup> For example, Christopher Marlowe (Hattaway, "Drama and society" 106), Richard Hooker (Talbert, *The Problem of Order* 55), Walter Raleigh (Jorgensen 181), Ben Jonson (Smuts 32), Fulke Greville (Smuts 33-34), William Cavendish (Condren 172-73), and John Donne (Moseley 22-23) all show the influence of Machiavelli in their writings. Sometimes these historians wrote about Tacitus in order to discuss the works of Machiavelli. To list but a few: Arrigo Caterina Davila's *The Historie of the Civill Warres of France*, Paolo Sarpi's *The Historie of the Councel of Trent*, Samuel Daniel's *The First Fowre Bookes of the ciuile wars between the two houses of Lancaster and Yorke*—which may have been read by Shakespeare—and John Hayward's *The Life and Reign of King Henry IV*, whose author may have read or seen Shakespeare's English History plays (Shapiro 118-24).

Henry VI could be seen to reflect on the tetralogy as a whole: “trust nobody, for fear you be betrayed” (2*HVI* 4.4.57)?<sup>72</sup> One should remember that this advice applies to Buckingham as well, for he has already indicated his own willingness to betray others in order to achieve more power (2*HVI* 1.1.175-76).

However, sometimes such cruelty does not have a political end, and sometimes it simply descends into horrific slaughter. For example, Young Clifford’s reaction to the death of his father dramatically illustrates this descent into barbarity:

My heart is turned to stone, and while ’tis mine  
It shall be stony. York not our old men spares;  
No more will I their babes . . . .  
Henceforth I will not have to do with pity.  
Meet I an infant of the house of York,  
Into as many gobbets will I cut it  
As wild Medea young Absyrtus did.  
In cruelty will I seek out my fame. (2*HVI* 5.2.50-60)

This speech is important, for it typifies the bloodthirsty acts of revenge and counter-revenge that will occur so often throughout *3 Henry VI*. Young Clifford uses an allusion that indicates the self-destructive nature of his bloodlust. Young Clifford will, like Medea, kill an innocent child in revenge for the death of someone who, although old, was willingly engaged in combat on the field of battle (Cox, *The Dramaturgy of Power* 92). He will “cut” the “infant of the house of York” into “gobbets,” an act that he knows will make him famous not for his courage but for his cruelty. However, he also—seemingly unknowingly—makes a mistake with his mythological references, a mistake that indicates that his bloodlust is not only self-destructive, but self-defeating. Clifford says that he will kill the infant just as Medea killed Absyrtus. However, what Clifford does not seem to realize is that Absyrtus was Medea’s own brother. By referencing the murder

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<sup>72</sup> This echoes Guicciardini’s advice that in politics one should believe little and trust less: “che non si può errare a credere poco, a fidarsi poco” (*Ricordi* C.157).

of one's own family while declaring one's intentions to slaughter a member of another family, Shakespeare seems to suggest that such bloodlust, be it inherent or not, ultimately destroys everyone involved (Kay 1).<sup>73</sup>

Despite this, Clifford desires to pursue his revenge regardless of the consequences. Politic stratagems are no longer important, for he declares that he will never be satisfied when it comes to his thirst for blood and revenge: "no, if I digged up thy forefather's graves / And hung their rotten coffins up in chains, / It could not slake mine ire nor ease my heart" (3*HVI* 1.3.27-29). Clifford declares that the descendants of the Yorkists will not be safe from his wrath; nor will their future generations: "till I root out their accursed line / And leave not one alive, I live in hell" (3*HVI* 32-33). The grotesqueness and horror of this declaration is underscored not only by the fact that Clifford is saying this to a child, but by the fact that he says this to a child he is about to murder. Even the murder of young Rutland is not enough to sate his bloodlust, for Clifford graphically says that the child's blood on his sword must be combined with the blood of the child's father: "this thy son's blood, cleaving to my blade, / Shall rust upon my weapon till thy blood / Congealed with this do make me wipe off both" (3*HVI* 50-52).<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Although the reference here is to Euripides, Brockbank argues that the scene is also evocative of the tragedies of Seneca:

The values apt to an heroic battle play are displaced by those prevailing in parts of English Seneca; in Heywood's *Thyestes*, for example, where "ire thinks nought unlawful to be done," "Babes be murdered ill" and "bloodshed lies the land about" (I. i. 79-89). Shakespeare gives the revenge motive a great political significance by relating it to the dynastic feud for which Clifford is not alone responsible. ("The Frame of Disorder" 61)

For more on the Senecan influences, see Miola, *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy: the Influence of Seneca*. For more on this scene in relation to revenge tragedies such as Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, see Somogyi, *Shakespeare's Theatre of War* (197-99) and Berry, *Patterns of Decay* (60).

<sup>74</sup> As Hall portrays the historical scene:

The young gentleman dismayed, had not a word to speake, but kneled on his knees imploring mercy, and desiryng grace, both with holding up his handes and making dolorous countenance, for his speache was gone for feare. Save him sayd his Chappelein,

However, the murder of York is also not enough, for Clifford goes on to try to convince Henry VI that they should destroy the Yorkists completely, for such cruelty, far from being abnormal, actually typifies the behavior of all living creatures:

To whom do lions cast their gentle looks?  
Not to the beast that would usurp their den.  
Whose hand is that the forest bear doth lick?  
Not his that spoils her young before her face.  
Who scapes the lurking serpent's mortal sting?  
Not he that sets his foot upon her back?  
The smallest worm will turn, being trodden on,  
And doves will peck in safeguard of their brood. (*3HVI* 2.2.11-18)

This is similar in many ways to Machiavelli's comment that people often fight not as humans but as beasts (*P* 18.68). However, for Clifford the desire for revenge is actually undermining politic stratagems. Shakespeare's drama shows the tension directed at various ends. Even though he is trying to convince Henry to support his son Prince Edward, Clifford paints a picture of the world that is cruel, savage, and entirely devoid of pity. Rackin argues that "in *3 Henry VI*, the kingdom is reduced to a Machiavellian jungle" (*Stages of History* 62), while Manheim notes that "seen through the *Henry VI* plays the new Machiavellianism is but [a] rationale for the step back to bestiality" (106). Clifford also tries to convince Henry not to feel pity for the sight of York's head on a pike, for there is simply no place for pity or kindness in this politic world: "harmful pity must be laid aside" (*3HVI* 2.2.10). Clifford feels no pity for the Yorkists, for despite the murder of Rutland he still says that he is "yet not satisfied" in his quest for revenge (*3HVI* 2.2.99). It is no accident then that Jones calls the battles at the beginning of *3 Henry VI* "the most savage fighting of the Wars" (*Origins* 182). Jones believes that such

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for he is a princes sonne, and peradventure may do you good hereafter. With that word, the lord Clifford marked him and sayde: by Gods blode, thy father slew myne, and so wil I do the and thy kyn, and with that word, stacke the erle to the hart with his dagger . . . . (qtd. in Bullough 177-78)

scenes are meant to “show the barbarousness of civil war,” but they could also be seen as a comment on the barbarity of humanity in general (*Origins* 182).<sup>75</sup> If this is the case, what then are we to make of Henry’s response to this speech and his declaration that Clifford has “played the orator” well and has “inferr[ed] arguments of mighty force” (*3HVI* 2.2.43-44). Henry goes on to disagree with Clifford’s arguments, but are we meant to?

Despite such claims, and despite the fact that Clifford is responsible for “one of the most infamous and cruel acts of the play, the death of Rutland” (Knowles, *Arguments with History* 37), it is interesting that Richard’s bloodthirstiness receives almost all of the attention in this play. This should not be surprising, as many critics seem to regard the first tetralogy as merely a precursor to the greater later play *Richard III*,<sup>76</sup> with *3 Henry VI* being of interest primarily in regards to Richard’s wonderfully politic soliloquy (*3HVI* 3.2.124-95).<sup>77</sup> There is no doubt that Richard is bloodthirsty in this play, but even his bloodthirstiness cannot match Clifford’s. After butchering both Young Rutland and York, Clifford completely acquiesces in the fact that he too will be butchered by his enemies: “come, York and Richard, Warwick and the rest: / I stabbed your father’s

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<sup>75</sup> This view certainly influenced Edward Hall—son of Peter Hall, whose production of the first tetralogy has been called “a watershed in English Shakespeare production” (Loehlin 141)—when he directed the first tetralogy under the title of *Rose Rage*, a production that “reduced the politics of *Henry VI* to a simple vision of brutality . . . [and] naked savagery” (Loehlin 148).

<sup>76</sup> Martin notes that productions of the play have heightened this further by sometimes adding scenes from *Richard III* to productions of *3 Henry VI* (Oxford *3HVI* 2).

<sup>77</sup> For example, Garber devotes almost half of her discussion of *3 Henry VI* to the ways that the Richard of that play prepare us for the Richard of *Richard III*:

when [the play] is not dismissed as “early” or “historical,” it is often regarded as anticipatory of the more assured success of *Richard III*, and certainly there is much in *3 Henry VI* that directly prefigures, or predicts, its successor play. Thus, for example, when Laurence Olivier staged—and then filmed—his version of *Richard III*, he began it with Richard’s great soliloquy, placed squarely at the center of *3 Henry VI*. (*Shakespeare After All* 118)

Richard is a fascinating character and well deserves all of the attention he receives. However, by placing all of our attention on Richard, we overlook other important aspects of the plays, like its depiction and exploration of the politic stratagems being pursued by other characters on the stage.



bosoms; split my breast” (3*HVI* 2.6.29-30). Some critics have seen this speech as a repentant desire to suffer the same fate that Clifford has inflicted on his enemies.

Possibly this is true, but, given Clifford’s earlier pronouncements, this is not the only way to read the speech. In any case, Clifford’s desire to be cut to pieces by his enemies certainly does come true. In the same way that York was mocked and abused before being killed and in the same way that his body was defiled after his death, so too will Clifford suffer mistreatment at the hands of the Yorkists.

This act also occurs in the same place where York was killed, which leads Warwick to say that he and the Yorkists are merely dispensing justice: “measure for measure must be answered” (3*HVI* 2.6.55). Given the harshness of this scene and the utter lack of justice behind such barbarity, Warwick’s biblical reference here is quite shocking. Replacing York’s head with Clifford’s does not strike one as an act of justice; instead, it seems like just one more murder in a play that has already seen so many. The audience does not see just punishment for a crime; instead it sees a dead body being mocked and mutilated on the stage. First the Yorkists go into great detail about how they will cut off Clifford’s head, and then they try to outdo each other in mocking—or “vex[ing]” (3*HVI* 2.6.68)—Clifford’s body. Jones notes that Clifford, being dead, “is beyond their malice. They are reduced to taunting a corpse. The scene is Shakespeare’s invention and shows eloquently the futility of the revenge ethic” (*Origins* 189). The fact that Shakespeare did not get this scene from the chronicles is worth keeping in mind in regards to what it says about such cruelty and what it shows about the complexity of Shakespeare’s attitude towards politic stratagems. This mocking is followed by

Richard's horrifying declaration that he wishes Clifford were alive so that he could kill him again, and that he would even be willing to cut off his own hand to see it done:

I know by that he's dead, and, by my soul,  
If this right hand would buy two hours' life,  
That I in all despite might rail at him,  
This hand should chop it off, and with the issuing blood  
Stifle the villain. (*3HVI* 2.6.77-83)

Foakes argues that such horrifying scenes “show Shakespeare competing with the spectacular representations of violence in plays by other dramatists of the time, especially Marlowe” (9). This may be true, but they also seem to move beyond mere sensationalism and serve as a comment on the treacherous political environment these characters find themselves in. By combining such a self-destructive act with revenge, Richard does much the same thing that Clifford did with his allusion to Medea and Absyrtus. There is nothing honorable, or even political, in any of this; even Warwick tells the brothers that they should dispense with this and get on with the business at hand (*3HVI* 2.6.85-87). There is no strategy and nothing at all to be gained from acting this way, and it contradicts Machiavelli's maxim that “the desire for power is as great as or even greater than the desire for revenge” (*D* 3.6.270) and that “the wish to acquire [power] is a most natural thing, and men who manage to acquire [it] are always applauded (or at least not blamed) when they succeed” (*P* 3.15).<sup>78</sup> However, Shakespeare explores the ways that politic stratagems and calculation often fail to account for the irrationality that often motivates our actions, irrationality that can easily degenerate into mere killing and destruction:

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<sup>78</sup> Machiavelli's assertion is similar to Tacitus' that the desire for power overrides all other passions or emotions: “Cupido dominandi cunctis adfectibus flagrantior est” (*Annales* 15.53). All subsequent translations of Tacitus are my own.

There is . . . a persistent theme of degeneration in all three plays as the England they depict sinks increasingly into chaos and barbarity. Yorkists and Lancastrians compete with each other in treachery and atrocity, authority is effaced, power becomes an end in itself, and the crown becomes a prize of war, tossed from one head to another at the whim of brute force and blind fortune. (Rackin, “English History Plays” 198)

All of this killing may be initially inspired by a desire to maneuver one’s way to the throne, but it can easily devolve into something far more horrifying.

## 2.4 CAN WE CHANGE?

Unlike many modern thinkers, who tend to believe that people are conditioned by contexts political, social, cultural, religious, economic, and otherwise, Machiavelli believed that people—at least in terms of their “essential” qualities—did not change. For example, Campbell points out that for Machiavelli “man remains the same,” and so “history repeats itself” (28).<sup>79</sup> For example, Machiavelli argues that people should study the ancients because people have not changed from that time to his own: “as if the sky, the sun, the elements, and mankind had changed their motion, order, and power from what they had been in antiquity” (*D* 1.Preface.106).

Can the same be said about Shakespeare’s characters? If these characters can change, then it is possible that the horrifying depths to which the characters sink in the scenes described above are not entirely irreversible. While there may be other scenes that do offer some hope of change, there is one scene that suggests that the characters in these plays do not change at all and that they will be forever embroiled in such politic behavior.

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<sup>79</sup> However, although Machiavelli believed that human nature did not change, he did believe quite strongly that political orders and regimes were constantly changing. As Rackin argues, this is one of the reasons why his theories were so troubling to early modern readers:

The demonic Machiavel of the Elizabethan stage expressed a recognition that Machiavelli’s theories were irreconcilably opposed to the providential vision of human history that justified the existing social and political order. (*Stages of History* 45).

For more on how this view possibly also shaped Shakespeare’s conception of history, see Rackin, *Stages of History* (45-59, 71-77) and Holderness, *Shakespeare Recycled* (31).

This is the first scene of *2 Henry VI*, a scene that “introduce[s] an action that serves as an emblem for the plays as a whole” (Berry, *Patterns of Decay* 30). Here we have a truly dramatic exploration of politic stratagems that fully appreciates all of strategy’s contours and fluidity. After announcing his marriage to Margaret and the poor terms that accompany it, Henry VI exits the stage (Meron 145). He has just thwarted both York and Humphrey’s designs and he has pleased no one but himself and Suffolk.<sup>80</sup> Oblivious to this, Henry leaves everyone onstage to mull over their grievances. One can imagine the smiles on the courtiers’ face while Henry is still onstage, smiles that vanish the moment he leaves it.<sup>81</sup> Before leaving, Henry has called out by name all who remain in order to thank them: “uncle Winchester, / Gloucester, York, Buckingham, Somerset, / Salisbury and Warwick” (*2HVI* 1.1.65-67). Warren notes that this listing of names is a device used by Shakespeare to “identify important characters early in the play, and to emphasize those already identified” (Oxford *2HVI* 115). This is true, but it also serves to showcase all those onstage who have cause to be angry about Henry’s actions and who will not be placated by an empty show of gratitude. Henry thinks these nobles are his friends, but there are few friends in politics.

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<sup>80</sup> While Humphrey does often act in Henry’s interests rather than his own, it does seem that he is angered by more than just what this marriage may mean for England. Perhaps taking a less cynical view, Cox argues that Humphrey is worried only by “the blow to English dignity and the undercutting of past military achievement” (*Shakespeare and the Dramaturgy of Power* 85). However, it does seem that he is equally rankled by his loss of control over Henry, a control that rankled so many in *1 Henry VI*.

<sup>81</sup> Machiavelli contends that “one can assess a prince’s intelligence by looking at the men with whom he surrounds himself” (*P* 22.88). This is similar to Tacitus’ complaints about the sycophantic Roman court:

At Romae ruere in servitium consules, patres, eques: quanto quis illustrius, tanto magis falsi ac festinantes, vultuque composito, ne laeti excessus principis, neu tristiores primordio, lacrimas, gaudium, questus adulationem miscebant. (*Annales* 1.7)

This translates as: “All of Rome—consuls, senators, knights—was plunged into slavery. A high rank meant even greater hypocrisy; one studied one’s looks to avoid seeming happy at the death of one emperor or sad at the ascension of another. One learned to combine delight and sorrow in one’s flattering adulation.”

This becomes clear the moment Henry leaves the stage Humphrey, described by so many critics as Henry's greatest friend and protector (Warren, Oxford *2HVI* 36-37), unleashes his fury over what has just happened. As Linda Gregerson notes, "the first scene of *2 Henry VI* is forcefully governed by the reactions of the Duke of Gloucester who, since the death of Talbot, has had to assume the mantle of constancy" (247). What kind of constancy does Humphrey represent? His speech here gives an indication:

Brave peers of England, pillars of the state,  
To you Duke Humphrey must unload his grief.  
Your grief, the common grief of the land.  
What! Did my brother Henry spend his youth,  
His valour, coin and people, in the wars . . . .  
And did my brother Bedford toil his wits  
To keep by policy what Henry got?  
Have you yourselves, Somerset, Buckingham,  
Brave York, Salisbury and victorious Warwick,  
Received deep scars in France and Normandy?  
Or hath mine uncle Beaufort and myself . . . .  
And shall these labours and these honours die?  
Shall Henry's conquest, Bedford's vigilance,  
Your deeds of war and all our counsel die?  
O peers of England, shameful is this league;  
Fatal this marriage, cancelling your fame,  
Blotting your names from books of memory,  
Razing the characters of your renown,  
Defacing monuments of conquered France,  
Undoing all, as all had never been! (*2HVI* 1.1.72-100)

The speech is really quite astonishing, for it helps to dispel the myth that Humphrey is, as the title pages of both the First Quarto and First Folio indicate, "good Duke Humphrey."<sup>82</sup> The title page's estimation of Humphrey is concurred with elsewhere, for Humphrey is essentially the only wholly innocent figure in *The Mirror for Magistrates*, in which he is described as the one "commlye called the good Duke" (Tragedy 29). This is a myth that is still very much alive, and many still continue to insist that Humphrey is

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<sup>82</sup> For a different interpretation of Shakespeare's approach to the myth of good Duke Humphrey, see Pratt, "Shakespeare and Humphrey Duke of Gloucester: A Study in Myth."

entirely “blameless” for the struggles that are ensuing around him (Champion, *Perspective* 38). For example, Manheim argues that Humphrey is “genuinely devoted to king and country” and that he “thoroughly accepts his place in the hierarchical framework” (83). Manheim even goes so far as to call him a “non-Machiavel” (83), while Prior argues that Humphrey “is the only important character in this play whose conduct is not guided by selfish personal interest” (110).<sup>83</sup>

However, there is another way of looking at it. If one looks at Humphrey’s behaviour through the lens of politic stratagems, his actions become less simple and more dramatically satisfying. As Saccio notes, Shakespeare “inherited” this view of Humphrey “from his sources,” for the historical Humphrey “certainly equaled [Winchester] in ambition and far surpassed him in self-centered impetuosity” (*Shakespeare’s English Kings* 111). Saccio also notes that the historical Humphrey was “no less self-seeking than his fellow magnates and more pugnacious than most” (*Shakespeare’s English Kings* 118). Does this ambivalence surrounding the historical Humphrey find its way into the play? It certainly does in this scene. One should note how Humphrey’s strategy comes alive in the drama. No longer is he “good Duke Humphrey”; now he becomes a kind of star performer trying to further his ends like everyone else on the stage. Note the rhetorical devices Humphrey uses to try to gather those around him as a single force of displeased nobles. Despite the fact that he has been the enemy of at least some of those on the stage, Humphrey refers to all of them—even the Cardinal, his most hated enemy—

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<sup>83</sup> Likewise, Cartelli argues that

while the Duke himself is, of course, as much of an aristocrat as are his enemies, he is repeatedly represented in these scenes as the only remaining source of balance and fairness in the kingdom and as friend, if not always defender, of the common people. Indeed, the immediacy and fervor with which the commons bring their case against Suffolk on the heels of the discovery of Duke Humphrey’s assassination . . . demonstrates with unusual force the extent to which Shakespeare has them identify Duke Humphrey with their concerns. (“Suffolk and the Pirates” 337)

as “brave peers of England” and “pillars of the state.” Even though it is really “his grief” that he is “unload[ing],” Humphrey makes sure to say that it is really their “grief, the common grief of all the land.” How can one who has so often been described as Henry’s greatest supporter so quickly move to bemoaning the now nullified sacrifices that his “brother Henry [V]” and his “brother Bedford” have made to seize France? Are these the words of someone who cares about Henry, or are these the words of a disgruntled noble who is angry at having lost his hold over Henry as a result of Suffolk’s maneuverings?

Warren notes that Henry’s roll call of nobles served to introduce the audience to the principal characters of the play (Oxford *2HVI* 115). Humphrey makes a similar roll call, only now he does so to rally these nobles to his side. He reminds “brave York,” “victorious Warwick” and the rest that they have “received deep scars in France and Normandy,” scars that are now being mocked by Henry’s acquiescence to French demands. Humphrey even goes so far as to describe his most hated enemy the Cardinal as “uncle Beaufort” as he outlines the many ways that the two of them “studied . . . long” and “debat[ed] to and fro” the many different strategies they might deploy in order to keep “France and Frenchmen . . . in awe.” Is he really so selfless that he is willing to forget all of their past disputes in order to keep England strong, or does his anger at Henry’s foolishness make him so desperate that he is even willing to try to call on the aid of the Cardinal? Is he arguing for England or is he arguing for himself? Humphrey’s hold on power, which had seemed so secure in *1 Henry VI*, is now quickly slipping through his fingers. By reminding those around him that their “labours and honours” are being tarnished by Henry’s actions, is Humphrey trying to hold on to what little power he has left? While he lists all the things that have been undone—the “deeds of war,” the

“counsel,” the “fame,” the blotting of one’s “name[] from books of memory,” the “razing” of “character” and the “defac[ed] monuments”—Humphrey strategically makes sure to say that such losses primarily affect those around him and not himself alone. Is he trying to rally them all to his side? If so, is he simply trying to rally them against Suffolk, or is he trying to rally them against both Suffolk and Henry? While critics such as Grene do acknowledge Humphrey’s lack of solely benign motivations in *1 Henry VI*, they generally make the claim that Humphrey is entirely selfless and devoted to Henry by the time we get to *2 Henry VI* (101). Nevertheless, it should be noted that even the Cardinal is shocked by what Humphrey has said: “Nephew, what means this passionate discourse, / This peroration with such circumstance?” (*2HVI* 1.1.101-02). Humphrey’s discourse has been passionate, but the Cardinal’s use of the word “peroration” is intriguing, for, as Warren notes, the word means a “long-winded speech with detail” (Oxford *2HVI* 117). Humphrey’s speech certainly was that, but Knowles’ acknowledgement that the word can also mean “rhetorical speech” (Arden *2HVI* 155) raises an interesting question: is Humphrey’s speech the long-winded bombast of a fiery noble who cannot keep his mouth shut, or is it a calculated attempt to win people over to his side? How one reads the speech will determine whether one sees Humphrey as either good Duke Humphrey or as just another scheming strategist like all the others.

This ambiguity is furthered by Humphrey’s response to the Cardinal’s shocked response: “Ay, uncle” (*2HVI* 1.1.104). Humphrey has called the Cardinal a number of things in *1 Henry VI*, but uncle is certainly not one of them. Perhaps he is simply just stating an obvious fact, or perhaps he is still trying to rally the Cardinal over to his side. There is no question that he hates the Cardinal, but it is quite possible that he is willing to



set his feelings aside in order to fight a common enemy. There is a well known proverb which says that “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.” Who is this common enemy who might be able to make even Humphrey and the Cardinal unite against him? According to Humphrey, it is “Suffolk, the new-made duke that rules the roast” (2*HVI* 1.1.106).<sup>84</sup> Not only is Suffolk responsible for the circumstances that will lead to the loss of France, but he is also maneuvering to place himself above the rest of the nobles in the room.<sup>85</sup> No one in the room said anything outright when Henry made Suffolk a duke, but it is more than likely that they share Humphrey’s concern over his sudden rise in power.

The question is whether or not they are as threatened by this rise as Humphrey is and whether they will decide to side with the rising star or this falling one. Pointing out Suffolk’s machinations may inspire the rest to rally against him, or it may instead inspire the nobles to cut Humphrey loose. It is a gamble, but Humphrey is willing to take it. Perhaps tellingly, Salisbury and Warwick both ignore the reference to Suffolk and focus solely on the loss of France and Normandy (2*HVI* 1.1.110-20). However, York takes Humphrey’s bait and wishes aloud that Suffolk should be “suffocate[d]” if his arranged match for Henry proves unprofitable and “dims the honour of this warlike isle!” (2*HVI* 1.1.121-22). Perhaps seeing an opening for more insinuations against his real target, Humphrey seizes on this, first by complimenting York on his pun and then by trying to sully Suffolk and Margaret’s names even further than he has already:

A proper jest, and never heard before,  
That Suffolk should demand a whole fifteenth  
For costs and charges in transporting her!

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<sup>84</sup> Warren chooses a different word than “roast,” opting instead for “roost,” for it is “more appropriate to a modernized text, especially since the origin of ‘roast’ remains obscure” (Oxford 2*HVI* 117).

<sup>85</sup> Saccio argues that the motivations of the historical Suffolk during the negotiations over France were possibly genuine, but while “he may have been working toward an eventual peace treaty based on realistic compromises . . . the loss of Anjou and Maine naturally infuriated many Englishmen” (*Shakespeare’s English Kings* 103).

She should have stayed in France, and starved in France  
Before — (2*HVI* 1.1.129-33)

It is at this point that the Cardinal, possibly realizing that his chances are probably much better with Suffolk than they are with Humphrey, stops Humphrey in his tracks (2*HVI* 1.1.134-35). There is a good chance that the political circumstances may have been enough for the two men to forget their former hatred, but why should the Cardinal ally himself with the losing side? Besides, how can the Cardinal trust that Humphrey will not try to go after him once again after the threat of Suffolk has been removed?

Strategy is more about being able to properly react to circumstances than it is being able to properly follow a preconceived plan. Humphrey shows some strategic acumen, but his failure to respond correctly to the Cardinal's challenge is strategically disastrous. Humphrey leaves the stage angrily, and his exit undoes any chance he may have had of achieving the unity he sought: "the unanimity of protest is short-lived . . . and dissolves into factionalism and intrigue" (Berry, *Patterns of Decay* 31).<sup>86</sup> As Manheim notes, while everyone on the stage may not be a politic strategist, they are all heavily ambitious and display a keen awareness of what is at stake strategically:

Which of these is not at some time motivated by the lust for political advancement to employ nearly any form of deceit or violent action to attain it? . . . The more important ones confess their true motives in soliloquy, but for the most part they only occasionally reveal what they are and what they are really after. But when they do, those motives are unmistakable, and the incidents involved give us glimpses, however brief, of just how ruthless a world this is. (80-81)

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<sup>86</sup> Grene does not feel that Humphrey is being politic in this scene and instead argues that Humphrey's exit here is an indication of both his short temper and his essential goodness:

This [exit] can be read as a sort of keynote to the character. Gloucester has a temper he cannot always control but, to his credit, he tries. As the (palpably false) accusations against him mount . . . he simply leaves . . . A Lord Protector accustomed to command, moved at times by uncontrollable gusts of anger, especially when his honest and direct nature is provoked by the deceits of the corrupt: such a characterisation can make sense of Gloucester at loggerheads with the Cardinal while maintaining his position as the 'good Duke'. (102)

Such glimpses are even more dynamic for being glimpses, for the audience must work to engage with and try to discover the political motivations and calculations behind the veneer of honesty and loyalty they see on the stage. This is far more dramatically interesting than simply having a cunning Machiavel unveil his plans to the audience, for they suggest that the audience must look underneath the surface to see what is really going on.

Given this, how the nobles react the moment Humphrey leaves the room is both strategically sensible and dramatically gripping. Just as nobody complained about Henry until he was sufficiently out of earshot, so too does everyone—except the Cardinal—wait for Humphrey to leave the stage before they can say what they really think. And what do they think? The Cardinal knows what he would like them to think: if Humphrey is not their ally, then he is their enemy.<sup>87</sup> As Jones notes, the Cardinal “at once sneeringly calls [Humphrey’s] sincerity into question” (*Origins* 162). However, there is more to it than that, for, like Humphrey, the Cardinal is also trying to win the others over to his side. However, while his speech trying to win them over is a lot like Humphrey’s, it also contains some very interesting differences:

So, there goes our Protector in a rage.  
'Tis known to you he is mine enemy,  
Nay more, an enemy unto you all,  
And no great friend, I fear me, to the King.  
Consider, lords, he is the next of blood  
And heir apparent to the English crown.  
Had Henry got an empire by his marriage  
And all the wealthy kingdoms of the west,

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<sup>87</sup> The motives behind the feud between the historical Humphrey and the Cardinal is described by Hall thus: In this season fell a greate division in the realm of England, which, of a sparkle was like to growe to a great flame: For whether the bishop of Winchester . . . envied the autoritee of Humfrey duke of Gloucester Protector of the realme, or whether the duke had taken disdain at the riches and pompous estate of the bishop, sure it is that the whole realme was troubled with them and their partakers. (qtd. in Bullough 46)

There's reason he should be displeas'd at it.  
Look to it, lords; let not his smoothing words  
Bewitch your hearts; be wise and circumspect.  
What though the common people favour him,  
Calling him 'Humphrey, the good Duke of Gloucester',  
Clapping their hands and crying with loud voice,  
'Jesu maintain your royal excellence!'  
I fear me, lords, for all his flattering gloss,  
He will be found a dangerous Protector. (*2HVI* 1.1.144-61)

Like Humphrey's speech, which opened by noting his own private grief before changing tack to make that grief appear to be the grief of everyone else in the room, the Cardinal first acknowledges that Humphrey is his enemy before adding that he is "more, an enemy unto [them] all." Despite the fact that Suffolk was his main target, it took Humphrey a while to declare openly that this was the case; it was not until after he had finished his speech that he made this explicit. The Cardinal does not make the same mistake, for the moment Humphrey leaves the room he quickly declares that Humphrey is actually the real threat to them all. As Champion notes,

Beaufort's virulent passion against Gloucester becomes clearly visible as he attempts to raise a faction against the Protector, accusing him . . . as heir apparent, to take aim at the crown itself. (*Perspective* 25)

Passion there may be, but there is policy as well. First the Cardinal says that Humphrey is "no great friend," he fears, "to the King," but then he points out the ways in which Humphrey is a threat to the power of everyone in the room: "Consider, lords, he is the next of blood / And heir apparent to the English crown." Given his status, Humphrey should be seen as an enemy to be destroyed and not as a friend who needs help.

Unlike Humphrey, who calls those around him "lordings," the Cardinal makes sure to call them "lords." In fact, he calls them this three times during his speech, and each time he does it he makes sure to emphasize it: "Consider, lords," and "Look to it,

lords,” and “I fear me, lords.” The Cardinal is more adept at using flattery to win these nobles over to his side. He also makes sure to warn them about Humphrey’s “smoothing words” so that they do not “bewitch [their] hearts.” One could argue that the Cardinal himself is the one who is using smoothing words to bewitch their hearts, but this does nevertheless suggest that Humphrey was speaking with his head as much as he was speaking with his heart. However, the Cardinal does not rely on smoothing words alone, for he also points out that Humphrey’s popularity with the masses makes him a real danger to them all: “the common people favour him, / Calling him ‘Humphrey, the good Duke of Gloucester.’” The Cardinal desires that they all unite against a common enemy, and the fact that Humphrey really may be only the Cardinal’s enemy is immaterial.

Above all else, the nobles must see that Humphrey “will be found a dangerous Protector.”

Holinshed’s description of the historical Humphrey should be kept in mind:

he as an upright and politike governour, bending all his indevours to the advancement of the common-wealth, verie loving to the poore commons, and so beloved of them againe; learned, wise, full of courtesie; void of pride and ambition: (a virtue rare in personages of such high estate, but, where it is, most commendable). (qtd. in Jones, *Origins* 162-63)

While Jones argues that “the key phrase seems to have been ‘bending all his indevours to the advancement of the common-wealth’” (*Origins* 162), the Cardinal here would probably suggest that the key word is “politike” and the key phrase is the one at the end of the passage that acknowledges that “pride and ambition” are quite common “in personages of such high estate.” Perhaps Humphrey is not a figure of “complete integrity” after all (Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics* 200).

In any case, the Cardinal's words have their effect. Humphrey had wanted everyone to unite with him against Suffolk, but, as Buckingham's words show, his plan has completely backfired:

Why should he then protect our sovereign,  
He being of age to govern of himself?  
Cousin of Somerset, join you with me,  
And all together, with the Duke of Suffolk,  
We'll quickly hoist Duke Humphrey from his seat. (*2HVI* 1.1.162-66)

The Cardinal has defined a common enemy for them to unite against, and the nobles begin to wonder aloud why Humphrey should be in a position to “protect [their] sovereign” or themselves. Warren notes that “historically, Henry was twenty-four and Humphrey [was] in fact no longer Protector; but the play retains him in that office to emphasize Henry's dependence on him and to intensify the catastrophe of his fall” (Oxford *2HVI* 120), a point which is also noted by Knowles (Arden *2HVI* 159). While it does intensify the catastrophe of his fall, one must never forget Henry's dependence on Humphrey or, by extension, Humphrey's control over Henry. As with *1 Henry VI*, the question of this play will be who gets to control—not protect—Henry, for whoever controls Henry controls England. And so, even though Buckingham speaks here of Henry's ability “to govern of himself,” what he is really saying is that someone other than Humphrey should have his hand at the tiller. Who should that someone be? For now it is unclear, but this question will continue to dominate the rest of the play. Buckingham wants to throw in his lot with the winning side, and so he asks Somerset to join him and form an alliance with Suffolk, which was the very thing that Humphrey was arguing against. Suffolk is the rising star while Humphrey is the falling one, and so one can easily “hoist Duke Humphrey from his seat.” The Cardinal ecstatically resolves that “this

weighty business” should “brook no delay,” and so he rushes off “to [inform] the Duke of Suffolk” (2*HVI* 1.1.167-68). The Cardinal is ecstatic because he has convinced them all that they must destroy Humphrey in order to thrive.

Is Humphrey the real enemy, or is it the Cardinal himself? In yet another great dramatic reversal, Somerset pulls Buckingham aside the moment the Cardinal has left the stage in order to warn him not to fall into the Cardinal’s trap:

Cousin of Buckingham, though Humphrey’s pride  
And greatness of his place be grief to us,  
Yet let us watch the haughty Cardinal;  
His insolence is more intolerable  
Than all the princes’ in the land beside.  
If Gloucester be displaced he’ll be Protector. (2*HVI* 1.1.169-74)

The way in which this reversal unfolds is really quite dynamic, for one has to imagine Somerset acknowledging some kind of assent when Buckingham first asked him to join with him. In fact, it was the seeming assent of both Buckingham and Somerset that convinced the Cardinal to rush offstage in the first place. However, this assent was clearly feigned for the Cardinal’s benefit, for the moment he has left the stage Somerset begins to reveal his true thoughts. Humphrey is a threat to them all, but that does not mean that the Cardinal is not a threat as well. Humphrey’s “pride” over the “greatness of his place” may prove to be dangerous, but the one who has pointed this out is also “haughty” and full of “insolence.” His haughtiness and insolence are “more intolerable / Than all the princes’ in the land beside.” Likewise, while they should probably listen to his advice about Humphrey, they should remember that the Cardinal has his own agendas too, for “if Gloucester be displaced he’ll be Protector.” Why should they help the Cardinal topple Humphrey when he simply wants to take Humphrey’s place for himself?

Once again, the turnaround here is quite dynamic and exciting. Equally exciting is Buckingham's politic response to Somerset's warning that the Cardinal could become Protector: "Or thou or I, Somerset, will be Protectors, / Despite Duke Humphrey, or the Cardinal" (2*HVI* 1.1.175-76). Manheim notes that even supposedly minor characters such as these are given some kind of strategic motivation: "Buckingham's ambition is obvious enough, but note Somerset's 'let us watch.' The key to all Machiavellian design is patience, the knowing when to act" (81). Note the use of the word "protectors."

Knowles chooses to use the word "protectors," a decision that Warren disagrees with:

F's line limps rhythmically . . . , and 'Protectors' should obviously be 'Protector'. I think the two problems are linked. If the dramatist marked 'Somerset' to be moved, or added, in the manuscript with an insertion mark and 's', this could have been misread by the compositor. (Oxford 2*HVI* 121)

This might seem to be somewhat pedantic quibbling, were it not for the fact that the choice of word here could dramatically alter our perception of the discussion between Somerset and Buckingham. It is not simply a matter of producing a line that is more speakable: it is a matter of determining the nature of what Buckingham is actually saying. Should it simply be changed to "protector" because of the sound, or would that not better reflect what Buckingham is actually planning? After all, he did not say "thou and I"; he said "thou or I." It seems that Buckingham is beginning to calculate his own odds for seizing power. He is no longer willing to ally himself with the Cardinal, whom he equates with Humphrey as yet another obstacle in his path. The use of the word "protectors" or "protector" is still important though. If Buckingham meant the former, he and Somerset exit the stage together as allies against Humphrey and the Cardinal. If he



meant the latter, he and Somerset exit not together but separately, not as allies but as enemies.

As if to heighten this, Salisbury continues with the dramatic reversal only after someone has left the stage. Salisbury has remained silent while Somerset and Buckingham were speaking, but now that they are gone we find out what he really thinks about them: “Pride went before; Ambition follows him. / While these do labour for their own preferment” (2*HVI* 1.1.177-78). Humphrey saw Suffolk as the real enemy. The Cardinal saw Humphrey as the real enemy. Buckingham and Somerset saw Humphrey and the Cardinal—and perhaps even each other—as the real enemies. For Salisbury they are all, with the exception of Humphrey, his enemies. And so, he too now tries to rally those who are left on the stage to his side. Granted, there are not too many people left on the stage; only his son Warwick and York:

Warwick, my son, the comfort of my age,  
Thy deeds, thy plainness and thy housekeeping  
Hath won thee greatest favour of the commons,  
Excepting none but good Duke Humphrey. —  
And, brother York, thy acts in Ireland  
In bringing them to civil discipline;  
Thy late exploits done in the heart of France  
When thou were regent for our sovereign,  
Have made thee feared and honoured of the people. —  
Join we together for the public good,  
In what we can to bridle and suppress  
The pride of Suffolk and the Cardinal,  
With Somerset’s and Buckingham’s ambition;  
And, as we may, cherish Duke Humphrey’s deeds,  
While they do tend the profit of the land. (2*HVI* 1.1.187-201)

Like Humphrey, Warwick has also “won . . . [the] greatest favour of the commons, / Excepting none but good Duke Humphrey.” Jones argues that “Salisbury and his son Warwick are left to speak up virtuously for the common good” (*Origins* 163). However,

there is another way to look at it. Although it is clear that Salisbury still thinks well of Humphrey, this reminder to his son indicates his ambitious belief that one day Warwick could be just as powerful as Humphrey. York is also in a strong position politically after bringing Ireland “to civil discipline,” winning renown in France, and being “feared and honoured of the people.” To Salisbury, York has managed to be both.

And so, he wants Warwick and York to “join . . . together for the public good.” Given his words and actions later in the play, Salisbury may mean it when he speaks of joining together for the public good; the question is whether or not Warwick and York share Salisbury’s altruistic ideals. As Jones notes, “Salisbury and Warwick are soon to ally themselves with the ambitious York and so forget their care for the commonwealth” (*Origins* 163). In any case, be it to aid the public good or to aid their own positions, Salisbury feels that they must “bridle and suppress” the ambitions of Suffolk, the Cardinal, Somerset and Buckingham. They are the real threats to their power. But what is his opinion of Humphrey? He says that they must “cherish Duke Humphrey’s deeds,” but what does that mean? Knowles notes that “cherish” could mean “to hold dear” or “make much of” (*Arden 2HVI* 1.1.162), while Warren feels that the word could be read as “encourage” (*Oxford 2HVI* 122). If we hold to the latter interpretation, Salisbury could be arguing that Humphrey should be their ally. However, if we hold to the former, Salisbury’s true intentions are much less clear. Does he want Humphrey to be his ally, or does he want Warwick and York to take his place?

One of the factors that makes strategizing so difficult is that one can never be really sure just who is an ally and who is an enemy. Humphrey felt that Suffolk was his greatest enemy and that those left on the stage were his allies. However, the moment he

left the stage the audience discovered that this was not the case. The Cardinal felt that Humphrey was his greatest enemy and that those left on the stage were his allies. However, the moment he left the stage the audience likewise discovered that this was not the case. Buckingham and Somerset felt that both Humphrey and the Cardinal were their greatest enemies and that those left on the stage were their allies. However, the moment they left the stage it was discovered that this was not the case; in fact, the audience is not even sure if they consider themselves to be allies. Salisbury felt that all who have just left the stage—with the possible exception of Humphrey—were his greatest enemies and that Warwick and York were his allies. However, the moment he and Warwick leave the stage we discover that this is not the case, for York has plans of his own. This becomes clear as York, “the most dangerous of them all” (Jones, *Origins* 163), declares in an aside to the audience that his only real loyalty is to himself:

A day will come when York shall claim his own;  
 And therefore I will take the Nevilles' parts  
 And make a show of love to proud Duke Humphrey,  
 And when I spy advantage, claim the crown,  
 For that's the golden mark I seek to hit.  
 Nor shall proud Lancaster usurp my right,  
 Nor hold the sceptre in his childish fist,  
 Nor wear the diadem upon his head,  
 Whose church-like humours fits not for a crown.  
 Then, York, be still awhile, till time do serve. (*2HVI* 1.1.2236-45).<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> In keeping with critics who often see the first tetralogy—and the first three plays in particular—in regards to the ways that they anticipate the plays to come, Brockbank notes that this soliloquy “becomes the first experiment in the form to be turned to such advantage in *Richard III*” (“The Frame of Disorder” 59). Likewise, Weimann and Bruster connect this scene and York’s other soliloquy in 3.1 with Richard’s acts of dissimulation in *Richard III*, pointing out that

we have here the force of closure and concealment in a character “full of deep deceit” . . . . Even in the early history play, the character is endowed with a plenitude of death, in the sense that “deep” inside, invisible and unfathomed by others, there is something harboring such “intent” as the simple outward show of him conceals . . . . this same person can . . . pierce or simply take off his persona. In doing so the disclosure is such that the entire fiction of role-playing is apparently uncovered in front of the audience. The act of aperture involves spectators with a sense of complicity. (164-65)

By making use of these dramatic entrances and exits, Shakespeare thus explores one of the more fascinating elements of politic stratagems. As Berry notes, each exit is immediately followed by a change of loyalty or a declaration of ambition, changes and declarations that continue to reverse as the various characters leave the stage:

As Gloucester exits, the cardinal stirs up opposition against him; as the cardinal leaves, Buckingham and Somerset express their hostility towards both parties; as they depart, Salisbury, Warwick, and York remain to vow allegiance to Gloucester; finally, York is left alone to voice his own ambition for the throne. The departures are meticulously choreographed, creating a vivid image of social dissension. (*Patterns of Decay* 31)

As Ornstein notes, the “stage clears” and “the audience’s attention is focused on progressively smaller groups of characters until at last it fastens on York, the last to leave, [and] the last to speak” (46). This scene raises some troubling questions, for the dwindling of characters makes one wonder if anyone can actually ever be trusted. Can we change, or are we going to simply keep repeating the mistakes described by Machiavelli and other politic authors? Despite all of the horrible acts that are committed during the course of the first tetralogy, one should remember that there are some moments of true regret in these plays, from the father and son who stand over the bodies of the son and father they have murdered in *3 Henry VI* to Clarence’s final dream before meeting his end in *Richard III* (Brooks, “*Richard III*” 145-50). Such examples may seem to be few and far between, but they do suggest that perhaps we can change.

## **2.5 IS THIS BLEAK, OR IS IT MERELY REALISTIC?**

One wonders whether the cynicism one finds in the first tetralogy is truly bleak, or if in fact it is merely realistic. A similar debate takes place in the works of Machiavelli, who often complains about those writers who waste their time writing about

“imagined republics and principalities that have never been seen or heard of” (*P* 15.59).<sup>89</sup> Machiavelli insists that he is not giving his readers anything imaginary; instead he insists that he is providing them with the truth: “Casting aside imagined things about a prince, and considering only things that are true, I argue that all men, particularly princes, since they have a higher position, are judged by qualities that attract praise or blame” (*P* 15.59). Similarly, Guicciardini argues for clear-eyed realism, for the world and princes are not made as they should be, but as they are: “non essendo piú el mondo e e principi fatti come dovrebbero, ma come sono” (*Ricordi* C.179).<sup>90</sup> It is a sobering thought, but is it so? Do these politic authors reveal the truth, or is their very bleakness as imaginary as the republics and principalities Machiavelli criticizes? Could one make the argument that, just as an overly optimistic view of the world is simply not realistic, is an overly pessimistic view equally divorced from reality? Some critics have pointed out this basic flaw in Machiavelli’s conception of things. For example, Knowles argues that

Machiavelli’s disjunctive mode, everything is either/or — a binary ultimatum to take unilateral action — shapes his political thinking with its rigid redaction of history into bleak alternatives of a consequentialist ethic: ends justifying means. Ironically, though condemned for his evil cynicism, from another point of view the devilish Florentine is not too far removed from the political utopians he scorns. (*Arguments with History* 180)

Nevertheless, many have also praised Machiavelli for what they perceive to be his unblinkered view:

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<sup>89</sup> His complaints are similar to those of Guicciardini: “Quanto è diversa la pratica dalla teorica! quanti sono che intendono le cose bene, che o non si ricordano o non sanno metterle in atto! E a chi fa così, questa intelligenza è inutile” (*Ricordi* C.35). “Theory is so very different from practice! Many learned men may understand things, but they do not know how to put these things into practice. The knowledge of such men is worthless.”

<sup>90</sup> Guicciardini laments that this is the case, even praying to God that it were not so, but he ultimately acknowledges that this is simply how people behave when power and property are at stake: “Parrá forse parola maligna o sospettosa, ma Dio volessi non fussi vera: sono piú e cattivi uomini che e buoni; massime dove va interesse di roba o di Stato” (*Ricordi* C.201).

The . . . implication of his [Machiavelli's] world humanism was political realism. Machiavelli endeavoured to dispel illusions about political life, to unmask the myths of *both* reactionaries *and* utopian visionaries. It was his firm conviction that man was an inveterate spinner of fancies and delusive images, concealing the true nature of events. At bottom, politics was a clash of particular interests and particular 'utilities', a struggle for brute advantage, hidden by veils of euphemism. (Femia 14)

This basic premise can be found again and again as Machiavelli is praised for his "study of the practical . . . rather than the ideal" (Hale, *Renaissance* 148); his "hard-nosed, clear-eyed, forked-tongue realism" (Craig 251); his emphasis on "the realities of political life rather than its . . . ideals" (Crane 22); his "exposition of power politics as it was [actually] practiced" (Keeton 315); and his ability to "force[] the world to face an ugly fact" (Franssen 167). There is also "the disturbing suspicion that actual events" may have "proved [Machiavelli] to be right" (Reese 330-31). Did Machiavelli "not invent Machiavellianism as much as he affirmed its presence in human nature" (Bevington et al. 644)? It remains to be seen.

Does Shakespeare share such a similarly bleak view of politics and human nature?

Spiekerman argues that

if Shakespeare is neither simply pro- or anti- Machiavelli, he does seem to share Machiavelli's view of the likely character of the political world. The history plays confirm Machiavelli's contention[s] . . . politics will almost always involve force and fraud, the struggle for power between ambitious and unscrupulous men; politics will almost always be at or near war, whether foreign or civil. Shakespeare shares Machiavelli's political realism: he too begins from the premise that the struggle for power is more central and more reliable than the struggle for justice. (157)

Whatever Shakespeare's own beliefs, many of his characters, particularly those in the first tetralogy, do seem to have a particularly harsh view of the world. However, one should not mistake Shakespeare's views for those of his characters. Richard is often seen as Shakespeare's best representation of Machiavellianism, but he is ultimately "deposed

because [he is] not fit to rule, not simply because [he is a] usurper[] or ha[s] a dubious claim to the throne” (Hadfield 11). It must be pointed out that Richard III and others like him do not succeed, a point that should be kept in mind when one discusses dramatic analogies between Shakespeare and Machiavelli. Shakespeare dramatizes situations in which characters temporarily succeed as a result of using strategy, but he also dramatizes the problems and the failures that come about as a result of such temporary and fleeting successes. Does might make right? Are things as bleak as they appear? From Thrasymachus to Thomas Hobbes, the notion that might makes right has been repeated often enough, to such an extent that the truism begins to veer dangerously close to being a cliché. As Isaiah Berlin notes: “the fact that the wicked are seen to flourish or that immoral courses appear to pay has never been very remote from the consciousness of mankind . . . . [for many had] cast enough light on political realities to shock the credulous out of uncritical idealism” (“The Originality of Machiavelli” 26). However, it is the very nature of Shakespeare’s dramatic exploration of these issues that transcends such boundaries to find not only the truth in the truism, but the limitations as well.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE CHARACTER OF THE PRINCE

#### 3.1 WHAT MAKES FOR A GOOD PRINCE?

Not every prince engages in the same kind of strategy or even agrees about what the best strategy might be, and the first tetralogy demonstrates Shakespeare's interest in exploring the many different characteristics and qualities of successful and unsuccessful princes. What makes for a good prince? In a letter to Giovan Batista Soderini, Machiavelli argues that the question is not a simple one to answer.

Lorenzo de' Medici disarmed the populace in order to hold Florence, while Messer Giovanni Bentivogli armed it in order to hold Bologna; Vitelli of Città di Castello and the current duke of Urbino destroyed their fortresses in order to hold on to their states, while Count Francesco [Sforza] in Milan and many others built fortresses in order to secure their states. Emperor Titus believed he would lose his state the day he did not do something good for someone, while another believed he would lose his the day he did something good. Many achieve their aims by measuring and pondering over every matter; but our current pope [Julius], who has neither scales nor yardstick in his house, with a flick of the wrist achieved, as unarmed as he was, what he would have been hard put to obtain through organization and arms. (*L* 492-93)

Should a prince arm or disarm the people? Should he avoid fortresses or should he rely on them completely? Should the prince do all that he can to be good, or should he be bad in order to avoid seeming weak? Is strategy the key to success, or is it boldness? These are only a handful of the questions that a prince must be prepared to consider. In doing so, a prince must realize that the best course of action in one situation will not always be the best in another. For example, Machiavelli says that Cesare Borgia is the standard that



every prince should aspire to (*P* 13.53), a point first made clear when Machiavelli met Borgia on a diplomatic mission and described him in a letter:

This prince is very splendid and magnificent, and in war he is so bold that there is no great enterprise that does not seem small to him, and to gain glory and territory he never rests or knows danger or weariness: he arrives at a place before anyone has heard that he has left the place he was in before: he wins the love of his soldiers, and has got hold of the best men in Italy. These things make him victorious and formidable, and are attended with invariable good fortune. (qtd. in Ridolfi, *The Life of Niccolò Machiavelli* 50)<sup>91</sup>

This is something that Gentillet also notes in *Contre-Machiavel*: “Il ne m'est possible (dit Messer Nicolas) de donner meilleurs preceptes à un nouveau prince, que luy mettre devant les yeux pour se servir d'exemple, les gestes de Cesar Borgia” (336).<sup>92</sup> Ridolfi makes the following point concerning Machiavelli’s ultimate opinion of Borgia:

I do not think that it is true to say that Machiavelli idealized Borgia; what is true is that, admiring strongly in him certain qualities and conditions, like a painter who takes some features from life for an ideal painting, he lent these characteristics to an abstract portrait of a prince, and sought them in vain in other princes of his time. (*The Life of Niccolò Machiavelli* 64)

However, the fact that Borgia himself ultimately failed in his political endeavors makes this a difficult issue to resolve. As Leggatt puts it, the search for the perfect strategy in politics is one “that produces no certain answers” (*Shakespeare’s Political Drama* 91).

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<sup>91</sup> For more on Machiavelli’s personal contact with Borgia, see Ridolfi, *The Life of Niccolò Machiavelli* (44-64) and Viroli, *Niccolò’s Smile* (52-75). Ridolfi in particular notes that Machiavelli made a study of Borgia (*The Life of Niccolò Machiavelli* 57-58). Machiavelli was present when Borgia ruthlessly destroyed the generals who had sought his ruin. Borgia’s reaction to the conspiracy had a profound impact on Machiavelli and his work. For more on this impact, see Rebhorn, *Foxes and Lions* (109-12). Nevertheless, some historians, such as Mattingly, actually contend that Machiavelli’s portrait of Borgia is satiric: “Machiavelli’s praise of the Borgian bungler is no more than satire” (*Renaissance Diplomacy* 143). However, it is worth pointing out that Mattingly—following the lead of Rousseau and others—believes that *The Prince* itself is a “savage satire” (*Renaissance Diplomacy* 101).

<sup>92</sup> “Machiavelli says that he cannot find any better precepts for a new prince than the actions of Cesare Borgia.” All subsequent translations of Gentillet are my own.

Shakespeare also presents his audience with a very wide variety of kings, all with different approaches to emulate or avoid:

The landscape of Shakespeare's plays is not filled only with strong and determined villains like Richard III. There are also wanton kings, such as Richard II and Henry IV, kings who are evil but incompetent . . . such as King John; and good but weak kings, such as Henry VI. (Meron 189)

Responses from audiences and critics to these kings have been equally varied. For example, Meron argues that "Shakespeare's Richard III and the Prince are . . . a perfect fit" (190), while Manheim insists that "Machiavelli would have been far readier to accept Henry V as his ideological offspring than Richard" (169). Others disagree over the nature of these kings themselves, with some arguing that Henry V is a good leader while others insist that he is a villain, and others arguing that his son Henry VI is a good man while others insist that he is a bad king.<sup>93</sup> However, whereas Machiavelli may have sought to find a perfect king to fit his abstract portrait, Shakespeare explores a wide variety of kings, good and bad, successful and unsuccessful, and tries to show how they rule or try to rule. How do Shakespeare's rulers translate their political ideas into political action? By looking at the rulers of the first tetralogy, one can see that, even at this early point in his career, Shakespeare had a very comprehensive and versatile view of the question of what makes for a good king or a bad king.

What attributes should good kings have? What goals should they aspire to? What perils should they avoid? Barry notes that in many early modern political writings and in Shakespeare's English History plays "the question of character . . . forms the basis for all political discourse" (122), a point echoed by Curtis, who argues that the first tetralogy is concerned with "the question whether all rulers are suited by temperament for the office"

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<sup>93</sup> For more on this divergence of critical opinion about Henry V, see Woodcock, *Shakespeare: Henry V*.

(57). What kind of attributes do Shakespeare's kings exhibit, both as political figures and as dramatic characters? Shakespeare forces the audience to consider this question immediately, for the first tetralogy begins with Henry V's coffin being brought onto the stage followed by nobles both bewailing his loss and explaining why he was a good prince. Acting as a kind of chorus, Bedford and Humphrey mourn their dead king with laments that both reflect their loss and dramatically proclaim to the assembled audience just why Henry V was the greatest of all English kings:

England ne'er had a king until his time.  
Virtue he had, deserving to command,  
His brandished sword did blind men with his beams,  
His arms spread wider than a dragon's wings:  
His sparkling eyes, replete with wrathful fire,  
More dazzled and drove back his enemies  
Than midday sun fierce bent against their faces.  
What should I say? His deeds exceed all speech;  
He ne'er lift up his hand but conquered. (*IHV* 1.1.8-16)

In many ways this proclamation will serve as a dramatic template, a standard by which the princes that follow will try to live up to. The ideal ruler as described by Humphrey and exemplified by Henry V is above all a warrior king, a king whose "brandished sword . . . blind[s] men with his beams" and who "ne'er lift[ed] up his hand but conquered." Moving from the spiritual to the secular, Winchester describes Henry V as one "blest of the King of kings" (*IHV* 1.1.28), while Bedford believes that his "glorious star" will shine even brighter than Julius Caesar's (*IHV* 1.1.55-56). Wilders notes that in times of crisis "some of Shakespeare's characters . . . look back with regret on an ideal period in the past, on what seems to them to be a vanished golden age" (135). This is true, but Henry's memory foreshadows as much it recalls past events, for the audience is being prepared for the different kings who will come in Henry V's wake.

And so, the characters are shaped by strategists and stratagems, both past and present, and their strategies in turn influence both themselves and those around them. Henry V will be evoked again and again throughout the first tetralogy, and his example will be used to cast scorn on those who do not live up to it or express hopes for those who seem to possess the dead king's potential. For instance, in *3 Henry VI* Clifford chides Henry VI for not being strong enough to repel the Yorkists. York is sitting on Henry VI's throne, something that he would never have done if Henry V were still king: "[York] durst not sit there had [Henry V] lived" (*3HVI* 1.1.63). Later in the same play, a rousing speech by Henry VI's son Prince Edward inspires the Lancastrians to wish aloud that he may be able to emulate his grandfather's former glory: "O brave young Prince, thy famous grandfather / Doth live again in thee. Long mayst thou live / To bear his image and renew his glories" (*3HVI* 5.4.52-54). The image—for it is an image, not necessarily the reality—of Henry V will thus cast a long shadow over the actions of many of the rulers in these plays, with some seeking to imitate it and others expressing despair at ever reaching such heights.

What about Henry V's son, Henry VI? Greenblatt notes the irony of the son of Shakespeare's most successful king being the most unsuccessful king in the canon ("Shakespeare and the ethics of authority" 68). It does not help his case that Henry VI inherited the crown at such an early age, for he "achieved mere infancy at the beginning of the plays that bear his name; his reign has been launched prematurely by his father's early death" (Gregerson 246-47). As Henry VI laments at one point: "No sooner was I crept out of my cradle / But I was made a king at nine months old" (*2HVI* 4.9.3-4).

Ornstein wryly notes that Henry's youth "proves the ancient truism: woe to a kingdom ruled by a child" (38). Manheim argues that

Henry's inadequacies result . . . from his love for his fellow men and his desire to do good in the world . . . his downfall results . . . from his adherence in political life to traditional Christian virtues . . . adherence to those . . . virtues is . . . an invitation to political disintegration. (76-77)<sup>94</sup>

Clearly the traits of a good prince are not always passed from father to son. Trafton argues that while "both Henry [IV] and Hal spill blood continually and with considerable success[,] the reign of Henry VI . . . reveals the [ultimate] precariousness of their achievement" (93). When the sword fails, so too does the dynasty. It is telling that Henry VI does not appear in the first play to bear his name until the third act, and when he does he will not speak until line 65. When Henry does speak, he does so not authoritatively but plaintively, for he unsuccessfully tries to calm the quarrels of Humphrey and the Cardinal. Henry tries to stop the "civil dissension" that is overtaking his kingdom, but he fails to see that his "tender years" and lack of political acumen help to ensure that such dissension will continue to brew (*IHVI* 3.1.71-72). This lack of strength is underscored dramatically with the interruption of Henry's pacifistic speech by yet another quarrel that Henry is equally powerless to stop. And so, the audience gets to experience Henry's feelings of powerlessness, feelings that will only intensify as the tetralogy progresses. Henry cannot stop the nobles around him from coming to blows, and his weakness inspires many to compete for complete control—either indirectly by

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<sup>94</sup> This point is also latched onto by Gentillet when he argues that Machiavelli had changed the focus from the earlier paragons of virtue to the new politic prince. The tyrant must learn to embrace vice the way others embrace religious virtue:

Machiavel l'ose bien parangonner aux grands et vertueux capitaines qui ont esté, et le proposer à imiter au prince. De sorte qu'on void bien que ce meschant atheiste n'a autre but en ses livres, que de persuader au prince de devenir tyran et meschant, embrassant tous vices et chassant toute vertu. (413)

As Copenhaver and Schmitt note, "one can scarcely exaggerate the violence done by Machiavelli's . . . ideas to the discourse of virtues and vices that early modern Christians took for granted" (280).

controlling Henry or directly by seizing the crown for themselves—and this only serves to make the situation worse. Manheim argues that “by the Machiavellian standards which govern almost everyone else in the play, Henry is surely the most wretched king in ‘Christendom’” (80). Ornstein likewise notes that Henry cannot “translate his goodness into political action” (39), which makes him prey to those who are not good.<sup>95</sup> Ironically, everyone in the kingdom wants to rule but the man who sits on the throne, a man who can only lament the responsibility that has been thrust upon his unwilling shoulders: “was never subject longed to be a king / As I do long and wish to be a subject” (*2HVI* 4.9.5-6).

This lament is repeated by Henry at several times throughout the first tetralogy, but nowhere more forcefully than during the Battle of Towton. Sidelined by his own disgusted supporters, Henry wanders the battlefield alone and begins to reflect on both the precariousness of battle and the nature of rule. Relying heavily on pastoral imagery, Henry VI declares—in what has been described by Foakes as “the most celebrated scene in the play” (48)—that he would rather be a shepherd in a field than a king in the court (*3HVI* 2.5.41-54). Henry’s reaction to the horrors of war has been interpreted in a number of different ways by critics. Prior sees this moment as a redeeming one for Henry, for he “remains the only one who redeems humanity” (119). However, as Scragg notes, Henry’s evocation of a pastoral paradise is unrealistic and naïve, and it, like his conception of politics, is based on a lack of understanding of the world: “[Henry describes] a life that, with its peaceful tending of flocks and time for sport and contemplation, has little bearing on the realities of rural existence in either his own or

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<sup>95</sup> Howard and Rackin argue that “Henry’s failings as a king are . . . presented in part as failings of masculinity. He can neither fight with a sword; tilt with a lance; nor effectively wield the staff of office” (*Engendering a Nation* 71). This focus on Henry’s lack of masculinity is taken even further by Hodgdon, who argues that Henry’s political impotence might be sexual as well (*The End Crowns All* 61-62).

Shakespeare's day" ("Source Study" 381). Likewise, while Prior argues that Henry redeems his humanity, he does add that Henry "cannot redeem his kingdom" (119). Others are far more damning in their response to Henry's desire for a quiet life. For example, Pearlman describes the speech as "self-indulgent" (43), while Champion argues that "Henry's allusions to the desirability of the simple shepherd's life seem beyond criminal in their irresponsibility" (*Noise of Threatening Drum* 86).

But should Henry be judged so harshly? Leggatt disagrees with such disapproval, arguing instead that Henry "speaks for that part of the audience's response that remains detached from the partisan struggles, seeing only their cruelty and absurdity" (*Shakespeare's Political Drama* 26); however, such an argument ignores the fact that, as king, Henry does not have the right to such detachment. How should the famous lament be seen? It is difficult to say, but how one responds to it will inevitably reveal much about how they respond to Henry VI's action throughout the first tetralogy. Those who see it as a great speech against violence and for pacifism will no doubt respond positively to Henry's unwillingness to take part in the politic stratagems of his court, while those who see it in a more negative light will probably share the anger and frustration of many of Henry's supporters. One should note that while Henry VI's father had made a similar cry of lament just before the Battle of Agincourt (*Henry V* 4.1.212-66), this lament did not prevent Henry from fighting the next day. Unlike his father, whose lament seems to stir him on to greater action, Henry VI after the lament at Towton becomes more and more of a nonentity in the plays that bear his name (Hadfield 75), and his own supporters sideline him and begin to treat him as little more than a figurehead. This is made clear when Warwick displaces Edward IV from the throne and places Henry VI back onto it;

although Henry VI was ignored and disrespected before, he is now nothing more than a puppet king. Does Shakespeare share the scorn for Henry that is expressed by so many of the characters in *3 Henry VI*? He is certainly more than aware of Henry's political failings, but, unlike Machiavelli or so many other politic authors, Shakespeare is also aware that there is more to a person than political success alone. Henry VI may not succeed politically, but he does seem, particularly in his final encounter with Richard, to win a moral victory (*3HVI* 5.6.1-56).

Perhaps one should look at how the other kings in the first tetralogy react to the hazards and responsibilities of rule. Despite Warwick the Kingmaker's attempts to make him one, Edward IV does not want to be a puppet king. It is notable that, just as both Humphrey and Suffolk had tried to arrange a marriage that would help them have better control over Henry VI, so too does Warwick try to determine who Edward marries. Instead of acquiescing, Edward betrays Warwick and marries Elizabeth, an act that Richard and Clarence ascribe to lust, but one which may actually be Edward's attempt to show Warwick that he is no puppet king (*3HVI* 3.2.27-28). As Edward says when he hears of Warwick's betrayal and Louis XI's threats: "belike he thinks me Henry" (*3HVI* 4.1.96). As Saccio notes, Edward's behaviour in the play is in keeping with his historical counterpart, for the historical "Warwick . . . attempted to rule England under Edward's nominal authority in the same way that the duke of York had attempted to rule in Henry's name . . . . But Edward was different from Henry" (*Shakespeare's English Kings* 145). Edward is no Henry, and he will not let Warwick or anyone else try to rule over him. Not only has Edward learned not to be weak like Henry, but he has also learned not to allow the discord within his kingdom to get out of control. At the end of *3 Henry VI* Edward



announces that all the threats to his throne have been eliminated (*3HVI* 5.7.1-20), and in *Richard III* he spends his dying moments trying to do all that he can to ensure that his nobles stay united so that his son can reign in peace (*RIII* 2.1.42). This is a good policy, but Edward's hopes for a peaceful and stable transfer of power will later be dashed by his brother Richard's ambitions. Perhaps Edward's model of kingship is just as faulty as Henry VI's, or perhaps Shakespeare is less interested in distilling a lesson and more interested in analyzing kingship dramatically, an analysis that offers no easy answers about what will lead to success and what will lead to failure.

Machiavelli argues that, in order to rule, princes should become acquainted with the triumphs and failures of past princes, for such knowledge will allow them to achieve more of the former and suffer less of the latter (*P* 14.58). The examples of past kings similarly hang over the kings and rulers in these plays. The question is whether or not the new kings learn anything from these examples (Spiekerman, "The Education of Hal" 122); or, perhaps it is whether or not such examples are as worthwhile as Machiavelli suggests. In Shakespeare's plays circumstances are unique and dynamic, and so an action that resulted in success in a previous situation might not yield the same results in another. Henry VI does not try to emulate his father, but his son Prince Edward does try to repeat his grandfather's achievements. Prince Edward insists that he will not follow his father until after his mother has helped him achieve victory (*3HVI* 1.1.260-61). Like Henry V, Prince Edward is very desirous of military glory (*3HVI* 2.2.78-80) and, unlike Henry VI, he is willing to stand up to rebellious nobles like Warwick (*3HVI* 3.3.140). Likewise, whereas his father's attitude at the time of his death was one of stoic

acceptance, Prince Edward has nothing but scorn for the Yorkists who have come to kill him (*3HVI* 5.5.33-37).

The Yorkists will also produce their own line of kings who will try—successfully and unsuccessfully—to learn from the triumphs and failures of the past. Edward IV has learned not to be like Henry VI, although whether he manages to become a ruler worth emulating is another matter. His son the Duke of York does seem to possess a certain wiliness (*RIII* 3.1.135) and desire for military glory (*RIII* 3.1.91-93), but his murder at the hands of *Richard III* means that he is never given the chance to put any of this into practice. Does Richard III learn anything from his predecessors?<sup>96</sup> There is little in common between Richard and Edward IV, but, as much as he insists that it is caused by his deformity, some of Richard's ruthlessness may have been caused by other factors as well.<sup>97</sup> The politic and strategic tendencies displayed by his father York in *2 Henry VI* probably had their influence, but Richard seems determined not only to prove a villain but to avoid proving to be a weak king like Henry VI. However, if Richard is influenced by a desire not to repeat Henry's mistakes of weakness, his own ruthless style of kingship ensures that he will make a whole list of new ones. Shakespeare's dramatic exploration raises such questions about being a prince, and this exploration makes one wonder if it is possible to ever truly succeed in the role of the prince.

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<sup>96</sup> In a play full of wonderful asides to the audience, Buckingham's appreciative description of the Duke of York's cunning must surely stand out as one of the highlights, particularly as it showcases itself in a test of wits with his seemingly more wily uncle: "With what a sharp-provided wit he reasons: / To mitigate the scorn he gives his uncle, / He prettily and aptly taunts himself. / So cunning and so young is wonderful" (*RIII* 3.1.132-35). Siemon notes rightly that while some editors have directed this aside to Hastings, it is much more effective if directed to the audience (*Arden RIII* 256).

<sup>97</sup> For more on the historical Richard's supposed deformity and how it was primarily concocted by Tudor propagandists, see Seward, *The Wars of the Roses* (272) and Weir, *The Princes in the Tower* (31-33). The latter book contains portraits of Richard that suggest some form of tampering in the portraits to emphasize his supposed deformity.

### 3.2 THE FOX AND THE LION

While it may be difficult to pinpoint exactly what kind of qualities may lead to political success or failure, there are nevertheless some skills that a good strategist should become adept at. Machiavelli often argues that the behavior of people was little better than that of beasts (*P* 18.68). If that was the case, which animal should one imitate (D'Amico 46)? Dismissing the argument laid down by Cicero in *De officiis* (*On Duties*) that “the force and deceit typified by the lion and the fox are alien to human nature” (Dzelzainis, “Bacon’s ‘Of Simulation and Dissimulation’” 235), Machiavelli argues that “there are two ways of fighting: either with laws or with force . . . the first is peculiar to men, the second to beasts,” and that the prince should learn “how to use the nature of the beast to his advantage, he must emulate both the fox and the lion, because a lion cannot defy a snare, while a fox cannot defy a pack of wolves” (*P* 18.68-69). Gentillet was opposed to Machiavelli’s recommendations (396), but his argument did not convince other early modern writers such as Justus Lipsius (Hamlin 123) or Thomas More, who created a similar dichotomy when he wrote that Richard could win power by one of two ways, “either by power or by policy” (*The History of King Richard III* 59). As much as he praises martial prowess, Machiavelli saves his greatest praise for those who are able to win by deceit over those who simply rely on force. Machiavelli approves of the way that Cesare Borgia used craft to defeat his enemies even though he could have defeated them in battle: “though Duke Valentino [Borgia] was now strong enough to attack his enemies in open war, he nevertheless calculated that it would be safer and more useful to deceive them, so he continued his peace negotiations” (*DV* 368). Like a true actor, Borgia realized that sometimes it was best to play the fox rather than charge forward like a lion.

Machiavelli's *The Art of War* also advises that it is better to win like a fox rather than a lion, perhaps nowhere more clearly when he says it is better to let an enemy army starve rather than run the risk of fighting them, for the former carries no risk while the latter could result in utter defeat (*AW* 7.311). A ruler should not abandon the ways of the lion completely, but he must learn, as the Roman Emperor Severus did, to combine them with the ways of the fox: "Whoever considers Severus's actions will see that he was a ferocious lion and a cunning fox, feared and revered by all" (*P* 19.76). Whether such a combination is possible is another matter.

How does Shakespeare's drama explore the interactions between cunning and power? In *1 Henry VI*, Charles and his defeated French army are given bad terms by the victorious English. Charles balks at this, but Alençon advises him not to do so, for the French are not yet in a position to fight on successfully. Instead, they should accept the terms and wait for the English to leave before breaking their word:

To say the truth, it is your policy  
To save your subjects from such massacre  
And ruthless slaughters as are daily seen  
By our proceeding in hostility:  
And therefore take this compact of a truce —  
Although you break it, when your pleasure serves. (*IHVI* 5.3.159-64)

In other words, there is no point in fighting a strong enemy; it is far better to wait for the enemy to weaken before going on the attack. It must be remembered that Alençon's advice is given in an aside spoken to Charles, for the French have turned "*to talk among themselves*" (*IHVI* 5.3.154). The audience is thus made privy, in an almost conspiratorial manner, to this very fox-like maneuver. Charles follows Alençon's advice, and by the next play the English have already lost their hold on France (*2HVI* 3.1.84-85). As Jorgensen notes:

The mockery of professed concord is dramatized . . . in the cynicism of the French truce in *1 Henry VI* . . . . So consistently pessimistic is Shakespeare's picture of truces, that one may wonder whether it does not betray a personal bias. (174-75)

However, is it a personal bias, or merely a realization of the realities of combat and maneuver, both on and off the field? A more confrontational stand might have been more conventionally dramatic, but if the French had refused the truce and fought like lions, they would never have won. This more subtle dramatization suggests that, regardless of the supposed calm of the scene, the English have just lost the war. This point is made all the more telling by the fact that in *3 Henry VI* the English are the ones who are going to the French court for help and not the other way around. Such a subtly dramatic reversal could never have been achieved if the French had chosen the lion's way in *1 Henry VI*. Berry sees this as a victory acquired through "Henry's negligence rather than . . . [French] might" (*Patterns of Decay* 13). This may be so, but it was also acquired through the strategic skills of Alençon, "that notorious Machiavel" (*IHVI* 5.3.74). Again, as with the reversals in Henry VI's court at the beginning of *2 Henry VI*, Shakespeare forces the audience to consider the policy playing out just beneath the surface of the performance. In other words, subtext can suggest an underlying political motivation just as much as it can a psychological one.

Although he is fooled by Alençon's stratagems in *1 Henry VI*, York is a strong example of a character who uses the ways of the fox in order to achieve political success. He is also a strong example of a character whose outward actions disguise the true nature of his political ambitions. Shakespeare portrays York as a politic figure who always plays with his hand close to his chest, something that he inherited from the historical York of the chronicles:

The main fact about the chronicle York is that he takes his opportunities skilfully because, unlike the unreflective opportunists among his peers, he anticipates, calculates, and prepares the ground. His “attempt,” says Holinshed, “was politicly handled,” “secretly kept” and his purpose “ready” before it was “openly published” . . . . If all that York stands for in history is to be properly conveyed in the play, his emergence when “mischief breaks out” must take his enemies by surprise. (Brockbank, “The Frame of Disorder” 58-59)<sup>98</sup>

This politic cunning is subtly explored in the first tetralogy. For example, when all of the other nobles are attacking Humphrey and glorying in his fall from power,<sup>99</sup> York is noticeably silent (*2HVI* 3.1.133-82). He has the most to gain from Humphrey’s fall, but there is no reason to get directly involved so long as Margaret, Suffolk, the Cardinal and the others are willing to do all the work for him. York avoids making an overt enemy of Humphrey while managing to make the others believe that he is on their side. This is made quite clear when Suffolk uses the following words to describe Humphrey to Henry VI: “the fox barks not when he would steal the lamb” (*2HVI* 3.1.55). Suffolk is talking about the threat that Humphrey poses, but he is unaware that the real threat is York who, like a fox, is not barking even though he means to steal not only the lamb but the entire kingdom as well. It is not surprising that the bombast gets most of the attention, but the politic maneuvers deserve to be looked at more closely. Again, Shakespeare seems more interested in the unspoken drama playing out just beneath the surface action. York may have his direct addresses to the audience at other points in the play, but it is his controlled

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<sup>98</sup> As Brockbank notes, the calculating side of the historical York can be found at numerous points in Holinshed. For example, Holinshed argue that York was entirely duplicitous in the ways that he handled the army under his control:

The duke of Yorke, pretending (as yee haue heard) a right to the crowne, as heire to Lionell duke of Clarence, came this yeare out of Ireland vnto London, in the parlement time, there to consult with his special freends . . . . After long deliberation and aduise taken, it was thought expedient to keepe their cheefe purpose secret; and that the duke should raise an armie of men, vnder a pretext to remooue diuerse councillors about the king, and to reuenge the manifest iniuries doone to the common-wealth by the same rulers. (qtd. in Nicoll and Nicoll 119-20)

<sup>99</sup> This gleefulness on the part of the conspirators is best summed up by Margaret’s description of Humphrey as a “loser,” for he has lost in the political game that they are all playing (*2HVI* 3.1.182).

and politic silence in these scenes that is actually far more dramatically interesting. Likewise, when Humphrey is arrested York takes the least prominent role of all the conspirators. One could say that they are taking the lion's part, for the other conspirators are rushing out to meet their enemy head-on. If this is so, then York must be taking the fox's part, for he is allowing the other conspirators to destroy one of his enemies while his other ones put themselves in a position that might backfire on them at any moment. His maneuver is not explicit, but the intricacy of York's plan unfolds in front of the audience in a way that is both subtle and satisfying. There is no need for York to get involved if they are going to do his work for him. Also, if Henry does regret his actions against Humphrey, the other conspirators will be the ones who will take the brunt of his anger.

This becomes more clear when the conspirators begin to discuss killing Humphrey. While the conspirators are quite willing to do the deed, at one point they do begin to express some doubts. However York, the one conspirator who is not actually sticking his neck out, is quick to spur them on. When both the Cardinal and Suffolk worry aloud about what will happen to them if Humphrey were to be murdered (*2HVI* 3.1.238-42), York asks them "so that, by this, you would not have him die?" (*2HVI* 3.1.243). This question inspires them to continue regardless of the consequences even though, as York himself admits in an aside, he will be the only one to truly benefit from Humphrey's death (*2HVI* 3.1.244). Ornstein describes the attack on Humphrey as "brutally direct," but such a view ignores York's politic indirectness in this scene (47). Far from being brutally direct, York's maneuver against his enemies is a master-stroke in calculated counter-maneuver. York then goes on to outline a plan for how they should do

it, a plan that everyone readily accepts (*2HVI* 3.1.246-50). They were just starting to pull back, but York quietly manages to push them forward. Perhaps no greater example of fox-like behavior exists than the ability to get one's enemies to take the lion's part to their own detriment. The subtlety of York's move here seems beyond even his son Richard's strategic prowess. The audience can join in on the duplicity, for it can see how York is giving everyone onstage just enough rope to hang themselves. This is highlighted by Suffolk, first by comparing himself and the other conspirators to foxes who will kill the chicken in their custody and then by arguing that Humphrey is the fox who must be killed because he is "an enemy to the flock" (*2HVI* 3.1.257). However, it is York who actually outfoxes them all here.

Many critics have spoken about the way that the conspirators in this scene act like true Machiavellians (Knowles, Arden *2HVI* 247), particularly when Suffolk says how he and the conspirators should move against Humphrey:

And do not stand on quillets how to slay him;  
Be it by gins, by snares, by subtlety,  
Sleeping or waking, 'tis no matter how,  
So he be dead; for that is good deceit  
Which mates him first that first intends deceit. (*2HVI* 3.1.261-65)

Manheim describes how Margaret and Suffolk meet the "Machiavellian standards" (13) and that their behavior stands as one of the strongest examples of Machiavellianism in the play (92). Likewise Scott argues that Suffolk is "thoroughly Machiavellian" (165), an argument that is also made by Jones (*Origins* 45). These characters are Machiavellian, particularly in the way that their gleeful pronouncements of their plans remind one of the original stage Machiavel, a character which is undoubtedly crafty and villainous, but which is not particularly subtle or strategic. This is where the true divergence between



the politic strategist and the stage Machiavel can be clearly seen. Here it is the strategic York, quietly waiting in the background while his plans come to fruition, that is the true strategist. The wonderfully Machiavellian lines are all given to his temporary allies, and so it is not surprising that audiences and critics often overlook York's politic stratagems. Suffolk's cold and seemingly calculating speech about the way that Humphrey should be killed actually showcases his inability to be truly strategic, for he fails to see the larger picture. Willing to kill Humphrey without thinking about the consequences, Suffolk is rushing forward like a lion while York, like a fox, sits back and lets Suffolk and the rest do the deed and take the blame that will come afterward. Critics continue to look at this scene of plotting as the height of Machiavellianism, while ignoring Champion's point that "York is the lone powerful figure to emerge from the disordered political situation" (*Perspective* 36). Instead of the way the scene is typically seen, the audience gets to see a thoroughly Machiavellian plan being set in motion while also watching a quiet, unassuming strategist pace the room and plan the best way to attack. Instead of being undramatic, York's lack of lines during this scene actually heightens the drama, for one wonders whether he will be able to hold on to this façade for long. However, the supposedly Machiavellian characters cannot see behind York's disguise. Even Suffolk's speech indicates this, for he and the others are the ones who will be taken in "by gins, snares, [and] by subtlety." When Suffolk says that it is good to deceive those who mean to deceive you, he is talking about Humphrey, but he is unaware that the one standing next to him is the one who is actually deceiving them all.

However, no one can remain on top indefinitely, and York's strategic prowess begins to suffer after he declares his intentions and can thus no longer hide behind the

mask he has been relying on. Later in the play, York thus begins to play less and less the fox's part and more and more the lion's. As a result of this, York manages to bring out the fox in some unlikely figures, including Henry VI. For example, when York demands that Somerset be imprisoned in the Tower, Henry responds in the following way: "tell him I'll send Duke Edmund to the Tower — / And, Somerset, we will commit thee thither, / Until his army be dismissed from him" (2*HVI* 4.9.38-40). Coming from Henry this is really quite surprising, for Henry has managed to make a move worthy of the craftiest of foxes. Even Holinshed, who generally refers to the historical York as a politic dissembler, concedes that the historical Henry outfoxed him here:

The duke of Yorke . . . dissolved his armie, brake vp his campe, and came to the kings tente, where contrarie to his expectation, & against promise made by the king (as other write) he found . . . the duke of *Summerset*.  
(qtd. in Nicoll and Nicoll 121)

Essentially Henry, like Alençon, says that they should heed York's demands while his army is in the field, but once his army has disbanded they can revoke any promises they have made. This act has produced a great deal of squeamishness in critics such as Berry, who notes that "whether inadvertently or by conscious design, Henry has committed an act that threatens the very basis of all political order" (*Patterns of Decay* 49). Berry is so troubled by this that he even quotes Thomas Elyot's *The Boke named the Governour* and its argument that, in keeping with the teachings of Aristotle, "faith is both the original and (as it were) principal constitutor and conservator of the public weal" (qtd. in *Patterns of Decay* 48). Berry goes on to insist that Henry's betrayal is "an act that violates the central values of the play" and likewise insist that attempts to foist the blame onto Margaret are not supported by the text: "one may argue . . . that it is apparently Margaret who is responsible for Somerset's release. But Henry does not even try to order Somerset

returned; instead, his reaction is one of uncomfortable complicity” (*Patters of Decay* 49). Berry is reluctant to see Henry’s offer as conscious, for to do so would fly in the face of those who keep insisting that Henry, despite his weaknesses, is fundamentally a naïve figure.<sup>100</sup>

In many ways Henry is such a figure, but there is another side to his character, a side that Shakespeare forces the audience to confront. By removing Somerset, Henry removes the reason for York having the army in the first place. York will then be put in an difficult position: keep the army and fight regardless of the initial reasons for bringing it onto the field, or disband the army and face his enemies alone. Like a true fox, Henry seems to create a dramatic situation that forces York to either accept defeat or show his hand. The lion sees a threat and fights, while the fox waits for the right time to pounce. This can also be seen with Henry’s instruction to Buckingham. Even though it is clear that Henry has already decided to betray his promise, he tells Buckingham “not [to be] too rough in terms” with him (*2HVI* 4.9.43). Henry is in a situation in which time is on his side. If he stalls, the reason for York having a force in the field will quickly disappear. On the other hand, York needs a conflict to justify his having an army, and so any such delay will also quickly dilute his forces. And so Henry’s instructions that

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<sup>100</sup> This naïveté and innocence is often the dominant note when Henry is portrayed on the stage: It was the piety of Peter Benson, playing Henry in Jane Howell’s BBC Television version, that was stressed from the start . . . Ralph Fiennes in Adrian Noble’s *Plantagenets*, Paul Brennen in the ESC *Wars*, David Oyelowo in Michael Boyd’s *This England* production, came over rather as idealists with a misplaced belief in the power of principle in politics, gradually ground down by circumstances. In the 1960s *Wars of the Roses*, the development of David Warner, gauche and awkward in the opening scenes, his graceless movements suggesting his unkingliness, was suggested by changes in bearing and costume. With the addition of a cloak to the plain robe that he wore from the beginning, he was made to look positively friar-like, and he grew into a saintly authority making of his death a full Christian martyrdom. (Greene 111)

Buckingham placate York with words do not seem naïve or weak at all; instead, they seem to be the words of someone who knows how and when to play the fox.

Once Buckingham announces that Somerset has been placed in the Tower (*2HVI* 5.1.38-41), York finds that, as a result of charging forward and playing the lion, he has made a fundamental error. If York does not disarm he will show his hand at a moment when he is not quite ready, but if he does disarm he will place himself at the Lancastrians' mercy. Coming so close to his goals has clearly made York play the game much more sloppily. What makes the situation particularly clever is that Henry has seized on York's poor terms and has managed to outplay the fox at his own game. Henry can very easily go back on his word; all he has to do is release one man from prison. York cannot do the same, for once his army is disbanded it will be much more difficult to bring it back together again. This shows the brilliance of playing the fox's part and the danger of playing the lion's, for York has put himself in a position where he is essentially bound to fail. He is now forced to either declare his intentions without provocation from anyone else or disband his army and leave himself at the mercy of his enemies. York is forced to show his hand before he is ready to do so. York is successful initially, for he wins the Battle of Saint Albans and he sends the Lancastrians into full retreat. However, his successes do not last forever, and he is soon killed as a direct result of his playing the lion's part. Instead of waiting for reinforcements to arrive, York decides to rush out like a lion and face Margaret's forces when he is surrounded (*3HVI* 1.2.68-74). This is exactly what the lion would do, and this is exactly where York goes wrong. What makes this blunder so galling is that, in addition to his earlier foxiness in *2 Henry VI*, York had opened this play by mocking those who fight this way, for the Lancastrians had foolishly

“charged [the Yorkist] main battle’s front, and breaking in, / Were by the swords of common soldiers slain” (3HVI 1.1.8-9). To charge ahead like this is foolish, but Shakespeare furthers the irony by having York make the same mistake himself, an irony compounded by York’s final words before the battle: “Why should I not now have the like success?” (3HVI 1.2.74).

Shakespeare’s dramatic exploration of this subject reveals the complications just beneath the surface of all strategic concepts. Sometimes it is good to play the lion, while at other times it is good to play the fox. However, few strategists are able to always play the right role at the right time. General rules may help, but each situation is unique and dynamic, so strategists must be able to respond to situations not in advance but as they occur. Such flexibility is inherently dramatic. Shakespeare’s engagement with and dramatization of these politic stratagems are thus thoroughly dynamic, for they are engaged with the *praxis* of politics, an engagement that reveals a host of strategy’s subtle contours and variations.

### **3.3 THE PRINCE MUST BE FLEXIBLE WITH CHANGING TIMES**

While people may not be able to change all that much, the world around them is changing constantly, and so that the strategist must be flexible with changing times. Those who refuse to alter their ways and delude themselves into believing that they are not the fools of time will eventually fall prey to those who know how to change and adapt and make the most of the present situation. Machiavelli stresses this point at a number of times in his writings. For example, he insists that a prince must emulate the Romans, for they understood how to be flexible and how to plan ahead:

The Romans did what every wise prince must do: They kept their eyes trained not only on present problems but also future ones, which must be

anticipated with great care, because when one sees these problems approaching they can still be remedied, whereas if one waits for them to arrive it will be too late to administer medicine. The illness will have become incurable. As physicians say of consumption: In the first stages it is easy to cure though hard to detect, but with the progress of time . . . consumption becomes easy to detect but hard to cure. (*P* 3.13)

Machiavelli believed that this flexibility characterized all of the great leaders in history, for they managed to capitalize on opportunities best suited to their talents: “Without that opportunity, their skill would not have flourished, and without that skill, the opportunity would have presented itself in vain” (*P* 6.23).<sup>101</sup> This concept perplexed Machiavelli quite deeply, and he returns to it at a number of times in his works (Skinner 43-44): how can it be that the same actions do not always produce the same results, and why is it that the same result can be produced by very different actions (*L* 492)? How can one “understand[] the times and the order of things and . . . adapt to them . . . [to] have good fortune or guard . . . against the bad” (*L* 494)? Flexibility may be essential to success and survival, but is it even possible to possess such flexibility?

Machiavelli conceded that it was difficult, but he did not think that it was impossible. For example, he strongly believed that Cesare Borgia and his father Pope Alexander VI had this ability and that this was the very thing that allowed them to be so successful:

I remember hearing Cardinal Soderini say that among the many reasons one could call Cesare Borgia and the pope [Alexander VI] great is that they are experts at seeing an opportunity and seizing it. This view is proved by our experience of what they have carried out when they had the opportunity. (*PV* 363)

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<sup>101</sup> While Constantine opts for “skill,” Machiavelli actually uses the word that one finds again and again throughout his writings: “virtù.” However, here it is a virtù of mind, or “virtù dello animo” that enables princes such as these to seize the opportunities presented to them (15). For more on Machiavelli’s attitudes towards these figures, see Reborn, *Foxes and Lions* (99-104).

Such an ability for energetic improvisation seems to be the very quality of an actor, which is why drama injects strategy with such a dynamic quality. Politics and war provide numerous opportunities to be seized and dangers to be avoided; the trick is knowing how to tell them apart and how to act on them by “think[ing] on one’s feet” (*AW* 7.313). None of this is easy to achieve, for one can never be entirely sure if a problem requires immediate action (*D* 1.34.189) or the patience to bide one’s time for a better solution (*D* 1.33.185). There is something quite vibrant about this, for it suggests that nothing is ever quite fixed, that success in one situation may not lead to success in another, and that the times change regardless of whether or not the prince does. It is a difficult tightrope, but it is one that must be walked if a prince hopes to remain successful: “he who conforms his course of action to the quality of the times will fare well, and conversely he whose course of action clashes with the times will fare badly” (*P* 25.95).<sup>102</sup>

Shakespeare is also interested in strategic flexibility, but this interest results in very different findings regarding this approach to politics. York is clearly someone who finds a way to remain flexible with the changing times. This concern for adaptability is impressed upon him quite early on, for in *1 Henry VI* Mortimer advises him to wait for the right time to strike at the House of Lancaster (*IHVI* 2.5.101-03) and that “the politician’s first lesson is to watch his tongue” and wait for the right opportunity to strike (Worden, “Shakespeare and Politics” 35). For now “the house of Lancaster” is too “strong fixed” to be “removed,” but when the time comes York must know how to seize the opportunity (*IHVI* 2.5.101-06). York heeds Mortimer’s advice, so much so that he is

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<sup>102</sup> In the original Italian this skill is twofold, for not only must a prince “conform his course of action to the quality of the times” but, equally important, he must be able to first find out what these qualities are before he begins: “riscontra el modo del procedere suo con le qualità de’ tempi” (73).

able to hold his tongue even when he is presented with grave disappointments. Those times require York to be more deferential, while later ones will require him to be far more proactive. Just as York is able to plan ahead, his dissembling nature clouds the true nature of his actions to everyone—except for Exeter (*IHVI* 4.1.182-86)—seems surprised when York finally does make his move. This dissembling side of York’s character and its strategic implications in Shakespeare can also be found in Holinshed’s description of the historical York: “The duke of Yorke, perceiuing . . . his euill will, openlie dissembled that which he inwardlie minded” (qtd. in Nicoll and Nicoll 98).

Shakespeare makes use of this historical point for dramatic ends, creating numerous scenes in which York is presented with a challenge or a disappointment that requires him to be politic and hold his tongue. For instance, York says nothing when he is discharged from the post of Regent in France (*2HVI* 1.1.62-65) when he sees Henry distributing lands he believes are rightfully his (*2HVI* 1.1.211-28), or when Henry foolishly loses much of England’s French possessions (*2HVI* 1.1.233-34). All of these affronts receive not a murmur of dissent from York. Such silence is quite intriguing, for the audience is well aware of York’s ambitions and is thus excited to see when or if York will reveal himself too openly. Even when his hopes are dashed even further, York remains quiet (*2HVI* 1.3.205-21). Unlike Humphrey, York is able to be flexible with changing times, and the audience begins to see not only York’s employment of such flexibility but its benefits as a politic stratagem. For example, York had wanted an army, and those plans have been ruined. However, if he can keep his head and wait for the right moment, an opportunity will eventually arise. As Ruffo-Fiore notes in relation to Machiavelli’s discussions of flexibility:



The degree to which a new prince can take advantage of the apparently negative or contrary elements of an occasion and channel them toward a successful end depends on his perception of the real nature of things (*realtà effettuale*). (38)

York can see the real nature of things, and he does know how to seize an opportunity when it presents itself. When an opportunity does arise later in the form of a post announcing that a rebellion is brewing in Ireland, York knows what to do. The Cardinal argues that this crisis must be dealt with immediately and that it craves “a quick expedient stop” (*2HVI* 3.1.287-88). This impolitic forthrightness shows how different the others are from York. While they are loudly prattling on or moving too soon, York is willing to sit back to find out what is going on before acting. Somerset is suggested as a possible commander, but York sows some doubt about Somerset’s abilities by reminding everyone of his “fortune” in France, a reminder that will ensure that York will be the one who is given the army to put down the Irish rebellion (*2HVI* 3.1.289-91).

However, not all strategists can completely avoid making mistakes, and here York’s earlier clashes with his old enemy from *1 Henry VI* almost serve to undermine his quest for the crown in *2 Henry VI*. While York is quietly deferential to many on the state, his enemy Somerset has had a chance to see York’s true colours, and Somerset does not like what he sees. He angrily makes note of York’s “far-fet policy,” ostensibly to argue that York would have had the same fortune in France that he had, but also to acknowledge York’s long-term strategy, for York is the only one here who can think on his feet and adapt to circumstances as they arise (*2HVI* 3.1.292). Shakespeare uses York to investigate the dynamic nature of politic stratagems over the course of successive plays. Rather than merely illustrate key strategic concepts, Shakespeare’s dramatization allows him to explore the ways that politic stratagems operate, succeed, or fail.

Shakespeare creates a York who—at least for the moment—is capable of changing his direction as the winds of fortune indicate. Leggatt sees York’s stalling as an example of his loss of “political initiative and theatrical focus,” but this is to miss the point of York’s strategy (*Shakespeare’s Political Drama* 14). Actually, York’s quiet maneuvering around all of his assorted enemies on the stage serves to give his character a strong theatrical focus, a focus that Shakespeare finds in his sources but enhances dramatically. The historical York knew when to bide his time, but he also knew when to seize an opportunity: “[his intentions were] so politiklie handled, and so secretlie kept, that prouision to his purpose was readie, before his purpose was openlie published” (qtd. in Nicoll and Nicoll 110). The “key to all Machiavellian design is patience” (Manheim 81) and so York “is willing to bide his time until his faction is strong and Henry’s cause weak” (Ornstein 40).

However, what distinguishes the dramatic York from the historical one is Shakespeare’s interest in building the tension surrounding York’s strategy, tension that is far from being theatrically unfocused. York loudly paces the stage and proclaims his desire to dissemble and be politic, but the audience gets to see him quietly set his plans in motion while he plays his opponents off against each other and waits for the best time to strike. This quiet duplicity is what sets York apart from the less subtle theatrical Machiavels that he evokes in his addresses to the audience. The Machiavel is intriguing, but the quiet duplicity taking place just beneath the surface is much more so.

Shakespeare makes use of this sudden entry to signal the arrival of that opportunity, for the rebellion in Ireland suddenly gives York an army to command (*2HVI* 3.1.281-86, 308-14). Shakespeare makes great use of this dramatic moment, for while York has been

waiting for this for a long time, he still needs to strengthen his resolve. He quietly accepts the post at line 314, but he manages to keep his cool until the other characters leave the stage almost twenty lines later. The audience sees York trying to suppress his excitement at this sudden opportunity. In a soliloquy that also serves as a direct address to the audience, York talks himself into not letting the moment pass by:

Now, York, or never, steel thy fearful thoughts,  
And change misdoubt to resolution . . . .  
Let pale-faced fear keep with a mean-born man  
And find no harbour in a royal heart. (*2HVI* 3.1.330-35)

York does make the most out of his opportunity, and even though everything does not come out the way he planned, at least he did not let it pass. Instead of merely dramatizing a success or a failure, this mixed result is yet another way that Shakespeare explores the truly dynamic nature of politic stratagems. Sometimes an action might lead to success, but sometimes that same action might lead to failure. In the chronicles the historical York's success seems almost pre-ordained, while in the first tetralogy Shakespeare shows the numerous steps along the way where York may have failed and where he finally needed to steel his fearful thoughts and make a move for the crown.

If York can be seen as one example of flexibility, Margaret can be seen as another, one that is quite different but one that is just as revealing about the dynamic nature of strategic flexibility. Like York, Margaret serves as an example of *virtù* of the highest order, for she is willing to do whatever it takes to fight on and remain in power. This becomes quite clear in the scene in which she and Suffolk part forever (*2HVI* 3.2.300-412). Most critics and performers have viewed this scene in terms of the romance between Suffolk and Margaret, and their parting has thus been seen as one of the few genuine moments of sadness and pathos in the first tetralogy (Warren, Oxford *2HVI*

44-50). This interpretation is accurate, but the scene also suggests something else: a strategic scenario playing just beneath the surface action. Throughout this play a number of characters have tried to separate Margaret from Suffolk. There are a number of reasons for this, but the main one is that such a separation will isolate Margaret politically and neutralize her power in the court. Margaret shows a very strong political calculation throughout the first tetralogy, but she really comes into her own when she has no one to rely on but herself. Unlike Suffolk, she is able to adapt to the times and continue to fight against her enemies. She has lost this round, but she is not yet defeated. For example, when Suffolk gives up—“cease, gentle Queen, these execrations, / And let thy Suffolk take his heavy leave” (2*HVI* 3.2.305-06)—Margaret angrily responds: “fie, coward woman and soft-hearted wretch!” (2*HVI* 3.2.307).<sup>103</sup> She implies that she is the one who is acting like a man. This contradicts the view of others earlier in the play, who thought that Suffolk was the one in control pulling the strings and doing all of the dirty work, even if it was all to Margaret’s benefit (2*HVI* 1.3.89-101).<sup>104</sup> However, Margaret will prove to be the one who is not willing to give up.

Margaret is stronger than Suffolk is, stronger than anyone thinks she is, and she will fight again. As Banks notes, Shakespeare seems to set Margaret up in strong and deliberate contrast to her husband Henry:

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<sup>103</sup> Hall describes the historical Margaret thus: “This woman excelled all other, as well in beautie and favor, as in wit and policie, and was of stomack and corage, more like a man, then a woman” (qtd. in Bullough 102). Not all of the characters on the stage are happy with this side of Margaret, and many see her as a threat to their own masculinity. For more on this, see Lee, “Reflections of Power” and Norvell, “The dramatic portrait of Margaret,” as well as Howard and Rackin, *Engendering a Nation*.

<sup>104</sup> The nature of Suffolk’s aid is ambiguous, for while he provides her with counsel he also insists that Margaret will be the one who rules the realm: “madam, list to me — / For I am bold to counsel you in this — / . . . one by one we’ll weed them all at last, / And you yourself shall steer the happy realm” (2*HVI* 1.3.93-101). Suffolk’s motivations are never entirely clear, for despite earlier claiming his intentions to rule over “both [Margaret], the King and realm” (1*HVI* 5.4.108), he does seem to express genuine loyalty to her, particularly in the end.

Margaret is a strong, ambitious queen, a female foil designed to offset her weak and effeminate husband . . . . Shakespeare presents Henry VI as bookish and holy, qualities which better suit a member of the Reformation clergy than the leader of a country at war with France and, as the king is increasingly recognised as a failure to both wife and warring nation, Queen Margaret steps into her husband's shoes. (174)

Such stepping in can be seen quite clearly in this scene. However much she and Suffolk have been curtailed, Margaret still has strategic options. She is still the queen, and she still has the means to fight back. First, she must distance herself from Suffolk, and this is where the strategic scenario comes into contact with the romantic parting that dominates the surface action and most of our attention. Margaret is lamenting the loss of her love, but she is also trying to realign herself politically now that her plan to remove Humphrey has gone awry: “so get thee gone that I may know my grief; / 'Tis but surmised whiles thou art standing by, / As one that surfeits thinking on a want . . . Go; speak not to me; even now be gone!” (2*HVI* 3.2.346-48, 352). She is emotionally hurt by his presence, but it hurts her politically as well. If Henry sees them together, it will hurt her chances of getting back into power. As Manheim argues, Margaret “sees the greatest threat to her position from Suffolk's downfall” (99). She has a better chance of regaining her former influence over Henry if Suffolk is not around. There is no question that there is love here—“O go not yet. Even thus, two friends condemned / Embrace, and kiss, and take ten thousand leaves, / Loather a hundred times to part than die” (2*HVI* 3.2.353-55)—but there is strategy too, playing just beneath the surface action. There is also quick-mindedness, toughness, and a refusal to give up.

Margaret has the ability to be flexible with the changing times. All one has to do is contrast Suffolk's “wherefore should I curse them?” (2*HVI* 3.2.309) with Margaret's “wherefore grieve I at an hour's loss” (2*HVI* 3.2.381) to see their two very different

responses to failure. As Howard argues, the fall of Suffolk and the weakness of Henry result in Margaret taking on the dominant political and military role for the Lancastrians, a role that inspires praise from some and curses from others:

Margaret . . . becomes a warrior, consequently, in order to protect Henry's throne and the claims of their son to that throne. Taking over her husband's place in battle and at the council table, Margaret successfully rules until finally defeated by the forces of the English rebels. In one way Margaret is perfectly conventional, especially in her desire to see her son rule in the place of his father. In another way, however, she is utterly unconventional and a threat to patriarchal order in her insistence on assuming the roles typically reserved for men, and, tellingly in her adultery with an English courtier named Suffolk. Despite her strengths, she is vilified as a monster. ("Feminist Criticism" 416)<sup>105</sup>

Whatever the other characters may think of her, the key to Margaret's political success is her ability to rebound after a fall. Even after her defeat, Margaret continues to attack her the "wrangling pirates" who have killed her husband and her son and have taken away her crown (*RIII* 1.3.157). By this time she has to content herself with words, but these words prove to be even more devastating than her armies. Hunter argues that each play in the first tetralogy gives us "a different Margaret, accommodated to a different structure and operating in terms of a different range of relationships and effects" ("The Royal Shakespeare Company plays *Henry VI*" 93). This is true, but these changes are also the result of a strategic reaction to the changing political climate of the court. Margaret has had to become more flexible to respond effectively to the ever-changing atmosphere in the court. However, whereas York's flexibility is largely forgotten after he openly declares himself to be king, Margaret still manages to rebound, even after an initial

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<sup>105</sup> This ambivalence towards Margaret can also be found in the historical sources Shakespeare consulted. For example, Hall describes the historical Margaret in a manner that is at once admiring and disapproving:

But on the other parte, the Quene his wife, was a woman of greate witte . . . of haute stomacke, desirous of glory, and covetous of honor, and of reason, pollicye, counsaill, and other giftes and talentes of nature belongyng to a man . . . of witte and wilinesse she lacked nothyng, nor of diligence, studies, and businesse. (qtd. in Bullough 105-06)

strategic blunder. Again, just as Shakespeare uses the character of York to explore one kind of adaptive politic stratagem, so too does he use Margaret to explore another.

Through Margaret, Shakespeare explores what it takes for a character to succeed after a terrible loss. This is made even more clear after the Lancastrians have lost the Battle of Saint Albans. Once again she is confronted with someone who wants to give up and submit to the times. Henry is more than willing to give up: “can we outrun the heavens? Good Margaret, stay” (2*HVI* 5.2.74). However, Margaret refuses to concede defeat, for she knows that the situation can be saved if they escape to London to regain their strength and plot a new strategy:

if we haply scape —  
As well we may, if not through your [Henry’s] neglect —  
We shall to London get, where you are loved  
And where this breach now in our fortunes made  
May readily be stopped. (2*HVI* 5.2.79-83)

This is not an insurmountable obstacle, nor is it an utterly disastrous defeat; instead, it is simply a temporary “breach in [their] fortunes.” Margaret can see that all is not lost, and she knows that if they can get back to London they can fight another day. This is important, because she is the one who quickly manages to turn things around to defeat and kill York at the beginning of 3 *Henry VI* despite his victory at the end of 2 *Henry VI*. Margaret’s advice to Henry is seconded by Young Clifford, who will be her chief ally in turning the tables: “away for your relief! And we will live / To see their day and them our fortune give” (2*HVI* 5.2.88-89). Even when Margaret finally does lose everything she still refuses to give up, spending much of *Richard III* cursing all of the Yorkists for what they have done to her family.<sup>106</sup> Margaret is different from York, in that York’s

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<sup>106</sup> However, one should point out that Margaret’s role in *Richard III* seems more reflective of the force of *fortuna* rather than *virtù*. Hunter argues that the change in Margaret’s character in *Richard III* suggests a

skill is his ability to see an opportunity and seize it with both hands, but hers is equally important, for she refuses to let the times overwhelm her and she is always willing to fight on. Through these characters, Shakespeare is able to investigate the virtues and limitations of strategic flexibility.

Edward is another case study in flexibility, one that offers an interesting twist on the two previous examples, for Edward's flexibility is quite different from his father's and Margaret's. Upon returning to England after having lost his crown, Edward claims that he "challenge[s] nothing but [his] dukedom, / As being well content with that alone" (*3HVI* 4.7.23-24). However, Cox and Rasmussen note that the historical Edward "quickly discovered that he won more support by claiming that he came only for his duchy than by claiming the kingdom" (Arden *3HVI* 323). This also anticipates Bolingbroke in *Richard II*, for many critics have also strongly debated whether or not he desired the crown from the very beginning or whether he saw an opportunity for power and took it (Manheim 72-75). Again we are confronted with the mistaken assumption that a lack of articulation is somehow undramatic, when in fact such an absence is really not undramatic at all. Likewise, a character's apparent failure to fully articulate their plans does not mean that they have no plans; it merely means that the dramatist chose a different way of representing them dramatically. Subtext does not pertain to psychology alone. Despite wanting the crown, Edward is willing for now to be flexible with the changing times; if this is all that he can get, then he is willing to be content with that, at least for now. There is really little doubt that Edward will seize more power the moment

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strong discontinuity from the earlier plays ("The Royal Shakespeare Company plays *Henry VI*" 93), but some productions have found clever ways to show that Margaret is merely fighting the Yorkists in a new way (Greene 118). For more on the role of Margaret from one of the most successful modern realizations of her character, see Ashcroft, "Margaet of Anjou."



he is in a position to, but for now he is willing to take what he can get. Thus, his claim about the dukedom is pragmatic, for it allows him to get a toehold from which he will be able to make a wider step to power. The opportunity to make this step comes quite suddenly, for Montgomery arrives and calls Edward “King Edward,” to which Edward responds: “thanks, good Montgomery, but we now forget / Our title to the crown, and only claim / Our dukedom, till God please to send the rest” (3HVI 4.7.45-47). One should note the final two words of this speech, for although Edward still insists that he does not want the crown, he does say that if an opportunity were to arise he would be more than willing to take “the rest.”

That moment will arrive sooner than Edward realizes. When Montgomery says that he “came to serve a king and not a duke” (3HVI 4.7.49), Edward, being flexible, immediately responds to the problem: “nay, stay, Sir John, awhile, and we’ll debate / By what safe means the crown may be recovered” (3HVI 4.7.51-52). However, Montgomery will have none of this:

What talk you of debating? In few words,  
If you’ll not proclaim yourself our king,  
I’ll leave you to your fortune and be gone  
And keep them back that come to succor you.  
Why should we fight, if you pretend no title? (3HVI 4.7.53-57)

Is this the opportunity that Edward has been waiting for? He still seems unsure, for even when Richard prods him that they must act and not “stand . . . on nice points” (3HVI 4.7.58), Edward insists that they should wait until the time is right to strike: “when we grow stronger, then we’ll make our claim. / Till then ’tis wisdom to conceal our meaning” (3HVI 4.7.59-60). Edward is trying to follow the same advice that Mortimer had given to his father in about hiding one’s intentions (IHVI 2.5.101-06), but that was

then and this is now. A politic stratagem that worked in the past is not guaranteed of success in the future, and vice versa (Ruffo-Fiore 39). His intentions, in any case, cannot be as easily concealed as his father's were, for Edward has already had the crown on his head. Would anyone really believe that he truly wants anything less?

Again, strategy is not about following a pre-conceived plan so much as it is about having the ability to respond to and take advantage of situations as they arise. For Edward, that opportunity has just arrived. Both Hastings and Richard insist that if he does not move fast the opportunity to take back the crown will be lost, for Montgomery is willing to "proclaim [Edward] out of hand. / The bruit thereof will bring [him] many friends" (3*HVI* 4.7.63-64). At this Edward quickly and flexibly acquiesces and agrees that he will become king and will move against Henry as soon as possible, and he even manages to find cause for his planned usurpation: "then be it as you will, for 'tis my right, / And Henry but usurps the diadem" (3*HVI* 4.7.65-66). Edward had wanted to wait, but now that such an opportunity has arisen he has to take it. And so, Edward will succeed where so many have failed. The audience can see Edward processing this scenario and tabulating his chances of success before accepting Montgomery's offer. Far from being ineffective or inarticulate, this sense of immediacy makes the scene effective. The actor cannot always plan strategies in advance; instead, he or she must respond and adapt to circumstances and situations as they arise. Edward has learned how to be flexible with the changing times. Shakespeare is exploring these ideas rather than merely illustrating them, and this exploration reveals both the positive and negative effects of politic stratagems. Edward may be successful at the end of 3 *Henry VI*, but he has also opened the door to Richard's rise to power, a rise that will result in both the death of

Edward's children and the loss of the Yorkist dynasty. Edward has learned to be flexible with the changing times for the moment, but no one can remain flexible forever.

### **3.4 IS IT POSSIBLE TO BE A PRINCE WITHOUT BECOMING THE PRINCE?**

In "The Frame of Disorder" Brockbank argues that one of the catastrophes of the first tetralogy is the effect that weakness has on the realm, an argument echoed by Talbert (*The Problem of Order* 15) and Condren (172-73). Manheim makes the point that "if the actions of the king are evaluated by the Machiavellian standard . . . then its only successful character is its arch-villain, and it is against young Richard that all other characters should be measured" (85-86). Is this Shakespeare's position? Is it possible to be a good man and a good king, or are such questions merely naïve? Whatever the answer, it is clear that this is one of the fundamental questions dramatically explored by Shakespeare in these plays. As Berry argues:

The problem posed . . . is one central to the political consciousness of the period: how, in a corrupt society ineptly ruled, can a virtuous man contribute to his own or the greater good? For audiences accustomed to a pervasive moral relativism this problem tends to evaporate: one must bend a bit to the wind of politics, be pragmatic, sacrifice a little of the means for the sake of the end. But for most Elizabethans, absolutists in theory if not in practice, the problem becomes truly a dilemma: to bend is to give implicit sanction to Machiavellianism. (*Patterns of Decay* 40)

As his dramatic exploration of the issues of strategy makes clear, Shakespeare is clearly wondering about these questions and exploring them. Part of this exploration involves having different characters react differently to Henry's actions; what to York was a grave insult was to Warwick an unintentional mistake. However, other characters share York's anger and frustration over Henry's mistakes. For example, Clifford later blames Henry for all of the ills that have bedeviled England, and his dying words are full of scorn for the monarch he is supposedly fighting to defend:

Henry, hadst thou swayed as kings should do,  
Or as thy father and his father did,  
Giving no ground unto the house of York,  
They never then had sprung like summer flies;  
I and ten thousand in this luckless realm  
Had left no mourning widows for our death,  
And thou this day hadst kept thy chair in peace.  
For what doth cherish weeds but gentle air?  
And what makes robbers hold but too much lenity? (*3HVI* 2.6.14-22)

To Clifford and so many other characters on the stage, all of the disasters that have befallen the Lancastrians have done so because of Henry's "gentle air" and "lenity."

Machiavelli argues that such attributes will ultimately destroy a prince in the end:

What will make the prince contemptible is for him to be perceived as undependable, frivolous, effeminate, pusillanimous, and irresolute, against which a prince must guard himself as from the plague. He must do his utmost so that his actions will be perceived as imbued with greatness, courage, dignity, and power. And as for the private affairs of his subjects, he must be adamant that his decisions are irrevocable. He must maintain a standing such that no man would venture to cheat or deceive him. (*P* 19.71)<sup>107</sup>

York clearly shares such sentiments, for he acknowledges that his bid for the crown has been inspired by Henry's weakness even more than by his rights: "and force perforce I'll make him yield the crown, / Whose bookish rule hath pulled fair England down" (*2HVI* 1.1.255-56).

However, Shakespeare never allows any question to remain uncomplicated. Even when Henry has been made into a puppet king, he still strongly believes that he is more loved than Edward: "then why should they love Edward more than me? / No, Exeter, these graces challenge grace, / And when the lion fawns upon the lamb, / The lamb will never cease to follow him" (*3HVI* 4.8.47-50). One could say that Henry is wrong here,

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<sup>107</sup> While "standing" does suggest one's place among the people, Machiavelli's use of the word "opinion" actually seems to be more appropriate, for it is a much looser term and it suggests the degree to which such opinions can be manipulated by the prince: "si mantenga in tale opinione, che alcuno non pensi né a ingannarlo né ad aggirarlo" (52).

for the lamb clearly does not follow the lion that fawns upon him. His error is compounded even further as this speech is immediately dramatically followed by Edward bursting onto the stage to take him prisoner and place him in the Tower. Henry will later die in the Tower, murdered by someone who shares none of his pious beliefs about politics or anything else. Is one meant then to conclude that it is worse to be weak than it is to be ruthless? All of the weak characters meet ghastly ends in the first tetralogy. Noting the dangers of weakness to the Lancastrian cause, Trafton argues that “when the sword fails, the dynasty falls” (93). However, while the weaker characters do prove unable to survive in the politic world of the first tetralogy, it should be remembered that the strong characters meet ghastly ends as well. Perhaps then the issue is not the place of goodness in politics, but the ability to translate such goodness into action.

Is it possible to be a prince without becoming The Prince? Several of Shakespeare’s kings, rulers, and political figures meet their ends because they are not ruthless enough to survive in the political climate they find themselves in. Such a climate seems quite congenial to Machiavelli, who spent his life working in it and analyzing it in his writings. At many points Machiavelli insists that it is simply not possible to be a prince without acting like The Prince:

A certain prince of our times (whom I shall not name) [probably Ferdinand II] preaches nothing but peace and loyalty, while he could not be more hostile to both. Yet if he lived by what he preaches, he would by now have lost both his reputation and his state many times over. (*P* 18.54)

In Machiavelli’s opinion, such behaviour simply comes with the position, for there are simply “too many factors are lined up against a ruler at any one time to allow for the practice of orthodox morality” (Roe, “Shakespeare and Machiavelli” 364). Nevertheless, Machiavelli does not argue that harshness and cruelty are the only proper modes of

conduct for peace, for too much ruthlessness can bring about one's ruin just as quickly as too much weakness can. Despite achieving success as a result of cunning, craft, and cruelty, Castruccio gives his son advice on how to rule once he is gone:

Whereas I sought to make them [the Florentines] my enemy, in the belief that such enmity would bring me power and glory, you must seek with all your strength to make them your friends, because their friendship will bring you security and benefit. (CC 424)

This point is also made by Gentillet in his summary of Chapter 7 of *The Prince*, a chapter in which Machiavelli insists that one must learn to perceive when violence is necessary and when it is not. When it is, the prince should always make sure to keep the blood of one's hands (594).

Clearly ruthlessness alone will not suffice, for princes must learn how to temper their rule with both fear and love.<sup>108</sup> Enemies should be crushed, but friends should not be alienated. In other words, one must be, like Fabrizio in *The Art of War*, desirous of peace while being constantly prepared for war (AW 1.304). One must never forget that “men never do good except out of necessity” (D 1.3.120), but one must also never forget the dangers that can arise as a result of excess cruelty, as Machiavelli's description of the fate of wantonly cruel Roman emperors suggests:

Anyone who wishes to become the prince of a state should consider how much more praise is merited by emperors who lived as good rulers according to the law after Rome became an empire than by emperors who did not. Titus, Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus, and Marcus did not need the Praetorian Guard or whole legions to defend them. They were defended by their conduct, the goodwill of the populace, and the love of the senate. On the other hand, Caligula, Nero, Vitellius, and so many other wicked emperors found that their eastern and western armies were not enough to save them from the enemies their evil ways had generated. A new prince who considers their history carefully will find it excellent training, showing him the path to glory or to blame, the path to security or

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<sup>108</sup> See Machiavelli's *The Life of Castruccio Castracani* (425), *Discourse on Pisa* (349) and *On How to Treat the Populace of Valdichiana* (360-61).

fear. Of the twenty-six emperors between Caesar and Maximinus, sixteen were murdered and ten died of natural causes. (*D* 1.10.144-45)

Such advice clearly suggests that, despite what the notoriety of his political advice may suggest, Machiavelli strongly feels that reckless and unjustifiable cruelty is not strategic. And so, just as Henry VI could conceivably learn much from Machiavelli, so too could leaders like Richard III, whose excessive brutality results in his destruction and who realizes too late that “one rarely finds a tyrant who comes to a good end” (*D* 3.6.267).<sup>109</sup>

Is it possible to combine kindness and cruelty? Can one be feared and loved? At the end of *3 Henry VI*, Edward proclaims that all enemies to the crown are now dead and peace can now begin without fear of reprisal (*3HVI* 5.7.1-20), a proclamation duplicated by Richmond once he manages to seize the crown from Richard III (*RIII* 5.5.15-41). Both kings have used violence in order to seize power, but both are willing to use peaceful methods now that their power is secure. They have the power of a giant, but they have learned the value in not using it as such (Jaffa, “Charity as a political principle” 202). Both kings would also probably agree that although it is better to be feared than loved, and that one should, in keeping with Machiavelli’s advice, try to avoid being hated while always keeping in mind that “being feared and not hated go well together” (*P* 17.65), or “può molto bene stare insieme esser temuto e non odiato” (48). It is a question of balance, for while fear can aid a prince, hatred will only lead to his ruin (*D* 1.10.144-45).<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Likewise, Jaffa argues something similar in regards to the self-defeating nature of Macbeth’s early success: “We see the actions by which he became, and maintained himself in his tyranny, to be self-defeating: for in the process of becoming a tyrant, he lost every reason for being a tyrant” (“An interpretation of the Shakespearean universe” 286). This would contradict Ornstein’s claim that “nothing succeeds like success” (26-27).

<sup>110</sup> As Hörnqvist notes: “with a . . . twist of irony . . . Machiavelli, the advocate of the two extremes . . . turns the tables on [Aristotle] by using the middle-way argument against him” (*Machiavelli and Empire* 207).

This is different from Richard III, but one must point out that Richard's cruelty does not produce results. Richard eliminates the princes the moment he steps on the throne (*RIII* 4.2.18-19), an act that not only scandalizes the people but leaves them to wonder whether they might be next (*RIII* 4.2.50-51, 91-92, 119-20). Machiavelli says that Castruccio "was kind to his friends, ruthless to his enemies, fair to those under his rule, and unfair to those who were not" (*CC* 425). Richard clearly cannot make such distinctions, and he meets a disastrous end as a result. Like Agathocles, he knew how to achieve "power, but not glory" (*P* 8.34), or "acquistare imperio, ma non Gloria" (25). Machiavelli argues that fear creates a stronger bond than love, an argument with which Richard would no doubt agree. However, he would clearly ignore Machiavelli's equally compelling instruction that the prince must avoid hatred, for this can only bring about his ruin. Machiavelli provides scores of examples of rulers who, like Richard III, became so hated that they were eventually killed by their own subjects (*P* 19.77-78). They, like Richard, were able to inspire fear, but they were not able to inspire love. However, whereas Machiavelli only discusses this inability in political terms, Shakespeare's interest is far more wide-ranging. As a dramatist, Shakespeare understands in a way that Machiavelli never does that political action is never solely political, and that political success, far from being the end, is only just the beginning.



## CHAPTER 4

### THE ISSUE OF FRIENDS AND ALLIES

#### 4.1 MAKING AND BREAKING ALLIANCES

A strategist may be ruthless or resolute, or able to strike the appropriate balance between cunning and power. However, no matter how successful, a strategist cannot survive on his or her own. Alliances are required for success, but such alliances are fraught with peril, for one can never fully trust that one's ally is not working on his or her own behalf. In an early letter to Alamanno Salviati, Machiavelli describes the Emperor Maximilian's plans for Italy and how an alliance with Venice would affect those plans, noting how the Florentines view the potential outcome of such an alliance:

most people here in Florence are extremely worried about the emperor's conquering Padua, but they are also worried about his not managing to conquer it. They believe that if he is successful, his standing will increase to such an extent that France will side with him and he will be given the Holy Roman crown by the pope without hindrance, and we and the rest of Italy will be at his disposal. If, on the other hand, he does not manage to conquer Padua, he might reach an agreement with Venice to our detriment with the same result: Because he is so well armed, no one will be able to stand up to him should he unite his army with that of Venice. (*L* 498)

At no point does Machiavelli discuss the actions of Maximilian and the Venetians in terms of friendship; instead, he always discusses them in terms of interest and motive. He looks at the possible outcome of Maximilian's success and failure in Padua solely in terms of how it will affect his alliances in Italy, alliances that will ultimately be determined by whether or not Maximilian succeeds or fails. As Machiavelli stresses at another point in the letter, these are the things that one should pay attention to when

looking at alliances: “wanting to see if a treaty should ensue, one must examine first what motives move the parties and then, if there are such motives, to believe them” (L 498). Machiavelli follows his own advice, for he notes that Maximilian is motivated by “honor and profit” while the Venetians are looking for an “opportunity to gain time,” to avoid “the dangers that shadow their liberty,” and “to lighten their expenses” (L 498). The alliance is beneficial for now because both sides have interests that will be served by it. However, Machiavelli is quite clear that it will be a different story once that is no longer the case. The example from Machiavelli shows the degree to which alliances are dramatically fraught with tension and suspicion, for each ally is constantly on the lookout for betrayal.

Shakespeare is also interested in depicting the ulterior motives of his characters when it comes to alliances, but his exploration, unlike Machiavelli’s, stresses both the dangers and the benefits of making and breaking alliance. The best way to approach the issues of alliances is to look at a character who has generally not yet received his due from literary critics. That character is the Earl of Warwick, who becomes an ally of the Yorkists in *2 Henry VI* and who remains their strongest supporter until coming into conflict with Edward in *3 Henry VI*. This conflict will temporarily cost Edward his crown and will temporarily regain Henry’s lost crown, thus earning Warwick the epithet Warwick the Kingmaker, the “setter-up and plucker-down of kings” (Brockbank, “The Frame of Disorder” 59), “an opportunist with more interest in self-promotion than [in] questions of rights, obligations and duties” (Hadfield 39). It also reveals the way that alliances operate dramatically throughout the first tetralogy. Warwick’s example offers a startling dramatic testing of the principles articulated in Machiavelli’s contention that

“the arms of another will either fall off your back, weigh you down, or hamper you” (*P* 13.54), a contention reinforced by his witnessing how Borgia was betrayed by Julius II despite helping him to become pope.<sup>111</sup> The actions of Julius II immediately following the election show that these hopes were unfounded (Ridolfi, *The Life of Niccolò Machiavelli* 68). Borgia made the mistake of “believ[ing] that other people’s words are more to be relied upon than his own were” (qtd. in Ridolfi, *The Life of Niccolò Machiavelli* 70).<sup>112</sup>

However, whereas Machiavelli’s response to this episode is to advise one not to trust even one’s allies, Shakespeare is more aware that such mistrust, in addition to being self-defeating strategically, will ultimately bring about one’s ruin. As Jones notes, the betrayals of Warwick and Clarence stand out in the tetralogy as a whole: “The only factor which remained stable [during the Wars of the Roses] was the hostility of York and Lancaster, whose supporters stayed loyal to their chosen sides except for the two notable turncoats Warwick and Clarence” (*Origins* 180). Shakespeare not only dramatizes Warwick as a threat to Edward, but he also dramatizes the threat from Warwick’s perspective and from the perspectives of all those who, like Clarence, are forced to make hard choices based on the rupture of Warwick’s and Edward’s alliance. The difficulty of these choices makes such decisions dynamic, for Shakespeare’s exploration suggests that there are no easy answers to the questions faced by Warwick and Clarence, for each situation and each alliance requires its own particular response.

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<sup>111</sup> While “hamper” does convey the appropriate meaning, Machiavelli’s actual “stringano” or “tighten,” is more appropriate, for it implies the closing off of strategic options rather than mere hindering (40). At the same time, Machiavelli’s “stringano” also gives the impression of a noose becoming tighter and tighter. To “hamper” is to stall or annoy, but Machiavelli’s choice is far more ominous. Elsewhere Machiavelli writes that princes “end up making enemies of all those [they] have offended during [their] conquest of the principality, and [they] find that [they] cannot keep the friendship of those who helped [them] to power, since [they] cannot satisfy them in the way they had envisioned” (*P* 3.9).

<sup>112</sup> For more on this, see Viroli, *Niccolò’s Smile* (72-75).

Alliances may be based on interest rather than loyalty and may be vulnerable to betrayal, but they are also necessary and vital to maintain if a prince wants to stay in power. For example, Richard immediately sets about dismantling his alliances with Buckingham and others the moment he becomes king in Act 4 of *Richard III*, only to be betrayed and killed by the end of Act 5. As Blunt says, Richard “hath no friends but what are friends for fear, / Which in his dearest need will fly from him” (*RIII* 5.3.20-21). Richard’s fall shows that there is something quite hollow in Machiavelli’s belief that a prince can somehow survive and thrive on their own, that one can be, as Richard proclaims, to “have no brother” and to be “[one]self alone” (*3HVI* 5.6.80-83). Shakespeare shows this hollowness most clearly by contrasting it with the success of characters such as Edward, Elizabeth and Stanley, who all work hard to create alliances that will keep them strong and allow them to hold on to their power. Although they may share some of Machiavelli’s skepticism about the fragility of alliances, they are still willing and able to use alliances to secure power and security for themselves. By skillfully and dexterously managing the tightrope of strategic alliances, they manage to succeed brilliantly at the end of a series of plays where so many others have failed.

The nature of alliances—how they are made, how they are maintained, and how they are broken—is first fully explored in *2 Henry VI* when York announces his intentions to the audience to seize the crown from Henry VI and power for himself (*2HVI* 1.1.211-56). His words in this scene are reminiscent of the stage Machiavels of Marlowe and others described in the Introduction, particularly in regards to their strong sense of individualism and their belief that they do not need friends or allies. However, this soon changes, as York realizes that he cannot win the crown alone. This is one of

Shakespeare's more fascinating contrasts with other early modern dramatizers of Machiavels. Unlike Barabas, York needs real allies, not henchmen like Ithamore, and so he turns to Warwick and his father Salisbury for support (Ornstein 40). Following Eleanor's arrest, he asks a servingman to "invite my Lords of Salisbury and Warwick / To sup with me tomorrow night. Away!" (2*HVI* 1.4.79-80). His final command is hurried in tone, for it is vital for York to develop this alliance as soon as possible.<sup>113</sup> When we next see them the dinner has just concluded and York is preparing to move on to the real purpose of their gathering: "our simple supper ended, give me leave / In this close walk to satisfy myself" (2*HVI* 2.2.2-3).<sup>114</sup> The fact that this conversation takes place in a closed garden gives a conspiratorial tone to the proceedings, for York essentially wants Warwick and Salisbury to support his seizure of the crown. Jones notes that "nothing could be more treasonable than their behaviour" (*Origins* 172).<sup>115</sup> He is right, for this is the alliance that will eventually topple Henry from the throne.

Here Shakespeare's dramatizes an important exchange that takes place between York and Warwick, one that serves to dramatize both the beginning of their alliance and

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<sup>113</sup> As Edward Hall notes, the historical York actually began to seek out further allies only after the death of Gloucester:

For after the deposicion or rather the destruccion of the good duke of Gloucester, and the exaltacion and advauncement of this glorious man: Rychard duke of Yorke, beyng greatly alied by his wyfe, to the chief peres and potentates of the Realme, over and beside his awne progenye and greate consanguinitie, perceivying the Kyng to be a ruler not Ruling . . . began secretly to allure to his frendes of the nobilitie, and privatly declared to them, hys title and right to the Crowne. (qtd. in Bullough 108)

Shakespeare's change indicates a genuine interest in exploring York's developing strategy.

<sup>114</sup> In Howell's BBC version, the scene meant to immediately proceed the unseen dinner was given a domestic tone:

York . . . was . . . hoping to persuade the venerable grey-haired Salisbury on to his side with the help of his long-term friend and contemporary Warwick . . . . At the conclusion of the scene, the very tall Mark Wing-Davey playing Warwick, triumphing at York's success in converting his father to their cause, swung one of the boys up on to his shoulders . . . . Framing his face were the legs of the child, with the left one in calipers. This was the third son of York, the future Richard of Gloucester. (Greene 121)

Such a visual marker indicates the ultimate outcome of this alliance.

<sup>115</sup> Saccio notes that historically Salisbury and Warwick did not support York out of loyalty but because of their ever expanding feuds with the Percies and the Cliffords (*Shakespeare's English Kings* 130).

its eventual end. Warwick is a strong ally, but he may be too strong. *In The Mirror for Magistrates*, Warwick asks if anyone has

ever heard of subject under sonne  
That plaaste and baste his soveraynes so oft,  
By enterchaunge, now low, and than aloft? (Tragedy 16.82-84)

In Shakespeare's drama, Warwick says that his "heart" tells him that "Warwick / Shall one day make the Duke of York a king" (2*HVI* 2.2.78-79). York responds by saying that *he* will "live to make the Earl of Warwick / The greatest man in England but the king" (2*HVI* 2.2.81-82). Note that York has countered Warwick's words about "making" him king by saying that *he* will be the one doing the "making." Leggatt notes that "beneath the exchange of courtesies, York seems properly wary of his new ally" (*Shakespeare's Political Drama* 15). York will be the one who does the making, not Warwick. Warren also notes the underlying tension of this exchange: "is York warning Warwick against overreaching himself? That was certainly suggested by Jack May in the BBC 'Age of Kings' version and by Donald Sinden at [in Peter Hall's] Stratford-upon-Avon [production] in 1963-64" (Oxford 2*HVI* 166). Essentially the rivalry and tension have already been set up between Warwick and the House of York at the very moment that the alliance is first formed. York will be dead before the alliance falls apart, but right here we are given strong indications that Warwick will try to be the greatest man in England, even greater than the king. There is a true subtlety to the drama playing out before the audience in this scene, for the smiles of friendship and amity hide something much more sinister underneath.

Nevertheless, Warwick does prove to be a good ally to York, for he and Salisbury help him bring down Suffolk (2*HVI* 3.2.122-288) and later prove instrumental to the

Yorkist victory at the Battle of Saint Albans (*2HVI* 5.3.20-33). However, as *3 Henry VI* begins, it is clear already that the tension is starting to bubble ever closer to the surface. The discussion between Warwick and York that opens the play amplifies this tension. Although they seem to be friends and allies, there are hints in this early exchange that this alliance can never last. One should note Warwick's "before I see thee seated" (*3HVI* 1.1.22). His speech is ostensibly a speech of support, but it also clearly underlines *his* role in seating York on the throne. Even phrases like "possess it, York," suggest Warwick's ability to confer power more than his ability to encourage (*3HVI* 1.1.26). York clearly thinks so, for his "assist me then, sweet Warwick" openly acknowledges the importance of Warwick's assistance to the Yorkist cause (*3HVI* 1.1.27). In many ways, this scene also dramatically foreshadows what is to come, for Warwick will eventually betray Edward and try to seize power for himself. Why does Warwick betray Edward? Would Warwick have betrayed York too? Is York better able to placate Warwick than his son is, or is Warwick simply less loyal to Edward than he would have been to his father?

These questions come to dominate the latter part of the play, but here Shakespeare finds a way to insert them between the lines. Given this tension, Warwick's next speech sounds more like instruction than simply good advice: "And when the king comes, offer him no violence, / Unless he seek to thrust you out perforce" (*3HVI* 1.1.33-34). York needs Warwick as an ally, but does Warwick need York? The extent of his power becomes clear when Warwick makes an interesting declaration just before the Lancastrians arrive: "[no one] dares stir a wing if Warwick shakes his bells. / I'll plant Plantagenet; root him up who dares" (*3HVI* 1.1.47-48). Ostensibly this is a speech of

support, but Warwick dramatically declares that he is the one who is doing the planting. He also says “Plantagenet” rather than Richard, Duke of York. This may anticipate his later support of Clarence, another Plantagenet, and Henry VI, who is a Plantagenet as well. At the moment it is in Warwick’s interest to support the Yorkists, but that is subject to change.

Warwick’s importance to the Yorkists becomes central after York is killed by Margaret and Clifford (*3HVI* 1.4.175-78), for with York dead, he is clearly the one holding the alliance together. Although he does not outwardly express his reaction to this change in his position, it is quite conceivable that Warwick has already begun to reconsider his options. For example, his actions at the second Battle of Saint Albans are very different from his actions at the first. At the first battle Warwick fought bravely and valiantly and helped bring the Yorkists to victory, but the second time around he flees. Why does he do this? It is important that Warwick was aware of York’s death “ten days” before the battle (*3HVI* 2.1.104, 109-10). Does news of this death make Warwick rethink his position? Warwick says that his troops lost heart because of the actions of Henry, Margaret, and Clifford, but he also refers to his story as a “tale” that will be “conclude[d] with truth” (*3HVI* 2.1.119, 127). Has he begun it with truth, or has it all been a tale? Cox and Rasmussen make note of Warwick’s “excuse[s]” (Arden *3HVI* 228); perhaps thinking it better to remove his own army from harm, Warwick may have abandoned York when he saw that his side was lost. There is sound strategic sense to this, but it should be noted that, however much Warwick is York’s ally, his first allegiance is to himself.



The Yorkists may not like it, but they need Warwick too much to complain. At first Richard openly questions both Warwick's loyalty and his courage: "'Twas odds, belike, when valiant Warwick fled. / Oft have I heard his praises in pursuit, / But ne'er till now his scandal of retire'" (3HVI 2.1.147-49). However, after Warwick reminds them just how important he is to their side winning the crown (3HVI 2.1.150-55), Richard backs off: "I know it well, Lord Warwick; blame me not" (3HVI 2.1.156). This doubt is later seconded by Margaret when she says that Warwick's "legs did better service than [his] hands" (3HVI 2.2.104). Perhaps it is less a lack of courage on his part than an attempt to reevaluate his position. Shakespeare explores the strong tension in this scene, for Warwick is surrounded by people who doubt his motives but who cannot outwardly express their doubts. However, whatever Edward's doubts, Warwick is simply too important to the Yorkists' cause:

Lord Warwick, on thy shoulder will I lean;  
And when thou fall'st, as God forbid the hour,  
Must Edward fall, which peril heaven forbend! (3HVI 2.1.188-90)

The problem, as Warwick himself acknowledges, is that Warwick knows it (3HVI 2.1.191-93). How long can he remain loyal to someone who needs to lean on him to this extent? Whatever their doubts about Warwick's true motivations, the Yorkists must own that Warwick is an essential ally, especially now that York is dead. The dramatic friction will have dire consequences later, as Warwick begins to wonder whether he needs the Yorkists and as Edward begins to wonder whether his ally is helping or hurting his cause.

In *The Florentine Histories*, Machiavelli notes that "it often happened that whatever faction gained the upper hand [soon] proceeded to split in two" (FH Preface.318). Shakespeare's own exploration of this problem shows just how quickly

such bonds can deteriorate, but he is far more interested in just how they proceed to split. This becomes clear soon after the Yorkists defeat the Lancastrians and Edward becomes king. It actually becomes clear before that, right after the Battle of Towton.<sup>116</sup> Perhaps unaware of how symbolic his gesture will be, Edward calls Warwick a “setter-up and plucker-down of kings” (*3HVI* 2.3.37). In saying this he implicitly acknowledges that, just as Warwick is about to pluck Henry VI off the throne in order to set Edward up on it, he also has the power to reverse this if he wants to. Again Shakespeare finds dynamic ways to upend scenes of apparent unity. Ostensibly those assembled here are proclaiming their loyalty, but even here, at this moment of supposed togetherness, one can see that this alliance is bound to fail. This interest in the fragility of alliances sets Shakespeare apart from Machiavelli, who is often more dismissive of the intricacies of such bonds. Shakespeare, on the other hand, seems fascinated by each and every crack that can appear in the façade.

The first crack seems innocuous enough, for Warwick tells the Yorkists to end their mocking of Clifford’s body and to place its head on the gates of York (*3HVI* 2.6.52-53). Cox and Rasmussen note that “in [Edward] Hall, this order is given by Edward, not by Warwick” (Arden *3HVI* 257). It is important that Warwick takes a commanding role, a role that will be resented by Edward and that will soon lead to a rupture in their alliance. Things become far less innocuous as Warwick and the Yorkists begin to plan their next course of action and Warwick declares that they should go “to London with triumphant march, / . . . to be crowned England’s royal king” (*3HVI* 2.6.87-88). Perhaps Warwick does not mention Edward specifically because he regards the crown, at least

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<sup>116</sup> For more on the historical battle, see Kendall, *Warwick the Kingmaker* (89-92); Weir, *Lancaster & York: The Wars of the Roses* (281-86); and Seward, *The Wars of the Roses* (80-85).

partly, as his own. It is arguable that this is partly Edward's fault. Both here and elsewhere, he has shown Warwick that he is grateful for all that he has done, but maybe he has overdone it. By being too compliant, Edward has made Warwick think that he is just as pliable as Henry.<sup>117</sup> Edward is no Henry, but at this moment that is not clear. It is possible then that this is why Warwick immediately begins to talk of arranging a marriage between Edward and Lady Bona, the sister-in-law of Louis XI. No doubt there is much to be said in favor of such a marriage, for an alliance between Edward and Louis would no doubt help to secure his newly won crown. However, both Humphrey and Suffolk tried to use marriage in order to gain better control of Henry VI in *1 Henry VI*, a scheme best characterized by Suffolk: "Margaret shall now be queen, and rule the King: / But I will rule both her, the King and realm" (*IHVI* 5.4.107-08).<sup>118</sup> Does Warwick have similar ambitions?

As Gregerson notes, marriage is often used as a means of manipulation and control (247).<sup>119</sup> Despite Warwick's later claims to the contrary, his attempts to wed Edward to Lady Bona can be seen with some degree of suspicion. Machiavelli warns princes about ambitious advisers:

When the prince sees that the adviser is more intent on furthering his own interest than that of the prince, and that his actions aim to further his own goals, this adviser will never be a good one, and the prince will never be able to trust him. (*P* 22.8)

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<sup>117</sup> Manheim argues that "the real villain" in a Machiavellian world is "the weak king," for he "provokes" rebellious behavior in his subjects (169). In fact, "Machiavellianism, first rejected in these plays, comes to be tolerated in them as a means of countering the sense of despair the weak king inevitably engenders" (Manheim 10).

<sup>118</sup> For more on this, see Champion, *Noise of Threatening Drum* (79) and Knights, "Shakespeare and Political Wisdom."

<sup>119</sup> However, Wilders argues that Suffolk's motives are decidedly mixed, for they are motivated by both stratagem and genuine love:

In the minds of Shakespeare's historical characters, personal and political motives are so combined as to be inseparable. Suffolk arranges Henry VI's marriage to Margaret of Anjou not simply because he hopes to rule the country by influencing her, but because he is in love with her and plans to have her close to him. (2-3)

Machiavelli's interest lies more with the prince than the adviser, but Shakespeare is equally concerned with how both figures deal with such a situation. Despite the fact that there is nothing strategically wrong with Warwick's recommendations that Edward marry Lady Bona and destroy the remaining Lancastrians, at no point does Warwick present these as options for Edward to consider; instead, he tells Edward that he is going to

cut the sea to France  
And ask Lady Bona for thy queen.  
So shalt thou sinew both these lands together;  
And having France thy friend thou shalt not dread  
The scattered foe that hopes to rise again . . . .  
First will I see the coronation;  
And then to Brittany I'll cross the sea  
To effect this marriage, so it please my lord. (*3HVI* 2.6.89-98)

Edward has made the mistake of giving Warwick the impression that he relies on him in order to stay in power. Warwick's speech thus makes reference to everything he will do—"first will I" and "then . . . I'll"—and ends with this: "so it please my lord." The tone of the speech gives the impression that he is not asking permission, so much so that his final words might even be seen as being mocking. As Saccio notes, the historical Warwick was equally arrogant and ambitious:

Warwick was unquestionably the greatest of Edward's subjects, not only because of his services in making Edward king, but also by reason of his territorial power. He enjoyed . . . [numerous] offices . . . he was still captain of Calais; and he held his wife's earldom of Warwick, his mother's earldom of Salisbury, and numerous other estates brought to him by the successes of the Neville family. He was a popular and glamorous figure, but also a difficult man, an ambitious adventurer capable of sullen resentment. (*Shakespeare's English Kings* 142)

This may have been the situation historically, but on the stage things are far more contentious, for Warwick is essentially standing over Edward and making demands of him. Shakespeare clearly relishes the dramatic irony of the situation here, for Warwick's

words of supposed support and compliance actually reveal just how much he is working in his own interest. Warwick may feel that he is in a position to speak the way that he does to his king, for at the moment Edward is clearly not willing to stand up to him:

Even as thou wilt, sweet Warwick, let it be;  
For in thy shoulder do I build my seat,  
And never will I undertake the thing  
Wherein thy counsel and consent is wanting. (*3HVI* 2.6.99-102)

Edward likely does not feel that he is strong enough to stand up to Warwick yet. His “let it be” might seem to imply acquiescence, but it actually hides genuine anger at Warwick’s arrogant behaviour. If so, then the use of the word “sweet” may be just as mocking as Warwick’s words.

Edward still needs Warwick as an ally, and for now so he is willing to accept the sour with the sweet. Thus, Edward’s reference to Warwick “as ourself” is important, as is his declaration that Warwick can “do and undo” the promotions Edward has just given Richard and Clarence as it pleases him best (*3HVI* 2.6.105). There is an air of strain and anxiety in this scene. Seeing Edward’s acquiescence as a sign of weakness, Warwick is beginning to lord it over his king and supposed ally. Unbeknownst to Warwick, Edward does see what Warwick is doing and he is already planning on a way of dealing with it. Even Edward’s suggestion that Warwick can “do and undo” Edward’s own promotions—which Warwick actually does when he tells Richard that he cannot be Duke of Clarence but must be Duke of Gloucester (*3HVI* 2.6.108-09)—is a kind of test, for Edward sees that Warwick is starting to become dangerous.<sup>120</sup> Shakespeare’s placement of this

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<sup>120</sup> Machiavelli argues that a successful general should always be wary of a jealous prince, for the latter will always find something threatening about the former:

Because man’s nature is ruthless . . . it is inevitable that the suspicion immediately sparked in a prince after his general’s victory will be triggered by some arrogant action or remark of the general. Consequently, the prince cannot think of anything but how to secure himself against the general. (*D* 1.29.178)

dramatic test this soon after the alliance's greatest success suggests that such alliances are precarious at best. What makes the scene so dynamic is that one character is testing another character without his knowledge, a scenario that creates a wonderful sense of unease on the part of the audience. Warwick takes the bait and fails the test. The scene ends with Warwick ordering and dominating everyone around him (*3HVI* 2.6.109-10), unaware that he is creating an enemy who will eventually destroy him.

The suddenness of this reversal is shocking, for Shakespeare has shown just how easily one can fall into strategic error. Saccio notes that the historical Edward IV and Earl of Warwick fell out with each other the moment the Lancastrian threat was removed:

For a time Edward and Warwick were close . . . they had to cooperate in order to wipe out remaining pockets of Lancastrian resistance. Once that was done, the relationship between king and kingmaker became increasingly strained. Edward was his own man, not a mere protégé of his older cousin. (*Shakespeare's English Kings* 142)

Edward is not Henry, as Warwick will eventually find out. However, is Warwick overplaying his hand, or is Edward the one who is being ungrateful? Machiavelli argues that “once a man has secured the honors and benefits he thinks he deserves, he no longer feels obligated to those who rewarded him” (*D* 1.16.159), while Guicciardini points out that nothing is more quickly forgotten than a benefit received: “Non è la piú labile cosa che la memoria de' beneficii ricevuti” (*Ricordi* C.24).<sup>121</sup> However, Shakespeare is concerned with each member of the alliance, not just with the perspective of a single suspicious prince. Edward and Warwick are both in the alliance, so their reactions are of equal importance and interest. The next time we see Edward he betrays Warwick, and

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<sup>121</sup> For example, Roberto Ridolfi points out that this was how the Florentines treated Paolo Vitelli despite his numerous military successes for the city: “Paolo was brought to Florence, tortured with ferocity, and . . . his head was cut off. This pitiless justice . . . pleased the Florentines very much” (*The Life of Niccolò Machiavelli* 29).

the next time we see Warwick he reacts to this betrayal by an act of betrayal of his own, so it really is in this scene, where everything seems so united, that the cracks begin.

Perhaps Edward's marriage to Elizabeth is motivated less by lust or "hast[e]" than by a desire not to allow himself to be placed under Warwick's thumb (Pearlman 40).

The politic side to Edward's decision to betray Warwick is often overlooked by critics, such as Manheim, who see it as evidence of rashness rather than reason:

(Edward) betrays his closest adviser (Warwick) who is seeking a good political marriage for him in France (Lady Bona) by marrying someone else (Elizabeth) for whom his erotic impulses have been aroused . . . . Edward marries Elizabeth when he cannot bribe her to satisfy his lust. Edward is a hardened sensualist . . . . Edward always satisfies his appetites—in one way or another. (98)

Likewise, Champion argues that Edward forsakes "his betrothal to Lady Bona in order to satisfy his own lust" (*Noise of Threatening Drum* 86), while Rackin argues that Edward needlessly "endangers Warwick's support and endangers his throne to make a disastrous marriage to a woman he desires" (*Stages of History* 171). Seward notes that this marriage was public proof that Warwick "no longer enjoyed King Edward's full confidence" (121) and that while "it was inevitable that the King and the Earl, his 'over mighty subject', would eventually fall out with each other . . . Edward undoubtedly hastened the process by taking such a wife" (125). Leggatt argues that Edward's marriage to Elizabeth shows him to be just another Henry (*Shakespeare's Political Drama* 15), but this ignores a very strong motivation for Edward's actions. Is the marriage to Elizabeth a blunder, or is it a declaration of independence? Perhaps it is true that the prince can have no friends, that alliances are only fruitful in the short term and only when it is in someone's interest, and that princes often have more to fear from their

friends than from their enemies (Levith 62).<sup>122</sup> Shakespeare is interested in the dramatic potential of such precariousness, but he also reveals that alliances are essential despite such dangers.

#### 4.2 ON CHANGING ALLIANCES TO ONE'S ADVANTAGE

Like Edward's decision to marry Elizabeth, Warwick's betrayal of Edward and change of allegiance to Margaret and Henry has not been very well thought of by most critics. Even Saccio describes the historical change as a "strange new alliance" (*Shakespeare's English Kings* 146). Cox and Rasmussen note that Warwick's shift in allegiance is too "precipitate" and that his "resentment against York surfaces so quickly as to be almost farcical" and "far-fetched" (Arden *3HVI* 291-92). Some of Warwick's justifications for switching allegiance are seen as being so odd that they are "routinely cut in modern productions" (Martin, Oxford *3HVI* 254). Martin also discusses the way in which Warwick's actions in this scene have been seen as being comic or melodramatic:

The abruptness of Warwick's change often elicits laughter from theatre audiences, and some actors make Warwick conscious of the moment's irony. In the 1963-4 and 1987 ESC productions, however, Warwick was seriously vexed and switched sides angrily. (Oxford *3HVI* 255)<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Tacitus tells of Vitellius' description of his friendship with Asiaticus to Claudius—a description that includes all of Asiaticus' fine acts on behalf of Vitellius, Claudius, and Rome—giving one the false impression that he is begging for Asiaticus' life. Instead, Vitellius is actually asking for Asiaticus' death: *sed consultanti super absolute Asiatici fleus Vitellius, commemorate uetustate amicitiae, utque Antoniam principis matrem partier obseruauissent, dein percursis Asiatici in rem publicam officiis recentique aduersus Britanniam militia quaeque alia conciliandae misericordiae uidebantur, liberum mortis arbitrium ei permisit.* (*Annales* 11.3.1)

<sup>123</sup> Martin also notes the difficulties performers have had in dealing with Margaret's own switch in allegiance:

In the 1983 BBC production, Julia Foster stood open-mouthed, needing a moment to quell her astonishment and find new words before responding. In 1963-4 Peggy Ashcroft paused for several seconds, frowning over Brewster Mason's (clearly reluctant) offer. She then stretched out her arm to one side, forcing Warwick to kneel and kiss her hand. The obvious suspicion on both sides—Warwick glanced up sceptically at 'love'—indicated this was purely a pact of convenience. (Oxford *3HVI* 255)



Martin notes that productions seem to have difficulty with the scene's believability:

The pivotal moment—to which audiences usually react with sniggers or outright laughter—in this [Hall and Barton's *Edward IV*] and other modern productions comes when Warwick publicly shifts his allegiance. In the 1992 Ashland production even the Lancastrians were startled by Derrick Lee Weeden's volte-face. Before announcing, 'I here renounce him and return to Henry' (194), Weeden paused to look silently at the audience, waiting for them to read his thoughts and relish his knowing hypocrisy. For his part, Brewster Mason [in Hall and Barton's *Edward IV*] did not even try to pretend to hide his disgust when Margaret forced him to kneel and kiss her hand. (Oxford *3HVI* 80)

Is the scene as hard to believe as so many critics and performers feel? If one takes Shakespeare's dramatic handling of strategic alliances into consideration, there is less that is farcical or far-fetched about the shifts in allegiance that occur within this scene; in many ways, it is one of the greatest examples of strategic power-brokering that we have in the first tetralogy. It is "a superb exercise in the acrobatics of diplomacy" (Brockbank, "The Frame of Disorder" 60), one that anticipates the sudden making and breaking of alliances that occur in later plays such as *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*.

The scene of Warwick's dramatic *volte-face* opens with Margaret in the French court of Louis XI, asking for help to topple Edward IV from the throne and place Henry VI back onto it. Louis' opening speech to Margaret before she makes her request for aid has a particular tone: "Be plain, Queen Margaret, and tell thy grief: / It shall be eased, if France can yield relief" (*3HVI* 3.3.19-20). Of special interest is the use of the words "if" and "yield," for the former implies that Louis may or may not help according to his interests, while the latter stresses the fact that Louis is the one who has the power to give help as he sees fit. As Henry had predicted, she gives a wonderful description of her interpretation of what has happened, an interpretation that casts all blame on her enemies and none on herself and the Lancastrians (*3HVI* 3.1.28-41). The scene is set up in a very

interesting way dramatically, for Margaret's rhetorical appeal is set up against Louis' attempt to arrive at the best strategic decision for himself. In what will become a highly metadramatic moment, Louis will act as a kind of judging audience to first Margaret's and then Warwick's appeals for an alliance. However, although he seems sympathetic to her plight, Louis shows no indication that he is going to rush out to save the Lancastrians. Even his declaration that he needs time to "bethink a means to break [the storm] off" suggests that he, as a good strategist, wants to wait and see before committing himself (3*HVI* 3.3.39). Cox and Rasmussen note that "bethink" means to "devise, plan" and "contrive," and that is exactly what Louis is doing (Arden 3*HVI* 283).<sup>124</sup> Margaret presses him to move fast, for "the more we stay, the stronger grows our foe," but Louis calmly resists this push: "the more I stay, the more I'll succour thee" (3*HVI* 3.3.40-41). As Jones notes, the characters in this scene "orate with "blandly unblushing official eloquence, scarcely bothering to cover up their true political motives" (*Origins* 191). It may not be bland, but it certainly is unblushing. Margaret's "we" and "our" suggest that she may already see them as allies bound together, but Louis' "I" suggests that he is not as willing to go that far. While Louis may not have appeared on the stage until this scene, Shakespeare asks his audience to watch him as he tries to make a strategic decision based on what is being presented to him onstage. One must look at this from Louis' position. As Henry had said, Margaret is here not to give help but to ask for it. What advantage is there for Louis to spend money and risk troops to advance Margaret's interests? Would it not be more profitable for him to throw in his lot with those who won rather than lose everything trying to support a side that has lost? If there is little

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<sup>124</sup> Louis XI was known both as the Spider King and Louis the Prudent, the former because of his numerous machinations (Seward, *The Wars of the Roses* 155) and the latter because he never committed himself unless it was in his interests to do so (Seward, *The Wars of the Roses* 170).

advantage to Louis supporting the defeated Lancastrians, there is no advantage to his rushing out to fight the Yorkists on their behalf.

It must be stressed that these people are not friends. They are allies, and they remain so only as long as their interests and objectives cohere. The problem for Margaret is that Louis does not feel such a cohesion in interests. There is much to be gained if Margaret can convince Louis to help the Lancastrians as soon as possible, for the longer they wait the worse Henry's position becomes. However, the exact opposite is true for Louis, for the longer he waits, the more he gets to see how things really are before committing himself. If it looks like the Lancastrians have a real chance, he would help her, but if the Yorkists have already secured their position, why should he commit money and troops to fighting them? For Louis, it makes perfect strategic sense to wait and see.

Louis is not the only one who is coolly calculating the advantages and disadvantages of supporting this potential ally. Margaret may speak as though Louis is a friend of the Lancastrians, but she is more than happy to risk his money and troops if it serves her interests. Margaret can accuse Louis of not being a good ally, but she is not being a good one either. As Henry predicts, Margaret's rhetorical polish will stand for little in the face of what Warwick and the Yorkists have to offer:

Ay, but she's come to beg, Warwick to give:  
She on his left side, craving aid for Henry;  
He on his right, asking a wife for Edward.  
She weeps, and says her Henry is deposed;  
He smiles, and says his Edward is installed:  
That she, poor wretch, for grief can speak no more,  
Whiles Warwick tells his title, smooths the wrong,  
Inferreth arguments of mighty strength,  
And in conclusion wins the King from her  
With promise of his sister, and what else,  
To strengthen and support King Edward's place.  
O Margaret, thus 'twill be; and thou, poor soul,

Art then forsaken, as thou went'st forlorn. (*3HVI* 3.1.42-54)

Henry, the supposedly naïve and politically inexperienced saint king, hits the nail right on the head here, for he understands completely just what is at play: interests and objectives. Margaret has come to beg, while Warwick has come to give. Edward is in power and secure, so placing Henry on the throne would require a great deal of effort. Edward can offer support in the form of marriage, an alliance that would be greatly beneficial to both. Margaret, on the other hand, went “forlorn” to Louis’ court, which Martin interprets as “abandoned; in a miserable condition” and “doomed to destruction” (Oxford *3HVI* 230). The word also means to be deprived of, both emotionally and materially, and it is the latter which will probably determine Louis’ decision more than anything else. And so, whatever Louis’ sympathies, it is simply not in his interest to support a weak ally.<sup>125</sup> Instead, it makes far better sense to cast this ally aside and seek a new one.

As if to emphasize this strategic option, Shakespeare now has Warwick enter the scene. Whatever Margaret’s protestations, Louis welcomes him as “brave Warwick” and treats him as a friend (*3HVI* 3.3.46). He also asks why Warwick has come to France, which suggests that, regardless of what Margaret has just said, Louis is interested in what Warwick has to say and offer. Perhaps not surprisingly, Margaret disapproves of Louis’ friendliness. Martin suggests that this disapproval is “possibly delivered wholly or partly to herself, or to Prince Edward” (Oxford *3HVI* 248), while Cox and Rasmussen believe

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<sup>125</sup> Roe Argues that Machiavelli believes that such lack of fidelity is often due to weakness: Machiavelli is arguing that it is dangerous to trust men, as they will break the oath of loyalty as soon as look at it if they fear for their personal concerns or safety. What causes them to do this is something fundamental or inherent in their nature, a kind of weakness, which renders their behavior abject. (“Shakespeare and Machiavelli” 363) Although this is true, Machiavelli also counsels princes to know when and how to break alliances, so it is clear that weakness was not the only thing that influenced infidelity. Just as it is strategic to know how to acquire allies, it is equally so to know when to dispense with them.

that “her plaintive remarks may be asides, but if they are not, everyone’s determination to ignore them would be a potent rejection of her and an effective indication of her helplessness” (Arden *3HVI* 283). The latter interpretation is preferable, for it would indicate that, however much they may speak of friendship, these characters will not enter into alliances that are against their interests. The audience is being made privy to all of the various considerations that come to play when trying to plan for the best possible alliance. Louis sits before the two claimants, and the audience takes part in his decision-making process. Warwick is more powerful than Margaret, and ignoring her in this way would help to dramatically underscore this. In this sense, Margaret is wrong to decry the fact that Warwick “moves both wind and tide” for it is merely reminding everyone that Warwick is the one who should be listened to in this room, not Margaret herself (*3HVI* 3.3.48). This position of strength allows Warwick to “crave a league of amity” which is very different from Margaret’s request for aid (*3HVI* 3.3.54). As Wilders notes, “Lewis’s reaction is . . . to place his bet on the horse most likely to win” (105). Edward can actually help Louis, and Warwick shows this by proposing “a lucrative marriage” between Edward and Lady Bona (Jones, *Origins* 191). Referring to Edward as “King of Albion” in order to reiterate how secure he is on the throne, Warwick proposes an alliance that will help both Edward and Louis, an alliance that Margaret’s protestations can do nothing to counter (*3HVI* 3.3.49). Margaret immediately sees that such a match would be utterly disastrous for the Lancastrians: “if that go forward, Henry’s hope is done” (*3HVI* 3.3.58). This match would destroy any hope Henry has of securing French aid, and so it would completely dash any hope the Lancastrians may have of getting his throne back.

However, just as both Louis and Margaret are looking to further their own interests, so too is Warwick. Warwick's key role in this match can only strengthen his position of power over Edward, something that may explain why Edward has already betrayed Warwick. It is worth asking whether or not Edward is right to betray Warwick. In one sense it is a horrible blunder, for it ends the alliance with France and even results in Edward temporarily losing his throne. However, what would be the point of Edward having a more secure throne if he is entirely in the debt of his ally Warwick? That would simply make Edward another Henry, a king in name only who is entirely under the thumb of his supposed allies. Machiavelli argues that "a prince who acquires it [the state] with the help of the nobility . . . is surrounded by men who consider themselves his equals and whom he therefore cannot command or govern as he pleases" (*P* 9.38). He also argues that "a prince should avoid forming an alliance with a power stronger than himself merely in order to attack another . . . if that power wins, he will end up its prisoner, and princes must do their utmost to avoid ending up in another's power" (*P* 21.86). These politic considerations are directly analogous to Edward's predicament. If Edward had waited longer, it would have been more difficult to challenge Warwick. Warwick says that he is "commanded" to bring about the match, but we have already seen that Warwick is the one who commanded that it take place (*3HVI* 3.3.60). Warwick's wooing of Lady Bona on Edward's behalf (*3HVI* 3.3.61-64) recalls Suffolk's wooing of Margaret (*1HVI* 5.2.65-151). Margaret actually alludes to this when she says that Warwick's "demand / Springs not from Edward's well-meant honest love / But from deceit, bred by necessity: / For how can tyrants safely govern home / Unless abroad they purchase great alliance?" (*3HVI* 3.3.66-70). She says that Warwick "demand[s]" Louis in an attempt to hurt their

relationship, but she also alludes to the fact that Warwick has “demand[ed]” that Edward go through with this match.

Margaret’s reference to purchasing alliances is important, for it reiterates the fact that alliances are not friendships but partnerships that are used to one’s advantage. This is made even clearer as both Margaret and Warwick accuse each other of having been an enemy of the French. Louis’ role is essential in this scene, for his weighing of the different options on the stage parallels our own witnessing of such bargaining and all that it entails. Both sides deny the accusations in verbose ways. They were enemies then, but now things have changed. In keeping with this, Louis shows that he cares little for the disputes of the past; what matters now is how they are going to help him. He completely ignores all of their accusations and, like any good politician trying to weigh up the benefits or dangers of a potential ally, calls on Warwick to “stand aside” for “further conference” (*3HVI* 3.3.110-11). The audience now sees the two potential allies off to the side of the stage speaking conspiratorially, an action that suggests just how it is that alliances are formed and broken. As Jones notes, at this point “Margaret’s case seems hopeless” (*Origins* 191). The questions that trouble Louis are not whether Edward is the legitimate king but whether his footing is secure: “is Edward your true king? For I were loath / To link with him that were not lawful chosen” (*3HVI* 3.3.114-15). This also indicates the importance of Warwick’s support, for so long as Warwick supports Edward, no one can knock him from the throne. Upon hearing that Edward is secure, Louis says that he will put aside all “dissembling,” which suggests that he has been not entirely honest with either Margaret or Warwick (*3HVI* 3.3.119). He wanted both of them to

think that he was on their side, but now that he is satisfied he is willing to give his support to the Yorkists.

Louis' promise of support seems quite hypocritical for, despite the fact that he has also just promised to help Margaret, he now asks her to "draw near . . . and be a witness / That Bona shall be wife to the English King" (*3HVI* 3.3.138-39). Margaret accuses Warwick of deceit when it comes to winning over Louis, when, in reality, it is not entirely deceitful; it is largely the fact that the alliance with Edward and Warwick is more profitable for Louis than any alliance with Margaret. In fact, Warwick has been quite honest about what he has to offer Louis by way of an alliance, while Margaret, by whitewashing how the Lancastrians have fallen and by pretending that Henry has more support than he actually does, is actually being far more deceitful. If Louis had simply just listened to Margaret and had thrown his weight behind her, his forces would probably be taking the brunt of the assault and he would have been ruined. If alliances are based on friendship, Louis would be deceitful, but he is not if one sees allies not as friends but as partners for furthering one's interests. This becomes clear when Margaret accuses Louis of no longer being Henry's friend: "before [Warwick's] coming, Lewis was Henry's friend" (*3HVI* 3.3.143). Louis insists that he still is Henry's friend, but alliances are not friendships:

And still is friend to him and Margaret.  
But if your title to the crown be weak,  
As may appear by Edward's good success,  
Then 'tis but reason that I be released  
From giving aid, which late I promised.  
Yet shall you have all kindness at my hand.  
That your estate requires and mine can yield. (*3HVI* 3.3.144-50)



This is probably the best description in the entire first tetralogy of the real nature of alliances, and it is one of the main reasons why this scene is so illustrative of this concept. Louis is still the friend of Henry and Margaret, but it is not practical to support them in their bid to take back the throne and “’tis but reason” that Warwick is the more obvious candidate for an alliance. They have nothing to offer him, while Warwick and Edward can offer much. Louis will continue to protect Margaret, but ultimately her status at his court will be determined by her lack of power. The fact that alliances are based on having similar interests and objects rather than on actual friendship is underscored by Warwick, who still insists that Margaret not stay at Louis’ court (*3HVI* 3.3.153-55). This shows that Warwick understands that his new alliance with Louis is an alliance of convenience, and that Louis might change sides to Margaret once again if the time is right. Margaret understands this too, and so she refuses to leave and promises to do all that she can to break this alliance up: “I will not hence till with my talk and tears, / Both full of truth, I make King Lewis behold / Thy sly conveyance and thy lord’s false love” (*3HVI* 3.3.158-60). Warwick’s uneasiness is justified.

The scene that follows is anything but farcical or far-fetched, for it clearly shows just what it is that determines the making and breaking of alliances. The entry of the post giving letters to Warwick, Margaret, and Louis is successful, for the letters tell Warwick and Margaret of Edward’s marriage to Elizabeth while the one to Louis asks him to be patient. The audience has just been shown the potential effectiveness of deceit as a politic stratagem, for Edward’s letter could have bought him time. However, in keeping with Shakespeare’s exploration of both the successes and perils of strategy, here the audience sees just what happens when a deceitful stratagem backfires on the strategist.

Louis is understandably quite angry, for he feels that Warwick has been deceiving him throughout this entire scene: “is this th’alliance that [Edward] seeks with France? / Dare he presume to scorn us in this manner?” (3HVI 3.3.176-77). In reality Warwick has been tricked just as much as Louis has. In one sense, the suddenness of all of this makes the following believable, and there is no reason why performers and critics need to see the scene as ridiculous. When comparing it to the historical event, John Julius Norwich notes that the dramatic scene is actually quite realistic: “one is left with the conviction that, whatever liberties Shakespeare might take with strict historical truth, in the essentials he was almost invariably right” (312).<sup>126</sup>

Whether he meant to or not, Edward has put Warwick in a horrible position, and Margaret does her best to capitalize on his discomfort: “I told your majesty as much before: / This proveth Edward’s love and Warwick’s honesty” (3HVI 3.3.179-80). One could ask whether Edward meant for Warwick to find out about this the way that he has. The letter that informs Warwick of the match is from his brother Montague, so it is quite possible that Edward meant to deceive Warwick for at least a little while longer. However, something could also be said for the way that Edward has publicly humiliated his ally and has shown everyone that Edward will not be ruled by Warwick or anyone else. As Saccio notes, the historical Edward felt that Warwick,

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<sup>126</sup> For example, in *The Discourses* Machiavelli cites the example of Mucianus:

With great skill Antonius Primus destroyed two of Vitellus’s armies and occupied Rome, so that when Mucianus, who had been sent by Vespasian, arrived in Rome, he found that every difficulty had been overcome. Yet Antonius’ reward was that Mucianus immediately stripped him of command of the army, and little by little took away any authority he had in Rome. Antonius turned to Vespasian, who was still in Asia, but he stripped Antonius of all military rank, and Antonius later died in quite desperate circumstances. The histories are filled with examples. (*D* 1.29.178)

Such is the gratitude of princes, or perhaps of people in general, as Craig notes:

most people find unpleasant the feeling of being indebted (implying as it does an inferiority of status, which offends their pride), they are predisposed to depreciate the motivations of their benefactors. They would prefer to presume that all generosity, all altruism, is somehow self-serving, hence self-rewarding. (153)

the man who had been so necessary to the ambitions of the house of York seemed no longer necessary, or even important, once those ambitions had been realized. (*Shakespeare's English Kings* 145)

Perhaps the dramatic Edward feels that this was the best way to act under the circumstances. Breaking the alliance in this way may seem rash or even mad, but there does seem to be some method to it. Machiavelli argues that “the suspicion in princes [of successful generals] is so natural that they cannot avoid it” (*D* 1.29.178-79), but Shakespeare suggests that such suspicions, rather than being mere paranoia, have their own layers of ambiguity.

It is not necessary to charge Warwick with “knowing hypocrisy” when he protests that he knew nothing of the match between Edward and Elizabeth (Martin, Oxford *3HVI* 80). The scene as it unfolds on the stage need not support such a reading. Warwick’s confusion, anger, and public shame really makes the quickness of the dramatic *volte-face* quite believable: “no more my King, for he dishonours me” (*3HVI* 3.3.184). Although Holinshed does not provide us with the same moment of dramatic reversal given to us by Shakespeare, he does write that the historical Warwick had been publicly shamed by Edward’s betrayal:

when the earle of Warwicke had knowledge by letters sent to him out of England from his trustie friends, that king Edward had gotten him a new wife, he was not a little troubled in his mind; for that he tooke it his credence thereby was greatlie minished, and his honour much stained, namelie, in the court of France; for that it might be iudged he came rather like as espiall, to moouue a thing neuer minded, and to treat a marriage determined before not to take effect. Surelie he thought himselfe euill vsed, that when he had brought the matter to his purposed intent and wished conclusion, then to haue it quaille on his part; so as all men might thinke at the least wise, that his prince made small account of him, to send him on such a sleuelesse errand. (qtd. in Nicoll and Nicoll 131)<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Saccio also points out that the historical Warwick was “shocked and chagrined” over Edward’s marriage (*Shakespeare's English Kings* 143). For more on this, see Kendall, *Warwick the Kingmaker* (164-68).

Not only has Warwick been sent on a useless errand, but he has been made to look like Edward's errand boy, someone Edward has not even thought enough of to keep fully informed of his decisions. Cox and Rasmussen describe it as "precipitate" and "impulsive" (Arden *3HVI* 291), but that does not reduce the scene's believability; if anything, it increases it. Jones argues that while the betrayal seems "almost farcically glib," it is "all too believably true to the life of power-politics" (*Origins* 191). Warwick has shown himself to be quite astute politically, and he is sharp enough to know when he has been tricked. In one sense, how much time does he need before making the decision to switch sides? Warwick does not really have too many options left open to him. In an analogous scenario, Machiavelli argues that

the general will not be able to escape the sting of the prince's ingratitude, I would advise the general to do one of two things: Either leave the army immediately after his victory and put himself in the hands of the prince, being careful not to commit any insolent or ambitious act, so that the prince has no reason to suspect him and every reason to reward him, or at least not harm him; or, if this does not seem the prudent thing to do, energetically take the opposite course, and consider all the means by which he can make what he acquired in battle his own, and not his prince's. He must secure the goodwill of soldier and subject, forge new alliances with neighbors, occupy the fortresses with his men, bribe the commanders of his army, and take measures against those he cannot bribe. By these means he must punish the prince for the ingratitude the prince would otherwise show him. There are no other alternatives . . . . (*D* 1.30.181-82)<sup>128</sup>

What are Warwick's alternatives? He is clearly not willing to give up his power, and so he begins to explore other options. As Norwich notes of the historical Warwick: "for a man like Warwick such a situation was intolerable; before long he began looking around

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<sup>128</sup> In a similar vein, Guicciardini argues that one who has helped another achieve power will eventually begin to feel a strong sense of ingratitude. This is because the prince knows the man's abilities and strengths, and so he fears that the man may take back the power he gave:

Si vede per esperienza che quasi tutti quelli che sono stati ministri a acquistare grandezza a altri, in progresso di tempo restano seco in poco grado: la ragione si dice essere, perché avendo cognosciuto la sufficienza sua, teme non possa uno giorno torgli quello che gli ha dato. (*Ricordi* C.52)

for other friends” (292). Emotion plays an important role, but this is less a “personal vendetta[.]” (Leggatt, *Shakespeare’s Political Drama* 16) than an act of political survival. Warwick’s alliance with Edward is an alliance of convenience, so it makes perfect sense that he should move on as quickly as possible to try and stay in the game.

If one thinks of this as a friendship, then the shift seems unbelievable, but if one thinks about it as a political alliance it is actually quite believable, and its dramatic suddenness heightens its credibility. Many critics have mocked the reasons that Warwick suddenly comes up with for turning on Edward: “Warwick’s resentment against York surfaces so quickly as to be almost farcical, perhaps emphasizing the sorry state into which public life has declined” (Cox and Rasmussen, Arden *3HVI* 292). But although the reasons he gives may seem dubious, this does not make them farcical. Likewise, Billings sees Warwick’s defection as a strong example of “the noble or the great undermined by the mean, the ignoble, and unheroic” (49). While the action may be mean, ignoble, and unheroic, one should not place the action in contrast with the noble or great, for such things do not appear often enough in the world of these plays. These plays are governed by politic stratagems, and Warwick’s actions are entirely in keeping with such a situation. Warwick’s sudden claims are strategic, for he is publicly stressing that Edward is the one who has acted dishonorably. Even if the charges that Warwick lays at Edward’s door—the death of his father, the abuse done to Warwick’s niece, even the injuries done to Henry VI and Lady Bona (*3HVI* 3.3.186-98)—were true, they were clearly not enough to keep Warwick from being Edward’s ally before. However, such charges are exactly what one would make in order to justify a change in allegiance, for they represent “the expedience of opportunistic memory” (Knowles, *Arguments with*

*History* 43).<sup>129</sup> Politically, Warwick's denunciation of Edward is sound, for it is not in his interest to support him any longer. Knowles sees Warwick's reversal as an act that "seem[s] quite preposterous were it not for the fact that it has now become virtually the accepted norm" (*Arguments with History* 43). However, this is not a slide into brazen betrayal but a realistic comment on the political climate of the first tetralogy as a whole.

Who then should Warwick look to as an ally? It actually makes perfect sense that he should now throw in his lot with the Lancastrians. This is not an exchange of friendship, but merely "a realignment of forces" based on mutual interest (Jones, *Origins* 191). One of the factors that ruined the alliance between Edward and Warwick was the fact that the former was much stronger and much less malleable than the latter believed him to be, and so when the former stood up to him, the latter saw his power in jeopardy.<sup>130</sup> This will not be the case with Henry, who has shown himself to be weak and malleable. Edward and Henry offer two very different kinds of kings for Warwick to throw his weight behind, and it is notable that he decides to throw his weight behind a king that he believes will be much easier to keep in line. With his reference to "replant[ing] Henry to his former state" (*3HVI* 3.3.198), Warwick clearly wants to play the same role in this new alliance as he played in his alliance with the Yorkists: the dominant one. Despite the fact that both Margaret and Warwick use the word "friend" to describe their new alliance (*3HVI* 3.3.201-02), Warwick simply realizes that he may have an even better chance politically with the Lancastrians than he had with the Yorkists. As Saccio notes, this is in keeping with the historical world the first tetralogy depicts:

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<sup>129</sup> Shakespeare would later explore a similar kind of opportunistic memory in *1 Henry IV*, as the rebels begin to lament their earlier support for Henry IV (*IHIV* 1.3.156-85).

<sup>130</sup> In *The Prince* Machiavelli argues that "he who helps another man to power is setting himself up for ruin, because that power has been brought about by either diligence or force, both of which are suspect to the man who has newly become powerful" (*P* 3.16). He also argues that the prince is also in danger from those who helped him to power (*P* 4.18), for neither can trust the other.

“people were not aligned in clearcut parties. Rather they jockeyed for power, striking opportunistic and temporary alliances while the situation gradually deteriorated around them” (*Shakespeare’s English Kings* 122). For many of the characters, there are no friends; there are only allies to help secure his power (Prior 294). Shakespeare uses these characters to explore how such alliances are formed and how they ultimately fall apart.

Nevertheless, many still have issues with this scene. Even though this is not a change of heart but a change in allegiance, performers often worry that the audience will not believe the change in Warwick’s heart (Martin, Oxford *3HVI* 80). Likewise, Margaret’s decision to accept Warwick as an ally is also motivated by politics and not, as she puts it, for “love” (*3HVI* 3.3.199). On the stage such words seem to be deliberately hollow. In keeping with this, Warwick is Henry’s friend “if King Lewis vouchsafe to furnish” him with troops so that he can land on England’s coast and unseat Edward (*3HVI* 3.3.203-06). Warwick is Henry’s friend so long as Louis will help them, and the friendship can only be consolidated by Henry getting the crown back and proving himself to be a valuable ally. Warwick thus hopes to rule over Henry, but he is also hedging his bets with another alliance. He says that he has been receiving letters from Clarence complaining about Edward’s actions (*3HVI* 3.3.208-11). Berry argues that Clarence betrays Edward because of “injured pride,” but this is not convincing (*Patterns of Decay* 81). Despite the way he has often been performed as being entirely blameless in *Richard III*, Clarence is as duplicitous as the rest, but they also show that Warwick is trying to play all sides.<sup>131</sup> He is basically supporting both Henry and Clarence, even though their

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<sup>131</sup> In keeping with this, Siemon notes the claim made by “an 1870 commentator” who “predicted that putting the play in the tetralogy context would expose ‘the guile and selfishness, second only to [Richard’s]

claims to the throne are at odds with each other. Cox and Rasmussen argue that Shakespeare has made Warwick less deceiving in this play than he was historically: “Shakespeare omits [Edward] Hall’s compelling description of Warwick’s dissimulation and indirection, preferring another character for Warwick entirely” (Arden *3HVI* 296). Given Warwick’s actions in this scene and in the scenes that follow, this is not entirely true. Warwick shows that he does not have any friendship with either side; he is merely trying to find a way to secure his position and set himself up as the most powerful man in the realm. If either Henry or Clarence wins, both sides will be completely in Warwick’s debt. However, he should remember how Edward behaved the moment he felt that he no longer needed Warwick’s friendship.

Louis’ actions seem to reinforce this cynical view of alliances, for although he had previously supported Edward over Henry, he now completely renounces his support in light of Warwick’s shift in allegiance. Despite ignoring her moments before, Louis is also willing to make Margaret an ally once again: “therefore, at last, I firmly am resolved / You shall have aid” (*3HVI* 3.3.219-20). This may seem like hypocritical equivocation, but in reality such shifts merely reinforce the sense that none of this is personal; it is simply politics (Hale, *Renaissance* 33). The use of “at last” stresses the fact that Louis has been waiting to see who will come out on top before making his move. Warwick’s power is stressed at several points throughout this play, and so characters often wait to

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own, by which he was surrounded, and the dreadful circumstances (the consequences of civil war and dynastic ambition) which alone made such a character and such actions possible” (Arden *RIII* 108). I agree, and thus I disagree with Richard’s estimation of his brother as “simple, plain Clarence” (*RIII* 1.1.118). Richard is fascinating, but he alone does not make the play *Richard III*, let alone the whole first tetralogy. In any case, Richard’s ingeniously duplicitous ways of defeating his enemies are somewhat diminished if one merely sees his opponents as defenseless saps. The entire play becomes much more interesting and engaging if Richard is getting the better of genuine opponents who actually stand some chance of fighting back. Only by looking at the tetralogy as a whole and not merely as an extended precursor to the final play does such a dynamic engagement become possible.



see what Warwick will do before throwing their weight behind any particular candidate. This is made clear by the fact that, despite having just promised his daughter to Edward moments before, Louis now feels free to mock “false Edward, thy supposed king” (3HVI 3.3.223). Louis supported Edward’s claim to the throne when Warwick did, but now that he does not Louis does not either.

Louis truly is the Spider King (Greene, *The 48 Laws* 85), for even now he moves to make sure that his alliance with Warwick and Margaret will benefit his interests and not put him in danger. He tells Warwick about how he will deploy his troops:

But, Warwick,  
Thou and Oxford with five thousand men  
Shall cross the seas and bid false Edward battle;  
And, as occasion serves, this noble Queen  
And Prince shall follow with fresh supply. (3HVI 3.3.233-37)

Louis promises to send a “fresh supply” of troops “as occasion serves,” or after Warwick and Oxford have already done most of the fighting themselves. He only promises help to transport the troops, which would cost him very little if the invasion is not a success (3HVI 3.3.251-53). Louis might be willing to call Edward false here on the stage, but when it comes to battle he will wait to see if Warwick can actually supplant him before he sends Margaret and the rest of his troops.<sup>132</sup> Louis also demands another test of loyalty from Warwick: “what pledge have we of thy firm loyalty?” (3HVI 3.3.239). This is what makes the proposed marriage between Prince Edward and Warwick’s daughter so interesting. Clarence is also married to one of his daughters, so both Louis and Warwick are clearly hedging their bets here.<sup>133</sup> Louis can now feel secure that the alliance between

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<sup>132</sup> This is just what Louis does, for news does not arrive that Margaret is arriving with the rest of the army until after Edward has been captured by Warwick in 4.3.

<sup>133</sup> As Hodgson argues, the proposal is fruitful to the Lancastrians while being harmful to the Yorkists:

Warwick and Margaret is on firmer ground, while Warwick has added yet another opportunity to control the crown from behind the scenes. The question is how Clarence will react when he learns of a marriage that so alters his own power.

The fact that alliances can change so quickly once personal interest is involved is underscored by Warwick's words to the audience at the end of the scene when he finds himself alone on the stage: "I came from Edward as ambassador, / But I return his sworn and mortal foe" (3*HVI* 3.3.256-57). It is interesting that he says that the "matter of marriage was the charge he gave me" (3*HVI* 3.3.258), as though Edward had betrayed him when he forsook Lady Bona. The matter of marriage was Warwick's own idea, and it was his idea because this kind of an alliance would increase his power over both Edward and England. Clearly Warwick feels duped by Edward. As Saccio notes, the historical Warwick saw Edward's actions as "a slap in the face" (*Shakespeare's English Kings* 143). Warwick cannot seem to understand why Edward would want to undo this power, even though he now openly declares that it is his power that has set Edward up, so it will be his power that knocks Edward down. He was in an alliance with Edward because he thought it would place him in a good position politically, and when that proved not to be the case he switched his allegiance to an even weaker king.<sup>134</sup> Saccio argues that this scene is "simplified by the omission of much [of the] international diplomacy," such as the role of Burgundy, that actually contributed to Warwick's

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Warwick's defection not only "corrects" Lancastrian family relations but fractures York family unity: whereas one of his daughters "fathers" him to Lancaster, the other draws Clarence, King Edward's brother, to Margaret's camp. (*The End Crowns All* 70)

<sup>134</sup> This often happens in Shakespeare's later English History plays, as Knowles notes in regards to the second tetralogy in general and *I Henry IV* in particular: "at every stage the Percies actively assisted Henry in his assumption of regal authority and his deposition of Richard. Hotspur and Worcester are at Shrewsbury not because of Henry's oath-breaking, but to make their bid for power in a dynastic struggle between feudal war lords" (*Arguments with History* 75). Such a self-interested change in allegiance was first dramatically explored by Shakespeare in the first tetralogy.

betrayal (*Shakespeare's English Kings* 150). This is true, but that dramatic simplification highlights the political truths that are revealed in this scene, particularly as they relate to the nature of strategic alliances. In the end Warwick is his own ally, and his power makes him believe that he can move the other players around in a way that will enhance his position. Politic strategists such as Machiavelli argue that there are no friends in politics, and for the moment Warwick seems to operate on the same principle. However, Shakespeare's drama will go on to test even this hard-nosed maxim.

### 4.3 THE PERILS OF MAKING AND BREAKING ALLIANCES

As strange as some may find Warwick's *volte-face*, Edward certainly does not find it so. Whatever his bravado when he hears of Warwick's betrayal—"Ha! Doest the traitor breathe out so proud words?" (3*HVI* 4.1.112)—he is quick to seize upon its implications: "but say, is Warwick friends with Margaret?" (3*HVI* 4.1.115). Even if he did mean to end the alliance with Warwick, Edward probably did not want his former ally to join with the Lancastrians. Just as a marriage broke up the alliance between Edward and Warwick, so now does a marriage seal the one between the new allies: "they are so linked in friendship / That young Prince Edward marries Warwick's daughter" (3*HVI* 4.1.116-17). As mentioned above, there is no actual friendship between Warwick and Margaret; it is merely an alliance of convenience created to topple Edward from the throne. This point is emphasized by the way Edward is so quick to grasp the enormity of what has happened. As Jones notes, the second half of 3 *Henry VI* is governed by this note of treachery:

For this second movement of the play . . . Shakespeare constructs a sequence whose chief quality is a giddy instability. Its characters are for the most part constant only in their struggle for power. Otherwise, violent and unprincipled, they change as their interest changes, breaking

oaths, repudiating treaties, betraying friends, and re-forming into newly constituted groups. (*Origins* 189)

If Warwick could betray Edward in this way, who might be next? Foakes argues that there is little surprise when Clarence “change[s] sides,” for there is little advantage to being Edward’s ally at the moment (50). Edward is not the only one to grasp this, for Clarence does as well (*3HVI* 4.1.118-23). Jones notes that “if in the earlier sequence [of *3 Henry VI*] the typical figure was the butcher Clifford, here it is the turncoat Clarence” (*Origins* 189). Warwick has already suggested that he and Clarence were communicating secretly, but the news of this alliance clearly gives Clarence the confidence to act.<sup>135</sup>

Emotions and family ties have little to do with Clarence’s decision to betray his “brother king” (*3HVI* 4.1.119); Clarence simply decides to throw his weight behind the one who looks most likely to win.<sup>136</sup> Manheim contrasts Richard’s deceitfulness with Clarence’s by arguing that the former stays with Edward because he knows better than the latter “on which side to put his money” (86). This may be true, but such a fault on Clarence’s part thus becomes a fault in strategy, not a lack of duplicity or a willingness to get one’s hands dirty. Unlike the way that he has been seen by Spivack and others (400), Clarence is clearly not simply just one of Richard’s “dupes.”

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<sup>135</sup> Holinshed writes that the historical Warwick sought a strategic alliance with Clarence in order to cover his bets:

The earle of Warwicke, being a . . . far casting prince, perceiued somewhat in the duke of Clarence, whereby he judged that he bare no great will towards the king his brother; and therevpon, feeling his minde by such talke as he of purpose minstred, vnderstood how he was bent, and so wan him to his purpose. (qtd. in Nicoll and Nicoll 132)

<sup>136</sup> That is not to say that family bonds play no role in these plays. Quite the contrary. As Chapter 6 will argue, family bonds are actually very important and manage to add a dimension to these strategic machinations that Machiavelli seems to have under-valued. Machiavelli’s political landscape may not allow “loyalty to a family” to “impede ambition” (D’Amico 171), but things are far more complex in Shakespeare’s plays. However, whether Clarence’s ties to his family are actually heartfelt is another question entirely. Certainly that is the way that he has been played on the stage in a number of productions, but his actual lines in both *3 Henry VI* and even *Richard III* do not seem to warrant such an interpretation. For more on the issue of family bonds in *3 Henry VI*, see Kathryn Schwarz, “Vexed Relations” (348).

However, there is a problem here. Clarence's decision to marry "Warwick's other daughter" may make strategic sense, but the use of the word "other" already suggests just how precarious this new alliance will be (*3HVI* 4.1.120). The historical Clarence wanted to be king (Norwich 292), but the same news that enticed him to make his bid also contained the very thing that makes such a bid impossible: the marriage between Warwick's daughter and Prince Edward. Holinshed notes that this contradiction was implicit in the historical Warwick's deal with the Lancastrians:

The crownes of the realms of England and France were by authoritie of the same parlement intailed to king Henrie the sixt, and to his heires male; and, for default of such heiress, to remaine to George duke of Clarence, & to his heries male. (qtd. in Nicoll and Nicoll 133)

One should pay particular attention to the word "default." Clarence is more than willing to fight for himself, but how is he willing to fight for Prince Edward? Therein lies the basic contradiction of Warwick's strategy of alliances: he has allied himself with too many people and will soon find himself pulled in too many different directions. Unlike Henry V, Warwick will not be able to "keep both sides uncertain and thus loyal to him" (Manheim 168). Machiavelli praises the way that Castruccio furthered his agenda by making as many alliances as he could:

When Castruccio returned to Lucca he found that his standing had grown . . . and he made sure to gain as many allies and supporters as he could, using all the methods necessary to win men over. (*CC* 407)

However, Shakespeare dramatically explores the ways that such a strategy is simply not sustainable, particularly when those alliances have no firm foundation. At the moment his numerous alliances allow Warwick room to maneuver, but eventually they will come to trap him in a corner. Shakespeare also shows that the decision to make an alliance with Warwick is also a bad move for Clarence, for ultimately Warwick can never satisfy

Clarence's political ambitions.<sup>137</sup> This is why Richard, even though the odds seem to be against Edward at the moment, decides to stay with his brother: "my thoughts aim at a further matter: / I stay not for the love of Edward, but the crown" (*3HVI* 4.1.124-25).<sup>138</sup> Richard can see the dead end that is implicit in a relationship with Warwick, and so he decides to remain with his brother not out of loyalty but because it offers him better options. Thus, although it appears to be the more strategic move, Clarence's strategy has some key flaws. If Warwick wins, Clarence will almost certainly be shoved aside in favor of Prince Edward. If Edward wins, he will never forgive Clarence, for he cannot trust him. For Richard, the victory of Warwick will mean little if he is on his side, whereas the victory of Edward will mean everything if he is on his side, particularly now that Clarence has abandoned Edward, for Richard will have supplanted his older brother and moved one step closer to the throne (*3HVI* 3.2.172-81). As Richard says, one must always look to "a further matter," when crafting a long-term strategy. Richard's view is not cloudy, and so he can see what to do.

The precarious nature of Warwick's alliances becomes less cloudy and more clear when he is approached by Clarence. Despite being in an alliance with him, it is clear that Warwick cannot trust Clarence. When Clarence arrives Warwick's first question is "are we all friends?" (*3HVI* 4.2.4). Clarence assures him that they are, but Warwick is still not convinced, for he expresses concerns that "Clarence, Edward's brother, / Were but a feigned friend to our proceedings" (*3HVI* 4.2.10-11). Shakespeare's ratchets up the

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<sup>137</sup> While these ambitions are much less explicit in the play than they are in the histories, Clarence does betray his brother very soon after Edward's marriage. Clearly the mocking jibes spoken by Clarence and Richard are spoken not entirely in jest (*3HVI* 3.2.1-35).

<sup>138</sup> Thomas More contended that Richard had always planned to betray his brother once the time was right: "he longe in kynge Edwarde his tyme thought to obtaine the crowne in case that the kynge his brother, whose life he loked that evill diet would sone shorten shoulde happen to disease" (qtd. in Bullough 253). For more on More's influence on *Richard III*, see Donno, "Thomas More and Richard III" and Kinney, "The tyrant being slain: afterlives of More's *History of Richard III*."

dramatic tension in this scene, for ostensible amicability hides a much more sinister reality just beneath the surface. The characters may move about on the stage as though they are friends, but their words and actions imply something else. Here then is another flaw in Clarence's betrayal, for anyone who could betray his brother can never be completely trusted (Cox and Rasmussen, Arden *3HVI* 306).<sup>139</sup> Nevertheless, Warwick still promises to marry his daughter to Clarence and bring him into the fold. Edward expressed his concern earlier about the difficulty of trusting one's friends, even going so far as to say that he would prefer declared "foes" to "hollow friends" (*3HVI* 4.1.138).<sup>140</sup> His fears are warranted, for Montague swears an oath of loyalty to him (*3HVI* 4.1.142) even though he has already betrayed him to Warwick and will do so again (*3HVI* 4.6.0.3). Warwick cannot trust his allies either. Clarence's loyalty is in doubt, but so are Louis and Margaret's, for there is also clear distrust between her and Warwick, so much so that perhaps it is no accident that the former plans to seize Edward and place Henry back onto the throne before the latter arrives in England. As Jones notes, the audience may not feel pathos or laughter when seeing scenes such as this, but it does receive some kind of satisfaction from the way that it unfolds in such a dynamic way:

. . . this second movement [Acts 4 and 5 of *3 Henry VI*], with its long succession of reversals, is never as moving as was the first, with its two great scenes of passion and tragic contemplation [York's death and Henry on the molehill]. Nor is it meant to be: it is instead plotted so as to make the most of its ironical possibilities. (*Origins* 189-90)

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<sup>139</sup> Howard and Rackin point out that the betrayal is made all the more appalling by the fact that it follows so soon after the pledges the brothers—admittedly minus Clarence—make to each other after seeing what appears to be three suns on the horizon (*3HVI* 2.1.25-40). According to them, "it is the more surprising, then, that these sons of York do not continue in amity throughout the play. Before it is over, Clarence will fight on the Lancastrian side against his brother Edward" (*Engendering a Nation* 89).

<sup>140</sup> According to Knowles, such a view also influences Henry IV in *1 Henry IV*. Knowles argues that Henry IV actually tricks the rebels into rebelling first when they are still too weak to defeat him, a move that would mark Henry IV as a supreme strategist. This interpretation also links the play with Hayward's history (*Arguments with History* 184-85).

This keenness is enlivened as one sees how the numerous different strategies play or fail to play out on the stage and before the audience. Warwick has placed himself in a situation where he will have to betray either Clarence or Prince Edward, for he cannot support them both.<sup>141</sup>

Warwick's alliances have stretched him too thin, and he has committed, as Schwarz puts it, a "failure of strategy":

*3 Henry VI* displays . . . the failure of strategy: Warwick marries one daughter to Clarence of York and the other to Edward of Lancaster, two well-conceived unions which produce betrayal in the first instance and futility in the second. (354)<sup>142</sup>

At the moment such failures do not seem to concern Warwick, either because he has failed to plan ahead or because he believes himself to be powerful enough to dictate terms to his allies when the time comes. For now Warwick's confidence appears warranted, for he quickly manages to capture Edward and hold him prisoner. This scene is quite successful, as the audience sees someone physically take the crown off a king's head and claim it for, if not himself, then at least his own interests. Warwick's impassioned accusation of Edward is worth paying attention to, for it reveals much about the nature of alliances. Warwick said that although he was willing to call Edward king before, but

the case is [now] altered.  
When you disgraced me in my embassy,

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<sup>141</sup> Warwick's position parallels Machiavelli's description of how Louis XII of France bungled things when it came to making and breaking alliances:

He [Louis XII] could have remained secure had he stood by his friends, who, because they were many, weak, and afraid . . . would have been forced to remain at his side. With their help he could have kept in check those who remained powerful . . . What Louis did not realize was that with this move he weakened himself, alienating his allies and those who would readily have rushed into his arms. (*P* 3.14)

<sup>142</sup> As Saccio notes, this was also the case with the numerous alliances made by the historical Warwick: "the new government was shaky, founded upon alliances impossible to maintain for any length of time" (*Shakespeare's English Kings* 147).



Then I degraded you from being King  
And come now to create you Duke of York.  
Alas, how should you govern any kingdom,  
That know not how to use ambassadors,  
Nor how to be contented with one wife,  
Nor how to use your brothers brotherly,  
Nor how to study for the people's welfare,  
Nor how to shroud yourself from enemies? (*3HVI* 4.3.31-40)

In addition to suggesting that legitimacy means little in the face of power, the speech is also quite suggestive about how alliances are made and broken. Although Warwick “accuses Edward of failings at home that breed crises abroad,” his charges are quite disingenuous (Schwarz 348). He is willing to support Edward so long as it is in his interests to do so, but now that it is not he is perfectly comfortable with casting his former ally aside. However, such an approach does have its negative consequences. Wilders notes that, with “characteristically Shakespearean irony,” “the method[s] each [ ]” character uses “to secure [his or her] position eventually weakens it” (50-51). Warwick says that his betrayal is Edward’s fault, for Edward is the one who does not know “how to use ambassadors,” “how to use . . . brothers brotherly,” or “how to shroud [himself] from enemies.” This last point is made all the forceful by the presence of Clarence, who Edward suddenly realizes is standing alongside Warwick: “Yea, brother of Clarence, art thou there too? / Nay, then I see that Edward needs must down” (*3HVI* 4.3.41-42). However, Warwick fails to heed his own advice on how to shroud oneself from enemies, for Clarence will betray him too.

The betrayals of Warwick and Clarence bring immediate successes, but these successes will ultimately prove themselves to be limited. As Martin notes in relation to Montague’s loyalty to his brother, family loyalty may count for more than Machiavelli and other politic authors would like to think (Oxford *3HVI* 63), for it is brotherly loyalty

that will prove Warwick's undoing. This is made clear the moment the newly enthroned Henry gives power to Warwick: "Warwick, although my head still wear the crown, / I here resign my government to thee" (*3HVI* 4.6.23-24). In one sense Warwick has succeeded tremendously, for he clearly has more power over Henry than he ever had over Edward. However Henry has placed Warwick in a dramatic situation that reveals the true extent of his blunder. The seemingly innocuous dramatic exchange actually undercuts Warwick's entire strategy. Two problems are immediately apparent with Henry's acquiescence. First, Margaret will never agree to this transfer of power, for this is the very thing that had so angered her at the beginning of this play (*3HVI* 1.1.215-25). Henry may realize that, by placing power in Warwick's hands so completely, he ensures that the alliance between Warwick and Margaret will be finished the moment she finds out what happened. Second, there is the problem of Clarence. Clarence has not betrayed his brother Edward and allied himself with Warwick in order to be his minion. Perhaps this is why Warwick says that Henry should not choose him "when Clarence is in place" (*3HVI* 4.6.31), for he realizes that Henry has done something that could bring the alliance between Warwick and Clarence to an end. It is possible that he does not mean what he says, for Shakespeare's politicians are often quite adept at claiming that they do not want power when that is the very thing that they want most of all. Likewise, although Clarence says that Warwick is "worthy of the sway" because he is "blest in peace and war" (*3HVI* 4.6.32, 35), he has already shown that he is more than capable of expressing support when he does not mean it.

Again, it is quite possible that Henry understands the rupture that he is causing, for he asks Warwick and Clarence to join hands on the stage at the very moment that the alliance is about to come apart:

Warwick and Clarence, give me both your hands.  
Now join your hands, and with your hands your hearts,  
That no dissension hinder government.  
I make you both Protectors of this land. (*3HVI* 4.6.38-41)

Clarence has been made Protector, but that is not enough for him. Ostensibly Henry is bringing them together, but neither of them seems pleased at the prospect of sharing power. Ornstein sees Henry's appointment as naïveté (57), but perhaps Henry is setting his enemies up for a situation that is bound to fail. As Jorgensen notes, disaster resulting from "friction between two or more heads of an army" is "one of Shakespeare's basic military interests" (39). Likewise, there is simply no way that this bond can hold true once Margaret arrives and demands that Prince Edward be recognized as the heir to the throne. Is Henry aware of this? It is one of those moves that could be attributed to gross ignorance or political genius, for it ensures that everything Warwick has tried to build with his alliances will come tumbling down. Clarence and Warwick's responses to Henry's suggestion are revealing and amusing, for both of them are waiting to see what the other has to say before speaking (*3HVI* 4.6.45-46). Warwick consents to "yoke together," although he also says that he is "loath" to do so (*3HVI* 4.6.48-49). Why? Is it that he does not want to share power with Clarence? It seems likely. It also seems likely that Richard was right to avoid Clarence's trap. As Richard will later do with his own allies, Warwick has made Clarence into a fool.<sup>143</sup> It might have seemed like the more

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<sup>143</sup> As Jaffa notes in regards to a similar situation in *Richard III*:

Richard [III] manipulates others into becoming voluntary accomplices. Such manipulation becomes a high art, and we are led to admire him as we would admire any

strategic thing to do, but Clarence has thrown himself into a shaky alliance. Perhaps Jorgensen is right when he argues that “Shakespeare’s picture of truces” is “so consistently pessimistic” that “one may wonder whether it does not betray a personal bias” (175).

As if to emphasize this, Warwick’s first act as Clarence’s ally is to declare that “Edward be pronounced a traitor / And all his lands and goods be confiscate” (*3HVI* 4.6.54-55). Even though Warwick is talking about Edward of York, the audience cannot help seeing the hole Warwick has dug for himself. First, there is Prince Edward, for one can only guess what he and Margaret will do when they arrive and find out about this arrangement. Second, there is Clarence, for although it is probably smart to try to neutralize Edward and his power, that power comes from the same source that Clarence’s does. By neutralizing Edward, Warwick may also be trying to remove Clarence’s power and, by extension, remove him as an ally now that he is no longer needed. This is why Clarence immediately asks about whether “succession [will] be determined,” for if Edward is out of the way, where does that leave Clarence (*3HVI* 4.6.56)? Note Warwick’s response: “ay, therein Clarence shall not want his part” (*3HVI* 4.6.57). Does Warwick want Clarence out of the way? Is this why Clarence will betray Warwick just as he had betrayed Edward?<sup>144</sup> Henry’s role in all of this is also worth remembering. He says that Warwick and Clarence should immediately send for Margaret and Prince

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great performing artist. His victims are enticed into becoming his agents. It is part of Richard’s art, that his victims are made in the end to curse themselves rather than him for their fate . . . . Richard’s victims are first made into fools, and then into corpses. (“An interpretation of the Shakespearean universe” 287)

While these characters are not Richard’s victims but his opponents, it is nevertheless an intriguing interpretation of the play. Certainly this view of Richard as the ultimate puppet-master is one that has influenced some important productions in the 1990s (Siemon, Arden *RIII* 116-18).

<sup>144</sup> In recent years the historical Clarence’s betrayals and changes in allegiance have been defended by a rising number of commentators and historians, chief among them M. A. Hicks. For more on this, see Hicks, *False, Fleeting, Perjur’d Clarence*.

Edward, “for till I see them here, by doubtful fear / My joy of liberty is half eclipsed” (3*HVI* 4.6.62-63). Does he really only want to see Margaret and Prince Edward in order to gladden his heart, or does he know that their presence will drive a nail through the heart of this alliance?

The person who will be most affected by their arrival is Clarence, the one who answers Henry’s request: “it shall be done, my sovereign, with all speed” (3*HVI* 4.6.64). If Henry does not see what he is doing, it is clear by now that Clarence does see it. Saccio notes that the historical Clarence was always the wild card in Warwick’s network of alliances, for Warwick could never provide Clarence with the power he desired:

Clarence’s allegiance was uncertain: he yearned for a throne, but with Lancaster restored, the best that could be offered him was a promise that he should inherit if Henry and his son died without issue. (*Shakespeare’s English Kings* 148)

Clarence has made a bad deal by entering into an alliance with Warwick. Machiavelli points out that “Livy shows us [in Book VIII, Chapter 4] that the Latins attacked once they became aware of the Roman deception. He has Annius Setinus say: “For under the semblance of a treaty between equals we have already been enslaved” (*D* 2.13.238-39). Clarence finds himself in a very similar position. Clarence has made a bad move by abandoning his brother. However, whereas Machiavelli’s victims are simply defeated dupes, Clarence is not so willing to cave in. As a dramatic scenario, perseverance is much more arresting than acquiescence. Note his use of “with all speed.” Clarence may realize that he has to get out of there with all speed, for he has made a terrible mistake and one that he has to rectify as soon as possible. He says nothing else for the rest of the scene, and the next time the audience sees him in 5.1 he betrays his alliance with

Warwick and enters a new one with Edward. Warwick will be angry, but it is difficult to say what he could have expected given his behavior towards Clarence in this scene.

Although Warwick seemed rather dismissive of the alliance with Clarence when he feels that he no longer needs it, things change rather quickly when he finds himself in trouble later in the play when Edward is marching against him: “In Warwickshire I have true-hearted friends, / Not mutinous in peace, yet bold in war. / . . . thou, son Clarence” (3*HVI* 4.8.9-11). Warwick has never spoken this warmly of Clarence before. At first he was suspicious of him, and then he was rather dismissive of him. What has changed is that Warwick now needs Clarence’s help, for Edward has managed to escape and is now on the warpath. The very thing that now makes Warwick value Clarence as an ally is the very thing that now convinces Clarence that the time has come to change his allegiance once again. And so, although Clarence had kissed Henry’s hand “in sign of truth,” when we next see him he will betray both Henry and his ally Warwick (3*HVI* 4.8.26).

However, Warwick does not realize this yet. Waiting in Coventry for Clarence’s forces to arrive, Warwick once again refers to Clarence as his “loving son” (3*HVI* 5.1.7).

Again, now that he needs Clarence things have changed quite a bit. This can be seen by Warwick’s question: “how nigh is Clarence now?” (3*HVI* 5.1.8). Clarence is not nigh, either literally or figuratively, for he has abandoned Warwick to his destruction. This is underlined dramatically when Warwick hears a drum and says “Clarence is at hand, I hear his drum” and Somerville replies that “it is not his, my lord . . . . The drum your honour hears marcheth from Warwick” (3*HVI* 5.1.11-13). As Jorgensen notes, this is a mistake of “strategic importance,” for it involves “a critical misunderstanding of drum identity . . . . While they are thus speculating, Edward’s hostile army arrives as a grim

clarification of the mystery” (28). Clarence is not marching to Warwick as an ally, but away from him and towards his enemy Edward. Warwick’s inability to grasp just how much he has blundered is underscored by his confused question when he sees Edward and Richard and their army marching towards him: “who should that be? Belike unlooked-for friends” (*3HVI* 5.1.14). These are not Warwick’s friends.

Warwick has made a mistake by constantly switching sides and by aligning himself to anyone and everyone who could offer him help. Machiavelli argues that alliances are based less on friendship than on similar interests and objectives, but Shakespeare shows that one cannot continuously shift and sway as Warwick does without expecting things eventually to recoil. Edward suggests this to his former ally:

Sail how thou canst, have wind and tide thy friend,  
This hand, fast wound about thy coal-black hair,  
Shall, whiles thy head is warm and new cut off,  
Write in the dust this sentence with thy blood,  
‘Wind-changing Warwick now can change no more.’ (*3HVI* 5.1. 53-57)

Cox and Rasmussen note that the last line refers to the fact that Warwick has been so “changeable,” for he has been trying to play every side against each other while trying to make allies of them all (*Arden 3HVI* 338). Although this seemed to be successful at first, it has become clear that this strategy is self-defeating. Warwick’s approach is far from being dexterous, for it has only managed to make enemies of everyone. In one sense, Warwick has out-manuevered himself, for he cannot put himself on the throne. Margaret does not trust him and will never agree to him having this much power once she arrives, Clarence is not a trustworthy ally, and Edward, regardless of his and Richard’s demands that Warwick surrender and join them once more, will never forgive this betrayal. Even

though he does manage to make a grand fight of it at the end, Warwick has placed himself in a situation where his defeat is inevitable.

If such a defeat is inevitable, what should Clarence do? Cox and Rasmussen note an interesting difference between the many versions of the play in regards to this scene:

In F Clarence has already made up his mind to rejoin Edward when he enters, but O has a different version: Clarence enters with a shout for Lancaster, and Edward exclaims in dismay at Clarence's treachery . . . . O then has this SD: 'Sound a Parlie, and *Richard* and *Clarence* whispers together, and then Clarence takes his red Rose out of his hat, and throws it at *Warwicke*' . . . . O's portrayal of Richard's rhetoric . . . [Edward] Hall and is arguably more dramatic than F's version of Clarence with his mind already made up. (Arden *3HVI* 340-41)

Cox and Rasmussen's editing of this scene is different from both of these, but it dramatically showcases the way that Clarence's decision to betray Warwick is caused by Warwick's treatment of their alliance. Warwick is clearly pleased to see Clarence arrive on the field, but his pleasure is overshadowed by his oddly imperious tone: "come, Clarence, come. Thou wilt, if Warwick call" (*3HVI* 5.1.80). This places Clarence in a dramatic situation, for we in the audience see him in the process of making an actual decision: to join Warwick or to rejoin Edward. When Clarence does decide, his response is full of anger at Warwick's arrogance: "father of Warwick, know you what this means?" (*3HVI* 5.1.81). Clarence then takes off his red rose and throws it defiantly at his former ally. Jones calls this a "sharp visual moment" for the audience (*Origins* 180), while Schwarz argues that the bonds of family have overcome those of strategy: "having crossed the gap between 'father of Warwick,' strategically acquired, and that other father's house and blood, Clarence crosses back" (355).<sup>145</sup> Clarence's decision however

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<sup>145</sup> This does not mean that Clarence's family will forgive him once the battle is over. Machiavelli argues that princes generally despise those who are constantly switching sides, for they show that they can never be trusted:



was not made before he entered the stage, as a result of Richard's rhetorical skills or because of familial ties; it was made because Clarence can now see that his alliance with Warwick is no longer beneficial to himself. The act may seem "spontaneous," but one should not overlook the very real strategic considerations that underlie it (Berry, *Patterns of Decay* 67). Agreeing with Berry, Leggatt expresses frustration that the whispering between Richard and Clarence "is all the explanation we have for George's return to the Yorkist cause" (*Shakespeare's Political Drama* 10). It may not be spelt out, but it seems that Shakespeare actually does provide several hints regarding Clarence's changing of sides.

Shakespeare does not judge his characters when he places them in situations like this; instead, he sees that such actions are in keeping with the world they inhabit. Clarence can now see that helping Warwick does not help him, for why would he, as a Yorkist, ever want to place a Lancastrian on the throne and thus disinherit himself: "I will not ruin my father's house, / Who gave his blood to lime the stones together, / And set up Lancaster" (*3HVI* 5.1.83-85). The plan was to give him the throne, not to find a way to aid Henry VI and Prince Edward. How can Warwick expect Clarence to act in a way that is so clearly against his own interests? Clarence says that Warwick is wrong to expect him to fight against his brother—"why, trowest thou, Warwick, / That Clarence is so harsh, so blunt, so unnatural, / To bend the fatal instruments of war / Against his brother and his lawful King?" (*3HVI* 5.1.85-88)—but what he really means is that Warwick is wrong to expect him to bend against himself. It is not unnatural for Warwick

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A prince is also revered when he is a true friend and a true enemy—in other words, when he declares himself without reservation in favor of one man against another. This kind of resolution is always more useful than if he remains neutral . . . Neither side will have reason or cause to come to your assistance, for the winner will not want the kind of ally who did not come to his aid in adversity, nor will the loser give you refuge, since you were not prepared to share his fate with your weapons drawn. (*P* 21.85)

to expect Clarence to act against Edward, for almost everyone commits similar acts of betrayal in the first tetralogy. As D'Amico notes, "loyalty to a family . . . does not impede ambition" (171). What is unnatural is to go against his own interests, for in going "against his brother and his lawful King," Clarence is expected to go against his own claim to the throne. Warwick does not seem to have realized this when he spoke of disinheriting Edward in an earlier scene. If Clarence were to do this, he would be disinheriting himself. By failing to recognize this, Warwick fails to recognize that his alliance with Clarence was precarious. Just as Warwick's switch in allegiance offers Shakespeare an intensely dynamic portrayal of the dramatic nature of strategy, so too does Clarence's. The audience can partake in Clarence's decision-making process as he debates with himself the pros and cons of staying with Warwick or of rejoining Edward and see why Clarence chooses the latter.

Manheim argues that Clarence's switching of allegiance over to Edward is in keeping with strategic principle: "the key to all Machiavellian design is patience, the knowing when to act" (81). However, has Clarence been patient, or has he found himself in an impossible position? Clarence now blames Warwick for "misleading" him and leading him astray (*3HVI* 5.1.97). Clarence may think that this will help his reconciliation with Edward, but he has not been misled by anyone, for the same thing that led him to join Warwick is the same thing that now leads him to join Edward: self-interest. Clarence first thought that his chances were better with Warwick, but now that things have changed he thinks that his chances are better with his brother Edward. Warwick's "misleading" plays a role here, but self-interest and a calculation of the odds of success and failure play a larger one. There is also the bond of family which Clarence

now does his best to evoke. Clarence's apology to Edward and Richard is worth keeping in mind, for it plays just as much of a role in bringing about Clarence's death in *Richard III* as does Richard's maneuvering: "and to my brothers turn my blushing cheeks. / Pardon me, Edward, I will make amends. / And Richard, do not frown upon my faults, / For I will henceforth be no more unconstant" (3*HVI* 5.1.99-102). Edward accepts his apology now—"now, welcome, more, and ten times more, beloved / Than if thou never hadst deserved our hate" (3*HVI* 5.1.103-04)—for he needs Clarence's aid. However, his reference to "now" refers to his temporary acceptance of Clarence's apology, while his reference to deserving "hate" suggests that Clarence will never be fully trusted ever again.<sup>146</sup> Edward will have to wait until his power is more secure to act on this suspicion, but it will always be there in the back of his mind. As John Kerrigan notes when discussing Clarence's imprisonment in *Richard III*: "his imprisonment stems ultimately from the fact that he broke his allegiance to Edward in the first place: this is the treachery that now makes him vulnerable to the king's suspicions" (72).<sup>147</sup> Critics such as Inga-Stina Ewbank have argued that Edward is devastated by Clarence's death, but such judgments tend to ignore Clarence's earlier betrayal (407).<sup>148</sup> Clarence ignores to his cost Machiavelli's principle that "one cannot attack a prince first and then trust him"

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<sup>146</sup> Clarence does suffer from remorse and disillusionment in *Richard III*, but his behaviour reflects not the naïve saintliness one found in Loncraine's 1996 film but something more like genuine disillusionment. This would better explain Clarence's pessimistic picture of the ultimate end of all worldly joys (*RIII* 1.4.24-33). In the end all of this strategizing and guile proves to be less important than "a horse" (*RIII* 5.4.13). For an interesting comparison between Clarence and Richard's final moments, see Champion, *Perspective in Shakespeare's English Histories* (58-59).

<sup>147</sup> This interpretation differs from that of critics such as Foakes, who argue that Clarence's imprisonment is occasioned by Richard's maliciousness alone (53). Such an interpretation ignores Clarence's betrayal in 3 *Henry VI* and likewise Edward's genuine motivations for imprisoning his brother.

<sup>148</sup> Productions have often made similar oversights despite the fact that the two murderers sent by Richard remind Clarence of his earlier misdeeds just before they kill him. As the first murderer declares: "How canst thou urge God's dreadful law unto us / When thou hast broke it in such dear degree?" (*RIII* 1.4.208-09).

(*DV* 368).<sup>149</sup> Warwick expresses disgust at Clarence's treachery, but his own actions have been just as calculating throughout this play (*3HVI* 5.1.106). Warwick will die in this play and Clarence will die in the next, for such is the fate of those who make mistakes when making and breaking alliances.

#### 4.4 ARE THERE FRIENDS IN POLITICS?

If alliances are this shaky, one has to wonder whether or not there can even be true friends in politics. Many of Shakespeare's rulers would say no, for many of them come to find that power is something that isolates them from their fellow human beings. As Prior argues in regards to Richard, such a character "cannot have friends" (300). Machiavelli often argues that the prince should not have any friends, but Shakespeare dramatizes the tragic fate of princes who cannot have any friends.<sup>150</sup> The first tetralogy paints a similarly bleak picture of the impossibility of achieving friendship if one is in power. It is a picture in keeping with Machiavelli's arguments that "men never do good except out of necessity" (*D* 1.3.120), that "men are often deceived in their assessment of the friendship someone bears for them" (*D* 3.6.271), and that "you should never let yourself fall in the hope that someone will be there to help you up" (*P* 24.93).<sup>151</sup> Just such a scenario is evoked by Exeter early on in the first tetralogy, when he says that the English nobles can never be friends, for their hatred is merely burning under the ashes:

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<sup>149</sup> As Innocent Gentillet puts it: "Car jamais (dit il) les nouveaux plaisirs ne font oublier les vieilles injures et offenses" (324), or "new favours do not erase old injuries or offenses." Clarence may be on Edward's side now, but Edward will never forget the earlier betrayal, for "new benefits can never cancel old injuries" (Meron 190). As Saccio notes, the historical Clarence was clearly untrustworthy and ambitious, perhaps even more so than Richard, and that the responsibility for the historical Clarence's death actually lies with Edward (*Shakespeare's English Kings* 168-69).

<sup>150</sup> Certainly several writers, from antiquity to the early modern period, saw such Machiavellian isolation as tragic. For more on this, see Hörnqvist, *Machiavelli and Empire* (208-10). While Machiavelli may not be overtly concerned with such a tragic situation, Shakespeare certainly is. Such isolation will figure prominently not only in the first tetralogy but in Shakespeare's later tragedies as well.

<sup>151</sup> In keeping with this, Machiavelli insists that the only trustworthy defenses are those the prince has created himself: "quelle difese solamente sono buone, sono certe, sono durabili, che dependono da te proprio e dalla virtù tua" (71-72).

This late dissension grown betwixt the peers  
Burns under feigned ashes of forged love  
And will at last break out into a flame:  
As festered members rot but by degree,  
Till bones and flesh and sinews fall away,  
So will this base and envious discord breed. (*IHVI* 3.1.191-96)

This can be seen at a number of points, most forcefully when Suffolk assures Margaret that they will soon have a chance to destroy their allies, for once their enemies are out of the way they will be free to wipe everyone out (*2HVI* 1.3.89-101). If the nobles have this much hatred for each other, their hatred for the prince is no less intense. The king has probably even more to fear from his subjects than anyone else. This can clearly be seen when Buckingham advises Henry to “trust nobody, for fear you be betrayed” (*2HVI* 4.4.57). What makes Buckingham’s advice so troubling is that he has already hinted at the fact that he may also betray Henry if the opportunity presents itself (*2HVI* 1.1.175-76). Even Gentillet, one of Machiavelli’s harshest critics, agrees with him and warns “princes of the dangers of tolerating bad advisers and flatterers” (Hadfield 89).<sup>152</sup> This is why York, even when the nobles begin to move over to him in support, is still heavily suspicious of their intentions (*3HVI* 1.1.149, 165). Such cynicism even begins to affect Henry, for he also says that kings must “fear their subjects’ treachery,” for “mistrust and treason wait on him” (*3HVI* 2.5.45, 54).

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<sup>152</sup> Innocent Gentillet’s *Contre-Machiavel* contains a wonderful description of the negative outcome of such flatterers, for not only do they corrupt the judgment of the prince, but they create a smoke screen that can even hide the sun from the prince. A good prince is the one who has people around him who are free to tell him the truth without fear of retribution; all others are hollow and blind to the evil designs of those around them (94). However, Machiavelli does insist that a prince should not allow such freedom to turn into contempt: “Then again, however, if every man is free to tell him at will, the prince quickly becomes a figure of contempt” (*P* 23.90). Machiavelli’s phrasing is much more aware of the effect of such contempt, particularly when it is witnessed by others, for his “estimazione,” or “estimation,” is explicitly concerned with the dangers of losing such respect publicly: “[Un principe] chi fa altrimenti, o e’ precipita per li adulatori, o si muta spesso per la variazione de’ pareri: di che ne nasce la poca estimazione sua” (69).

However, Shakespeare's view, while similar in some respects, differs in many others. Perhaps this is because Machiavelli, as Cronin notes, "tends to underestimate the human factor: personal friendships, diplomacy, compromise and mutual trust which play so important a part in human affairs" (124). As a dramatist, Shakespeare does not suffer from such an underestimation. His kings and nobles may argue that a prince can have no friends, but none of them manages to achieve any lasting success. To act as Castruccio did might eliminate one's enemies, but it also ensures that one will never have friends or allies. The rulers who do actually achieve success in Shakespeare's plays are the ones who know how to make friends and cement alliances. Four of these also appear in the first tetralogy: Edward, Elizabeth, Stanley, and Richmond. There is no question that Edward has a difficult time maintaining the loyalty of his brothers Clarence and Richard, but he is able to find other ways to forge alliances to help keep him in power. In 4.1 of 3 *Henry VI* Edward rewards Hastings, which inspires both Richard and Clarence to ask why Edward is doing so little to help his brothers. Historically Edward did try to keep his brothers from making advantageous marriages (Saccio, *Shakespeare's English Kings* 144-45), and here in 3 *Henry VI* Edward sets up a marriage between "the heir and daughter of Lord Scales" and "the heir / Of the Lord Bonville" to Elizabeth's brother and son respectively (3*HVI* 4.1.52, 57). However, regardless of his brothers' complaints, Edward clearly cannot trust them and does not want to give them the chance to get more power. Seeing the way that family bonds can be so easily broken once power is at stake, Edward decides to look for another way to secure his position. As Champion notes, this lack of bonding is emblematic of the first tetralogy as a whole, for "Shakespeare depicts an aristocratic society rent at the very center" (*Noise of Threatening Drum* 76). As

unpopular as it may be to some, Edward's decision to advance Elizabeth's family is an attempt on his part to create new and powerful allies with those who are entirely reliant on him rather than those who may seek the crown for themselves. Likewise, although Elizabeth insists here (*3HVI* 4.1.70-74) and later (*RIII* 1.3.82-83) that she has never sought advancement as a result of her marriage with Edward, this is clearly what is happening. These marriages can only strengthen her family.

In the end this proves to be a good strategy, and it shows that princes can actually have, if not friends, then at least good allies. Warwick thinks that he can destroy the Yorkists by seizing Edward, but this proves not to be the case, for Edward has created a situation in which his allies rely on him too much for their own power, and so they basically have to rescue him if they have any hope of retaining their strength. Some of his nobles do defect, but enough remain loyal to give him a fighting chance. This is not the case for Warwick, for both Margaret and Clarence might drop him at any time, which the latter actually does and which the former probably would have done sooner or later. This becomes clear when Edward asks the nobles around him to make a pledge of loyalty (*3HVI* 4.1.133-48). Although both Montague and Clarence are preparing to betray Edward, one should not necessarily read irony in Edward's closing words concerning the tightness of these bonds and how they assure him victory. Such a reading has its validity, but with the exception of Montague, Hastings and Richard and the others will remain close allies. They are acting in their own interests, but their self-interest actually makes them better allies, for they see that their chances of personal power are better with Edward, and so they will do whatever they can to help him. This is the mistake that the seemingly more strategic Warwick makes, for it soon becomes clear that he can

ultimately further no one else's interests but his own (Wilders 50). Edward succeeds and continues to work hard to keep his alliances strong, but ultimately his illness and Richard's machinations prove too strong. However, Edward spends his final moments doing all that he can to ensure that his court remains united and strong (*RIII* 2.1.1-44). These actions may not work out as he had planned but, as Shakespeare's dramatization of Edward's example suggests, the prince can and should have friends.



## CHAPTER 5

### ENEMIES AND THE ISSUE OF PLAYING BY THE RULES

#### 5.1 NOT EVERYONE PLAYS BY THE SAME RULES

Although friendships and alliances can be advantageous to some, the fact remains that for many people in power there will usually be more enemies than friends. There are numerous kinds of enemies that a strategist must contend with. It is not always easy to know who is a friend and who is an enemy, for not everyone plays by the same rules. Moseley argues that “the man—monarch or subject—who refuses to keep the rules and plays purely for advantage fascinated the Elizabethan mind” (67-68). It fascinated the Florentine mind as well. As Machiavelli was well aware, no two opponents play by the same set of rules, and successful attacks often take an indirect route. A strong example of this can be found with Castruccio Castracani. Castracani manages to play both the different political factions in Florence off against each other and eventually destroy them:

The leader of the Whites was Bastiano di Possente, and the leader of the Blacks, Iacopo da Gia. They both conducted secret talks with Castruccio, as each wanted to drive the other party out . . . . Castruccio promised Iacopo that he would come in person, and Bastiano that he would send Pagolo Giunigi, and told them when to expect them . . . . At midnight both Castruccio and Pagolo arrived at Pistoria, and as allies they were allowed through the gates. Once inside, Castruccio gave Pagolo a sign, at which point Castruccio killed Iacopo da Gia, and Pagolo killed Bastiano di Possente, and then they slaughtered or took prisoner all their supporters. Castruccio . . . occupied Pistoria without further opposition. (CC 414-15)

Machiavelli even describes the way that Castruccio, a ruthless and cunning prince, was himself duped and almost killed simply by accepting an invitation to dinner (CC 410).

Machiavelli clearly relishes the drama of the scene, for Castruccio’s enemies are seated around the table with daggers in their smiles, all waiting to see who will strike first.

Castruccio's actions here are strongly reminiscent of the actions of Cesare Borgia against the generals who rebelled against him, an event Machiavelli partially witnessed (Cronin 121-22) and chillingly describes in *How Duke Valentino Killed the Generals*.<sup>153</sup>

Shakespeare is also interested in the nature of enemies. However, unlike those who might rely on a melodramatic, or at least explicit, villain, Shakespeare's depictions of enemies suggest that they are often the ones that you least suspect. The very characters that one assumes to be trustworthy and fair often prove to be something quite different. How does Shakespeare explore the politics of suspicion? Do the characters of the first tetralogy play by the same rules, or do they play by any rule that allows them to win?

### 5.1.1 "The chivalrous knight"

This can be seen from the very beginning of the tetralogy, as the Countess of Auvergne invites Talbot—"the ideal of the aristocrat as warrior" (Cox, *The Dramaturgy of Power* 84)—"to visit her poor castle where she lies" (*IHVI* 2.2.41).<sup>154</sup> By playing on Talbot's vanity, the Countess hopes to lull him into a sense of false security and kill him. However, although Talbot is vain, he is no fool. Even his initially positive response to the messenger's request, with words like "trust" and "oratory," betray a certain sense of unease (*IHVI* 2.2.48-49). To Burgundy this seems like a golden opportunity, but Talbot

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<sup>153</sup> For more on this episode in Machiavelli's life, see Ridolfi, *The Life of Niccolò Machiavelli*, particularly Ridolfi's inclusion of a letter sent by Machiavelli to his superiors while Borgia's stratagem was still being carried out:

When it was at its height, [Machiavelli] wrote in great agitation to the Ten: 'The town is still being sacked, and it is 11 o'clock at night. I am extremely worried. I don't know if I shall be able to find anyone to take this letter. I will write at length later. My opinion is that they [Vitellozzo and Oliverotto] will not be alive tomorrow.' (63)

It is interesting that Machiavelli makes reference in his letter to what he will write later, for Borgia and this episode would play a huge role in his later writings.

<sup>154</sup> It is worth noting that Talbot invariably seems to find the most trouble not with the French army but with French women, particularly the Countess and Joan of Arc. For an interesting comparison between the Countess and Joan, see Rackin, *Stages of History* (151-52).

realizes that something dangerous might lie behind the glitter. Here on the stage are two very different responses to the same invitation, and these challenge the audience over what their results might be. After giving his thanks to the messenger and promising to attend the Countess shortly, Talbot asks those around him if they will come with him (*IHVI* 2.2.53). Why would he do this if he thought that everything was fine? When Bedford refuses, Talbot is clearly disturbed: “Why then, alone (since there’s no remedy)” (*IHVI* 2.2.54-57). Is he afraid? It certainly appears so. Talbot immediately calls his captain over for a private conference: “Come hither, captain, you perceive my mind” (*IHVI* 2.2.59). The two men whisper out of earshot, so the audience never knows what Talbot tells him. There is something quite dynamic about Talbot’s clandestine behaviour, for the audience is witnessing a politic stratagem being formed and plotted on the stage.

There are many strategists in these plays, and many of their stratagems are quite ingenious. However, laying a good trap for one’s enemy, as the Countess does, will not save one from falling into a trap laid by someone else. Instead of simply having Talbot killed once she has him in her grasp, the Countess proceeds to exult before the battle is actually won. Like a melodramatic Machiavel, the Countess positively gleams with delight over Talbot’s apparent plight. The flattery of the previous scene has disappeared, and now the Countess reveals—in words that may mock a famous passage in Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* (5.1.93-94)<sup>155</sup>—her true estimation of the great John Talbot:

Is this the scourge of France?

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<sup>155</sup> Henry also evokes Marlowe’s play when he first sees Talbot: “Is this the Lord Talbot, uncle Gloucester, / That hath so long been resident in France” (*IHVI* 3.4.13-14). Although Henry does not mock Talbot the way that the Countess does, Jones argues that the king “gazes at him as at some famous old monument, or as if the shade of a long-dead hero had been summoned up by a magician” (*Origins* 155). The relationship between Shakespeare and Marlowe has been discussed and debated by a number of critics, notably in Bate’s *The Genius of Shakespeare* (101-32).

Is this the Talbot, so much feared abroad  
 That with his name the mothers still their babes?  
 I see report is fabulous and false.  
 I thought I should have seen some Hercules,  
 A second Hector for his grim aspect  
 And large proposition of his strong-knit limbs.  
 Alas, this is a child, a silly dwarf:  
 It cannot be this weak and writhled shrimp  
 Should strike such terror to his enemies. (*IHVI* 2.3.14-23).<sup>156</sup>

A sharp tactician and strategist, Talbot has prepared himself for the worst and thus produces his soldiers who arrive to protect him (*IHVI* 2.3.59-65). The dramatic arrival of the English army onto the stage suggests something about the dynamic nature of politic stratagems. As Taylor notes, the audience “soon becomes enjoyably aware of how one slippery customer has outmaneuvered the other” (Oxford *IHVI* 53). This is why Talbot is able to laugh at the Countess’ threats and her declaration that he is her prisoner. It is not, as some critics have claimed, a case of French duplicity versus English courage and tenacity. For example, Robert Jones sees Talbot as the embodiment of “the ideal of an heroic historical heritage than can live anew in the present if the English people will but heed the lesson” (Bevington, “*I Henry VI*” 312). Earlier critics, in keeping with their times, have resoundingly praised such courage and tenacity, while modern critics, again in keeping with their times, dispraise it just as resoundingly and dismiss such scenes as

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<sup>156</sup> Leggatt sees this exclamation as being of fundamental importance to the nature of the genre:  
 The question is one of shadow and substance. The physical body of Talbot is a disappointment in view of his great reputation, just as the appearance of the actor himself may not live up to the legend of the character he is portraying; behind the image of Talbot, Shakespeare is dealing with one of the fundamental problems of historical drama, characteristically calling attention to the difficulty rather than smoothing it over.  
 (*Shakespeare’s Political Drama* 3)

In keeping with this, Knowles argues that while there might be some “derogatory exaggeration” on the Countess’ part, “there must be some correlation between her description and Talbot’s stature, otherwise her remarks would have no point” (*Arguments with History* 23). Nevertheless, Walsh points out that “the Talbot of *I Henry VI* . . . is intertwined with the ‘tragedian’ who plays him” (*Shakespeare, the Queen’s Men* 140). Walsh also argues that “in *I Henry VI*, history emerges as akin to performance: shadowy, transient, and existing only through the collective will of those who produce and receive it” (*Shakespeare, the Queen’s Men* 5).

jingoistic and xenophobic (Taylor, Oxford *IHVI* 20). What both ignore is the duplicity of Talbot in this scene, for he has out-manuevered the Countess and has managed to escape a trap by laying one himself. Manheim notes that Talbot's "encounter with the countess of Auvergne is not without craft" (81), which understates it a bit, while John Cox points out that Talbot shows here that he is "capable of handling himself effectively in a situation involving a duplicitous political power play" (*The Dramaturgy of Power* 84).

Such duplicitous play reveals much about the realities of power. The Countess has told Talbot that she has kept a portrait of him in her gallery, and that "now the substance [i.e. the real Talbot] shall endure" (*IHVI* 2.3.37) the pain he has inflicted on France (*IHVI* 2.3.38-41). Talbot mocks her confidence and exclaims that she is "deceived," for his

substance is not here;  
For what you see is but the smallest part  
And least proportion of humanity.  
I tell you, madam, were the whole frame here,  
It is of such a spacious lofty pitch  
Your roof were not sufficient to contain't. (*IHVI* 2.3.50-55)

What does Talbot mean by this riddle that his substance is not here and his body is not only the smallest but the least proportion of his humanity? Is he, as both his supporters and his critics suggest, talking about his bravery or his spirit? What is it that cannot be contained in the Countess' castle and that would burst her roof if it were to be unleashed? It is the large group of soldiers armed with cannon that Talbot has brought with him for protection. The soldiers, with a burst of cannon-fire, have entered the stage the moment Talbot declares that he will show the Countess his true substance, inspiring their leader to refer to them as his "substance, sinews, arms and strength" (*IHVI* 2.3.62).

This is the true power behind Talbot. Words and bravery count for something, but arms and soldiers count for more. Burns notes that

The Countess of Auvergne's identification [of Talbot] with Hector initially backfires when she fails to be impressed by his physical stature, but it is undercut, and the whole tradition implicitly ironized, by his knowledge of what his heroism ultimately consists in: the strength of the English army and its loyalty to him (2.3). Individual heroism is a myth, if a strategically necessary one, and his awareness of this makes Talbot closer to the audience. (Arden *IHVI* 45)

The audience is brought closer to an in-depth exploration of the dynamics of strategy and the realities of power as they unfold on the stage. Whether or not it makes Talbot closer to the audience, it does make the Countess revise her tactics. Realizing her mistake and reassessing the situation, the Countess flexibly changes her approach:

Victorious Talbot, pardon my abuse.  
I find thou art no less than fame hath bruited,  
And more than may be gathered by thy shape.  
Let my presumption not provoke thy wrath,  
For I am sorry that with reverence  
I did not entertain thee as thou art. (*IHVI* 2.3.66-71)

This reversal is interesting, for it reveals another key element of strategy, which is the ability to think on one's feet and respond to situations as they occur. Plans are good, but no plan ever fully survives first contact with the enemy. Things change quickly, and a true strategist must learn how to adapt accordingly. This is inherently dynamic, for the audience can see the Countess respond to this alteration in the playing field and try to keep alive and in the game. The Countess' apology also reveals something about the nature of power itself. When she says that Talbot is "no less than fame hath bruited" she is saying—as Burns notes (Arden *IHVI* 177)—that Talbot is no less than has been reported (*IHVI* 2.3.67). And yet, although the word "bruited" means "reported" or

“spoken of,” it also brings to mind the word “brute,” for it is the brute force standing behind Talbot that has made the Countess see the error of her ways.

When the Countess says that there is more than can be gathered by Talbot’s shape and that she should have entertained him as he is, what she is really saying is that she should have been more aware that even if Talbot the man can be defeated and humiliated—as he was earlier (*IHVI* 1.4.38-42)—the men behind Talbot are not so easily disposed of. Talbot alone is vulnerable, but Talbot at the head of an army is another story. The power of Talbot relies not on words or bravery, but on force. Taylor notes that this is

a scene in the play that many commentators inexplicably find extraneous and unnecessary and many productions cut. Yet there Talbot and the Countess, Talbot particularly, flesh out, away from the battlefield, chivalrous possibilities in the courtly exchanges between men and women of aristocratic rank. The scene looks forward to the chivalric community of the romantic comedies. (Oxford *IHVI* 21)

The strategic elements tends to undermine this focus on chivalry and courtly love. The strategic element often plays out under the surface, and so it is often overlooked. For example, Jones notes that while “the surface meaning of this little episode is clear enough, one may feel puzzled as to why it was included at all” (*Origins* 144). Taylor may be right when he suggests that it provides an interesting reflection on the nature of chivalry and anticipates some of Shakespeare’s later comedies. However, it also offers a fascinating picture of strategy in action. Should Talbot really be seen as the one-dimensional knight who

alone on the English side represents a consistent idea of loyalty to England and the kings, as well as chivalry, shown not only on the battlefield, but also in his exchanges with the Countess of Auvergne. (Foakes 42)<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Likewise, Bevington notes that Nashe

Such interpretations of Talbot are accurate, but they are incomplete. This is not the foolishly naïve Talbot who is constantly being out-manuevered by the more Machiavellian strategists around him; this is a Talbot who knows how to play the game himself.<sup>158</sup> At the same time, the scene showcases the way that strategy enhances the dramatic experience. As Jones notes when he describes the large number of theatrical terms and metaphors in this scene:

‘Shadow’, as opposed here to ‘substance’, in Elizabethan English was a synonym for ‘actor’, while ‘shape’ could also be used to mean ‘role’ or ‘theatrical part’, sometimes ‘theatrical costume’. These theatrical terms point to the same idea: throughout the episode there runs an undercurrent of thought about imagination and reality—and what is imagined includes the life enjoyed in the minds of others by the famous, fame itself being much a matter of imagination as the idea of drama, the imaginary events imitated by actors on a stage. (*Origins* 146)

The way that Talbot has out-manuevered the Countess relies as much on drama as it does on tactics; or, to put it another way: the tactics are actually improved by the use of drama. The Countess has been acting for Talbot and Talbot has been acting for the Countess. Even the entry of the troops and the Countess’ plea for forgiveness are all heavily indebted to stage business, and yet it suggests something quite crucial about the dynamic nature of strategy. Many critics have insisted on seeing Talbot, “that mighty English warrior of renown” (Banks 173), as an entirely un-duplicitous character.

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saw the play as Talbot’s play, and indeed Talbot is onstage extensively in scenes of combat. The prolonged sword-fighting invokes a lost medieval world of Malory, with Talbot as its chivalric hero doomed by the onrush of a more modern disillusioning world of political intrigue. (“*I Henry VI*” 320)

<sup>158</sup> For more on strategy and early modern warfare, particularly the perception of the ways in which such strategies were seen to conflict with medieval ideals of chivalry, see Hale, *Renaissance War Studies* and his *War and Society in Renaissance Europe*. Somogyi’s *Shakespeare’s Theater of War* is also helpful, especially its discussion of the complaints made by some commentators about Machiavelli’s influence on the warfare of their time (21-24). This is certainly the kind of complaint many critics would expect Talbot to make, a complaint akin to the lament in Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* (1516) that chivalry and knighthood are gone forever (Gilbert, “Machiavelli” 11-12).



Cherniak argues that “Talbot is given a prominence as English champion far more than in the chronicles” and notes that “at times he seems to be fighting the French single-handed” (29). Of all the characters in the first tetralogy, he is the only one who seems to be playing by the rules. For instance, Saccio argues that the “chief hero” of *1 Henry VI* is Talbot (92)—something seconded by Grene (14)—while in *Piers Penniless his Supplication to the Devil* (1592) Thomas Nashe calls Talbot the “terror of the French” and says that his triumph and death produced tears in “ten thousand spectators at least (at several times)” (qtd. in Taylor, Oxford *IHVI* 2). Several critics have argued that Talbot stands at the centre of the play, particularly because his old-fashioned notions of chivalry and playing by the rules stand in such contrast to the several Machiavellian rule-breakers who come to dominate the tetralogy. For example, Lull also argues that Talbot’s “scenes suggest” that “the English cannot rely on the old-fashioned chivalric values embodied by Talbot” (92), while Riggs insists that Talbot “epitomizes the feudal *nobles d’épée*, envisioning every battle as a *beau geste* and a chance to fulfill a vow made on behalf of his fallen peers and his personal honor” (23). Manheim even goes so far as to call Talbot a “non-Machiavel” that he is “crushed by the new politicians” (83), an interpretation that overlooks this more duplicitous side to his character.

These interpretations are particularly valid, but a consideration of strategic behaviour reveals something different about Talbot’s behaviour. Another example of this can be seen after Joan and the French have seized the city of Rouen by a strategic trick (Foakes 41), when an angry Talbot challenges them to leave the city walls and fight the English in the field: “Dare ye come forth and meet us in the field” (*IHVI* 3.2.60). Several critics have noted that this speech can be seen as an example of Talbot’s valiant

chivalry; even the phrase “meet . . . in the field” recalls medieval jousting tournaments. However, such a request is preposterous in terms of strategy. As a consequence, Joan’s response to Talbot’s challenge is full of scorn: “Belike your lordship takes us then for fools, / To try if that our own be ours or no” (*IHVI* 3.2.61-62). Why should the French give up their advantage? They have already won the city of Rouen, so why should they engage in a chivalrous bout that might result in their defeat? Why should they play by the rules of chivalry, especially when playing by such rules would only lead to their defeat?

Joan is right to mock Talbot’s challenge to meet her in the field (Neill, *Putting History to the Question* 403), but the underlying strategic scenario suggests that there is more going on here than meets the eye. His challenge may not be the action of an anachronistic chivalric warrior hopelessly out of touch with the modern ways of war and strategic actions. Conversely, Taylor notes that “Talbot is outraged . . . by the French refusal to play the aristocratic game of war by the outmoded rules of masculine chivalry” (Oxford *IHVI* 40). Likewise, Grene points out that

throughout *I Henry VI* the English typically, characteristically, win all the pitched battles fought on fair terms. They only lose when the French use underhand or supernatural powers against them, or when they are betrayed by quite exceptional cowardice (Fastolf) or dissension on their own side.  
(67)

However, Talbot may be deceiving us as much as he is trying to deceive Joan. Joan believes that his challenge is foolish, but it could be a ruse, an attempt to draw her out of her secure base and fight where she and the French would lose their defensive advantage. Joan scornfully refuses the seemingly chivalric challenge, failing to see how potentially

devious it is.<sup>159</sup> Is Talbot calling out the French to engage in chivalric conflict, or is he trying to get them to leave the security of Rouen and put themselves at a strategic disadvantage? It should be remembered that Talbot makes his offer only after, according to the stage directions, “*The English whisper together in counsel*” (*IHVI* 3.2.59). Again the audience gets to see a stratagem being concocted onstage, as one side whispers in counsel while the others try to understand what is going on. In response to Talbot’s challenge Joan asks if he “takes [the French] them for fools” (*IHVI* 3.2.61). Talbot may not be as chivalric or as anachronistic as some may think.

As filled with pathos as Talbot’s death may be, it also includes his reminder to his son that he has tutored him “in stratagems of war” (*IHVI* 4.4.2).<sup>160</sup> While the scene has been played for pathos, the reference to stratagems does suggest that “any response to the extensive pathos of the deaths of Talbot and his young son as the heroic fulfillment of true chivalric sacrifice has to be severely compromised by our awareness of the larger context of treachery and betrayal” (Knowles, *Arguments with History* 25). Talbot is not immune to this context, and his behaviour at several key points in *1 Henry VI* suggest that he can betray with the best of them. While the interpretations of Talbot as a chivalric knight are partly convincing, they need to be qualified by Talbot’s more strategic actions. This qualification opens up different interpretative avenues and shows just how much the dramatic exploration of strategy can open up the plays in surprising ways. Talbot’s challenge can be seen as the challenge of an outmoded chivalric knight, but it can also be

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<sup>159</sup> As if to illustrate what would have happened if Joan had accepted Talbot’s “chivalric” offer, Shakespeare actually includes a very similar scenario later in the tetralogy that shows just how potentially dangerous the challenge could have been. In *3 Henry VI* Margaret successfully manages to draw York out of his safety zone and into an area where not only his safety but his very survival are in doubt (*3HVI* 1.3.70-74).

<sup>160</sup> For more on this scene, see Leggatt, “The death of John Talbot.” Knowles also argues that the reasons behind “the deaths of Talbot and his son . . . [are] not borne out by the larger dramatic situation” (*Arguments with History* 26).

seen as an attempt to get his enemies to drop their guard and put themselves at a disadvantage. While Jones is for the most part positive in his description of Talbot, even he suggests that Shakespeare may have ultimately disliked the character (*Origins* 159-60). Jones is right that Shakespeare's view of Talbot is far more nuanced and far less openly celebratory as Nashe's description might suggest. However, it is wrong to suggest that the play thus "suffers from a lack of authorial conviction" (Jones, *Origins* 160); in fact, the ambiguity surrounding Talbot and his actions makes the play more challenging. A concern with the ambiguous nature of politic stratagems is not insincere at all, and a dramatic exploration of these ambiguities does not, as Jones suggests (*Origins* 160), "ring hollow." Instead, such exploration should show that, if strategy is taken into consideration, even the behaviour of heroes can be seen in a new and dynamic light.

### 5.1.2 "The saintly king"

There is another example of a character who does not play by the same set of rules: Henry VI. This side of Henry does not override the pious, pacifistic portrait that most critics paint of him; instead, it provides a different and more nuanced way of seeing him.<sup>161</sup> The strategic side of Henry presents itself best when Henry is forced to give up his throne to York at the opening of *3Henry VI*. York and his followers are for taking the crown entirely, but Henry suggests that York allow him to "reign as king" for his lifetime, after which the crown would then pass to York (*3HVI* 1.1.171). Edward Hall records that historically this decision was not made by Henry but came about after "long

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<sup>161</sup> For more on the traditional view of Henry, see Marx, "Shakespeare's Pacifism." Champion argues that Henry's behaviour can be seen in direct contrast to the Machiavellianism of those around him: "If the spectators sit in awe of the superhuman Machiavellian determination of Richard, they pity Henry, perceiving him, for all his flaws, as something better than that which surrounds him" (*Perspective* 39-40).

arguments made, & deliberate consultation had among the peeres, prelates, and commons of the realme” (249). There are dramatic reasons for Shakespeare compressing this suggestion and giving it to Henry alone in a newly created scene that does not rely on the chronicles.<sup>162</sup> It is a scene that demands our attention, for as Manheim argues it is “the most severe test of audience sympathies toward Henry” (102). Many audience members may share Margaret’s reaction to what seems to be Henry’s weakness. For example, Curtis gives us this image of Henry before his enemies: “Here is the poignant image of the hapless, peace-preferring king who would rather use words and the law than arms” (55-56). Likewise, Champion notes that in this play “Henry fades into little more than a figurehead, at one point agreeing to disinherit his children” (*Noise of Threatening Drum* 84). In terms of dramatic tension, Henry is under considerable pressure from the immediate threat of the Yorkist troops on the stage; however, there may be other reasons for Henry’s capitulation.

Henry is actually managing to carve out a position for himself despite being put into a seemingly hopeless position. York accepts Henry’s offer immediately, declaring that as long as Henry “confirm[s] the crown to [York] and to [his] heirs,” Henry “shalt reign in quiet while [he] liv’st” (*3HVI* 1.1.173-73). Cox and Rasmussen argue that “York’s quick acceptance of Henry’s suggestion in 171 indicates a keen awareness of political reality, in contrast to Henry, whose suggestion puts him in a position of damaging weakness” (Arden *3HVI* 197). There are good grounds for seeing the scene in

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<sup>162</sup> Cox makes the interesting suggestion that this scene is patterned on “the opening scene in all the extant mystery cycles: the fall of Lucifer” (*The Dramaturgy of Power* 95). It is an interesting interpretation but, in complete contrast to his behaviour in *2 Henry VI*, York is actually one of the least dissembling figures in this scene, for he is presenting his case quite openly and aggressively. If anyone is being dissembling in this scene it is probably Henry, who is forced to accept the terms that are being pushed on him, terms that he sees no reason to accept after the immediate threat of the Yorks is gone. Therein lies the problem with interpretations that seek to prove that Henry will not break his word, for the action of the play shows that he sometimes does little to keep it.

this way, and Henry's allies certainly do so. However, given Henry's precarious position at the moment that he makes this offer, the deal that he offers is actually largely in his favour.<sup>163</sup> It would be easy for Henry to go back on his promise to make York his heir, whereas it would be much more difficult for York to do anything about it. York can only see Henry's weakness, and so he fails to see the strategic scenario playing out just before his eyes. Many critics have been equally taken in by Henry's weak appearance.

Discussing this scene, Sahel argues that "the Yorkists (who are going to perform the coup) are determined; language will not conquer them . . . language will not subvert action" (131). Sahel misses the point entirely, for this scene suggests that language actually can succeed where mere force fails. Although he may often prefer the rout to the ruse, Machiavelli also contends that the wisest princes can manipulate language:

Everyone knows how commendable it is for a prince to keep his word and live by integrity rather than by cunning. And yet our own era has shown that princes who have little regard for their word have achieved great things, being expert at beguiling men's minds. In the end, these princes overcame those who relied solely on loyalty. (*P* 18.68)<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Henry is putting York in the same position that he put him in regarding the imprisonment of Somerset described in *2 Henry VI*: in order for Henry to break his word, all he had to do was release one man from prison, while York would have to raise an army and start the rebellion all over again (*2HVI* 4.9.36-40).

<sup>164</sup> While "beguile" is in keeping with Machiavelli's meaning, his language actually refers to such beguiling in terms of strategic maneuvering, for a prince must learn to outflank the minds of others with cunning maneuver, or "astuzia aggirare," for this will allow them to outshine those who rely too heavily on loyalty: "quelli principi avere fatto gran cose, che della fede hanno tenuto poco conto, e che hanno saputo con l'astuzia aggirare è cervelli delli uomini; et alla fine hanno superato quelli che si sono fondati in sulla lealtà" (50). In any case, this advice runs counter to Machiavelli's other contention that an unarmed prince can inspire no respect: "being unarmed makes you, among other things, despised, which is one of the infamies from which a prince must shield himself . . . There is no comparison between an armed man and an unarmed one" (*P* 14.56). Henry may be despised, but he is able to achieve quite a lot considering his weakened position.

Besides, as Knowles notes when discussing Henry IV, the last thing anyone should do is take the actions of a king at face value (*Arguments with History* 72-75).<sup>165</sup> As Franssen notes, Shakespeare's rulers sometimes make good use of

devices of entrapment and equivocation. The rulers would call it testing and permissible deceit, while denouncing their opponents as Machiavellian villains for using similar methods. (179-80)

Is Henry making use of similar methods? Shakespeare's interest in such devices is different, for while Machiavelli suggests that it may be best to break one's word, Shakespeare shows the advantages of oath-breaking in one scene and the disadvantages of it in another. Honesty may not always be the best policy, but a sole reliance on dishonesty can be equally hazardous.

One hopes not to fall back into the kind of criticism so deplored by Knights and begin speculating about what Henry has on his mind, but the basic situation is this: at the time that Henry makes the offer, York is in a complete position of strength.<sup>166</sup> As mentioned earlier, Warwick has actually threatened Henry's life at this point (*3HVI* 1.1.166-69). There would be little that Henry would actually be able to do if York were to grab the crown. However, by accepting Henry's terms, York agrees to disband his

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<sup>165</sup> In keeping with this, Gentillet describes Machiavelli's contention that an oath can always be broken when it is one's interest to do so:

Un prudent et advisé seigneur (dit messer Nicolas) ne puet ny ne doit garder estroitement la foy, quand telle observation luy est prejudiciable, et que les occasions et necessitez qui la luy ont fait promettre sont ja passages et estaintes. (445)

“Machiavelli says that a careful prince should learn not to keep faith when it is damaging to him. One breaks one's promises when the opportunities arise and the need that caused him to promise in the first place has changed.”

<sup>166</sup> I refer to Knights' famous essay “How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?” (115-28), in which Knights attacks the extremes to which critics—following the example of Bradley—had gone in attempting to discuss Shakespeare's characters as though they were real people, even going so far as to speculate about their lives before or after the action of the play. Despite the soundness of his criticism, particularly in regards to the lengths that some critics had gone in attempting to delve into the characters' lives, it should be noted that the plays often encourage the audience to make such speculation. As Nuttall argues, “audiences guess and hypothesize all the time, and good dramatists rely on the fact” (46). Critics can do so too so long as such inferences are grounded in the text itself.

army in the hopes that Henry will keep his word to him. Henry may even be willing to do so, but his deal has given him and the Lancastrians breathing room and a chance to fight back. This is clearly what happens, for Clifford's immediate response to Henry's terms is to run and "tell the Queen these news" (*3HVI* 1.1.182). Henry's response suggests that Margaret will fight back, but there would be little that Clifford, Margaret or any of the Lancastrians would be able to do if York had simply just seized everything. It must be stressed that both the deal and the decision behind the deal take place on the stage, which allows the audience the chance truly to see strategy in action. If strategy requires the strategist to respond to situations as they occur and make use of circumstances to the best of one's possible advantage, then the audience has just witnessed a strategic masterstroke. Despite seeming to be so weak and being so ridiculed by the other Lancastrians, Henry actually gives the Lancastrians a fighting chance, a chance that they will make great use of, for within three scenes York will be dead and the Lancastrians will be victorious.<sup>167</sup> This would not have been possible if Henry had just handed over the crown.

One should heed the oath Henry asks York to make before giving up his son's inheritance:

I here entail  
The crown to thee and to thine heirs forever,  
Conditionally, that here thou take an oath  
To cease this civil war and, whilst I live,  
To honour me as thy King and sovereign,  
And neither by treason nor hostility  
To seek to put me down and reign thyself. (*3HVI* 1.1.194-200)

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<sup>167</sup> Manheim argues that Henry "does not even rage, as Edward II and Richard II rage, but yields mouse-like to his enemies' demands before stealing away from the wrath of his shrill queen" (85). While Henry does want to avoid Margaret's anger, he has not yielded as easily as Manheim suggests.



It must be pointed out that Henry demands this oath after having already agreed to give up his son's inheritance, so why York accepts such terms is really quite puzzling.<sup>168</sup> It is certainly puzzling that York publicly swears to an oath that is completely disadvantageous to him. Does Henry take advantage of York's over-estimation of himself and under-estimation of Henry? Manheim argues that Henry is always "stumbling over his old infirmity: absolute respect for the truth. York handles him with consummate Machiavellian skill" (103). However, who is handling whom? Essentially Henry asks for York to make an oath of loyalty to him as long as he lives. This seems straightforward enough, and even the Yorkists see it as being both peaceful and conciliatory. However, Henry is not in a position to demand an oath of loyalty from anyone, let alone York. The historical Henry VI did not demand such an oath, nor did he come up with the deal offered by the dramatic Henry here (Saccio, *Shakespeare's English Kings* 136). Shakespeare's decision to give this oath-making role to Henry offers up a new way of seeing his character and his possible strategic motivations. Henry's own Lancastrian allies have just openly—and disloyally—left him in disgust, so why should he expect anything from his enemy? However, Henry has the gall—or bravery, or cunning—to demand such an oath of loyalty while he is alone in this room without a single ally at his side.

One plays a different game when one can see that there is nothing left to lose. Henry is surrounded by enemies, and yet he is the one who is making this offer. What

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<sup>168</sup> The word "demand" is also used by Kerrigan when he describes this scene while noting that here, "for once, [Henry] appears decisive" (57). He is being decisive, much more so than Kerrigan is willing to concede.

does this oath accomplish?<sup>169</sup> Is it really an offer of peace? Is it really an attempt to unite the houses of Lancaster and York, as York himself claims (*3HVI* 1.1.205)? Perhaps, but it is more likely that critics such as Cairncross and Kerrigan are correct when they argue that the breaking of oaths is a dominant theme in the first tetralogy (Kerrigan 57). Champion notes that the first tetralogy is “shot through with broken vows” (*Noise of Threatening Drum* 86), while Kelly argues that “the sanctity of an oath” is completely maligned and disregarded in this scene (359). Henry’s allies have just left the room in disgust to go and get Margaret to undo what Henry is doing; whatever his seeming lack of political acumen, Henry has to be aware that his own allies will not stand for any deal he makes with the Yorkists, for they have just told him so (*3HVI* 1.1.178-88). Henry knows that the Lancastrians will attack York as soon as they can muster an army, and despite the oath he does nothing to stop them. It may be that the sanctity of oaths is not respected by Henry any more than by his enemies.

So what does this oath accomplish? It could be a play for time, for it allows Henry’s allies enough breathing space to get back on their feet. Edward soon uses this very phrase when he chides his father for giving “the house of Lancaster leave to breathe” (*3HVI* 1.2.12). Henry is not in a position of strength here, but he still has options. His move is often seen by critics and portrayed by actors as simple acquiescence, “a weak gesture of hopeless political compromise” (Cox, *The Dramaturgy of Power* 86) or as a last ditch attempt by the saintly king to make peace between the Lancastrians and Yorkists (Manheim 104). Is it a useless gesture because those around

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<sup>169</sup> The issue of oaths was very much in the air in the early modern period, and it produced a huge amount of anxiety amongst several people. Could people be trusted when they gave their word? For a fascinating discussion of early modern anxieties over oath-making, oath-breaking, dissimulation, and equivocation, see Zagorin, *Ways of Lying* (193-97) and Houdt, “Fraud and Deceit in Early Modern Times.”

Henry simply cannot accept peace, or is it one because Henry has meant for it to be so? Has Henry set up an oath that is bound to fail in order to out-manuever his enemies? If so, then Berry is certainly wrong when he argues that “Henry is not merely outfaced” by York, but that he is “outargued” as well (*Patterns of Decay* 54). In reality, York is the one who is making a bad deal, for he is making an oath despite realizing that oaths can be broken.<sup>170</sup> Knowles is quick to point out that York should not be trusted, for “we have already witness[ed] his complete perjury” before (*Arguments with History* 40), but Knowles overlooks the fact that here the breaking of the oath will actually rebound on York. York is the one who will be breaking his oath if he seeks to put Henry down or reign himself while Henry is alive. It is important to note that York does not ask for a similar oath from Henry.<sup>171</sup> York has shown himself to be such a great strategist throughout these plays, but he allows himself to be duped by the “church-like” Henry (*2HVI* 1.1.244). Manheim argues that “Henry is no showman” and that “he simply cannot and will not behave as though he were invulnerable when he is not” (82). Henry may be no showman, but here he manages to give the impression that he and the

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<sup>170</sup> For more on the depiction of oaths in the first tetralogy, see Kelly, “Oaths in Shakespeare’s *Henry VI* plays.” It is a subject that would continue to interest Shakespeare, particularly in the second tetralogy.

<sup>171</sup> While arguing that the deal is disastrous for Henry, Prior also points out that the oath makes no sense for York: “if York believes his title to be superior, he cannot in justice agree to defer the taking of it” (116). In keeping with this, Holinshed does not include any specific oath from the historical Henry despite providing a detailed one from the historical York:

“In the name of God, Amen: I, Richard duke of Yorke, promise and swear by the faith and truth that I owe to almightie God, that I shall neuer consent, procure, or stirre, directlie or indirectlie, in priuie or apert, neither (as much as in me is) shall suffer to be doone, consented, procured, or stirred, anie thing that may sound to the abridgement of the naturall life of king Henrie the sixt, or to the hurt or diminishing of his reigne or dignitie roiall, by violence, or anie other waie, against his freedome or libertie.” (qtd. in Nicoll and Nicoll 123)

What kept York from demanding that Henry and the Lancastrians make a similar oath not to attack him? No doubt it would have been broken, but at least York would not be the only one publicly breaking his word of honour.

Lancastrians are more vulnerable than they actually are. This false impression makes York over-confident of success and unsuspecting of Henry's possible motivations.

This is made clear when York announces that York and Lancaster are reconciled and that he will split up his main force by going to Wakefield (*3HVI* 1.1.204, 206). It is bad policy for York to disband his army when it is the only thing that allows him to make such demands, a fact underscored by Warwick's declaration that he will keep his own troops in London (*3HVI* 1.1.207). The presence of troops is the only thing keeping them in the game, and by accepting Henry's oath York abandons his material advantage and will be dead by the end of the act. How does this happen? It happens because York does not even consider that Henry might not be playing by the same set of rules that he is, and so he is wrong to mock "simple Henry" and "his oaths" later in the play (*3HVI* 1.2.58). York may mock Henry and his supposed gullibility, but he is the one who winds up looking like the fool. Manheim argues that "York honours an oath for too long and thus is caught in Margaret's trap" (81). However, it is Henry's trap as much as Margaret's. York breaks his oath if he moves against Henry, but Henry breaks no oath if he or his allies move against York, which they decide to do before this scene has even ended (Kerrigan 57-58). Critics have often paid much attention to Richard's advice to his father that he break his oath to Henry on the grounds that "an oath is of no moment, being not took / Before a true and lawful magistrate / That hath authority over him that swears. / Henry had none" (*3HVI* 1.2.2124).<sup>172</sup> For example, Kerrigan argues that

Richard's two-sided character is born on the subject of oaths. It is a terrible thing to be forsworn. Oaths *are* of no moment, he implies, when not sworn before "a true and lawful magistrate." But since Henry's

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<sup>172</sup> For more on this scene in relation to the Vice tradition, see Kerrigan, *Shakespeare's Promises* (63-65).

authority is illegitimate, York's oath was "vain and frivolous": let ambition's race begin! (59-60)<sup>173</sup>

Likewise, Knowles argues that Richard's argument in this scene "provide[s] a verbal argument of Machiavellian rationalization" (*Arguments with History* 40). While this is true, one should keep in mind that when Margaret announces her decision to attack York, Henry does nothing to stop her. The audience has just seen Henry set up this oath moments before, and yet now it sees Henry acquiesce to its complete and utter betrayal.

Is this weakness on Henry's part, or is it strategic calculation? Margaret's forces actually "render Richard's argument redundant" (Knowles, *Arguments with History* 41-42). Richard is clearly not the only one interested in breaking oaths in order to take part in ambition's race. Henry also calls York "that hateful Duke" (*3HVI* 1.1.266), wishes Margaret success in destroying him, and immediately writes to Westmoreland, Northumberland, and Clifford to win them back to his side (*3HVI* 1.1.270-72).<sup>174</sup> He claims he that it torments his heart to do so, but he must know that these nobles will help to ensure the destruction and death of York. As Meron notes, "a ruler can always find a colourable excuse for non-fulfillment of a promise" (190). One might find it hard to apply such a maxim to Henry, but given his actions in this scene it is equally hard not to. It is difficult to continue to insist that Henry is completely uninvolved in the strategic

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<sup>173</sup> Champion argues that Shakespeare has set up Henry and Richard in opposition to each other in order to achieve greater dramatic unity "through an increasingly intense movement between the two major value structures in the play, provides an emotional coherence for the multiple plot strands" (*Perspective* 48). This argument is also made by Leggatt: "At first encounter *Henry VI* looks like a lumbering, shapeless chronicle; but it may begin to make sense if we can see it as framed by the death of a hero and the birth of a monster" (*Shakespeare's Political Drama* 31). This may be so, but dramatic unity can be achieved by ways other than simply pitting two characters against each other, for the numerous politic stratagems pursued by *all* the characters also give the plays a real energy and dynamic sense of structure. The multiple plot strands also need not be seen as a hindrance; in fact, they could be seen as one of the plays' most interesting features.

<sup>174</sup> This view of Henry differs from that offered by Howard and Rackin, who contend that Henry's behaviour in this scene represent his lowest moment as a ruler: "Henry is admittedly weak, pious, and ineffectual in the earlier plays, but it is only in *Part III* that the hollowness at the center of the patriarchal edifice is fully exposed" (*Engendering a Nation* 85).

maneuverings of his court (Greenblatt, "Shakespeare and the ethics of authority" 68). It should be noted that Henry later tries to disassociate himself from what has happened after he sees the head of York who has just been killed:

Ay, as the rocks cheer them that fear their wrack,  
To see this sight it irks my very soul.  
Withhold revenge, dear God. 'Tis not my fault,  
Nor wittingly have I infringed my vow. (*3HVI* 2.2.5-8)

Is this entirely genuine, or is it also another strategic performance? Henry's actions have helped lead towards the sight that so repels him now. Have Henry's vows been unwittingly broken, or has he created a set of circumstances that could easily end in this way? As one critic has argued, the "very rejection of the rules of the game helps" the player "to win it" (Moseley 68). It would seem that no one, not even Henry, plays by the same rules all the time.<sup>175</sup>

Just before York is taken by Margaret and her forces, Northumberland declares that "it is war's prize to take all vantages, / And ten to one is no impeach of valour" (*3HVI* 1.4.59-60). It is a short speech spoken by one of the seemingly minor characters in the play, but it has real resonance for this section and for the tetralogy as a whole. If Henry VI cannot be trusted, who can?<sup>176</sup> The question of whether or not Henry can be trusted arises again when Warwick has placed Henry back on the throne. Again, Henry

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<sup>175</sup> As Machiavelli insists time and time again, the true dissembler is often the one you would least expect. He even gives the example of Alexander VI, who "never thought or did anything except to deceive, and he always found someone to deceive . . . [But] he always got away with his deceptions, because he was so well acquainted with this aspect of the world" (*P* 18.69), or he "conosceva bene questa parte del mondo" (51).

<sup>176</sup> Shakespeare was not the only writer who dramatically explored these Machiavellian questions. As Harp notes, Ben Jonson was quite familiar with the Florentine's writings (188, 191, 197). Such familiarity can be seen in *Sejanus* (1603), in which Tiberius' strategic actions are as difficult to comprehend as Henry VI's. Franssen argues that Tiberius has actually been quietly pulling the strings the entire time by allowing Sejanus to commit crimes that will benefit Tiberius but will result in Sejanus' ruin (178). Although Sejanus believes that he is the one who is pulling the strings, Tiberius is the one who is the true strategist. The inscrutability of one's moves does not dilute their strategic effectiveness; in fact, such inscrutability is often an asset. Henry VI's moves may be inscrutable to those around him, but that does not necessarily mean that he is not being strategic.

shows a certain wiliness at the very moment when he is most powerless. This is in keeping with Hale's argument that Machiavelli often shows how "in a life-and-death struggle a small man must sometimes hit a big bully below the belt" (*Renaissance* 148). As Chapter 3 has shown, Shakespeare is certainly interested in the bully, but here we see his interest in the small man. Warwick has stretched himself too thin with his alliances, to such an extent that eventually they all turn on him. The basic flaw in Warwick's alliance strategy is exposed by Henry in a scene that shows strategy in all of its dynamic permutations. In a gesture of seeming submission, Henry offers to give his crown to Warwick (*3HVI* 4.6.24-25). Warwick immediately refuses and says that Clarence is next in line to the throne (*3HVI* 4.6.30-31), only to be followed by Clarence insisting that he is willing to yield his "free consent" to Warwick (*3HVI* 4.6.36). Once again Henry asks his captors to make an oath, and once again this oath will have very interesting consequences for those who take it:

Warwick and Clarence, give me both your hands,  
 Now join your hands, and with your hands your hearts,  
 That no dissension hinder government.  
 I make you both Protectors of this land,  
 While I myself will lead a private life  
 And in devotion spend my latter days,  
 To sin's rebuke and my Creator's praise. (*3HVI* 4.6.38-44)

Most critics generally focus on the second part of the speech and continue to see Henry solely as the idealistic, "good, but weak king[]" (Meron 189).<sup>177</sup> This interpretation holds for the most part, but there is another way of interpreting Henry's actions.<sup>178</sup> Just as the

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<sup>177</sup> For more on Henry VI as an idealistic, good, but weak king, see Manheim, *The Weak King Dilemma*. This is also the picture of Henry that Shakespeare got from his historical sources such as Hall, who speculated on why the historical Henry's reign was so disastrous (Greene 109). Despite such assertions, it is nevertheless possible that Shakespeare saw a side to Henry's character that the chroniclers did not.

<sup>178</sup> Jones notes that Henry's discussion about oath-making and oath-breaking with his Keepers in 3.1 "sets the tone for the whole of" the second part of *3 Henry VI*, which in many ways serves as a dramatic study in duplicity (*Origins* 190). The scene Jones refers to includes the first Keeper's contention that an oath made

second part of the speech revealed one side of Henry's character, so too does the first part reveal another.

Warwick has just said that he will take control and keep "Clarence only for Protector" (*3HVI* 4.6.37). Henry's desire for them to share power actually ensures that their alliance will soon fall apart, as the back and forth that follows between Warwick and Clarence dramatically reveals (*3HVI* 4.6.45-49). Henry has set up a dramatic situation between two contentious characters that exposes their weaknesses, all while appearing as though he is simply a pious, pacifistic fool.<sup>179</sup> Warwick and Clarence may think that they are in control of Henry, but actually it is at least partly the other way around. Despite his weak position, Henry has exploited the weakness of their alliance, all with the use of words, the very thing he is supposed to be so inept with (*Sahel* 131).<sup>180</sup> Warwick has no interest in sharing power with Clarence, and Clarence now begins to realize the true nature of his alliance with Warwick, an alliance that is to his distinct disadvantage.

This underlying strategic scenario is set up and made possible by the supposedly saintly king who merely wants to retreat from the world and tend to his own garden. Is he sincere when he says this, or is he merely trying to keep his "opponents constantly off

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to a king is no longer valid if that man is no longer king: "we were subjects but while you were king" (*3HVI* 3.1.80). Henry insists that he is still king even though he is no longer on the throne, but this assertion is denied by his keepers, who suggest that their loyalty to Edward, like their disloyalty to Henry, is subject to change (*3HVI* 3.1.94-95). It is interesting that even though Henry's humbleness in 2.5 and at the opening of this scene gets the most attention, Henry's behaviour (*3HVI* 3.1.81-92) suggest that he still sees himself as king and is not quite willing to give it all up and go live as a shepherd (*3HVI* 2.5.21-54).

<sup>179</sup> At several points in his writings Machiavelli describes the way that rulers divide and conquer those around them in order to keep them under control, be it the cardinals inciting the Orsini and Colonna families in Rome (*P* 11.46), the Florentines encouraging conflicts within "their subject cities" like Pisa (*P* 20.81), or the Florentines themselves being similarly duped by the Venetians (*P* 20.81).

<sup>180</sup> Condren notes that Machiavelli was not the only early modern writer to discuss the ways in which oaths could be used and abused: "For men such as [Roger] Ascham and [Marchamont] Nedham, to stand upon traditional oaths as if the world were ideal was very much to 'miss ye cushion'" (170). Ascham's take on this question of oath-making and oath-breaking is interesting, especially since he poured such scorn over Italians like Machiavelli and infamously quoted the following proverb in *The Scholemaster* (1550): "An Englishman Italianate is a devil incarnate" (qtd. in Durant 607). Appearances can be deceiving.



balance” (Roe, “Shakespeare and Machiavelli” 364)? At several times Henry says that he does not want power, but so do a lot of Shakespeare’s rulers, including Richard III (*RIII* 3.7.203-06).<sup>181</sup> Even Henry’s allies do not take this view of his actions, for Margaret and others are full of scorn for him and his supposed weakness. However, just as Henry’s oath at the beginning of the play allowed “the house of Lancaster leave to breathe” (*3HVI* 1.2.12), so too does his oath here ensure that Warwick cannot fully dominate the scene the way that he would like. This is not to say that Henry should now be seen as being entirely duplicitous, but merely that the conventional portrait of him does not account for some of Henry’s actions. As Guicciardini argues, the secrets of a prince are infinite, and one should not judge a prince’s actions too quickly, for often what seems to be done for one reason has actually been done for another, and what you think may be foolish imprudence is actually the height of prudence (*Ricordi* C.154). Margaret and Prince Edward would probably have been completely sidelined by Warwick and Clarence’s seizure of power, but Henry’s oath keeps this from happening. However they may be interpreted, even by his allies, Henry’s actions keep the Lancastrians alive to fight another day.

### **5.2.3 “The loyal ally”**

Although York is duped by Henry in *3 Henry VI*, in *2 Henry VI* he is the one who is doing the duping. York is advised by Mortimer to wait to strike out against the Lancastrians (*1HVI* 2.5.101-06). And so he begins to build up alliances with other

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<sup>181</sup> Appearances are always subject to manipulation, a fact that can be found in the works of Machiavelli, Shakespeare, and others such as Friedrich Dedekind, Baldassare Castiglione and Balthazar Gracián (Houtdt 21-22). All the world is a stage, particularly when one is a politician. Just because some appear to be honest and naïve does not mean that they are so: “Men in general judge more with the eye than with the hand, because everyone can see, but few can feel. Everyone sees what you seem to be, but few feel what you are” (*P* 18.69-70). Machiavelli also notes that the select few who know the truth will not speak out against the opinion of the many, who are merely satisfied with the end results.

members of the court so that he will be ready when the Lancastrians begins to show signs of weakness. York is soon able to secure the loyalty of Warwick and Salisbury (*2HVI* 2.2.60-63), but he tells them to hold off openly declaring their support for him until the time is right. Acting first will merely declare their intentions to everyone; however, if they keep their thoughts and ambitions to themselves they will be able to take advantage of the turmoil that is brewing within the court. Earlier Mortimer had counseled York to be “silen[t]” and “politic” until the time was right (*IHVI* 2.5.101), and here York counsels his allies to do the same, encouraging them to wait in “silent secrecy” (*2HVI* 2.2.67). He also counsels Warwick and Salisbury to do

as [he does] in these dangerous days —  
Wink at the Duke of Suffolk’s insolence,  
At Beaufort’s pride, at Somerset’s ambition,  
At Buckingham, and all the crew of them,  
Till they have snared the shepherd of the flock,  
That virtuous prince, the good Duke Humphrey.  
'Tis that they seek; and they, in seeking that,  
Shall find their deaths, if York can prophesy. (*2HVI* 2.2.68-76)

Essentially York coaches them to behave as though they were players, for he asks them to act and give the impression that they do not desire the crown. Like Buckingham’s discussion of the acting skills necessary for gracing one’s stratagems (*RIII* 3.5.5-11), here York advises his allies to use drama to their strategic advantage. Acting will not only allow them the ability to hide their intentions; it will also help them use the Lancastrians for their own ends. York’s position is strengthening, but he needs Humphrey out of the way before he can truly make his move. York is not strong enough to go after Humphrey alone, and so he will do all he can to make sure that his own enemies remove Humphrey for him.

York is smart to do so, for he seeks to take advantage of his enemies' desire to destroy Humphrey. The scene is often cited as the definitive Machiavellian scene, and yet one can clearly see here the distinction between the Machiavel of Marlowe and others and the strategists that so intrigued Shakespeare. The Machiavels may get the best lines, but the strategist is the one quietly plotting their eventual ruin. It is a powerful scene, for as Dzelzainis notes, Shakespeare shows characters on the stage engaged in "the process of invention itself" as they "set about plotting – or inventing – [Humphrey's] murder" ("Shakespeare and Politics" 102). It is also quite chilling to hear Suffolk and the others plotting Humphrey's death, but the dramatic power of their strategic machinations creates an interesting dramatic effect: it shifts the attention off York. At the moment the conspirators are trying to destroy Humphrey, and so they fail to see the very real threat that York poses behind his seemingly friendly façade. York knows that this is merely a temporary alliance designed to remove the threat that Humphrey poses. As Manheim notes, it is an alliance of people who are "committed to destroy [each other] once the protector is out of the way" (92). Despite the later protestations of Margaret and Suffolk after their plot has been exposed, York is merely doing to them what they were planning to do to him.

The destruction of Humphrey will weaken them far more than they realize, for the conspirators will be seen to be the ones behind it. If York were to rush forward and try to kill his enemies, he would declare his intentions and thus dilute his strength, which at the moment is at least partially increased by the fact that no one knows what he is planning. It is far better for him to wait for his enemies to destroy themselves and then come along to pick up the pieces. Sometimes it may be essential to destroy your enemy first, but not

if someone else is going to do it for you (Roe, "Shakespeare and Machiavelli" 363). Manheim argues that "York's maneuvering in the attack on Duke Humphrey" can be seen in this light (81) and that York is clearly "playing both sides" (93). This becomes even more clear when York finds himself amongst the conspirators plotting Humphrey's murder. York tells the audience in an aside that he "hath more reason for" Humphrey's death (*2HVI* 3.1.245), and yet he hangs back and lets Suffolk and the Cardinal argue and wrangle over who will get to do the deed. Why should York volunteer himself when they are so willing to do it for him? As Guicciardini argues, the quickest way to make supporters of those who would be hostile to your designs is to make them think that they are their principal authors and benefactors: "Uno de' modi a fare fautore di qualche vostro disegno qualcuno che ne sarebbe stato alieno, è farne capo a lui, e farnelo, come dire, autore o principale" (*Ricordi* C.200).

Shakespeare exploits the dramatic tension of the scene by using York's aside to create a quiet complicity between him and the audience, one that is much more compelling than the one created by his address at the end of the scene (*2HVI* 3.1.330-82). The earlier aside allows us a window on the machinations of the scene and on the *praxis* of strategy, for here is a character quietly out-maneuvering everyone around him. In keeping with this, York's reaction to their final resolution is telling: "now we three have spoke it. / It skills not greatly who impugns our doom" (*2HVI* 3.1.279-80). York does not really care if Suffolk or the Cardinal does it; all that matters is that Humphrey will be killed. Again, as Manheim notes, York

actively joins the conspiracy following (but not preceding) Humphrey's imprisonment, and actually urges his murder, stopping short of volunteering to perform the act . . . York . . . [has] out-maneuvered (out-Machiavelled) Suffolk, Margaret, and the cardinal at the crucial moment,

thus reaping all the political benefit of Humphrey's murder while sharing none of the blame—York now of course being safely off in Ireland. Humphrey's downfall, then, leads directly to York's Machiavellian leap for power. (93)<sup>182</sup>

Pugliatti also argues that the Duke of York is depicted as being far more strategic “than [Edward] Halle suggests. He is presented as plotting the ruin of ‘good Duke Humphrey’ of Gloucester and as finally agreeing to his murder” (156). This is more subtle than the cackling Machiavel of the end of the scene. York's role in Humphrey's murder is not mentioned in the chronicles. Saccio insists that his inclusion in this scene suggests Shakespeare's “overhasty anticipation of his career in the next decade” (*Shakespeare's English Kings* 125). However, the way that this scene is carefully crafted suggests that it is not overhasty, for they reveal the dramatic potential of politic stratagems.

At the moment such deviousness has yet to be fully revealed, and so York must continue to play his part. In their rush to murder Humphrey, Suffolk and the Cardinal will not have a similar option to the one York is creating for himself. Many critics, such as Brockbank (“The Frame of Disorder” 83) and Jones (*Origins* 45), have discussed the role of Machiavellianism in this key scene:

Margaret, Suffolk and Cardinal Beaufort are the readily identifiable stage Machiavels for [Michael] Manheim [in *The Weak King Dilemma in the Shakespearean History Plays*] and though less obtrusive most of those around them have the mark of ‘policy’ on them in ‘a court . . . dominated openly by sixteenth-century Machiavellian standards’ (13), namely ruthlessness, deceit, violence and distrust. The rationalizations of ‘law’ and ‘right’ are merely ‘veneers of crude power-rivalry’ (82) in which the humanist service to the state of a Gloucester is sacrificed by rapacious Machiavellian self-serving (92). Margaret Scott singles out [in ‘Machiavelli and the Machiavel’] Suffolk's advice to murder Gloucester . . . as ‘thoroughly Machiavellian’ (165). (Knowles, Arden *2HVI* 63)

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<sup>182</sup> For more on the depiction of Ireland in *2 Henry VI*, see Maley, “The Irish Text and Subtext of Shakespeare's English Histories” (97-101). According to Maley, the play “contains more explicit Irish allusions than any other Shakespeare play” (97).

While there is little doubt that Margaret, Suffolk, and the Cardinal are Machiavellian characters making Machiavellian pronouncements—particularly Suffolk’s “be it by gins, by snares, by subtley, / Sleeping or waking, ’tis no matter how, / So he be dead” (*2HVI* 3.1.262-64)—the most effective Machiavellian strategist in this scene is actually the character who is saying the least: York.<sup>183</sup> It is interesting that York says “we three,” when in fact Suffolk and the Cardinal are the only ones who have been declaring their intentions to murder Humphrey. It costs nothing for York to say that he is on their side now, for they will be the ones who will have blood on their hands. York wants them to think that he is on their side, even though he has set things up in such a way that he can back away whenever he likes. As Prior notes, York takes part in the plan but “takes no part in the [public] undermining of Gloucester . . . . The king’s inability to protect Gloucester is . . . more than a humiliating failure to secure justice; it makes him vulnerable to York’s plans” (110). Humphrey and Henry are not the only ones who are vulnerable to York’s plans. As Champion notes, “York, as it turns out, has read the political situation correctly, and he is the prime benefactor of the events following Gloucester’s death” (*Noise of Threatening Drum* 83).

York has also created a situation that best accords with his strategic interests. And so, it is inadequate to see York as merely a precursor for his son Richard, for he has shown that he is one of the ablest strategists in the first tetralogy.<sup>184</sup> York will be the only one who will truly gain from Humphrey’s murder, while the others will all suffer

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<sup>183</sup> Holinshed also notes that the historical conspirators did “not stand on quillts” (*2HVI* 3.1.261) when it came to killing Humphrey, for they were determined to destroy him despite his innocence: “Although the duke sufficientlie answered to all things against him objected; yet, because his death was determined, his wisdom and innocencie nothing auailed” (qtd. in Nicoll and Nicoll 112).

<sup>184</sup> Hadfield argues that in 3.1 of *2 Henry VI* “York’s words prefigure the more brilliant and compelling rhetorical maneuvers of his younger son, Richard” (40), while Pugliatti argues that York “is the perfect Machiavellian villain and the worthy father of crookback Richard” (160). While there is no question that Richard is brilliant at some types of maneuvering, one must never forget who he learned his craft from.

greatly as a result of it. Worden calls him “the Machiavel of the trilogy” (“Shakespeare and Politics” 35), but this is to focus on his Vice-like addresses while ignoring his quiet and subtle duplicity. Earlier Suffolk declares that “it is good deceit / Which mates him first that first intends deceit” (2*HVI* 3.1.264-65). Warren notes that the word “conceit” has sometimes been used in place of the first “deceit,” declaring that “‘conceit’ also makes good sense: it is a good idea to deal with your opponent’s treachery in advance” (Oxford 2*HVI* 193). As Foakes argues, the animosity between the others “provide[s] an opportunity for the emergence to power of York” (44). Although the other conspirators, like more conventional Machiavels, are all clambering over themselves to do the jobs themselves (2*HVI* 3.1.267-77), York avoids direct involvement even though he has the most to gain and thus “more reason for his death” (2*HVI* 3.1.245). By the end of the scene York has not only been provided with the army that he needs to make his claim for the crown, but he has only been given a very convenient alibi for the murder itself, for he will be in Ireland by the time it takes place.<sup>185</sup> This alibi may not seem significant, but it allows York to escape the blame that will soon fall upon the other conspirators once Humphrey’s body has been discovered.

York’s absence during the discovery of Humphrey’s body often results in his true involvement to be overlooked by both characters and critics, but this must be kept in mind if one is to fully appreciate both the strategic finesse of the scene and Shakespeare’s coupling of drama and politic stratagems. An off-stage character is controlling the outcome of all that occurs. The conspirators’ stratagem quickly falls apart, for even Henry has not been taken in by their performance of sorrow (2*HVI* 3.2.27-29). It also falls apart for another dramatic reason, for, as if on cue, Warwick and his father Salisbury

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<sup>185</sup> Or, as York puts it: “’twas man I lacked, and you will give them to me” (2*HVI* 3.1.344).

burst in to declare that “it is reported, mighty sovereign, / That good Duke Humphrey traitorously is murdered / By Suffolk and the Cardinal Beaufort’s means” (2HVI 3.2.122-24). Some critics have seen the suddenness of this scene as just more proof of the play’s amateurish, episodic and loose structure (Ornstein 42), while in recent years some have begun to see the scene more in relation to the Cade rebellion, which this supposed outburst of popular fury seems to anticipate (Champion, ““Havoc in the commonwealth”” 165-80).<sup>186</sup> But Warwick’s sudden entry onto the stage may be due not to sloppiness on the part of the playwright or a desire to depict social upheaval and unrest; instead, it may be an ingenious *exposé* of strategy and the ways that it works in practice. Given that the murder of Humphrey has been committed a mere 121 lines before Warwick bursts onto the stage, it does seem surprising not only that he and Salisbury should know of it but that it has already been “reported” to “the commons” (2HVI 3.2.122-25). How could they possibly know this? However, when one takes York’s “far-fet policy” or strategy into consideration (2HVI 3.1.292), it seems quite possible that York has actually arranged the whole affair in order to bring down his former allies. The audience has already been made aware of the alliance between York and the Nevilles, for he has laid out his claim to the crown to them and they have offered him their allegiance (2HVI 2.2.9-59). They have thus joined together in a “private plot” not only to place York on the throne but also to destroy his enemies (2HVI 2.2.60).

York has been part of the conspiracy to kill Humphrey, and so he may very well be the source of the “report[.]” Warwick claims to be responding to (2HVI 3.2.122). York

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<sup>186</sup> In Holinshed’s history the Commons seem to be motivated both by a love of Humphrey and a hatred of Suffolk (Nicoll and Nicoll 113), while in Hall the reasons for the charges against Suffolk come less from popular rage and more from Suffolk’s poor handling of the murder and its aftermath, for it soon becomes clear to everyone who was behind it (Bullough 107-08).



has the most to gain from Humphrey's death (*2HVI* 3.1.245), but he also has the most to gain by exposing the conspirators, particularly at a time when his own role in the conspiracy is least likely to be revealed. It is unlikely because everyone is in a panic and is unsure what to do next. Even Henry, who has just lambasted Suffolk with a torrent of angry words, now acts as though he has no knowledge of the murder: "Then he is dead . . . 'tis too true; / But how he died, God knows, not Henry" (*2HVI* 3.2.130-31). Given his accusations against Suffolk (*2HVI* 3.2.39-55), it is an interesting response to say the least, but this is the kind of confusion and fear that York has both planned and is capitalizing on. While Suffolk had earlier tried to use theatre to his advantage and displayed Humphrey's body in the appropriate way, fashioning his own looks to appear sufficiently aggrieved (*2HVI* 3.2.11-12), here theatre is used against him to further York's stratagems. In an astonishing moment of metatheatre, Warwick draws back the curtains to reveal Humphrey's body for all to see. As Knowles notes, the Quarto's stage direction makes this metatheatrical element quite explicit: "to further the dramatic relationship between the verbal and the visual, . . . the audience's experience is made to parallel that of Henry and the others on the stage" (Arden *2HVI* 265). Again Warwick makes his accusation that "violent hands were laid / Upon the life of this thrice-famed duke" (*2HVI* 3.2.156-57).

This becomes more clear as Warwick begins to describe Humphrey's body to his captive audience, drawing attention to this or that feature before moving on to focus on other examples of the murderers' deed:

*See* how the blood is settled in his face . . . .  
*But see*, his face is black and full of blood,  
His eyeballs further out than when he lived,  
Staring full ghastly like a strangled man;

His hair upreared, his nostrils stretched with struggling;  
His hands abroad displayed, as one that grasped  
And tugged for life and was by strength subdued.  
*Look*, on the sheets of his hair, *you see*, is sticking;  
His well-proportioned beard made rough and rugged,  
Like to the summer's corn by tempest lodged.  
It cannot be but he was murdered here;  
The least of all these *signs* were probable. (2*HVI* 3.2.160-78) [my emphasis]

The murderers may have made no effort to hide their act despite their instructions, or Warwick may simply do a wonderful job of conjuring up images that do not actually exist. Again, York is absent from the scene of the crime and is thus able to avoid the suspicion that has been thrown on Suffolk and the Cardinal, whose proximity is now used to prove complicity: “Who finds the heifer dead and bleeding fresh / And sees fast by a butcher with an axe, / But will suspect ’twas he that made the slaughter” (2*HVI* 3.2.188-90). York is just as responsible for the swinging of that axe as anyone, and yet his absence absolves him. He has stage-managed the whole affair from afar in a way that seals the doom of his enemies, a metatheatrical element made even more explicit when Warwick refers to whole affair as a “tragedy” (2*HVI* 3.2.194). Perhaps even the avoidance of blame for Margaret is also contrived, for that might hurt the force of the accusation (2*HVI* 3.2.208-09). By keeping the focus on Suffolk, York and his allies manage to ensure not only that he will be exiled, but that Margaret’s power will be severely undermined. The stratagem works wonderfully, for Suffolk is banished from the kingdom “on the pain of death” (2*HVI* 3.2.288).

Margaret can see the trap that has been laid for her, and while Suffolk can only bemoan his state, Margaret makes sure to include a third party when she curses Henry and Warwick: “There’s two of you, the devil make a third! / And threefold vengeance

tend upon your steps” (2*HVI* 3.2.302-04). Knowles notes that Margaret relies here on a proverbial phrase that “there cannot lightly come a worse except the devil come himself” (Arden 2*HVI* 274), while Warren also links the phrase to a similar one made in *The Merchant of Venice* (Oxford 2*HVI* 216). This may be true, but it overlooks another explanation for Margaret’s words, one that is made all the more clear once one takes the nature of politic stratagems into consideration. York is safely away in Ireland while all of this is going on, but Margaret may realize the hand played by York in this whole affair. This realization may cause her to compare York to the devil, while her words also suggest that she realizes that she has become a pawn in York’s “far-fet policy” (2*HVI* 3.1.292). It is a politic stratagem that has been aided by theatre, for York has stage-managed the nature of Humphrey’s death while also realizing that his own presence on the stage might give the game away. A more conventional Machiavel would have welcomed the limelight, but York is willing to stay off the stage during his moment of triumph. York may give grand Machiavellian asides to the audience, but his behaviour amongst the other characters is a study in quiet duplicity. Margaret, Suffolk, and the other conspirators are given the great speeches in favour of duplicity while planning Humphrey’s death (2*HVI* 3.1.261-64). Likewise, Warwick and Suffolk are allowed to accuse and counter-accuse each other following the murder (2*HVI* 3.2.197-231), Salisbury energetically tries to keep the rousing and boisterous commons under control (2*HVI* 3.2.242-77), while Margaret and Suffolk part in a romantic scene full of pathos and sadness (2*HVI* 3.2.380-412).<sup>187</sup> The drama onstage is a screen for more duplicitous

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<sup>187</sup> For more on how the parting of Margaret and Suffolk has been portrayed on stage, see Warren’s Oxford edition of 2 *Henry VI* (44-49).

offstage drama, for standing above it all is the unseen York who has set all of this in motion.

#### 5.2.4 “The brother’s keeper”

Much has been made of the similarities between Richard and his father York (Pugliatti 160), but few have looked at the ways that Edward might actually outstrip his brother in terms of duplicity. Richard’s overtly Machiavellian behaviour gets the lion’s share of attention, but Edward’s quiet cunning actually helps to link him more strongly to his father. At the same time, the ease with which he allows Richard to take the blame for crimes for which Edward is equally responsible show that he is clearly not his brother’s keeper. When the Yorkists have succeeded in defeating both Warwick and Margaret’s forces at the battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury, Edward sets about creating a “footstool of security.” He immediately has Somerset executed before turning to the issue of what do with the Lancastrians (3*HVI* 5.5.3-4). Edward asks whether “proclamation [has been] made that who finds Edward / Shall have a high reward, and he his life?” (3*HVI* 5.5.9-10). For Edward it is extremely important that Prince Edward not be allowed to escape. His own successes at Barnet and Tewkesbury are due to his escape from Warwick, and so he has no intention of repeating Warwick’s mistake. Cox and Rasmussen note that “Edward’s assurance for the Prince’s life is the play’s final public promise, broken by Edward himself almost as soon as he makes it” (Arden 3*HVI* 353).<sup>188</sup>

Although this is true, one wonders if Edward could ever keep such a promise. If Prince Edward is allowed to escape the war will continue and Edward’s own crown will remain perpetually insecure. Although Edward is not often painted with the same brush as Richard, his language in this scene mimics that of his younger brother. For example,

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<sup>188</sup> For an interesting discussion of this topic, see Kerrigan, *Shakespeare’s Promises* (63-65)

just before the Battle of Tewkesbury Edward tells his soldiers to make their way through the “thorny wood,” which “must by the roots be hewn up yet ere night” (*3HVI* 5.4.67, 69). This image is taken up again when Prince Edward is brought forward under guard and Edward exclaims “what? Can so young a thorn begin to prick?” (*3HVI* 5.5.13). Both Martin (Oxford *3HVI* 311) and Cox and Rasmussen (Arden *3HVI* 354) note that Edward is relying on a proverbial phrase here, but such language and imagery is similar to a speech made earlier in this play, as Richard famously proclaims his desire to take the crown for himself when the time is right:

And I, like one lost in a thorny wood,  
That rents the thorns and is rent with the thorns,  
Seeking a way and straying from the way,  
Not knowing how to find the open air,  
But toiling desperately to find it out,  
Torment myself to catch the English crown:  
And from that torment I will free myself,  
Or hew my way out with a bloody axe. (*3HVI* 3.2.174-81)

These examples raise the question of whether or not Edward might be seen as strategically-minded as his brother. This strategic ability may be even greater, since Richard’s villainy is much more obvious. Richard may claim sole responsibility for his crimes in his soliloquies with the audience, soliloquies that are often seen as sincere expressions of Richard’s intentions, but one should not allow oneself to get entangled in the paradox of Epimenides the Cretan.<sup>189</sup> Richard tells us that he has fooled everyone, but that does not mean it is so.

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<sup>189</sup> Despite the fact that Richard lies to everyone on the stage, audiences generally want to believe that he speaks the truth to them. Ian McKellen, who played Loncraine’s 1996 film version, argues that all of Shakespeare’s troubled heroes reveal their inner selves in their confidential soliloquies. These are not thoughts-out-loud, but rather true confessions to the audience. Richard may lie to all the other characters but within his solo speeches he always tells the truth. I never doubted that in the film he would have to break through the fourth wall of the screen and talk directly to the camera, as to a confidant. If this unsettled the audience,

While the murders of Prince Edward and Henry VI are laid at Richard's door, Edward himself plays just as important a role in both murders. For example, Edward stabs Prince Edward to death along with his brothers; in fact, he is the first to stab him (3*HVI* 5.5.38). However, in *Richard III*, Richard acts as though he alone is responsible for the killing, for he tells Anne that he killed Prince Edward because he was jealous: " 'twas I that stabbed young Edward, / But 'twas thy heavenly face that set me on" (*RIII* 1.2.184-85).<sup>190</sup> But before such punishment comes the actual outcome of the murders. One must ask Cicero's question, "*Cui bono?*," for Edward is the one who benefits most from the murders.<sup>191</sup> For instance, Garber's description of the murders focuses almost entirely on Richard's role in them (*Shakespeare After All* 125-27), which is not surprising given that Margaret does the same during her many verbal attacks on Richard in *Richard III*: "Out, devil! I remember them too well: / Thou kill'st my husband Henry in the Tower, / And Edward, my poor son, at Tewkesbury" (*RIII* 1.3.117-19). Knowles argues that Richard's behaviour is "impelled by bloodlust and ambition" (*Arguments with History* 39), but this ignores the fact that Edward is the one who benefits most from the murders.

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so much the better. They should not be comfortable hearing his vile secrets and being treated as accomplices. (23)

Likewise, Rossiter argues that "except to the audience," Richard "is invisible" ("Angels with Horns" 80).

<sup>190</sup> Shakespeare's characters level these charges against Richard and accept this blame for Henry despite Hall's assertion that the historical Edward and Richard were both equally responsible:

But whosoever was the manqueller of this holy man [Henry VI] it shall appere, that both the murtherer and the consenter, had condigne and not undeserved punishment, for their bloody stroke, and butcherly act: and because they had now no enemies risen, on whom they might revenge themself . . . they exercised their crueltie, against their awne selves: and with their proper blood, embrued and polluted their awne handes and membres. (qtd. in Bullough 207)

<sup>191</sup> Although Cicero's *De officiis* praised morality in politicians, he was also aware of the fact that self-interest often governs our behaviour far more strongly than anything else: "L. Cassius . . . in causis quaerere solebat, 'cui bono' fuisset. Sic vita hominum est, ut ad maleficium nemo conetur sine spe atque emolumento accedere" (*Pro Roscio Amerino* 84).

This emphasis on Richard is not surprising, for while “Edward is still king at the end of [3 *Henry VI*], . . . it is Richard and Henry who face off as the champions” (Lull 95). The dramatic utilization of the contrast between the saintly Henry and the conventionally Machiavellian Richard makes sound dramatic sense, and it even appears in the histories that influenced Shakespeare’s drama. Like his father, Edward acts as a silent presence in the Tower scene, for he benefits the most from it even though his brother gets the best lines. This point is also made explicit in Holinshed, who emphasizes the historical Richard’s explicit role in the murder while indicating Edward’s implicit role within the parentheses:

In the Tower . . . Richard duke of Glocester, (as the constant fame ran,) . . .  
. . . (to the intent that his brother king Edward might reigne in more suertie)  
murthered the said king Henrie with a dagger. (qtd. in Nicoll and Nicoll  
137)

Items that are quietly placed within parentheses in Holinshed are handled even more subtly in Shakespeare’s play, so one must look closely at the dramatic scene for the hand of the unseen Edward.<sup>192</sup> The grisliness of the murder and the overt drama of the scene generally take attention away from the central fact that Edward, not Richard, is king at the end of the play. Richard may later take the blame for the murders (*RIII* 1.2.233) and Clarence may suffer tremendous feelings of remorse for his actions (*RIII* 1.4.52-63), but Edward receives neither the hatred directed toward the former nor the guilt felt by the latter. Giving undesirable yet necessary tasks to underlings is strategic: “princes should take full responsibility for popular actions and decrees, but delegate underlings to mete out unpopular policies and to perform unwelcomed actions” (Rebhorn,

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<sup>192</sup> For more on reading between the lines of Holinshed, see Patterson, *Reading Holinshed’s Chronicles*.

*Foxes and Lions* 25). Edward is able to succeed at being ruthless while avoiding the appearance of ruthlessness.

How is he able to do this? He is able to do this by his careful handling of another piece of politic advice: kill your enemy before your enemy can kill you. It has already been established that Edward cannot truly be king so long as Henry VI and Prince Edward remain alive. How then should Edward handle this task? He has just ordered the execution of Somerset as Prince Edward is brought to him (*IHVI* 5.5.3-4), so clearly he could easily just do the same thing to the Lancastrian heir. Instead of doing this, Edward stabs Prince Edward to death with the help of Clarence and Richard. One could see this as an impulsive act, an interpretation that has carried the day in most productions of the play.<sup>193</sup> However, in one production, at least, Edward's actions were clearly more deliberative: "the action is usually swift and explosive. But in the 1987 ESC production, Edward moved calmly and impersonally" (Martin, Oxford *3HVI* 312). In this production, Edward is deliberately involving his brothers in the murder in order to keep the blood from being, literally and figuratively, entirely on his hands. This spreading of the guilt will insure that Edward will never be entirely blamed for what has happened, so much so that his own involvement is downplayed.

Several characters in the first tetralogy seem to wholeheartedly comply with the notion that the only good enemy is a dead enemy. Edward's father York believed this to be so, but he also believed that it is far better to allow someone else to do the deed rather than risk having to do it oneself. Here Edward cannot completely remove himself from the act, and so he involves his brothers in on it as well, something similar to his father's

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<sup>193</sup> For example, in Noble's RSC production, Prince Edward was "stabbed in a vicious frenzy by the York brothers" (Rox and Casmussen, Arden *3HVI* 30).



alliances with the conspirators against Humphrey. This craftiness can also be seen in what immediately follows the murder of Prince Edward. Margaret begs the Yorkists to kill her too, and although Richard is willing to do so, Edward holds his brother back, declaring that they “have done too much” already (3*HVI* 5.5.43). In most productions Edward’s actions are interpreted as those of someone who has suddenly realized that things have gone too far:

Spoken after he [Edward] has watched Gloucester and Clarence act out his own violence. In the 1983 BBC and other productions, consciousness of what they have done hits Edward suddenly, and he moves to contain further violence. (Martin, Oxford 3*HVI* 313)

Richard’s immediate response to Edward’s command suggests another interpretation: “why should she live to fill the world with words” (3*HVI* 5.5.44). Although Richard’s concern with Margaret’s later actions is justified in view of his very tumultuous interactions with her in *Richard III*, his question here raises another interesting question: what will the people think? The death of York did little to stop the Yorkists from fighting on. The pity York’s death provoked—even from Northumberland (3*HVI* 1.4.150-51)—ultimately hurt the cause of Margaret and the Lancastrians and served as yet another challenge mounted by Shakespeare to such ruthless politic maxims. Although Prince Edward’s death could be seen as being justified in order to ensure the survival of the Yorkist dynasty, the murder of Margaret would probably be seen, in Edward’s words, as “too much.” With Prince Edward dead and Henry VI soon to be so, Margaret is no longer a threat. And so, Edward’s show of mercy towards her may be just that, a show, and not some sudden pang of conscience. It then could serve as Shakespeare’s possible amendment to Machiavelli’s maxim concerning enemies: kill your enemy before your enemy can kill you, but hold back if that enemy is no longer a

threat. Shakespeare shows that the more quiet York and Edward may be the better strategist, and his exploration of politic stratagems reveals the many ways that this issue is subject to change and reversal seen through multiple dramatic perspectives.

However, while Margaret may no longer be a threat, Henry VI remains one. The way that Shakespeare handles this scene opens the question of Edward's responsibility for Henry's death and why this responsibility has been so overlooked. As Saccio notes, this is in keeping with the historical record, for the historical Edward also largely escaped blame for the murder despite being the one who benefited from it most:

only one man remained alive who was descended from old John Gaunt entirely in the male line: Henry VI himself. On the night of King Edward's return to London, 21 May 1471, the roll of Lancastrian deaths was completed. The official account of the restored Yorkist government later announced that Henry had received the news of Tewkesbury "with such hatred, anger, and indignation, that of pure displeasure and melancholy he died." It is difficult to imagine anyone believing this disingenuous tale. The Tudors, including [Thomas More and] Shakespeare, held that Richard of Gloucester personally dispatched Henry on his own initiative, but this is quite unlikely. The death of the last Lancastrian king must have been ordered by Edward IV, possibly with the advice of his council. Richard, as constable of England, would probably have been charged with seeing that the decision was carried out. (*Shakespeare's English Kings* 149-50)<sup>194</sup>

In Shakespeare's drama the scene begins with Richard's declaration to Clarence that he must "hence to London on a serious matter" (*3HVI* 5.5.47). Cox and Rasmussen note that "this exchange is presumably not overheard by others" (Arden *3HVI* 356); Clarence's "what, what?" implies that it may not be heard by Clarence either (*3HVI* 5.5.49). Whether or not this is true, Clarence seems aware of what Richard is up to, as

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<sup>194</sup> Despite such duplicitous behaviour, Saccio notes that Edward's reign is done a tremendous disservice by Shakespeare: "of all the English kings in Shakespeare's double tetralogy, Edward IV is most neglected by the playwright . . . Aside from Henry V, he was the most successful of the later Plantagenets" (*Shakespeare's English Kings* 160). Shakespeare's Edward may not receive the same amount of attention as other monarchs, but his behaviour in this scene and others suggest that Shakespeare was far from being uninterested in this successful king.

his remarks to Edward regarding Richard's whereabouts make clear: "to London all in post and, as I guess, / To make a bloody supper in the Tower" (*3HVI* 5.5.84-85). Spivack argues that both Edward and Clarence are unaware of Richard's plans to kill Henry (389). However, Cox and Rasmussen note that Clarence at least is fully aware of what Richard has in mind; the only thing they dispute is Clarence's reaction to it: "Clarence is either repelled by what he suspects Richard is up to or makes a mordant joke about it" (Arden *3HVI* 359).

Clarence may be aware of what Richard is up to, but is Edward? Edward's response that Richard is "sudden if a thing comes in his head" (*3HVI* 5.5.86) is quite ambiguous. Cox and Rasmussen note that "Edward's inability to comprehend Richard anticipates their relationship in *R3*" (Arden *3HVI* 359), while Martin notes that most performers have taken a very different approach to the scene:

Commentators observe that Edward seems blind to, or refuses to see, Richard's intentions. Modern actors, however, often suggest that Edward pretends not to understand but actually knows what is going on, and/or speaks this line as a laconic understatement. In the 1987 ESC production, for example, this was a fatuous remark meant to repress articulating the aim of murder. (Oxford *3HVI* 315)

Thus, Edward's possible understanding can become more clear when such scenes are being performed dramatically. It has to be stressed again that Edward, not Richard, is the one who will benefit the most from the removal of Henry, a point very much at odds with the one made by Spivack when he sets up the differences between Edward and Richard: "Edward is . . . addicted to other things beside the throne—love, compassion, society, pleasure. Richard is addicted to nothing else" (390). Edward may have other forms of addiction, but acquiring the throne is still clearly on his mind and affecting his actions. Cox and Rasmussen note that Richard had earlier proclaimed that Henry VI and Prince

Edward stood between him and the throne (Arden *3HVI* 359). This is true, but they also stand between Edward and that same throne. This fact is made clear as the scene ends with Edward's concern over whether or not Elizabeth has had a son, a son whose title would never be secure if Henry VI were allowed to live (*3HVI* 5.5.88-90). Regardless of whether or not Henry VI wants the crown—and his behavior in the very next scene suggests that he no longer has any interest in it—he would serve as a rallying point for the Lancastrians. The only way to stay secure is to remove him as a potential threat.

In this sense Edward tricks his brother Richard in the same way that their father York tricked the conspirators against Humphrey. Manheim argues that Richard is the “most successful product” of his father and Machiavelli's teaching (87), but such a contention is clearly up for debate. Edward will benefit from the murder, while Richard will be the one to receive the blame for it. It is possible that Shakespeare came to this conclusion from reading Holinshed's chronicles, which note that the historical Richard “to thintent that king Edward his brother, should be clere out of all secret suspicion of sodain inuasion, murdered the said kyng [Henry VI] with a dagger” (324). Richard may have committed that murder to remove secret suspicion of Edward, but as a result he insured that he himself would be blamed for it. Sometimes it may be essential to destroy your enemy first, but not if someone else is going to do it for you. Champion argues that “the final emphasis [in *3 Henry VI*] is upon the rise to power of an awesome and fascinating figure possessed of a maniacal dedication to seizing the throne” (*Perspective* 41). Champion is referring to Richard, but the label might also apply to Edward.

However, Edward's deviousness is not entirely successful. Shakespeare shows quite clearly that, regardless of the political ends that may motivate them or any maxims

declaring that means do not matter so long as the ends are achieved, actions always have consequences. The murders of Prince Edward and Henry VI place Edward back on the throne, and he may be able to foist most of the blame onto his brother, but he does not emerge entirely unscathed from the murders. Edward is able to “repurchase[]” “England’s royal throne . . . with the blood of [his] enemies” (*3HVI* 5.7.1-2), but he has also set a dangerous precedent, one that will quickly remove his “footstool of security” (*3HVI* 5.7.14). If he could kill a king to become king, someone else can do the same. Edward is on the throne, but Richard is still a force to be reckoned with.

## CHAPTER 6

### DECEPTION, DISSIMULATION, AND POLITICS

#### 6.1 THE NECESSITY OF DISSIMULATION

A strategist must always be on guard against an enemy's deceptions, but a good strategist should also learn how to use deception to one's advantage. Deception is intricately related to both survival and prosperity in Machiavelli's works, for princes could not survive if they were actually as good as they appear to be:

But one must know how to conceal this quality [of ruthlessness] and be a great simulator and dissimulator, for men are so simple, and so prone to being won over by the necessity of the moment, that a deceiver will always find someone who is willing to be deceived. (*P* 18.69)<sup>195</sup>

In this sense a great dissimulator is also a great actor, for he must learn, as Richard declares, to “play the orator as well as Nestor,” “add colours to the chameleon,” and “changes shapes with Proteus for advantages” (3HVI 3.2.188-92). It is telling that Richard references Proteus, for the Greek god of the sea was often associated with shape-shifting, acting, and dissimulation. During the early modern period the issue was explicitly linked with Machiavelli: “until at least half way through the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a debate about honesty in politics was also a debate about Machiavelli, and a debate about Machiavelli was mainly a debate about honesty in politics” (Heck 48).<sup>196</sup> Some of

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<sup>195</sup> In the original Italian the word for deception, “inganno,” is also directly related to trickery and games, so there is something quite maliciously fun about Machiavelli's assertion that one who practices deception will always find willing dupes: “colui che inganna, troverà sempre chi si lascerà ingannare” (51). Such deception has not always been seen in a negative light. In *Six Books of Politics*, Justus Lipsius “openly defended Machiavelli in agreeing that public welfare sometimes requires the ruler to choose the useful lie over the inexpedient truth” (Copenhaver and Schmitt 269). It is a point that is also made by Greenblatt when he notes that “for Machiavelli, the prince engages in deception for one very clear reason: to survive” (*Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 14).

<sup>196</sup> As Houdt notes, this interest was also tied to an renewed interest in the works of Tacitus: “together with Machiavelli's book on the prince, the rediscovery of Tacitus made sure that the theme of simulation and

Machiavelli's most famous phrases from *The Prince* deal with the subject of deception. For example, he argues that Borgia, the model prince of that work, was an actor and "a master of dissimulation" (*P* 7.28).<sup>197</sup> Even in *The Discourses*, he insists on the necessity of deception, for "one can only conclude that a prince who aspires to great deeds must learn to deceive" (*D* 2.13.237-38).<sup>198</sup> In *The Art of War* he also argues that "the best strategy" in war "is that which remains concealed from the enemy until it has been carried out" (*AW* 7.312).

Deception plays an equally strong role in Shakespeare's plays, although not always for the same ends. Of the twenty-eight times that the word "deceit" appears in the canon, twelve of them are from the first tetralogy, and of the five times that the word "fraud" appears, three of them are from the first tetralogy. Why is this so? One reason may be that the world of the first tetralogy is a dangerous one, particularly the world of *Richard III*. There is Richard, who plots and schemes and attempts to kill off anyone who might stand between him and the throne. Then there are those like Buckingham, who are more than willing to do nearly whatever it takes to seize as much power as they can. As the play opens Edward IV is dying, and his wife Elizabeth and her family are attempting to hold on to the power they have so recently acquired. Hastings is one of the most powerful men in the kingdom, and as such he is constantly being tempted by those

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dissimulation became a commonplace in political discourse" (25). For more on the importance of deceit in Machiavelli's works, see Heck, "*Cymbalum Politicorum, Consultor Dolosus*."

<sup>197</sup> In the original Italian this appears differently, for Machiavelli states that Borgia was able to conceal the contents of his mind: "seppe tanto dissimulare l'animo suo" (20). For more on dissimulation during the early modern period, see Zagorin, *Ways of Lying*.

<sup>198</sup> In regards to the supposed divergence between *The Prince* and *The Discourses*, Femia argues that the latter work "may be a republican text, but it does not equate republicanism with sweetness and light . . . . The mood and focus vary from one work to the other, but both show equally the basic values for which Machiavelli is notorious" (13). For more, see Najemy, "Society, class, and state in Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy*" (99-101); Pocock, "Machiavelli and Rome: the republic as ideal and as history" (144-55); and Kahn, "Machiavelli's afterlife and reputation to the eighteenth century" (250-52).

who need his power and threatened by those who fear it. As long as Edward IV is alive there is some semblance of peace, but everything could fall apart the moment he dies.

What does one do in such a precarious situation? Do you align yourself with those who are the most powerful, or do you align yourself with those who are less powerful in order to form a united front? A prudent stratagem may be to avoid taking sides and to wait and see. However, although that stratagem has its advantages, it also means that you are alone and at the mercy of those, like Richard, who would rather destroy the man on the fence than attempt to employ his services. This is the position that Stanley and Buckingham both find themselves at the start of *Richard III*.<sup>199</sup> It is a perilous position to be in, and yet both characters manage to come out on top. However, whereas Buckingham comes out on top at the play's midpoint only to fall immediately afterwards, Stanley manages to survive a disaster at the same point in the play and be the one who takes the crown from Richard's corpse in order to crown his son-in-law the new King of England (*RIII* 5.5.4-7). Seward gives a vivid description of this historical event:

Reginald Bray . . . found the dead monarch's coronet in a hawthorn bush and at once took it to Lord Stanley . . . Stanley, who had betrayed Richard by taking his troops over to the other side, placed the diadem on his stepson's head, shouting 'King Henry! King Henry!', a cry which was taken up joyfully by everyone present. The Tudor Age had begun. (*The Wars of the Roses* 1-2)

Despite facing similarly difficult odds, the dramatic Stanley also manages to become the kingmaker that Warwick and Buckingham dreamed of being. How does this happen?

Both Buckingham and Stanley are adept at deception, but they utilize their talents in very different ways, ways that allow Shakespeare the chance to explore both the strengths and

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<sup>199</sup> As Rossiter notes, Stanley's name is quite confusing ("Angels with Horns" 75). Stanley's full title is Thomas, Lord Stanley, but he later became the Earl of Derby after his son-in-law Richmond became Henry VII. He is referred to as both "Stanley" and "Derby" in *Richard III*, but in an effort to avoid confusion I will be referring to him only as Stanley.



pitfalls of deception. This exploration shows that while Machiavelli may be right to advise deception in some cases, the use of deception can also create a trap from which it is impossible to escape.

While Buckingham has received some attention from critics, primarily as Richard's less dramatically interesting henchman, Stanley has received almost none (Besnault and Bitot 112). Historians have often noted Stanley's duplicitous nature, but this interpretation has not been pursued by literary critics when discussing the play.<sup>200</sup> Some have tried to make connections between Stanley the character and the Stanley family's possible relationship with Shakespeare, but such efforts tend to imply that the dramatic Stanley is of little to no actual interest.<sup>201</sup> And yet, Stanley is the focus in other early modern works such as "The Stanley Poem" and plays such as John Ford's *Perkin Warbeck*. As Hopkins notes:

When we turn to Shakespeare's *Richard III*, it may look as if the Stanley family is much more openly represented, but actually I want to argue that much of what is being suggested about them is in fact being presented covertly and that here too there is a tension between official and unofficial versions of history. (89)

Despite this declaration, Hopkins does not focus her attention on *Richard III*; instead, she asserts that "Shakespeare's telling of this story fits into a clutch of other sixteenth-century renderings of the relevant events, particularly those sponsored or authored by the Stanleys" (89). This is interesting, particularly since some have argued that Stanley's presence on the stage would have caught the attention of many members of the audience:

For those who knew the details of the story, and they must have been fairly common knowledge, Derby (or Stanley) was a key figure, whose

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<sup>200</sup> For example, Seward calls him "an opportunist, who usually avoided taking sides; one of the pillars of Richard III's régime, he intervened and destroyed him at Bosworth" (*The Wars of the Roses* xxx).

<sup>201</sup> For more on this topic, see Honigmann, *Shakespeare: the 'lost years'* (63-64, 91) and Thomson, *Shakespeare's Professional Career* (30-48).

very presence on stage must have carried a reminder of the final outcome . . . [His] was a well-known part of the story—one might say, legend—of Bosworth Field. (Jones 220-21)

Stanley was not only known to audiences, but his deceptive qualities were also known. Nevertheless, Hopkins feels that aside from Shakespeare's "circumspect decision to exclude [Stanley's wife] altogether from the play" (93), there is much less interest in Shakespeare's presentation of the Stanleys than in works by Ford and others.

Stanley and Buckingham are both captivating characters, and they refute Garber's contention that "the stage seems dull, flat, and unprofitable whenever, in the course of this very long play, [Richard] is not present" (*Shakespeare After All* 138). There is no question that Richard is a fascinating figure, and McAlindon is right to call him "the villain-hero of" the play (*Shakespeare Minus 'Theory'* 112), but he has overshadowed other equally fascinating characters who are also capable of using "ghastly looks" and "enforced smiles" to "grace" their "stratagems" (*RIII* 3.5.8-11). As Girard notes, Richard is far from being the only strategist in the play that bears his name:

We are in a world of bloody political struggles. All adult characters in the play have committed at least one political murder or benefited from one . . . Richard may kill more people more cynically than his predecessors, but he is not essentially different. (362)

The fact Buckingham and Stanley's deceptions have been frequently underestimated supports, in one sense, Machiavelli's point that the best politicians are those who know that while "a prince need not have all the good qualities . . . it is most necessary for him to appear to have them" (*P* 18.69). Buckingham's deceptions do eventually cost him, but despite his crimes he ends as one of the ghosts that accost Richard before the Battle of

Bosworth (*RIII* 5.3.167-76).<sup>202</sup> However, Stanley manages to end as Shakespeare's greatest kingmaker and also as one of his greatest strategists.

### 6.1.1 The hand that one is dealt

Stanley achieves this mastery by learning how to keep his head down in dangerous situations. The precariousness of Stanley's position is made clear from the moment he first steps onstage. Before he barely has a chance to invoke God's blessing on the Queen, Elizabeth reminds him that he and his wife have incurred her displeasure:

The Countess of Richmond [Stanley's wife], good my lord Derby,  
To your good prayer will scarcely say amen.  
Yet Derby, notwithstanding she's your wife  
And loves not me, be you, good lord, assured  
I hate not you for her proud arrogance. (*RIII* 1.3.20-24)

On the surface it seems as though Elizabeth is saying that despite the ill will between herself and Stanley's wife the Countess of Richmond, she feels no animosity towards Stanley himself. Elizabeth says that she does not hate Stanley for his wife's actions, but at the same time she is still putting him in a very tricky situation. How should Stanley react? Should he bow down and insult his own wife, or should he take the bait and defend her, and by extension insult Elizabeth? Stanley's response is interesting, for in a way he manages to do a bit of both while avoiding insulting Elizabeth:

I do beseech you, either not believe  
The envious slanders of her false accusers,  
Or, if she be accused on true report,  
Bear with her weakness, which I think proceeds  
From wayward sickness, and no grounded malice. (*RIII* 1.3.25-29)

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<sup>202</sup> Buckingham is executed on November 2, so "All Souls' Day is [his] body's doomsday" (*RIII* 5.1.10). As Siemon notes, All Souls' Day, "in the Roman Catholic Church, [is] a day to commemorate those Christians whose souls are believed to be in purgatory" (Arden *RIII* 378). For more on this, see Jones, *Origins* (226-32).

Stanley's response is tactful, for it helps to make Elizabeth believe that he and his wife are not a real threat to her or to anyone else. Others might have stood up to Elizabeth for casting such aspersions on their spouses, but Stanley chooses not to, and his choice probably tells Elizabeth more than anything his speech does. It tells her that Stanley is not the kind of person who is willing to risk his life for the sake of some personal slight. Stanley is a prudent man, and in the "sycophantic" court of Edward IV the prudent man is he who knows when to step forward and when to step back (Hadfield 16). Let the others claw at each other for power and get clawed in the process.

Buckingham finds himself in an equally precarious position, and he will try to survive and prosper as best he can. Buckingham enters in 1.3 and makes his salutations to Queen Elizabeth. He is still unsure of where to place his loyalty, for Elizabeth is still queen and Richard Gloucester is not yet Richard III, and so he makes sure to be gracious to the current queen and king. Buckingham also makes sure not to antagonize any of the other warring factions in court (*RIII* 1.3.36-39). When it is unclear who will win the fight it is best to remain neutral instead of jumping to the wrong side. Like Stanley, Buckingham finds it safest to play with his hand close to his chest. Buckingham's remains warily respectful of Elizabeth, but he also seems to be at pains to keep his options open. This wary respectfulness continues when one of those options, Richard, enters the room. Buckingham remains silent during Richard's tirade against Elizabeth (*RIII* 1.3.76-81), and he also holds his tongue while the latter defends herself against the charges of the former (*RIII* 1.3.82-88). He is less interested in the accusations being thrown back and forth than he is in trying to figure out who is in a better position to aid him politically. For now Elizabeth is the one with the power. Her husband is king and

her sons are next in line to the throne. She is the one who should be wooed and flattered by anyone hoping for advancement. However, Richard may be the one Buckingham should be seeking to align himself with instead of Elizabeth, who appears content with lavishing favors upon her family only.

Nevertheless, Buckingham remains cordial to everyone and refuses to support any particular side. He is adept at being a dissimulator, and Shakespeare uses him to explore the way that dissimulation can be used in political situations. It is important to note that it is not clear from the beginning that Buckingham will throw his weight behind Richard. In fact, Richard includes Buckingham in his list of those whom he has duped into believing that Elizabeth is responsible for Clarence's imprisonment:

I do beweepe to many simple gulls,  
Namely, to Derby, Hastings, Buckingham,  
And tell them 'tis the Queen and her allies  
That stir the King against the Duke my brother. (*RIII* 1.3.327-30)

Despite his own claims to the contrary, Richard's opponents are not all "simple gulls" who cannot see the way that Richard is pulling their strings. Richard is obviously a master strategist, but he is also up against genuine opponents who are themselves capable of strategic maneuvers.<sup>203</sup> There is little indication that Buckingham cares about who might be behind Clarence's imprisonment, but there is much to suggest that Buckingham sees that his chances of success are greatest with Richard. Richard may be on the fifth rung of the ladder but, upon closer inspection, Elizabeth's position is not as secure as it seems. Edward IV is dying and his sons the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York are

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<sup>203</sup> I disagree with Jaffa's argument, intriguing as it is, that Richard's opponents are merely "victims" and "fools" ("An interpretation of the Shakespearean universe" 287). In fact, it dilutes and deflates Richard's strategic aims and accomplishments if one insists on seeing all of the other characters merely as dupes and saps who have no chance of standing up against him. It is far more dramatically interesting if Richard is up against people who could defeat him.

children. Elizabeth realizes this, and this is probably why, despite her insistence to the contrary, Elizabeth has tried to advance her other sons Dorset and Grey and her brother Rivers, “ennobl[ing] those / That scarce some two days since were worth a noble” (*RIII* 1.3.80-81). However, this attempt to strengthen her position has shut out nobles like Buckingham. Elizabeth’s nepotism, and the rancor it has inspired, makes it easy for Buckingham to see that her camp is no place for him.

### **6.2.2 Playing the hand that one is dealt**

Stanley and Buckingham have very different approaches to their situations. Whereas Stanley prefers to keep his head down entirely and avoid any unnecessary political alliances, Buckingham seeks an ally who he thinks is strong enough to back. The fact that Buckingham chooses Richard as an ally should be emphasized, for Shakespeare’s focus on this choice reveals how strategy works dramatically. By 2.2 Edward IV is dead, leaving only the princes between Richard and the crown. Realizing the untenable nature of their position, Elizabeth’s brother Rivers urges his sister to “send straight for” her son and “let him be crowned,” for “in him [her] comfort lives” (*RIII* 2.2.97-98). This is the Wodevilles’ only chance for survival, and he knows it. The problem is that Buckingham knows it too. And so, in the midst of some insincere platitudes about the need to work together and maintain the reconciliations requested by the late Edward IV, Buckingham cuts to the point, and by doing so he also cuts to the bone:

Meseemeth good that with some little train  
Forthwith from Ludlow the young Prince be fet  
Hither to London, to be crowned our king. (*RIII* 2.2.120-22)

If the princes must come to London, Buckingham argues that they must come with a small train. Although it is in his and Richard's interests that the princes be unguarded, Buckingham insists that he is simply concerned for their welfare, for he fears

lest by a multitude  
The new-healed wound of malice should break out,  
Which would be so much the more dangerous  
By how much the estate is green and yet ungoverned. (*RIII* 2.2.124-27)

As Siemon notes, Buckingham's "potentially sinister proposal" is backed with "smooth generalities about factional conflict" ("The Power of Hope?" 367). Buckingham's remark is quite calculating, for the wound of malice, which is far from "healed," is the very thing that both governs his actions and allows those actions to be so successful. Richard is so surprised by it that he exclaims in wonder at his ally's ingeniousness: "My other self, my counsel's consistory, / My oracle, my prophet, my dear cousin, / I, as a child, will go by thy direction" (*RIII* 2.3.151-53). Siemon points out that an early modern annotator wrote the word "flatterie" next to this scene, indicating that Richard was seen to be duping Buckingham ("The Power of Hope?" 367). However, even when one allows for Richard's histrionics and hyperbole, it does not seem that he is mocking Buckingham; in fact, it seems as though Richard realizes that Buckingham is a genuine partner who can aid him in his schemes.

This is important, as Shakespeare did not get this particular point from the chronicles, for Holinshed writes that the plan was the historical Richard's alone:

the duke of Gloucester, vnderstanding that the lords . . . intended to bring him vp to his coronation accompanied with such power of their freends, that it should be hard for him to bring his purpose to passé . . . he secretlie therefore by diuers means caused the queene to be persuaded and brought in the mind, that it neither were need, and also should be ieopardous, the king to come vp strong. (qtd. in Nicoll and Nicoll 141)

Likewise, Thomas More suggests that the plot was primarily of Richard's making (*History of Richard III* 14-15), although he does point out that "some of the protector's friends said that [Buckingham] was the first mover of the protector to this matter, sending a privy messenger unto him, straight after King Edward's death" (*History of Richard III* 42).<sup>204</sup> Shakespeare's change to his material brings out a new side to Buckingham's character, one that also reflects his interest in the importance of showing Buckingham choose his own ally. Buckingham plays on the fear and hatred of those around him in order to divide and conquer his enemies. He even manages to elicit Rivers' approval to relinquish his one strategic asset: the prince. The prince is the only hope he, his sister, and all of their allies have of maintaining any kind of power. Why he does so seems unfathomable, for he does not simply want to avoid the "apparent likelihood of breach" that might come from the appearance of "much company" (*RIII* 2.2.136-37). Rivers has already made it clear that the princes are invaluable to him and his sister, so they are not foolishly duped as much as they are out-maneuvered. Although Rivers' plan sounds good enough in theory, it can only work if everyone plays by the same rules. All Rivers and Elizabeth have really managed to do is keep themselves and their allies from going to Ludlow, while those who are less concerned about keeping their word, such as Richard and Buckingham, basically have the path cleared for them. Why should they follow the Rivers' rules when it is so contrary to their purposes? A real strategist would take advantage of such an opportunity, and this is exactly what Buckingham proposes he and Richard should do. The moment everyone leaves their presence Buckingham

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<sup>204</sup> For more on the similarities and differences between Machiavelli and More, see Crane, "Early Tudor Humanism."



immediately turns to Richard and proposes the plan, his plan, that will win Richard the crown:

My lord, whoever journeys to the Prince,  
For God's sake let not us two stay at home;  
For by the way I'll sort occasion,  
As index to the story we late talked of,  
To part the Queen's proud kindred from the Prince. (*RIII* 2.2.146-50)

It does not matter what has been promised; it is paramount that Richard and Buckingham go to Ludlow. If others have broken their word, then they do not want to miss out on the spoils; if others have not broken their word, then they do not want to miss out on seizing the princes for themselves. Richard's position is strong now that Edward IV and Clarence are dead, but if he allows the Prince of Wales to be crowned he will lose everything.<sup>205</sup>

Buckingham chooses to be with Richard because it is strategically advantageous, not because he is the henchman or dupe that some have seen him as. Buckingham sees himself as an equal partner, for his finesse and strategic prowess combined with Richard's ruthlessness make them a deadly pair. They are referred to as a such by Dorset when he comes to report to Elizabeth that all of her chief allies have been imprisoned at Pomfret by "the mighty dukes / Gloucester and Buckingham" (*RIII* 2.4.45-46). Till now Richard alone was seen as the threat, and being alone it was believed that he could be dealt with easily enough. However, with Buckingham as his ally, Richard is now in a position to outsmart, outplay, and ultimately destroy all of his enemies. Buckingham is

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<sup>205</sup> Although Elizabeth and her family are not necessarily presented as being quite so duplicitous in *Richard III*, the play nevertheless suggests that the animosity between them and Richard is quite strong. Historically this was even more so, to such an extent that some have argued that the efforts to quickly crown Edward V were actually an attempt by Elizabeth and her family to seize complete control and remove Richard as an obstacle to their power. For more on this fascinating history, see Kendall, *Richard the Third* (193-206); Seward, *Richard III* (90-110) and *The Wars of the Roses* (259-68); and Saccio, *Shakespeare's English Kings* (169-73).

not merely a “fool[.]” (Jaffa, “An interpretation” 287) who “run[s] Richard’s errands and parrot[s] his ideas” (Ornstein 70), nor is he simply an “instrument[.]” of Richard’s ambitions (Prior 300), for he is essential to Richard’s success. Elizabeth at least can see him for what he is: an ally of Richard’s. In Holinshed the arrest of Elizabeth’s family is blamed on the historical Richard alone (Nicoll and Nicoll 143), so Shakespeare’s change suggests that he has placed Buckingham alongside Richard for a reason, for it shows how deception and dissimulation work strategically and dramatically. This alliance will serve Buckingham well, but when it does falter Buckingham will find that his way of dissimulating carries with it certain consequences.

## **6.2 CAN PEOPLE BE TRUSTED?**

### **6.2.1 Making use of spies**

The audience will find, in the character of Stanley, an almost entirely different method of dissimulation. Stanley’s method is far more wary and far less likely to bring immediate success, but it does allow him to stay alive long enough to come out on top at the end. Stanley tries to convince Hastings that Buckingham and Richard cannot be trusted, while Buckingham uses Hastings’ lack of distrust—and his arrogance—to bring him down. Buckingham wants to test Hastings, and so he has employed Catesby as a spy. Holinshed writes that the historical Buckingham

made verie good semblance vnto the lord Hastings, and kept him much in companie. And vndoubtedlie the protector loued him well, and loth was to haue lost him, sauing for feare least his life should haue quailed their purpose. For which cause [Buckingham] mooued Catesbie to prooue with some words cast out a *farre off*, whether he thinke it possible to win the lord Hastings vnto their part. (qtd. in Nicoll and Nicoll 146)

Machiavelli notes in *The Art of War* that a good spy is often more valuable than a whole army, for “he who in war is more vigilant in scrutinizing the enemy’s designs, and more

tireless in training his army, will face fewer dangers and have greater hope of victory” (*AW* 7.311). The best way of acquiring knowledge in warfare is through the use of spies, but Shakespeare is interested not only in how spies are useful, but in the ways that such mistrust can often turn in on itself. One should pay special note to the Holinshed’s “a farre off,” for they imply the dissembling nature of the historical Buckingham’s stratagem.<sup>206</sup> Buckingham uses Catesby as a spy, reminding him that “thou art sworn as deeply to effect what we intend / As closely to conceal what we impart” (*RIII* 3.1.158-59). Richard wants to be king, and he and Buckingham need to know whether Hastings and his ally Stanley will back their claim. Can they be counted as friends or should they be treated as enemies? Catesby asserts that Stanley seems the weaker of the two, so Hastings is the one they should focus their attention on. Buckingham thus instructs Catesby to sound out Hastings on his intentions, and his instructions are ingeniously devious:

sound thou Lord Hastings  
How he doth stand affected to our purpose . . . .  
If thou dost find him tractable to us,  
Encourage him, and tell him all our reasons.  
If he be leaden, icy, cold, unwilling,  
Be thou so too; and so break off the talk,  
And give us notice of his inclination. (*RIII* 3.1.170-78)

Essentially Buckingham wants Catesby to trap Hastings into revealing where he stands. The best way to get someone to open up is to pretend you are on his side, for an enemy will be far more cordial and candid about his plans if you make him believe you are his friend. If Hastings goes along with Richard and Buckingham’s plan, Catesby should do

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<sup>206</sup> Interestingly, More argues that the historical Richard also used spies to find out Buckingham’s true intentions, “for the state of things and the dispositions of men were then such that a man could not well tell whom he might trust or whom he might fear” (*History of Richard III* 43).

his best to make him an ally. However, if Hastings does not, Catesby should still do his best to make him believe that he is their ally and they mean him no harm.

Hastings may not grasp Richard's plan, but Stanley does, for even his act of sending a messenger is a sign of his uneasiness about the state of things. Stanley and Hastings are friends, but he sends a messenger just in case this is not so. The message shows just how apprehensive Stanley is:

Then certifies your lordship [Hastings] that this night  
He [Stanley] dreamt the boar had razèd off his helm.  
Besides, he says there are two councils kept,  
And that may be determined at the one  
Which may make you and him to rue at th'other.  
Therefore he sends to know your lordship's pleasure,  
If you will presently take horse with him  
And with all speed post with him toward the north,  
To shun the danger that his soul divines. (*RIII* 3.2.9-17)

This apprehensiveness may influence Stanley's decision to send a messenger rather than give the warning in person. The advice may come in the form of a "prophetic warning," but what Stanley actually offers is a very "precise vision," if only one would take it seriously (Berry, *Patterns of Decay* 89). Why does Stanley deliver his warning in this way? This may also be why Stanley chooses to give his warning in the form of a dream, for it is more ambiguous and less dangerous (*RIII* 3.2.10). Of all those who are angling for power, Hastings is undoubtedly the loose cannon, and even his friends should be a little wary of him. Stanley also chooses to say that he dreamt that a "boar had razèd off his helm" rather than simply referring to Richard directly (*RIII* 3.2.10).<sup>207</sup> Richard's crest

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<sup>207</sup> Shakespeare probably got the inspiration for Stanley's dream from More's *History of Richard III* and Holinshed. For example, Holinshed writes that

the lord Stanlie sent a trustie messenger vnto Hastings at midnight . . . requiring him to rise and ride awaie with him, for he was disposed vtterlie no longer to bide, he had so fearfull a *dreame*; in which him thought that a *boare* with his tuskes so *raised* them both by the heads, that the bloud ran about both their shoulders . . . this dreame made so fearfull an impression in his heart, that he was thoroughlie determined no longer to tarie,

was the white boar—which Lady Anne mocked earlier by calling Richard a “hedgehog” (*RIII* 1.2.104)—but the reference is nevertheless suitably ambiguous. Stanley could be referring to Richard directly or to some unknown threat. In any case the danger of that threat, whatever the lack of clarity surrounding its source, is clear enough.<sup>208</sup> What Stanley fears most of all is the plan for two councils, for “that may be determined at one / Which may make you [Hastings] and him [Stanley] to rue th’other” (*RIII* 3.2.12-13). Stanley’s choice of phrasing is interesting for, by stating Hastings first and himself second, he is emphasizing the threat to his friend while showing him that he is on Hastings’ side. They will have much to rue or regret if they do not prepare themselves. Unfortunately Hastings refuses to take the threat of Richard and Buckingham seriously. As Siemon notes, Hastings has a “deluded faith in worldly security” that will soon be upended by the events of the play (“The Power of Hope?” 373). Stanley implores him to “take horse with him / And with all speed post with him toward the north,” but Hastings does not understand or appreciate the “danger that [Stanley’s] soul divines” (*RIII* 3.2.15-17). He tells the messenger to calm Stanley’s fears and tell him not “to trust the mockery of unquiet slumbers” (*RIII* 3.2.26). What Hastings fails to appreciate is that this is really no dream at all but a warranted warning from a concerned friend and ally.

Stanley does not want to lose his friend, but he also has his own security to worry about. Richard and Buckingham are on the move, so the only options are to join them, fight them now, flee and fight them later, or flee and never return. As Catesby will soon find out (*RIII* 3.2.42-43), Hastings will never join them, and both he and Stanley have too

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but had his horsse readie, if the lord Hastings would go with him, to ride so farre yet the same night, that they should be out of *danger*. (qtd. in Nicoll and Nicoll 148)

<sup>208</sup> It is not so clear to Hastings. In *The Mirror for Magistrates* Hastings bewails the fact that he should have listened to his friend and not laughed at his dream: “The vysyon fyrst of Stanley, late descried. / Then myrth so extreme, that neare for ioye I dyed . . . / And glorious light to obscure night doth tend: / So extreame myrth in extreame moane doth ende” (Tragedy 21.425-32).

much to lose by simply fleeing England altogether. Fighting them now is dangerous, for Stanley and Hastings are not strong enough at the moment. The only real option is to flee to Stanley's lands in Cheshire in the North where they can gather their forces and prepare themselves for the fight to come, "shun[ning] the danger that [Stanley's] soul divines" (*RIII* 3.2.15-16). There is no point in waiting around to see what Richard and Buckingham will do, for that will limit the options they have for responding. That was the mistake made by Elizabeth's relatives, and now they have lost their lives at Pomfret.

Stanley now enters to warn his friend once again of the dangers around them. The fact that he has come so "early stirring" is a sure sign of his wariness (*RIII* 3.2.35-36). There less chance of his being seen, and there is a better chance that he and Hastings can make their escape while everyone is still in bed. Hastings is visited in the very early morning by Stanley's messenger, Catesby, a pursuivant, a priest, Buckingham, and Stanley himself. Everyone wants to know what Hastings is going to do and, by extension, what they themselves will have to do in reaction. Either from arrogance, obliviousness, or a strange combination of the two, Hastings does not seem to share everyone else's concern. He continues to mock Stanley and his dreams as he makes his entrance: "Come on, come on, where is your boar spear, man? / Fear you the boar, and go so unprovided?" (*RIII* 3.2.71-72). What is most ironic about Hastings' attitude is that he, not Stanley, has the most to fear from Richard and Buckingham for he, not Stanley, is the one they fear most.

This irony becomes apparent as Stanley bids his friend good morning: "You may jest on, but, by the Holy Rood, / I do not like these several councils, I" (*RIII* 3.2.74-75). As Holinshed puts it in his history, "the lord Stanleie . . . wiselie mistrusted it, and said

vnto the lord Hastings, that he much misliked these *two seuerall counceles*” (qtd. in Nicoll and Nicoll 147).<sup>209</sup> Hastings feels secure (*RIII* 3.2.80-81), but Stanley argues that pride comes before the fall:

The lords at Pomfret, when they rode from London,  
Were jocund and supposed their states were sure,  
And they indeed had no cause to mistrust;  
But yet you see how soon the day o’ercast.  
This sudden stab of rancor I misdoubt. (*RIII* 3.2.81-85)

The lords Stanley refers to are Elizabeth’s relatives who meet their end on the chopping block at Pomfret, who also thought themselves safe. They believed they “had no cause to mistrust” Richard, but he destroyed them the minute they let their guard down (*RIII* 3.2.83). In times such as these, “you [can] see how soon the day o’ercast” (*RIII* 3.2.84). Stanley believes that Richard will not be satisfied now that Elizabeth’s family is out of the way, for they are not his only enemies. However, seeing that he can speak no sense to his overconfident friend, Stanley decides to swallow his fear and go with Hastings to the Tower: “Pray God, I say, I prove a needless coward! / What, shall we toward the Tower?” (*RIII* 3.2.88).

The lack of mistrust on Hastings’ part, coupled with the lack of trust on everyone else’s, is explored even further, for just as Stanley does not trust Buckingham and Richard, so too does Buckingham not trust his own spy Catesby.<sup>210</sup> This lack of trust is thus shown by Shakespeare to be corrosive, for one cannot even trust one’s own allies.

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<sup>209</sup> More writes that the historical Stanley was not the only one who was suspicious of the several councils: To which council [for coronation], albeit there were . . . very few and they very secret, yet began there, here and there about, some manner of muttering among the people, . . . though they neither wist what they feared nor wherefore; were it that before such great things, men’s hearts of a secret instinct of nature misgiveth them, as the sea without wind swelleth of himself sometime before a tempest, or were it that some one man haply somewhat perceiving, filled many men with suspicion, though he showed few men what he knew. (*History of Richard III* 44-45)

<sup>210</sup> It is worth noting that More also argues that it is at least possible that the historical Catesby was an untrustworthy spy (*History of Richard III* 46).

This runs counter to the notion put forward by Machiavelli that spies are entirely helpful to one's endeavors. Catesby has just performed his task (*RIII* 3.2.34-69), but Buckingham, either not trusting Catesby to fulfill his task or not trusting Catesby at all, enters the stage to personally ensure that Hastings will go to the council meeting. It is essential that Hastings go, so Buckingham may simply be acting cautiously; however, it is likely that Buckingham cannot trust anyone. Buckingham enters with an air of geniality and makes sure to mention the fact that he and Richard have ordered the execution of Hastings' enemies at Pomfret, thus ensuring that Hastings regards Richard and Buckingham as friends. Despite swearing earlier to Edward that he would maintain peace with Elizabeth's family (*RIII* 2.1.11-28), Hastings clearly rejoices in their downfall (*RIII* 3.2.114-15). By appealing to Hastings' self-interest, Buckingham has managed to lull him into a false sense of security (Bach 224). Nevertheless, Buckingham cannot help making remarks that seem friendly on the surface but are deadly underneath. For instance, Buckingham jokes that Hastings has no need, unlike the men at Pomfret, to talk with a priest, for only those who are about to die need worry about confession and absolution (*RIII* 3.2.112-14). It is true that the men at Pomfret need a priest more than Hastings at the moment, but Buckingham's comments hint that Hastings will be seeking a priest soon enough. Buckingham also jokes in an aside that Hastings' stay at the Tower will be longer than he imagines, for it is there that Hastings will meet his end at the hands of the executioner, "although [he] knowst it not" (*RIII* 3.2.121-22).

### **6.2.2 The limits of friendship**

Everything hinges on the council meeting. If the Prince of Wales becomes King, then Hastings is secure. If Hastings is secure, then Stanley is secure. However, Stanley



knows that the boar Richard is planning something. He is not sure what it is yet, but he knows that the longer they wait to nominate the Prince the better Richard has a chance to seize power for himself. Why give your enemy time to strike? This is why he seems so desirous to get the nomination rolling, and his anxiousness and frustration give the scene a strong sense of dramatic tension. When Buckingham asks if everything is ready for “the royal time,” Stanley responds quickly that “it is, and wants but nomination” (*RIII* 3.4.4-5). He is both fearful and nervous, and these feelings are exacerbated when Richard enters.

It is here, in this dramatic moment, that Stanley realizes that Richard is going to win, and so he changes his position on the need to speed the nomination along:

We have not yet set down this day of triumph.  
Tomorrow, in my judgment, is too sudden,  
For I myself am not so well provided  
As else I would be, were the day prolonged. (*RIII* 3.4.42-45)

Given Stanley’s position it is an important statement, especially at this juncture. He has just said that the nomination should be done as quickly as possible, but now he says that “tomorrow, in [his] judgment, is too sudden” (*RIII* 3.4.43). He would have liked to have remained Hastings’ friend, but he is simply not willing to die for him. Machiavelli argues that one cannot trust anyone in politics: “men are often deceived in their assessment of the friendship someone bears for them. They can never assure themselves until it has been put to the test, and in this case testing it is extremely perilous” (*D* 3.6.271). Shakespeare shows that this kind of thinking is too simplistic, for friends are often essential. However, sometimes friends also have to be let go. Stanley had warned Hastings that this would happen, but Hastings would not listen. Now it is too late. When Stanley says that he is “not so well provided,” he is talking about his state of mind, but he

is also talking about his strategic position (*RIII* 3.4.44). Hastings has been a powerful ally in the past, but now he is a liability.

Now it is a question of standing by Hastings or betraying him. To do the former would almost certainly result in Stanley's execution; to do the latter at least gives him a chance to survive. And so, in this dramatic moment, Stanley makes the decision to betray Hastings by delaying the nomination, which essentially takes away any strategic leverage Hastings may have had. Stanley is exasperated by being forced into making this decision. He is annoyed that Hastings has put him in such a perilous predicament. When Hastings exclaims that Richard's face cannot hide his love or hate in Pacino's production (*RIII* 3.4.51-53), Stanley angrily chides him for failing to see the daggers in Richard's smiles: "What of his heart perceive you in his face / By any livelihood he showed today?" (*RIII* 3.4.54-55). Anyone can hide his or her feelings with a show of friendliness; in fact, the one who smiles at you the most is often the one concealing a knife.<sup>211</sup> Stanley prays that he is wrong about Richard, but he knows that he is not (*RIII* 3.4.58); he cannot save Hastings, but he can save himself.

The council meeting is an equally important turning point for Buckingham and Richard. Although the conflict between Richard and Hastings occupies centre-stage, Buckingham is the one who really pulls the strings and makes sure that everything goes according to plan. This is why Buckingham schedules the two coronation councils, the very thing that had scared Stanley so much (*RIII* 3.2.75). Buckingham and Richard could not act at the public council, as too much would be left to chance. They also could not go

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<sup>211</sup> Shakespeare would explore this inability to trust others in the political arena even more thoroughly in *Macbeth*. There are echoes in this scene of Donalbain's declaration that there are "daggers in men's smiles" (*Macbeth* 2.3.136), but one can see why he believes this to be the case. His father has been betrayed by the Thane of Cawdor, despite that "he was a gentleman on whom [Duncan] built / An absolute trust" (*Macbeth* 1.4.13-14). Such a lack of suspicion on Duncan's part means that the next Thane of Cawdor, Macbeth, Duncan's "worthiest cousin," will manage to betray and kill him (*Macbeth* 1.4.14).

after Hastings after the coronation, because then he would be too powerful. They need to destroy Hastings beforehand, at the private council. Shakespeare also uses this scene to indicate yet another way that strategy is informed by drama, for Buckingham and Richard use this scene to dramatically test everyone's loyalties: everyone at the council meeting will be forced to choose a side in front of everyone else. By placing them all in the same room, Richard and Buckingham have effectively trapped them. It is a dangerous room to be in. The only man in the room who does not seem to be worried is Hastings. The audience is presented with a situation that puts everyone's talk of friendship and alliances to the test. The tension is palpable: will people side with Hastings or Richard?

The plan is to get Hastings to say the wrong thing and implicate himself. Buckingham can see the arrogance on Hastings' face, but he can also sense the lord's impatience. Arrogance and impatience are a bad combination. Before Buckingham wanted to trick Hastings into revealing himself to Catesby; now he wants to trick Hastings into revealing himself before the council. A public revelation of his arrogance and ambition will make it easier to destroy him and bring his allies into Richard and Buckingham's camp. And so, Buckingham seeks to trick Hastings by asking, politely, "who knows the Lord Protector's [Richard's] mind herein? / Who is most inward with the noble Duke?" (*RIII* 3.4.7-8). The Bishop of Ely points out that Buckingham himself is, of them all, the most inward with Richard (*RIII* 3.4.9), but Buckingham wants to direct the attention back towards his prey, and so he points out that

We know each other's faces; for our hearts,  
He knows no more of mine than I of yours,  
Or I of his, my lord, than you of mine. (*RIII* 3.4.10-12)

With a seemingly innocent question Buckingham has shown that Hastings, in addition to being arrogant about his strength, knows little about either Richard or Buckingham or the threat they represent (Wilders 49).

Hastings is losing his grip, and everyone but Hastings can see it. This is why Buckingham mocks Hastings' self-assurance the moment Richard enters the room:

Had you not come upon your cue, my lord,  
William, Lord Hastings, had pronounced your part —  
I mean your voice for crowning of the King. (*RIII* 3.4.26-28)

One should note Buckingham's use of the word "cue." This has all been carefully stage-managed by both Richard and Buckingham. The entrapping questions, the suggestions of universal insincerity and duplicity, everything has been set up dramatically to create the desired effect. Even Holinshed's description of the historical Richard's reentry implies that theatricality played not a small role in Richard's behaviour: "he returned into the chamber amongst them, all changed, with a woonderfull soure angrie countenance, knitting the browes, frowning, and fretting and gnawing on his lips" (qtd. in Nicoll and Nicoll 151). Richard's performance aims to show that everyone that, if they value their lives, they should throw in their support for Richard. Richard and Buckingham's short exit from the stage allows this realization to settle in for those who remain on it. As Holinshed writes, the members of the historical council quickly understood what was at stake: "herevpon euerie mans mind sore misgauge them, well perceiuing that this matter was but a quarrel" (qtd. in Nicoll and Nicoll 151). However, Shakespeare has not merely recorded the history; instead, he has heightened and opened it exploration as a result of his dramatization. In the play this has all been a dramatic test, and Hastings has failed this test miserably.

Everything has changed, and everyone but Hastings knows it. He is finished the moment Richard re-enters the room and, no longer smiling, starts to make his accusations against Jane Shore.<sup>212</sup> The entire power-dynamic in the room has shifted as a result of a simple question: “tell me what they deserve / That do conspire my death with devilish plot . . . ?” (*RIII* 3.4.58-59). If Hastings had taken the threat of Richard and Buckingham seriously, as Stanley had implored him to, he might have been able to gather support for his cause. As it is, he is caught completely off guard by the swiftness of it all. The dramatic test has the desired effect, for once Hastings is rendered powerless no one comes to help him. Richard and Buckingham trick Hastings into thinking they were his friends, but even Hastings’ real friends, like Stanley, desert him the moment Richard accuses him. As Buckingham pointed out earlier in the scene, the face does not always show what the heart feels (*RIII* 3.4.10-12). In Pacino’s *Looking for Richard* (1996) Stanley is the last to leave, and Hastings explicitly asks Stanley to help him. Stanley hesitates, frowns, and then leaves with Richard and the rest. Pacino astutely gives prominence to one of the more interesting features of the scene. Shakespeare does not call attention to the fact that Stanley deserts Hastings, nor does he dramatize More’s suggestion that Stanley was attacked by one of Richard’s men during the arrest of Hastings (*History of Richard III* 49); instead, he merely indicates that everyone exits the stage except for Hastings and his executioners Lovell and Ratcliffe (*RIII* 3.4.78).<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Jorgensen notes that Shakespeare would use this scene again in *Henry V*, for Henry deploys a very similar stratagem against the conspirators: “[Henry] behaves toward the culprits as though he knew nothing of the conspiracy, and he even welcomes their advice on how to punish a commoner who has offended. In so doing, he has been suspected of reverting to his earlier fondness for dramatizing an episode” (98).

<sup>213</sup> Hastings makes the same claim in *The Mirror for Magistrates*, although he says that Stanley was able to hide from such attacks: “Layeng at lord Stanley, whose braine he [Richard’s henchman] had surely cleft / Had [Stanley] not downe beneath the table crept” (Tragedy 21.585-87). Is this a condemnation of Stanley’s cowardice, or an acknowledgement that Stanley will do whatever it takes to survive?

Everyone leaves Hastings, but it is not clear how close they were to him. What is clear is that Stanley was close, and so his desertion must seem to be the unkindest cut of all. Hastings chides himself for not heeding Stanley's omens, even stating that there were omens that he himself had failed to recognize (*RIII* 3.4.82-86). What he also fails to recognize is that Stanley's advice is not mystical or supernatural, but logical and strategic. Stanley is rightly suspicious of Richard and Buckingham, and he advises Hastings to share his suspicions. Hastings fails to heed this advice, and so he meets his end as a result.<sup>214</sup> Stanley may reprimand himself for his cowardice (*RIII* 3.2.87), but this cowardice is the very thing that keeps him alive to fight another day.

Buckingham and Stanley have shown two different approaches to the subject of distrust, and they draw two very different lessons from it. Buckingham believes that trust is something that can be played with and abused. He continues to hone the essential skills of dissimulation and deception, even going so far as to beguile and bamboozle the City of London (Chaudhuri 75). On the other hand, Stanley's early reticence is exacerbated even further by this episode, and he goes from playing with his cards close to his chest to hiding them under the table, so much so that even his son-in-law will never feel entirely sure of where his true sympathies lie. Which of the two approaches will be ultimately successful will become more clear as the play progresses.

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<sup>214</sup> Saccio points out that the execution of the historical Hastings was motivated as much by fear as ambition, a point that is made all the more clear when one looks at Shakespeare's handling of dates in *Richard III*: "In More and Shakespeare, the order of two crucial events is reversed: the queen releases York before the death of Hastings . . . More and Shakespeare . . . suppose that Richard was governed by long-range ambition" (*Shakespeare's English Kings* 173-74). It becomes clear that everyone in these plays pursues his or her own individual aims and ambitions. Such ambitions find articulation in the plays as well. When Hastings is brought news of the coming executions of Rivers, Vaughan, and Grey, he remarks that he will soon "send some packing that yet think not on't" (*RIII* 3.2.60). As Berry notes, "Hastings anticipates . . . triumphs yet to come" (*Patterns of Decay* 90). Given that he already knows that Rivers, Vaughan, and Grey are finished as potential rivals, it is left unclear who Hastings is referring to.

### 6.3 THE USES—AND ABUSES—OF THEATRE AND RHETORIC

People are won over by theatre and rhetoric because they “judge more with the eye than with the hand, because everyone can see, but few can feel.”<sup>215</sup> Everyone sees what you seem to be, but few feel what you are” (*P* 18.70).<sup>216</sup> As Tacitus writes in the *Annales*, the dignity of the emperor was greater at a distance: “Maiestate salva, cui maior e longinquo reverential” (1.47). These are the very factors that Buckingham, the great dissimulator, will tap into when he has to win over the people of London. He employs the arts of dissimulation while making his way through the dangerous world of the court. Now he will use those skills on the public at large. To win the people over one must be a great actor, so Richard and Buckingham joke about their acting abilities:

Richard: Come, cousin, canst thou quake and change thy colour,  
Murder thy breath in middle of a word,  
And then again begin, and stop again,  
As if thou wert distraught and mad with terror?

Buckingham: Tut, I can counterfeit the deep tragedian,  
Speak and look back, and pry on every side,  
Tremble and start at wagging of a straw,  
Intending deep suspicion; ghastly looks  
Are at my service, like enforced smiles,  
And both are ready in their offices,

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<sup>215</sup> In keeping with this, Kahn argues that “rhetoric is a force to be reckoned with in the struggle for political power” (*Machiavellian Rhetoric* 122). For more on Shakespeare and rhetoric, particularly in relation to Machiavelli, see Platt, “Shakespeare and Rhetorical Culture” (289-90). For more on this relation in early modern politics, see Bos, “The Hidden Self of the Hypocrite.”

<sup>216</sup> In the original Italian the focus on the difference between judging by one’s hands—“mani”—or one’s eyes—“occhi”—is made more explicit: “E li uomini, in universali, iudicano più alli occhi che alle mani; perché tocca a vedere a ognuno, a sentire a pochi. Ognuno vede quello che tu pari, pochi sentono quello che tu se” (51). As Innocent Gentillet puts it in *Contre-Machiavel*:

Le monde, dit Machiavel, ne s'arreste qu'à l'exterieur et à ce qui est en apparence, et juge de toutes actions non par les causes, mais par l'issue. Tellement qu'il suffit que le prince semble estre exterieurement religieux et devotieux, encores qu'il ne le soit point. Car posé ques quelques uns qui le frequenteront de plus pres descouvrent ceste feinte devotion, toutesfois ils n'oseront repugner à la multitude qui croira le prince estre vrayement devot. (190)

“Machiavelli says that the world can only see what is on the outside and therefore can only judge by appearances and the end results of actions. Since this is so, it is enough for a prince to appear religious and devotional; whether or not he is in reality is beside the point. For the few who do know that the prince is not religious, they dare not speak up against the multitude that believes it to be true.”

At any time, to grace my stratagems. (*RIII* 3.5.1-11)

There is a comic energy to this exchange, but also a deadly seriousness, for they are discussing the ways they will trick the public into supporting their cause. Richard also “draw[s] a dangerous and subversive analogy between fashioning a king and fashioning a role” (Hodgdon 74). All of the tricks of the actor’s trade are at their disposal, not for the purposes of fun, but “to grace [their] stratagems” (*RIII* 3.5.11). Richard and Buckingham are in the process of taking the crown by force and destroying everyone who stands in their way, but they still have to work hard to make people think that this is not the case. And so they must deploy all of the devices of the theatre. Just as the events at the council meeting were carefully choreographed, the winning over of the people will require a tremendous amount of dramatic intelligence. The people must be made to feel that Richard is the only one who can protect them during such perilous times. Stephen Greenblatt makes the point that, “as Machiavelli understood, physical compulsion is essential but never sufficient; the survival of the rulers depends upon a supplement of coercive belief” (“Invisible Bullets” 23). The way to win support is through theatre:

kingship depends for its authority not on God, but on performance . . . . As Machiavelli observed in *The Prince*, and as Elizabethan practice confirmed, political power is secured by theatrical illusion—a populace can best be controlled by dissimulation, image-making, and role-play. (Bulman, “*Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2*” 162)<sup>217</sup>

Of course it is all a lie, and the fact that Richard is largely responsible for these perils is something Richard and Buckingham will have to make sure that everyone overlooks.

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<sup>217</sup> For more on royal power and theatre, see D’Amico, *Shakespeare and Italy: The City and the Stage* (23-25). According for Garber, Elizabeth I and James I also used theatre to their advantage: “‘We princes,’ said Queen Elizabeth, ‘are set on stages, in the sight and view of all the world duly observed.’ King James . . . wrote, ‘a King is as one set on a stage, whose smallest actions and gestures, all the people gazingly doe behold.’” (*Shakespeare After All* 24).



Reputation is important, for those prone to vice even more so than those prone to virtue, as they have much more to conceal. Richard gets Buckingham to follow the Lord Mayor to Guildhall so that, after the mayor has relayed the news of Hastings' treachery to the people, he can also tell them of the bastardly beginnings of both Edward IV and his children. As Jones notes, Shakespeare's initial source for Richard and Buckingham's stratagem was More's *History of Richard III*:

The most compelling passage in More's *History* tells in detail how Richard manœuvred his way to the crown . . . . The object was to impute bastardy both to Edward IV and to his children by Elizabeth Woodville, thus leaving Richard as the apparently rightful heir to the throne. The whole strategy was such that Richard himself was to seem the mere pawn of events, an unambitious man . . . loyal to Edward and his children, swept along by the will of the people into accepting the crown. (*Origins* 212-13)

More writes that the whole affair was a sham from the beginning, but he notes that, historically, Richard's supporters were not entirely interested in the veracity of the charge so long as something was put in writing: "But that invention, simple as it was—it liked them to whom it sufficed to have somewhat to say, while they were sure to be compelled to no larger proof than themselves list to make" (*History of Richard III* 67). However, while More's focus is on the audience, Shakespeare's is on the actor creating the performance for strategic advantage. Believing himself equal to the task, Buckingham assures Richard that "doubt not," for he will "play the orator / As if the golden fee for which I plead / Were for myself" (*RIII* 3.5.95-97). Kahn argues that "the basest form of cunning is the twisting of words" (*Machiavellian Rhetoric* 122), but this cunning will be the very thing that helps to place the crown on Richard's head.

Richard and Buckingham must work hard to persuade them that Richard is the best candidate for leading England out of her present perils. 3.7 opens with Buckingham

returning from his meeting with the citizens, angry that he has failed to win them over. The people of London, understandably frightened over the recent turn of events, do not know what to think.<sup>218</sup> In an attempt to overcome their silence, Buckingham has laid out for them the list of Edward IV's supposed crimes:

his contract with Lady Lucy  
And his contract by deputy in France;  
Th' unsatiate greediness of his desire  
And his enforcement of the city wives;  
His tyranny for trifles; his own bastardy,  
As being got, your [Richard's] father then in France,  
And his resemblance, being not like the Duke. (*RIII* 3.7.5-11)<sup>219</sup>

Buckingham's descriptions of Edward's supposed vices and Richard's supposed virtues are simply not enough, and as his oratory draws to a close and he cries out for all to praise Richard as their new sovereign, the crowd "spake not a word, / But like dumb statues or breathing stones, / Stared at each other and looked deadly pale" (*RIII* 3.7.24-26). Holinshed suggests that the people of London were afraid (Nicoll and Nicoll 154-55), while More argues instead that they were ashamed at the obvious deceitfulness of the whole affair (*History of Richard III* 69). The emotions of the people in the play are a little less clear, but the emotions of Buckingham are another matter. Buckingham frustratingly reprimands the people and angrily asks the Lord Mayor what is the matter.

The Lord Mayor answers that the people are not used to being addressed by someone

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<sup>218</sup> Walsh describes the actions on display in this scene as "gullible/cowardly" (*Shakespeare, the Queen's Men* 141). However, as Leggatt insists, "we may see the citizens as mulish, stupid, or frightened. But we should, I think, distinguish between their silence, which conveys tacit dissent, and the silence of acquiescence we meet elsewhere in the play" (*Shakespeare's Political Drama* 37).

<sup>219</sup> More writes that the reaction of the people to the historical Buckingham's performance was ambivalent to say the least:

[Buckingham] rehearsed them the same matter again . . . so well and ornately . . . so evidently and plain, with voice, gesture, and countenance so comely and so convenient that every man much marveled that heard him and thought that they never had in their lives heard so evil a tale so well told. But were it for wonder or fear, or that each look that other should speak first, not one word was there answered of all the people that stood before, but all was as still as the midnight, not so much as rowning among them by which they might seem to comen what was best to do. (*History of Richard III* 77)

who is not a city official. Buckingham is losing the crowd, and he knows it (Worden, “Shakespeare and politics” 36). He signals “some followers of [his] own, / At lower end of the hall” to hurl their caps and cry out “God save King Richard!” (*RIII* 3.7.34-36). It is clever to have such men for theatrical purposes, but they are not enough, so he uses them to retreat, taking

the vantage of those few:  
‘Thanks, gentle citizens and friends,’ quoth I;  
‘This general applause and cheerful shout  
Argues your wisdom and your love to Richard:’  
And even here brake off and came away. (*RIII* 3.7.37-41)

The fact that this general applause and cheerful shout, made by ten men instead of thousands, is used by Buckingham as a sign of the people’s approval is funny, but it also shows that he and Richard are going to have to change tactics, both strategically and dramatically, if they want to win the crown.

Buckingham’s new stratagem is to combine theatre and rhetoric. With Buckingham setting the scene and with Richard playing the part, everyone will be blown away by the performance. This performance—which Sahel calls a “show-within-the-play” (132)—will enable Shakespeare to show that, as Houdt argues, “the close unity between (outer) appearance and (inner) reality seemed to be weakened to the point of disintegration” (21-22).<sup>220</sup> The people of London are coming, and so Buckingham gives Richard advice on how to play the part that will win him both the crowd and the crown:

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<sup>220</sup> Machiavelli sees no issue with such a disintegration. In fact, he argues that such break is necessary if one wants to be a successful prince: “He must have a spirit that can change depending on the winds and variations of Fortune, and . . . he must not, if he is able, distance himself from what is good, but must also, when necessary, know how to prefer what is bad” (*P* 18.69). In the original Italian Machiavelli sees how daring it is to say what he says, so much so that he regards it as an act of courage or “ardirò,” but it is what he has always observed: “E però bisogna che elli abbi uno animo disposto a volgersi secondo ch'e' venti e le variazioni della fortuna li comandono, e, come di sopra dissi, non partirsi dal bene, potendo, ma sapere intrare nel male, necessitato” (51). By ending on the word “necessitato,” Machiavelli stresses that necessity is what governs this behaviour. Unlike Richard, Machiavelli does not promote needless cruelty

Intend some fear.  
Be not you spoke with but by mighty suit;  
And look you get a prayer book in your hand,  
And stand between two churchmen, good my lord,  
For on that ground I'll make a holy descant.  
And be not easily won to our requests;  
Play the maid's part: still answer nay, and take it. (*RIII* 3.7.44-50)

Individuals, like the Lord Mayor, can be intimidated, but crowds, like the citizens of London, need to be coerced. As Sharpe notes, although rhetoric was “ideally a device for the communication of truths, [it] could become a mode of deception. Machiavelli counselled the prince to deploy language as a tool” (“The King’s writ” 118). Guicciardini argues that people should pay less attention to ceremonies and more attention to the reality behind them, for it is dangerous to fall prey to tricks of theatre and rhetoric: “Gli uomini doverebbono tenere molto piú conto delle sustanzie e effetti che delle cerimonie, e nondimeno è incredibile quanto la umanità e gratitudine di parole legghi comunemente ognuno” (*Ricordi* C.26). The London citizens are afraid, so instead of presenting himself as the object of their fear, Richard should dissimulate and act as though he is as frightened as they are.<sup>221</sup> The citizens fear that Richard is hungry for power, so instead of appearing ambitious, Richard should act as though he does not seek power at all. Several people, including his own wife, think that Richard is a devil, so he should act as though he is pious. Just as the head of Hastings was used as a prop for frightening the Lord Mayor, the Bible should now be used as a prop for convincing the people that Richard is devout. To add to this effect, Richard should stand between two priests. He should not stand in front of them or behind them; by standing between them it

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or deviousness; what he promotes is the ability to get one’s hands dirty if one feels that it is necessary.

<sup>221</sup> More writes that when the people came to see the historical Richard he acted as though he should not come out for fear of losing his life, acting “as though he doubted and partly distrusted the coming of such a number unto him so suddenly, without any warning or knowledge whether they came for good or harm” (*History of Richard III* 79). This sham was also recorded by Holinshed (Nicoll and Nicoll 156).

is as if he is being enveloped by their holiness. Grady argues that such strategies are “relatively simple” in terms of construction and dramatic presentation (126), but these are the strategies by which power has been achieved and people have been manipulated throughout history.

Buckingham insists that Richard should pretend that he does not want power, for the citizens are afraid of his ambition, and so what follows is a “admirable moment when the Londoners are being fooled into believing that [Richard] must be persuaded to be king” (Rossiter, “Angels with Horns” 82). As Guicciardini notes, a prince should always give the impression that his actions, no matter how selfish, are in the service of the public good (*Ricordi* C.142). No matter how much Buckingham pleads for Richard to take the crown, he should act as though he seeks only to live a life of prayer. The fact that none of this is true does not matter; the fact that the very opposite is true matters even less.<sup>222</sup> Here the link between politic stratagems and drama is made explicit, for drama is being used for specific strategic ends. It is very much in keeping with More’s description of the historical scene:

And in a stage play all the people know right wel, that [Richard] that plaeth the sowdayne is percase a sowter. Yet if one should can so little good, to shewe out of seasonne what acquaintance he hath with him, and calle him by his owne name whyle he standeth in his magestie, one of his tormentors might hap to breake his head, and worthy for marring of the play. And so they said that these matters bee Kynges games, as it were stage playes, and for the more part plaied upon scaffoldes. In which pore men be but the lokers on. And thei that wise be, will medle no farther. For they that sometime step vp and playe with them, when they cannot play their partes, they disorder the play and do themself no good. (qtd. in Jones, *Origins* 213-14)

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<sup>222</sup> Shakespeare would return to this scene again, for it bears striking similarities to the opening of *Julius Caesar*, in which Marc Antony offers Julius Caesar the crown—or coronet—three times as well. That scene is reported rather than dramatized, but we do get a disgusted Casca’s reaction to the whole performance, particularly his declaration that he “durst not laugh for fear of opening [his] lips and receiving the bad air” (*Julius Caesar* 1.2.235-48).

Although he is writing a history, More's interest here is on the dramatic component of this history, an interest that feeds into Shakespeare's own central concerns about drama and strategy. When the Lord Mayor enters with the citizens, Buckingham says that they have come upon Richard while he is in the midst of prayer. Richard, Buckingham is quick to insist, is nothing like his villainous brother Edward IV, for he is "not lolling on a lewd love bed" or "dallying with a brace of courtesans," but is instead "on his knees in contemplation . . . with two deep divines" (*RIII* 3.7.72-75).

The show is thoroughly designed to make everyone believe that this is the man that England needs to be king, although Buckingham expresses fears to his audience that Richard may be too spiritual to take on so secular a task (*RIII* 3.7.89-93). Seeing that his plan is working, Buckingham stresses Richard's zealous contemplation to the citizens, preparing them for Richard's grand entry onto the stage and telling them where to look:

Two *props* of virtue for a Christian prince,  
To stay him [Richard] from the fall of vanity;  
*And see*, a book of prayer in his hand,  
True ornaments to know a holy man. (*RIII* 3.7.95-98) [my emphasis]

Richard has been costumed and equipped with all of the proper "props" to indicate his saintliness, an image that runs directly counter to Richard's actual behaviour in the first tetralogy. As Berger argues, this scene is a wonderful example of what he calls "the villain's discourse," which places characters

in the delightful position of staging a travesty of its opposite, the discourse of virtue and morality – or, hyperbolically, for lack of a better noun, the saint's discourse . . . . The saint's discourse features a variety of postures that are often aggressively stated – unappreciated generosity and loyalty, self-sacrifice, slandered virtue, conspicuous probity, nonresponsibility for evil, renunciation of the world and its vanity. (380)

This is a wonderful reading of the discourse that goes on between Richard and Buckingham, although many critics continue to see the discourse as more of a monologue, a monologue with only one character being worthy of consideration. For example, Meron argues that Richard alone “is the master of image-making” (189), an idea that can also be found in Rackin’s *Stages of History*, where she notes that Richard is the one in charge of shaping his own image (72-73). Roe likewise gives sole credit to Richard for the scene with the bishops (“Shakespeare and Machiavelli” 366), as does Hadfield when he says that “Richard has to use Buckingham to fake popular support for him” (74). In reality Buckingham is the one who is the brilliant “public-relations man” (Prior 121) and “master of the political platform” (Ornstein 65), for he is the one who is in charge of the “carefully staged claims for Richard” (Hodgson, *The End Crowns All* 101). Buckingham is not “order[ed]” by Richard, as some such as Rackin have tried to suggest (*Stages of History* 51); instead, he is the one who is setting and directing the scene as he channels his audience and works to get the desired reaction from it. Buckingham is a very important partner, for he understands the power of theatre and he appreciates its ability to sway people to this cause or that. He is not simply a “flatterer who [only] knows how to please his principal” (Pearlman 53), for he actively plays a vital role. Leaving nothing to chance, Buckingham eagerly points out the two priests on either side of Richard and the Bible in his hand, making sure that everyone can see them and thus be taken in. Richard is no devil. Richard is a saint.

Having fooled the people thus, Buckingham proceeds to implore Richard to take the crown and govern “this ungoverned isle” (*RIII* 3.7.110). Richard is a saint, but to Buckingham he does have one fault, and it is a damning one:

it is your fault that you resign  
The supreme seat, the throne majestic,  
The scepter'd office of your ancestors,  
Your state of fortune and your due of birth,  
The lineal glory of your royal house,  
To the corruption of a blemished stock;  
Whiles, in the mildness of your sleepy thoughts,  
Which here we waken to our country's good,  
The noble isle doth want her proper limbs;  
Her face defaced with scars of infamy,  
Her royal stock graft with ignoble plants,  
And almost shouldered in the swallowing gulf  
Of dark forgetfulness and deep oblivion. (*RIII* 3.7.116-28)

Richard's fault is not that he is ambitious, but that he is not ambitious enough. Richard's fault is not that he is a devil determined to win the crown, but that he is a saint too concerned with God to care about the affairs of the realm. Richard's fault is not that he has destroyed everyone in his family who has stood between him and the throne, but that he has neglected his family by refusing to take on the role that they have bequeathed to him. He is not the bastard Edward's bastard children: he is the true heir. Richard does not want to destroy England; he wants to save it. As with all of Richard and Buckingham's lies, this speech is interesting in that it manages to tell the truth while concealing it (Kerrigan 63-65). While it is true that England has been defaced with scars of infamy and grafted with ignoble plants, Richard is the cause of these problems, not the cure.

Richard and Buckingham's comments about their dramatic skills at the opening of 3.5 are no joke. The performances truly are masterful: Richard, the reluctant ruler, being forced against his will to sit on the throne when he would rather kneel before the altar; and Buckingham, begging, imploring Richard to set aside his duty to God and think



instead about his duty to his people, who need him now in these dark and dangerous times.<sup>223</sup> Richard and Buckingham's performance illustrates Bos' description of

the Renaissance notion of theatricality . . . playing a role is an interaction of *simulatio* and *dissimulatio*, of simulating what is not there and . . . hiding the theatrical techniques used to realise this aim. (Bos 74-75)

That aim is realized here. Buckingham cries aloud for Richard to "take on the charge / And kingly government of" England "as successively from blood to blood, / Your right of birth, your empery, your own" (*RIII* 3.7.130-35). Despite having actually only received the cheers of ten men, Buckingham now claims that he has consorted with all of the citizens, and that they have chosen to support Richard "by their vehement instigation" (*RIII* 3.7.138).<sup>224</sup> The fact that Richard and Buckingham are the ones England needs to be saved from is carefully avoided as an alternative argument.

Either through the force of their performance or through sheer force, Richard and Buckingham are starting to win the citizens over, as now even the Lord Mayor cries out: "Do [become king], mighty lord [Richard]; your citizens entreat you" (*RIII* 3.7.200). But Buckingham is not through yet. It is not enough to point out Richard's virtues and the Prince of Wales' vices; Buckingham must show the citizens what will happen to them if Richard does not become king and the boy becomes king instead. He has hinted at the horrors of civil strife before, but now he delivers the *coup de grâce*:

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<sup>223</sup> However, while Richard and Buckingham knowingly utilize theatre for political ends, they fail to realize that they are also involved in a deeper—and more real—tragedy than they can imagine. Buckingham may mock the conventions associated with playing the "deep tragedian" and use them to his advantage, but he and Richard will both eventually suffer truly tragic fates.

<sup>224</sup> As entertaining as Richard and Buckingham's performances are in this scene, one does wonder whether anyone is really taken in by the arguments they make. Buckingham's earlier reference to "the citizens" remaining "mum" (*RIII* 3.7.3) may indicate that the citizens are more frightened than they are fooled. History is littered with examples of people believing greater lies than the ones concocted here by Richard and Buckingham, but it is also littered with examples of people agreeing to and taking part in the most horrible of crimes because of the fear that they felt. And so, regardless of whether they are fooled or frightened, Richard and Buckingham have the crowd right where they want it.

Yet know, whe'er you accept our suit or no,  
Your brother's son shall never reign our king,  
But we will plant some other in the throne  
To the disgrace and downfall of your house.  
And in this resolution here we leave you. (*RIII* 3.7.213-17)

Buckingham has not left Richard with this resolution; he has left it with the citizens of London. England has just gone through a civil war, when a weak boy king was ruled over by the rest of his family who often fought each other for control of the realm. More than the “disgrace and downfall” of a single house is at stake. It is probable that the citizens do not want to go through a civil war again, and Buckingham knows it. This is why Buckingham storms off so angrily. He really wants this part of the performance to sink in for everyone around him. As Sahel notes, the “coup d'état” has turned “into coup de theater” (133).

When it does start to sink in, the citizens realize that Buckingham, whether they like it or not, is telling the truth. If Richard does not take the crown and the Prince of Wales does, it will only be a matter of time before someone stronger, be it Richmond or some other ambitious noble, comes and takes it away. This is not the time for boy kings. More than anything else, this is the thing that ultimately wins the crowd over, for now the Lord Mayor and the citizens finally give Richard their blessing (*RIII* 3.7.236, 40). The argument about Edward IV's bastardly beginnings probably would not have been enough for the citizens; what matters is the threat of civil war. What could the Prince of Wales do if civil war broke out? He does not stand a chance against Richard, and he does not stand a chance against anyone else. Just as Richard and Buckingham had coupled theatricality with violence when confronting the Lord Mayor in 3.5, they now do the same when confronting the citizenry. The theatricality may help to sway the crowd in

their direction, but it is the threat of violence that ultimately tips them over. Now that the citizens have been tipped over in their favor, there is nothing that stands between Richard and the crown.<sup>225</sup> Richard's villainy has gotten him within reach of the throne, but it is Buckingham's use and abuse of theatre and rhetoric that finally puts him on it.

#### 6.4 ON THE PERILS OF DECEPTION AND THE LIMITS OF STRATEGY

Buckingham shows himself to be a master dissimulator.<sup>226</sup> He manages to fool most of the court and he has managed to fool the city of London. He succeeds by manipulating and betraying the trust of others. In this sense he is a very successful and prototypical strategic or "politic" politician. However, Shakespeare would not be Shakespeare if he did not take an idea and turn it on its head. Buckingham betrays the trust of others, but he never considers the possibility that he might also be in danger of placing his trust in the wrong person. Although Buckingham's ability to deceive has been helpful to Richard, he cannot help but wonder whether or not he too is being deceived. When Buckingham refuses—or at least asks for more time to consider—the task of killing the princes, Richard turns on him instantly, resolving that "the deep-revolving witty Buckingham / No more shall be the neighbour to my counsels" (*RIII* 4.2.42-43).<sup>227</sup> Buckingham does not realize that just as he plays tricks on others and puts them through tests of loyalty, so too has Richard now does this to him. Buckingham is been tested, and his loyalty to Richard is found wanting.

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<sup>225</sup> Saccio points out that whatever the duplicitous nature of Richard's usurpation, it was one of the most peaceful of the period, but one nevertheless fraught with numerous problems at the outset: "Richard's usurpation . . . was in one way the most efficient and least costly of the many irregular seizures of power in medieval England. No lives were lost in battle or riot. Only a handful of men were executed" (*Shakespeare's English Kings* 176).

<sup>226</sup> In this sense Buckingham's skill is in keeping with the fascination with the topic in many early modern works. For more on dissimulation in the works of George Puttenham and Christopher Marlowe, see Cox, *The Devil and the Sacred* (119-20).

<sup>227</sup> Machiavelli felt that new princes must destroy all members of the old order. The issue here is compounded by the fact that these are not princes of a different country but are Richard's own nephews.

Why does Buckingham step back from Richard at this time? This scene, like Warwick's switching of allegiance in *3 Henry VI*, is an important one for showing how Shakespeare explores the nature of strategy and its limitations dramatically. Other strategic ideas and scenarios may need several scenes or even plays to come to fruition, but here we have the essence of Shakespeare's exploration condensed into a single moment. To begin with, Richard tries to make use of insinuation to get Buckingham to help murder the princes: "shall we wear these glories for a day? / Or shall they last, and we rejoice in them?" (*RIII* 4.2.5-6).<sup>228</sup> However, Buckingham is too smart for such an obvious trick; if Richard wants him to murder the princes, he will have to say so outright.<sup>229</sup> And so he asks Richard to "say on" (*RIII* 4.2.11), which in turn forces Richard to say the very thing that he clearly does not want to say so openly:

Cousin, thou wast not wont to be so dull.  
 Shall I be plain? I wish the bastards dead,  
 And I would have it suddenly performed.  
 What sayst thou now? (*RIII* 4.2.17-20)

It is interesting that Richard thinks that Buckingham is being "dull," when he fails to take the bait of his insinuations. Likewise, Jones argues that "Buckingham is slow to take the point" (218). However, is this really the case? One could make the more Machiavellian argument that Buckingham is merely trying to get Richard to commit himself to the crime

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<sup>228</sup> As Siemon notes, Shakespeare would later dramatize similar scenes in *King John* and *Richard II* (Arden *RIII* 317-18). In *Richard II* Exton seizes on Henry IV's insinuation and fills in the rest of the blanks himself: "And speaking it, [Henry IV] wisely looked on me, / As who should say 'I would thou wert the man / That would divorce this terror from my heart', / Meaning the King at Pomfret" (*Richard II* 5.4.7-10). However, while Exton sees himself as "the King's friend" (*Richard II* 5.4.11), he soon realizes that while Henry IV "love[s]" Richard "murderèd," he "hate[s] the murderer" (*Richard II* 5.6.40). Perhaps this is why Hubert is much more circumspect with King John when he tries to make similar insinuations about Arthur (*King John* 3.3.56-65). It is only when King John overtly uses the words "death" and "grave" that Hubert agrees to do his king's bidding and kill Arthur: "He shall not live" (*King John* 3.3.66). Hubert betrays King John, which only goes to confirm just how complicated such affairs can become. Shakespeare first begins to explore these complications and their potential in this scene between Richard and Buckingham.  
<sup>229</sup> Buckingham's wariness is justified. Guicciardini argues that one must always be on one's guard with princes, for one never knows what kind of trap they are planning to set (*Ricordi* C.103). According to Guicciardini, it is difficult to guard against all of the princes' snares, so one must think and tread carefully.

so that Buckingham will not have to deal with its consequences alone. Richard is clearly making this argument for his own aims: there are impediments to his power, and so the strategic thing to do is to remove them. However, in this case the impediments are children, and here the audience sees the ways that Shakespeare's exploration of politic stratagems shows some basic flaws.

Richard may be able to see these children as simply impediments to be removed, but it seems that Buckingham cannot. However, it must be owned that Buckingham's position is never made entirely clear, for when he reenters he only manages to say "I have considered in my mind / The late request that you did sound me in" (*RIII* 4.2.82-83) before Richard cuts him off: "Well, let that rest" (*RIII* 4.2.84). What was Buckingham going to say? More writes that there were many different opinions about why the historical Richard and Buckingham split, but that the truth was unknown: "The occasion whereupon the king and the duke fell out is of divers folk divers pretended" (*History of Richard III* 90). This ambiguity remains in the play, but here the hesitation is due not to diverse accounts but to the nature of Shakespeare's exploration and what it reveals. Buckingham's hesitation implies moral doubt and anxiety over what is being asked, but the actual outcome of Buckingham's considerations is left to our speculation. Was Buckingham about to agree to go along with it, or was he going to refuse and instead ask the money and land that Richard had promised him? In essence this can be seen as a dramatic distillation of strategic thought, for Buckingham is weighing his options. Shakespeare never provides the answer to these deliberations; instead he gives us the dramatic representation of a character on the stage contemplating the murder of children without telling us what he ultimately decides.

The dispute between Buckingham and Richard over the princes is something that Shakespeare did not find in the chronicles (Siemon, Arden *RIII* 319). One could make the argument that Shakespeare, in keeping with the Tudor myth, merely wanted to make Richard more sinister. However, this dispute allows Shakespeare the chance to dramatically investigate politic stratagems in a way that reveals their ultimate limitations. Of course one could see Buckingham's hesitations as a form of strategic maneuvering. Richard interprets it as such, so much so that he even suspects Buckingham of being "high-reaching" and of wanting the throne for himself (*RIII* 4.2.31). Edward Berry argues that Richard "is distracted by his thoughts of the prophecies that Richmond will become king" (*Patterns of Decay* 97-98). Richard is completely incapable of seeing that personal morality and conscience might play a role in one's decision-making process, even when it comes to politic stratagems. In effect he suffers from a kind of blindness. Therein lies the ultimate limitations of strategy as proposed by politic writers such as Machiavelli: it may help someone in his aims, but no set of precepts can ever completely disregard and ignore "the human factor" (Cronin 124). Buckingham has been willing to help Richard combat his political opponents in the interests of securing power for himself, but the princes are not simply opponents: they are children. Machiavelli and other politic writers argue that there should be no limits for anyone seeking to achieve power, but Shakespeare's dramatic exploration shows that this simply is not true. Regardless of how long it may take someone to reach them, it must be owned that everyone has his limits.<sup>230</sup> Shakespeare's dramatic testing of these limits is what makes the whole thing so dynamic and intriguing.

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<sup>230</sup> While Richard may brag to the audience that he can "murder whiles [he] smile[s]" (*3HVI* 3.2.182) and that "love" is not "resident" in his heart (*3HVI* 5.6.81-82), even he will bewail the fact that he has lost his

Whether or not Buckingham would have agreed or refused to be Richard's assassin, it is not smart for him to wait around to see how Richard will react to his decision. Buckingham realizes the enormity of his error only after it is too late, so he can only stand astonished at the degree to which he, the great deceiver, has been deceived:

And is it thus? Repays he my deep service  
With such contempt? Made I him king for this?  
O, let me think on Hastings and be gone  
To Brecknock while my fearful head is on. (*RIII* 4.2.117-20)<sup>231</sup>

Buckingham's role as kingmaker is at an end, for he has supported a king who will never repay his debts. Although Buckingham initially escapes with his life, he is too far entwined with Richard to ever be trusted by anyone. Backed by Welsh soldiers, he takes to the field hoping to topple his former ally (*RIII* 4.3.46-48).<sup>232</sup> However, his forces are hastily recruited and Buckingham does not have the trust of those around him, for people understandably still associate him with Richard. Although he claims to fight on the side of Richmond (*RIII* 4.4.467-68), Richmond himself doubts his motives, and even sails back to Brittany rather than come ashore to join Buckingham's troops (*RIII* 4.4.520-27).<sup>233</sup> Since no one can really count on him, Buckingham is left alone on the field and is

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humanity in his bid for power: "I shall despair. There is no creature loves me, / And if I die, no soul will pity me" (*RIII* 5.3.200-01). Richard may avoid the weaknesses of Henry VI and may never be surprised by the daggers lurking behind the smiles of others, but he is also forced to be tragically alone.

<sup>231</sup> Saccio notes that the historical Buckingham's revolt against Richard—along with his motivations in general—are hard to pin down, for

we do not know why he turned on Richard within three months of the coronation . . . . Thomas More has him lured into rebellion by the wily tongue of Bishop Morton, whom Richard had committed to Buckingham's charge. Hall offers several explanations, one of which Shakespeare dramatizes: that Richard welshed on a promise to give Buckingham the earldom of Hereford . . . . Whatever the cause, Buckingham marched from Brecon against Richard. (*Shakespeare's English Kings* 179-80)

<sup>232</sup> That Buckingham sees himself in such a role is attested to by Holinshed, who writes of the historical Buckingham's complaints against his former ally, an ally who acts as he "had neuer furthered him, but hindered him; as though [he] had put him downe, and not set him up" (qtd. in Nicoll and Nicoll 160).

<sup>233</sup> As Holinshed portrays it:

The earle of Richmond, suspecting their flattering request to be but a fraud (as it was in deed), after he perceiued none of his ships to appeare in sight, he weied vp his anchors, halsed vp his sailes, &, hauing a prosperous and streinable wind, and a fresh gale sent

thus quickly crushed by Richard. And so, Buckingham meets his end on the scaffold, having been “found / False to [Edward’s] children and his wife’s allies” and having been duped “by the false faith of him whom most [he] trusted” (*RIII* 5.1.15-17).<sup>234</sup> Deception brought Buckingham success, but Shakespeare dramatizes the ways in which such deception also helps to bring about his failure. He also dramatically questions whether Buckingham’s fall is a failure. Might strategic failure in another light be seen as success? Buckingham does seem to regain some modicum of honour in his final moments as he is led to “the block of shame” and admits that “wrong hath but wrong, and blame the due of blame” (*RIII* 5.1.28-29). It should be noted that, even though he is surrounded by some of those whom he has helped to make ghosts, Shakespeare does place Buckingham among the ghosts who come to torment Richard before the Battle of Bosworth, his words containing a reminder that he was one “that helped [Richard] to the crown,” while at the same time giving full support to Richmond’s cause (*RIII* 5.3.167-76). Perhaps Buckingham’s end may be seen not as an endorsement for more duplicitous behaviour but more as a positive testimony to the superior claims of justice.

## 6.5 ON THE BENEFITS OF DECEPTION

What about Stanley? Certainly everyone on stage seems to have difficulty figuring out where Stanley’s true allegiance lies. Does Stanley succeed by being less devious than Buckingham, or does he succeed by being more? Grady argues that what distinguishes a strategist like Richard III and one like Henry V is that the former is more

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euen by God to deliuer him from that peril and ieopardie, arriued safe and in all securitie  
in the duchie of Normandie. (qtd. in Nicoll and Nicoll 166)

For more on the issue of flattery during the early modern period, see Zagorin, *Ways of Lying* (7-8) and Rhu, “Continental Influences” (437-40).

<sup>234</sup> In Loncraine’s 1996 film adaptation of *Richard III*, Buckingham, in a scene clearly evocative of *The Godfather*, does not meet his end on the scaffold: “Tyrrell’s final assassination is the garroting of Buckingham (who has obviously been beaten up) in the back of an army truck while Richard sits in the front seat, smoking” (Smith, “To beguile the time, look like the time” 155).



explicit for the audience while the latter “gives us both a heroic image *and* the machinery and calculations whereby the image of heroism is created” (217). While Stanley’s strategic maneuvers are less ostentatious than Richard’s they are actually far more effective. Stanley manages to succeed by making sure that he has plenty of options. He already made the mistake of placing too much trust in one person, and that almost cost him his head. He will not make the same mistake again. 4.1 is a perfect example of this. Stanley meets Elizabeth, her son the Marquess of Dorset, Richard’s mother the Duchess of York, and Richard’s wife Anne. Stanley is ostensibly there on Richard’s behalf, for he is to bring Anne “straight to Westminster . . . to be crownèd Richard’s royal queen” (*RIII* 4.1.31-32). This is a safe choice. However, Stanley has learned his lesson and will no longer put all of his eggs in one basket. And so he makes sure to graciously “salute” the “two fair queens” before him (*RIII* 4.1.29-30). One of those queens—at least in “one hour” (*RIII* 4.1.28)—is Anne, but the other queen he makes sure to salute is Elizabeth. Stanley also makes much of her counsel, which he declares to be full of “wise care” (*RIII* 4.1.47). Given what has passed between them, why does Stanley bother to be so cordial to her, especially now that she has lost most of her power?

Stanley does this because Elizabeth’s position is not as precarious as it seems and Richard’s position is also not as secure as it seems. Richard won over the nobles in 3.4 and the people in 3.7, but his power over them could be lost just as easily as it was won. Machiavelli argues that a prince should be feared instead of loved, for love holds only so long as it is convenient, whereas fear has a much tighter grip, an argument that Richard would probably agree with. Both the nobles and the people are clearly afraid of him. However, while fear may be useful, hatred is counterproductive. Stanley and the rest of

the nobles who rose to follow Richard after the council meeting fear Richard, but they also hate him. The same could be said of the people Richard and Buckingham won over with their oratory. They have thrown in their lot with Richard, but they could be persuaded to throw in their lot with someone else.

That someone else could be Stanley's son-in-law Richmond.<sup>235</sup> Alone neither Stanley or Elizabeth could ever hope to defeat Richard, but together they might have a chance, and Richmond provides the means for bringing them together. This is why Stanley tells Elizabeth's son Dorset to go to Richmond with the letters he has written, indicating planning on Stanley's part (*RIII* 4.1.49-50). What is Stanley planning? Whatever it is, he is anxious not to be discovered, for twice he implores Dorset to get to Richmond as quickly as possible: "Take all the swift advantage of the hours . . . . Be not ta'en tardy by unwise delay" (*RIII* 4.1.48, 51). Whatever Stanley is planning, it is imperative that Richard does not find out about it. Dorset must get to Richmond so that they can flee, and Stanley must fulfill Richard's request to take Anne to Westminster. Ostensibly Stanley acts as Richard's errand-boy and persuades Anne to come with him (*RIII* 4.1.57), but it is clear that he has another agenda.

Whatever Stanley's hopes for success with Elizabeth and his son-in-law, Stanley keeps his options open. Like Borgia, Stanley must learn how to "appear to be the other than he is" and "know how to dissemble or dissimulate" (Hager 26-27). He does not like Richard any more than anyone else does, but Richard is king, and so Stanley must act

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<sup>235</sup> Henry VI prophesized Richmond would one day be king:

This pretty lad will prove our country's bliss.  
His looks are full of peaceful majesty,  
His head by nature framed to wear a crown,  
His hand to wield a sceptre, and himself  
Likely in time to bless a regal throne. (*3HVI* 4.6.70-74)

Richard later recalls this incident when he says that he remembers that "Henry the Sixth / Did prophesy that Richmond should be king, / When Richmond was a little peevish boy" (*RIII* 4.2.94-96).

accordingly. Essentially Stanley finds himself in the same situation under Richard that he had been in under Elizabeth at the beginning of the play, only now it is his son and not his wife who is the cause for concern. However, Stanley is no fool. Even though he is responsible for sending Dorset away in the previous scene, he enters and acts as though he has simply heard that this is what has happened: “Know, my loving lord, / The Marquess Dorset, as I hear, is fled / To Richmond, in the parts where he abides” (*RIII* 4.2.47-49). He is walking a tightrope here, and he knows it. It is very clever of him to say “as I hear” and act ignorant of the very things that he himself has set in motion. It is also very clever of him to say “in the parts where he abides” as though he does not know where Richmond is, even though earlier Stanley gave every indication that he knew exactly where Richmond was (*RIII* 4.1.50).

Stanley is clever, but the situation is still quite dangerous. Richard angrily says that “Dorset has fled to Richmond” (*RIII* 4.2.84) and then threatens Stanley about his link to this new danger to his power: “Stanley, he is your wife’s son. Well, look unto it” (*RIII* 4.2.86). Clearly Richard does not know that Stanley has helped Dorset in his escape. Preferring to keep his betrayal a secret and wishing to avoid the king’s growing anger towards Buckingham (*RIII* 4.2.27), Stanley remains silent. He continues to bite his tongue when Richard rebukes him again: “Stanley, look to your wife. If she convey / Letters to Richmond, you shall answer it” (*RIII* 4.2.91-92). Given such threats, it is the safe approach. He will not fall into the same trap that destroyed Hastings. Clearly Stanley is hedging his bets. He would prefer that Richmond wins, but in such a world preferences are irrelevant. Richard has as good a chance of staying in power as Richmond has of toppling him, so it is smart to keep on everyone’s good side. Playing

both sides gives Stanley more options, and the essence of a winning stratagem is having more options than one's opponents. By taking away his opponents' options Stanley gives them less room to maneuver, and so he is better able to force them to make moves that will hurt them and help him. However, the game is not over yet, and Stanley is still in a very precarious position. When Richard asks Stanley about what news he has to report, Stanley replies that there is "none good, my liege, to please you with the hearing, / Nor none so bad but well may be reported" (*RIII* 4.4.457-58). Stanley knows of Richmond's whereabouts and plans, but here he claims to know nothing aside from what he may guess (*RIII* 4.4.465). Stanley "guesses" that Richmond, "stirred up by Dorset, Buckingham, and Morton . . . makes for England . . . to claim the crown" (*RIII* 4.4.467-68). It is wise of Stanley not to include himself in that list of stirrers.

The tension here is strong, for Shakespeare creates a scene in which a master strategist like Richard is being duped by Stanley, someone who knows that any false move will cost him his head. The dramatic back and forth between the two characters also creates a dynamic contrast in their two very different approaches to strategic maneuvering. Stanley is no fool, but Richard is no fool either, and he is right to fear that Stanley will "revolt and fly to" Richmond when he arrives in England (*RIII* 4.4.477). Stanley insists that this is not the case and that Richard should trust him (*RIII* 4.4.478), but Richard dismisses such promises. Richard has broken his word with almost everyone in the play, so why should he trust the word of anyone else? He asks Stanley why he has not sent his followers to beat Richmond back and why there are rumors that Stanley's forces are in the West and are aiding Richmond's landing (*RIII* 4.4.479-82). Again Stanley insists that this is not the case, for his forces are still in the North (*RIII* 4.4.483).

Trying to allay Richard's fear, Stanley says that he has not sent any commands to muster up his forces, but that he will do so immediately if Richard wants him to (*RIII* 4.4.486-89). Still wary, Richard says that he still does not trust Stanley. First he wanted Stanley's forces to help him in the West, but now he worries that if he allows Stanley to muster his forces he will immediately join with Richmond (*RIII* 4.4.490-91).

Stanley has seen too many people fall at Richard's hands not to try to avoid falling into this trap. He implores Richard to trust him, arguing that he has "no cause to hold my friendship doubtful," for "I never was nor never will be false" (*RIII* 4.4.491-93). Richard has much cause to hold Stanley's friendship doubtful because Stanley has been and will be false, but he cannot know for sure, and so he decides to hold Stanley's son as hostage. If Stanley betrays Richard, his son George Stanley will suffer the consequences (*RIII* 4.4.494-96).<sup>236</sup> Rossiter notes:

Richard suspects Stanley . . . and reasonably so: for he was husband to the Countess of Richmond, Henry Tudor's mother, the famous Lady Margaret Beaufort; and therefore keeps his son, George Stanley, as hostage. ("Angels with Horns" 75)

Likewise, Holinshed writes that while the historical Richard distrusted both Stanley and his brother, he distrusted Stanley most of all: "[Richard] mistrusted Thomas lord Stanleie, [and] sir William Stanleie his brother . . . of whose purposes although king Richard were ignorant, yet he gaue neither confidence nor credence to anie of them; and

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<sup>236</sup> Stanley's response to this threat, "so deal with him as I prove true to you" (*RIII* 4.4.497), is interesting, for the historical Stanley reacted rather callously when Richard threatened to execute his son during the Battle of Bosworth. The historical Stanley reportedly sent Richard a message saying that he had plenty of sons, showing that he was no more loyal to his own son than he was to his son-in-law or his sovereign:

Lord Stanley took up a position between the two armies, declining requests from both Henry and Richard to join them. When, after threatening to execute Lord Strange, the King received a message to the effect that Lord Stanley had plenty of other sons. (Seward, *The Wars of the Roses* 306)

Likewise, Holinshed writes that the historical "lord Stanleie answered the purseuant that, if the king did so, he had more sonnes aliue" (qtd. in Nicoll and Nicoll 172).

least of all to the lord Stanleie” (qtd. in Nicoll and Nicoll 163). Despite these dangers, Stanley continues to play both sides, even if it means risking the lives of his family.

Not only does Stanley risk the lives of his family in order to keep his options open, but he even uses such risks as an excuse when his son-in-law Richmond pleads with him to send him aid. Apparently Richmond is as exasperated with Stanley’s lack of support as Richard is. Historically this is accurate, for Stanley did withhold his military support from either side until the very last minute at the Battle of Bosworth: “the Stanleys sat on hilltops, awaiting a sign of the outcome [before acting]” (Saccio, *Shakespeare’s English Kings* 183).<sup>237</sup> It is surprising that critics would search high and low to find how the Stanleys of Shakespeare’s own time influenced Shakespeare’s conception of the character while almost completely ignoring how Shakespeare may have been influenced by accounts of the historical Stanley he was portraying on the stage.<sup>238</sup> For example, Ornstein fails to mention Stanley’s role at all, instead opting to describe the victory at Bosworth as one achieved “by a people determined to be rid of their oppressor” (81). In fact, Hodgson is one of the few critics to acknowledge “Stanley’s crucial role in Richmond’s victory” (*The End Crowns All* 112). Shakespeare’s Stanley is at least as strategic as his historical counterpart, and his drama explores the contours of this strategy while also involving the audience in the exploration.

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<sup>237</sup> Interestingly, Saccio notes that the historical Stanley “may have concerted strategy with Henry beforehand, but this is disputed” (183). Norwich also notes that it was unclear until the very last moment where the historical Stanley’s loyalties lay, but in the end his intervention on Richmond’s behalf was what turned the tide (351).

<sup>238</sup> For more on this, see Jones, “Richard III and the Stanleys”; Jowett, “‘Derby’, ‘Stanley’, and memorial reconstruction in Quarto *Richard III*”; and George, “Shakespeare and Pembroke’s Men.” All three articles offer very interesting points concerning this connection, particularly Jowett and George, who both argue that Shakespeare’s involvement with the Lord Strange’s Men under Ferdinando Stanley, 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby, may have affected the dramatization of the character of Stanley in *Richard III*. However, as fruitful as this connection may be, it over-simplifies the Stanley who is on the stage. These articles tend to assume that Shakespeare’s dramatization of Stanley is entirely positive, despite the fact that the character is far more duplicitous than he seems to be.

Stanley has learned his lesson about placing all of his support behind any one person. Strategically, it is in Stanley's best interests to keep both sides believing in him and relying on his aid. Richard does not trust Stanley but he does rely on his aid, as does Richmond. Stanley responds to Richmond's pleas by telling the priest Sir Christopher Urswick to let Richmond know that he cannot give him his full support just yet, for

in the sty of the most deadly boar  
My son George Stanley is franked up in hold;  
If I revolt, off goes young George's head.  
The fear of that holds off my present aid. (*RIII* 4.5.2-5)

The most deadly boar who holds George Stanley in his sty is clearly Richard, whose crest was the boar. Stanley dreamt of Richard as a razing boar before and he uses such imagery again (*RIII* 3.2.9-10). Also, by saying that George Stanley is in Richard's sty—as opposed to, say, lair or castle—Stanley emphasizes Richard's beastliness. This is in sharp contrast to Stanley's more deferential descriptions of Richard when he is in the king's presence in the previous scene: “my liege,” “mighty sovereign,” “my liege,” “my good lord,” “my good lord,” “mighty King,” “Your Majesty,” “Your Grace,” “Your Majesty,” and “most might sovereign” (*RIII* 4.4.457, 465, 474, 478, 483, 486, 487, 488, 489, 491). A different audience requires a different approach. Now Richmond is the one who is described by Stanley as being “princely” (*RIII* 4.5.9), although in Richard's presence Stanley simply referred to him by his name alone (*RIII* 4.4.462).

Stanley keeps Richard assured by keeping his forces from the field and he manages to keep Richmond assured by sending him messages such as the one he is sending now. Hodgson describes this scene as being too “brief” (*The End Crowns All* 112). It is brief, but that is the point. Stanley is doing more than simply sending messages, for he has also played a part in Elizabeth's decision to marry her daughter

Elizabeth of York to Richmond (*RIII* 4.5.7-8). If this marriage can take place, then Richmond's claim to the throne will be stronger than ever. This is partly why Stanley now calls Richmond "princely." He also shows that his professed ignorance about Richmond's whereabouts and plans was a lie (*RIII* 4.4.465, 474), for Richmond's forces are actually keeping Stanley well informed of such things (*RIII* 4.5.12-18). Things are looking good for Richmond, and so Stanley tells Sir Christopher that he kisses his son-in-law's hand and that his letter will let him know his mind (*RIII* 4.5.19-20). Stanley is beginning to lean towards his son-in-law, but, seeing as there are no real friends in politics, he still wants to keep his intentions secret. All of these reversals on Stanley's part take place with each succeeding scene, so Stanley supports Elizabeth and Richmond in 4.1 and Richard in 4.2, Richard in 4.4 and Elizabeth and Richmond in 4.5. One cannot help but take notice of Stanley's gift for guile. However, while Chernaik does make brief reference to "the divided loyalties of Stanley" (64), most critics seem to be of the opinion of Janis Lull, who argues that Stanley is merely one of the many characters in the play "used in various combinations to advance Richard's story" (96). Directors and critics also tend to overlook Stanley, taking him at his word that he is simply an innocent old man caught in the middle of all of this who is afraid of Richard's threats toward his son, when it is clear that Stanley is a far more strategic and duplicitous character.

Stanley is caught in the middle, but he survives because of his strategy. Hastings' execution has shown him the danger of relying too heavily on friends in politics. He begins to align himself with his son-in-law only when he sees that he has an actual chance of winning, and even then he still makes sure to do it as clandestinely as possible. Only those in Richmond's camp know of Stanley's betrayal of Richard, and it seems



unlikely that they will run to Richard with such information. Stanley has sent Richmond a letter—presumably the letter he handed to Sir Christopher earlier (*RIII* 4.5.20)—giving his son-in-law “fair comfort and encouragement” but no military support (*RIII* 5.2.6). However, Stanley does give Richmond important information about Richard’s whereabouts and how best to approach him (*RIII* 5.2.12-13). This information is invaluable to Richmond, but it has to be reiterated that Stanley has yet to give his military support. He still wants to wait and see.

Both sides now need Stanley, and they both try to win him over in turn. On the eve of the Battle of Bosworth Richmond asks Blunt where his father-in-law is quartered, only to be told that

Unless I have mista’ en his colors much,  
Which well I am assured I have not done,  
His regiment lies half a mile at least  
South from the mighty power of the King. (*RIII* 5.3.35-38)

It is interesting that Blunt questions if he has mistaken Stanley’s colors. Ostensibly he means the colors of Stanley’s regiment, but it is possible that he—or at least Shakespeare—means something more. Earlier in the play the word color had been used by Richard in reference to acting (*RIII* 3.5.1), as Buckingham bragged that he could change his color and “counterfeit the deep tragedian” (*RIII* 3.5.5). As Ewbank notes, “the reader soon becomes aware that the theatricality rests not only in the patterning of scenes but in the explicit self-consciousness that the author has given to the characters” (405). This theatricality applies to the world of the play, for this is a play in which everyone lies to everyone else, and in which destruction often comes the moment one begins to trust another. Stanley is playing a very dangerous game up to this point, and he has had to change his colors often, keeping on the good side of every faction and doing his best to

remain alive. Now all the factions suddenly want his allegiance, but he still seems reticent to give his support to any one side. He has been sending letters of comfort and encouragement to Richmond, and he has given his son-in-law valuable information, but for some reason he still chooses to keep his regiment only “half a mile . . . south from” Richard (*RIII* 5.3.37-38). Perhaps he is still trying to show Richard that he will remain loyal. In any case, Richmond needs more than words of encouragement, and there is real urgency in his tone when he asks Blunt to give Stanley his “most needful note” (*RIII* 5.3.41).

Richard needs Stanley too, but he has a very different way of trying to secure his allegiance. He sends Catesby to Stanley to remind him that they will kill George Stanley if he does not bring his regiment to Richard before sunrise (*RIII* 5.3.59-61). What Richard does not realize is that this Stanley is not as weak as Richard thinks he is. Richard has mistaken Stanley’s earlier reticence for cowardice, whereas in reality Stanley has simply been biding his time. Now Richard is the one who is in a position of weakness, and Stanley is the one who is in a position of power. The only problem for Richard is that he does not realize this until it is too late. Shakespeare did not write a scene with Catesby asking Stanley for his help, but he did write a scene between Richmond and Stanley on the eve of the Battle of Bosworth. Stanley’s first words to Richmond—“Fortune and victory sit on thy helm!” (*RIII* 5.3.79)—are interesting. Stanley would like Richmond to win, for his chances of success and advancement are probably far greater with his son-in-law, but at the end of the day he is still not willing to offer much more than comfort and encouragement. After telling Richmond about his mother’s prayers for his success (*RIII* 5.3.83-84), Stanley goes on to tell Richmond to

strike early in the morning before Richard can fully prepare himself (*RIII* 5.3.87-88).

Since Stanley and his regiment are situated but half a mile from Richard's camp, he is in a good position to know whether Richard's troops are properly prepared or not. He is willing to give praise and information, but he is not willing to give much else.

Stanley then gives a speech that truly reveals how his mind works and how his strategy has managed to twist and move about in the world of this play:

I, as I may—that which I would I cannot—  
With best advantage will deceive the time  
And aid thee in this doubtful shock of arms.  
But on thy side I may not be too forward,  
Lest, being seen, thy brother, tender George,  
Be executed in his father's sight.  
Farewell. The leisure and the fearful time  
Cuts off the ceremonious vows of love  
And ample interchange of sweet discourse,  
Which so long Sundered friends should dwell upon.  
God give us leisure for these rites of love.  
Once more, adieu; be valiant, and speed well. (*RIII* 5.3.91-102)

Essentially Stanley says that he would like to openly fight on Richmond's side, but unfortunately he cannot: "I, as I may—that which I would I cannot." However, he does say that he will "deceive the time" and work to his son-in-law's advantage without actually seeming to (*RIII* 5.3.92-93). What this means exactly is not clear. How will he work to Richmond's advantage? Will he work to it at all? As the use of the word "color" served earlier as an indication of Stanley's ability to act and possibly counterfeit, so now does his use of the "deceive" conjure up similar connotations (*RIII* 5.3.35). By and large Stanley is seen as someone who, if he is duplicitous at all, is only so when he is in Richard's company. The audience is therefore meant to believe that he is honest when he is in the company of Richmond or Elizabeth. However, Stanley is not simply just playing

one side; he is playing both sides. At the end of the day he will do whatever it takes to make sure that he wins.

It is revealing that he refers to the coming battle as “this doubtful shock of arms,” for that, in essence, is why he chooses to keep from picking a side too quickly (*RIII* 5.3.93). The outcome of the battle is still very much in doubt. Perhaps this is why Stanley has urged Richmond to attack Richard as quickly as possible, for that would afford Richmond his best chance of winning (*RIII* 5.3.88-89). It is also revealing that Stanley tells Richmond “on thy side I may not be too forward,” for in reality he does not want to seem too forward on either side (*RIII* 5.3.94). Stanley says that he worries about “being seen” to favor Richmond, but in reality he does not want to be seen to favor anyone (*RIII* 5.3.95). He says too that Richard’s threats against George Stanley keep him from joining the fray on Richmond’s side, but is this true (*RIII* 5.3.95-96)? It is great that Stanley calls George Stanley, Richmond’s brother, “tender George,” when in reality the two were actually not brothers (*RIII* 5.3.95). However, by emphasizing this “brotherly” bond and the “tender” nature of the hostage, Stanley suggests the ethical bind that he finds himself in. This seems to be merely a ruse. Stanley is not worried about being bound ethically so much as he is worried about being bound strategically. He cuts the meeting short, saying that “the fearful time / Cuts off the ceremonious vows of love / And ample interchange of sweet discourse” (*RIII* 5.3.97-99) that he would like to continue to engage in and he quickly exits reiterating his hopes for Richmond’s success in the battle (*RIII* 5.3.100-102). Again, Stanley does not want to be seen as favoring Richmond, just as he does not want to be seen as favoring Richard.

However, he does seem to be leaning more and more towards Richmond's camp. During the Battle of Bosworth the question of who Stanley will favor becomes yet more important. Richmond has already shown his eagerness to win Stanley over, and Stanley is also the first thing on Richard's mind as he begins to draw up his plans for battle (*RIII* 5.3.289-90). The outcome of this shock of arms is still in doubt, and whoever Stanley chooses to favor will probably win the day. This is historically accurate, and Shakespeare stresses this fact here and elsewhere. During the historical Battle of Bosworth, Stanley's forces came to Richmond's aid at the last minute and were thus essential to his victory. As Holinshed portrays it, the historical Stanley's arrival on the field secured Richmond's victory:

[Richmond] being almost in despaire of victorie, were suddenlie recomforted by sir William Stanleie, which came to his succors with three thousand tall men. At which verie instant, king Richards men were driuen backe and fled, & he himself, manfullie fighting in the middle of his enemies, was slaine. (qtd. in Nicoll and Nicoll 173)

The importance of Stanley's defection is also stressed by Shakespeare, for it is the last battle report Richard receives before he realizes that all is lost: "my lord, [Stanley] doth deny to come" (*RIII* 5.3.343). Richard tries to follow through on his earlier threat by ordering the execution of George Stanley (*RIII* 5.3.344), but now—as Norfolk reminds him (*RIII* 5.3.345-46)—it is too late. Stanley, the man he had underestimated and ignored, has beaten him. This underestimation has been shared by other critics such as Alexander Leggatt, who refers to Stanley as one of the "little people" in the play (*Shakespeare's Political Drama* 42). Since Richmond is the one who became Henry VII following the Battle of Bosworth, the importance of Stanley to the outcome of the battle

and the ascension also tends to be underestimated. Richmond could not have succeeded without his support, and Richard probably would not have failed without his defection.

The historical Henry VII did not underestimate or overlook his father-in-law's help, for he made Stanley the Earl of Derby shortly after the Battle of Bosworth. Stanley would continue to be favored by his stepson-in-law for the rest of his life. Even the title of stepfather changed in recognition of the historical Stanley's service. Seward notes that

Stanley, now 'the king's right entirely beloved father', was made Earl of Derby . . . . The earldom of Derby was almost royal . . . . In . . . recognition of the new Earl's crucial role at Bosworth, he was allowed to keep the hangings from King Richard's tent, which remained on display at the Stanley house . . . until the seventeenth century. (*The Wars of the Roses* 312-13)

Shakespeare does not dramatize the granting of the earldom, but he does emphasize Stanley's importance by having him pluck the crown from Richard's head and place it on Henry VII's:

Courageous Richmond, well hast thou acquit thee.  
Lo, here this long-usurped royalty  
From the dead temples of this bloody wretch  
Have I plucked off, to grace thy brows withal.  
Wear it, enjoy it and make much of it. (*RIII* 5.5.3-7)

This is in keeping with the tradition that the historical Stanley crowned Henry VII following the Battle of Bosworth. As Holinshed portrays it: "When the lord Stanleie saw the good will and gladnesse of the people, he tooke the crowne of king Richard . . . and set it on the earles head" (qtd. in Nicoll and Nicoll 173). The tradition also includes another historical detail that Shakespeare chooses to omit. According to tradition a servant of Stanley's wife Margaret Beaufort found the crown in a hawthorn bush and took it directly to Stanley (Seward, *The Wars of the Roses* 1-2). Why he took it directly to Stanley and not to Henry VII is not known, although it does indicate that Stanley was

perceived to be amongst the most powerful of the victors on the field on August 22, 1485. Richard would have probably been surprised if someone told him in 1.1—or 4.2 for that matter—that he would be bested by Stanley, but this is exactly what has happened. Even Stanley’s words betray a certain awareness of his new power. Until now Stanley has been more or less reticent to speak up and commit himself, but now he proudly proclaims that he is the one who has “plucked off” the crown “from the dead temples of this bloody wretch” (*RIII* 5.5.5-6).

Stanley stresses that he is the one who helped Henry VII win the day, and he is the one who will grace his son-in-law’s brow with the crown (*RIII* 5.5.6). Even his cheering words that Henry VII should wear, enjoy, and make much of the crown are telling (*RIII* 5.5.7). In one sense Stanley is telling Henry VII what to do, which is not really his prerogative. Stanley has basically become a kingmaker. Kingmakers such as Warwick and Buckingham help their respective sovereigns become king and then feel cheated when they are not adequately rewarded. Such resentment usually inspires the kingmakers to revolt, which often results in their deaths. Stanley does not suffer a similar lack of regard, and so he does not suffer a similar fate. Perhaps Stanley is more successful than his predecessors because he is smarter than they are. He is a master dissimulator who keeps his options open and chooses the best possible option at the best possible moment. That is why he is the one who succeeds where so many others have failed. He is thus one of Shakespeare’s greatest strategists and not merely a “secondary character” (Saccio, *Shakespeare’s English Kings* 180). His success brings about the victory of the Tudor dynasty, and so it may even rival the dynastic successes of either Henry V or Octavius Caesar. His achievement is all the more fascinating because it is so

often overlooked. In terms his character such inattention can be seen as a victory, for the successful strategist's intentions are often secretive by design. However, as a means of exploring the dramatic nature of strategy, Shakespeare's achievement should not be similarly overlooked.



## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

My dissertation has been structured in order to better tackle the diverse nature of strategy and its most essential issues. The first chapter dealt with the amoral and dangerous political world of the first tetralogy, a world in which one must be sufficiently strategic in order to survive. Not everyone engages in the same kind of strategy or even agrees about what the best strategy might be, so my second chapter outlined the many different characteristics of Shakespeare's successful and unsuccessful strategists. Since no strategist can survive on his or her own, my third chapter outlined the importance of strategic alliances and the dangers of making the wrong alliance with the wrong person. But alliances can be also dangerous because people cannot be trusted to care about aims other than their own; thus my fourth chapter dealt with the numerous kinds of enemies that a strategist must contend with. Not every enemy is straightforward about his aims, and many are actually quite duplicitous, which made the issue of deception the chief concern of my fifth chapter. All of these issues must be taken into consideration if one wants to be a successful prince, but the fact remains that even the most successful prince will likely fail at some point or another. The failure may be due to some flaw in the schemes, or it may be due to the fact that no one can remain successful indefinitely. There are very real limits to strategy, and so to close I shall deal with the inevitable conflict between *virtù* and *fortuna*.

## 7.1 ON FORTUNA

It is fair to say that, perhaps above all other concerns, the nature of *fortuna* perplexed and fascinated Machiavelli:

few of the chapters are without references to Fortune or associated matters such as occasion, chance, time as ‘the mother of many mutations’, or the variable things of the world . . . . This is a world of flux and reflux; times of prosperity must be looked on . . . as opportunities in which the wise man will prepare for the deluge. (Gilbert 206)

*Fortuna* goes by a number of names and definitions: Providence, fate, divine intervention, external circumstances, destiny, chance, or just plain luck. All of the strategies that Machiavelli describes seem ultimately powerless in the face of *fortuna*. The ability to be ruthless, to be both the fox and the lion, to be flexible with changing times, to be skilled at making and breaking alliances, and to be skilled in the arts of deception are helpful, but in the end they are not enough. As Viroli describes it:

Viewed from afar, the great dramas of history . . . appear inevitable outcomes, necessities of their times. The protagonists seem to struggle in the skeins of a web woven by a greater power, a power we may choose to call Fortune, or Destiny, or Providence. As this power continues on its way, it takes care to draw a merciful veil over all the protagonists, be they great or small, noble or vile, wise or foolish, brave or cowardly. (*Niccolò's Smile* 119)

Machiavelli's most powerful description of this power comes at the end of *The Prince*:

I would compare Fortune to one of those violent torrents that flood the plains, destroying trees and buildings, hurling earth from one place to another. Everyone flees this torrent, everyone yields to its force without being able to stand up to it. (*P* 25.94)<sup>239</sup>

For example, Borgia's rise influenced most of Machiavelli's observations in *The Prince*, but his fall severely affected Machiavelli's ideas about whether or not *virtù* was possible

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<sup>239</sup> The original Italian is less neutral, for the river is personified as an angry—“adirano”—force that wreaks havoc almost as an act of revenge: “assomiglio quella a uno di questi fiumi rovinosi, che, quando s'adirano, allagano è piani, ruinano gli arberi e li edifizii, lievono da questa parte terreno, pongono da quell'altra; ciascuno fugge loro dinanzi, ognuno cede allo impeto loro, senza potervi in alcuna parte obstarè” (72).

given the power of *fortuna*: “Had Borgia’s fate been written in the stars, thereby making his defeat inescapable? . . . Or was it possible for him to oppose these celestial influences and exercise a freedom of will and action?” (King 61).<sup>240</sup> That someone could rise so high and then fall so low disturbed Machiavelli greatly. Machiavelli describes the startled reaction of Borgia to his fate, a reaction that he could never have foreseen: “these blows from Fortune have stunned him, and since he is unaccustomed to receive them, his mind is confused” (qtd. in King 38).<sup>241</sup>

What role does *fortuna* play in the first tetralogy? This is a question that has taken on an increasing urgency over the years, and several critics have tried to tackle both it and its implications. In 1973 Manheim wrote that the conflict between *fortuna* and *virtù* has featured in numerous critical works on the first tetralogy:

two seemingly opposed outlooks toward the *Henry VI* plays have been predominant, [and] that opposition has been more over attitudes toward the nature and purpose of historical drama in the late sixteenth century than over the nature of the plays themselves. The apparent gulf . . . concerns whether or not Shakespeare’s history plays are part of a providential view of English history. (77-78)<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> For more on Machiavelli’s often complex view of *fortuna*, see Viroli, *Machiavelli’s God* (31-32) and Grazia, *Machiavelli in Hell* (204-05).

<sup>241</sup> Borgia’s ultimate defeat at the hands of *fortuna* is also described by Innocent Gentillet:

Il ne m'est possible (dit Messer Nicolas) de donner meilleurs preceptes à un nouveau prince, que luy mettre devant les yeux pour se servir d'exemple, les gestes de Cesar Borgia . . . Et si bien l'ordre qui'il donna à ses affaires ne luy servit de rien, ce ne fut pas totalement sa coulpe, ains celle d'une malignité extraordinaire de fortune. (336)

“Machiavelli says that he cannot find any better precepts for a new prince than the actions of Cesare Borgia. However, even his great successes could not survive against the extraordinary malignancy of *fortuna*.”

<sup>242</sup> For more on this, see Price, “The senses of “virtù” in Machiavelli” and Rackin, *Stages of History* (71-77).

Writing in 1989, Rackin noted that the debate had not subsided and that earlier critics such as Tillyard who had insisted on a providential view were in fact similar to those who had made similar claims in Shakespeare's time:<sup>243</sup>

much of the criticism of . . . during the past forty years has centered on various versions of an issue framed in Shakespeare's time as a conflict between providential and Machiavellian theories of historical causation. Politically conservative, the providential view of history looked backward to an older feudal world and upward to transcendent spiritual authority to oppose change and justify hereditary privilege. The Machiavellian view, by contrast, validates change, mobility, and individual initiative . . . . modern scholarly controversy even recapitulates the progress of the Renaissance debate: Like the older tradition in Shakespeare's own time, the older tradition on twentieth-century criticism of the history plays emphasized the providential view. (*Stages of History* 43)

For Rackin, the difference between earlier critics like Tillyard and later critics like herself could thus be read in the following terms:

The conservative critics of the mid-twentieth century saw the plays as essentially medieval, the expressions of conservative ideology, cautionary tales based upon a political theology that attributed all the sufferings of the Wars of the Roses to the deposition, two generations earlier, of the divinely anointed Richard II.<sup>244</sup> The newer generation, in our time as in the sixteenth century, prefers the Machiavellian version of historical causation, explaining history in terms of force, fortune, and practical politics. (*Stages of History* 43)

Writing in 2002, Knowles shows that this debate is still not resolved. He points out that modern audiences find such providential frameworks problematic, particularly as an explanation for suffering. Writing about *Richard III*, he notes that

the argument of providence would have presented a difficulty in the issue of suffering, evil and justice . . . . given the emphasis on the innocence of such figures as Rutland, Prince Edward and the princes in the Tower, how

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<sup>243</sup> For more on the problems with Tillyard's reading of Hall, see Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Shapes of Time* (15-16) and "The shape of time: form and value in the Shakespearean history play." Sound summaries of most of the major positions in regards to Tillyard can be found in Wells' "The Fortunes of Tillyard" and Bevington's "*I Henry VI*" (316-17).

<sup>244</sup> A mid-twentieth century critic who does not agree with this view is Brockbank, who argues that "the catastrophic virtue of Henry and the catastrophic evil of Richard are not an inescapable inheritance from the distant past but are generated by the happenings we are made to witness" ("The Frame of Disorder" 64).

do their deaths fit in with the providential scheme of things? Further, some characters such as Edward IV and Queen Margaret, seem to remain relatively unpunished. Justice seems quite arbitrary . . . . If we reconsider the issue in theological terms of particular and general providence, then the use of particular evil means to justify a general end seems more the work of a Machiavel than a loving God . . . . Shakespeare calls into question the possibility of any justice, natural or metaphysical. (*Arguments with History* 49-51)<sup>245</sup>

The question of the role that *fortuna* plays in the first tetralogy is an important one, for just as the exploration of strategy's possibilities and limitations would influence Shakespeare's later strategists, so too will the exploration of *fortuna* influence Shakespeare's later tragedies.<sup>246</sup> As Jones notes, "the favourite 'Tudor' theme is Fortune, whose grim realm—in literature at any rate—is defined by the court, the prison and the scaffold" (*Origins* 193). It is a theme that also unsettles many a strategist, for it suggests that there are real limits to what strategy can overcome. Moseley notes that in Shakespeare's English History plays "time, death and fortune govern all, even the great, and within the hollow crown of earthly power death the antic sits grinning at the empty pomp and self-importance of struggling men" (68). Does *fortuna* have complete control over the actions of the characters in the first tetralogy, or are they allowed some agency?

Because it is an activity that forces its participants to give up so much control to so many uncontrollable factors, war has often been inextricably linked with *fortuna*

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<sup>245</sup> For more on the influence of Augustine on this idea, see Wilders, *Patterns of Decay* (73-75) and Holderness' *Shakespeare Recycled* (31). This influence can certainly be found in Medieval tragedy, as Reese notes (380), and early modern works such as the *Mirror for Magistrates* (Moseley 68). For more on how this topic was influenced and shaped by Boethius' *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Saint Augustine's *The City of God*, and Calvinism, see Wilders (73-74).

<sup>246</sup> For more on the role of *fortuna* in the later tragedies, see Watson, *Shakespeare and the Hazards of Ambition*, McAlindon's *Shakespeare's Tragic Cosmos*, Hamlin's *Tragedy and Scepticism in Shakespeare's England*, and Levin's *The Overreacher*. While Shakespeare's handling of the topic would become increasingly complex, all of his later tragedies deal with the inherent struggle between *virtù* and *fortuna*. For example, in *King Lear* Edmund declares that belief in the power of *fortuna* is the "excellent foppery of the world" (1.2.109), while his father Gloucester famously exclaims in despair: "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods; / They kill us for their sport" (4.1.37-38). Both characters will have their views seriously tested and unsettled by the action of the play. These are views that Shakespeare first began to seriously tackle in the first tetralogy.

(Jorgensen 37). As Prior notes, “certain chancy situations were notoriously unpredictable, chief of them war” (22). From antiquity to the present, war’s success and failures have been ascribed to *fortuna*, a pattern that can be seen quite clearly at several points throughout the first tetralogy as characters try to understand and come to grips with “the mortal fortune of the field” (3HVI 2.2.83).<sup>247</sup> This becomes clear at the very beginning of *1 Henry VI*, as the same “comets” and “revolting stars” that are blamed by the English for Henry V’s death are praised by the French for bringing them victory (1HVI 1.1.2, 4). This image of war can also be seen in Shakespeare’s sources. For example, Holinshed describes the historical Battle of Towton in terms of changes in the wind and sea, as if the participants themselves could do little to change the outcome: “This deadly battayle and bloody conflicte, continued .x. houres in doubtfull victorie. The one parte some time flowying, and sometime ebbing” (qtd. in Bullough 182). This constant back and forth between victory and success has also been described by Guicciardini, who cites his own experience in war to show that the outcome of a battle can rarely be predicted (*Ricordi* C.127).<sup>248</sup> The situation can change so quickly that one is tempted to assume that change comes from above rather than from our own actions.

This is certainly the interpretation Charles gives to the recent victories the French have enjoyed over the English:

Mars his true moving, even as in the heavens  
 So in the earth, to this day is not known.  
 Late did he shine upon the English side:

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<sup>247</sup> As Kahn notes, the classical conception of *fortuna* had just as strong an influence as the Christian one described by Wilders. However, it was a conception concerned less with the soul than with masculine identity (85). The first tetralogy is quite concerned with masculine identity and the ways in which it might be threatened by feminine influences. For more on this, see Williamson, “When Men Are Rul’d by Women” (41-59) and Levine’s “Ruling Women” (68-96). For more on this topic in relation to Machiavelli, see Cavallo, “Machiavelli and Women” (123-48) and Pitkin, “Meditations on Machiavelli” (49-92).

<sup>248</sup> Similarly, Guicciardini insists that a battle is ultimately subject to *fortuna*: “è cosa troppo sottoposta alla fortuna” (*Ricordi* C.183).

Now we are victors — upon us he smiles. (*IHVI* 1.2.1-4)

Although Wilders argues that “fortune and its agents the stars are often held responsible by Shakespeare’s characters for their otherwise inexplicable failures and successes in war” (30-31), it should be noted that Charles’ praise is tempered by the fact that the French victory is influenced not by Mars but by the “want of men and money” on the English side (*IHVI* 1.1.69).<sup>249</sup> Has Mars determined the outcome of the battle, as Charles suggests, or was it want of men and money? Charles acknowledges the latter interpretation when he makes reference to the “famished English” who, “like pale ghosts, / Faintly besiege us one hour in a month” (*IHVI* 1.2.7-8), while Alençon confirms this when he says that the English “want their porridge” (*IHVI* 1.2.9). Reigner also says that Salisbury would like to fight but lacks the means to do so: “Nor men nor money hath he to make war” (*IHVI* 1.2.17).

Certainly *fortuna* cannot then be the only factor that plays a role in such things, or can it? Several characters in the first tetralogy do continue to praise and blame *fortuna* as if it were. This can be seen when Salisbury is killed in *I Henry VI*. After he has been shot, both he and Talbot’s men cry out to God for mercy, with the latter feeling crossed by “chance” and railing against the “accursed tower, [and] accursed fatal hand, / That hath contrived this woeful tragedy” (*IHVI* 1.4.75-76). As Wilders notes: “Talbot, not knowing who has fired the gun, compounds the irony by cursing the hand that has destroyed them” (35). Wilders also notes that “only the spectator knows how fortuitously the tragedy has occurred and he is placed in the position of an all-seeing fortune with which he is forced to be tacitly implicated” (36), for the audience can see that it is not the

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<sup>249</sup> One hears echoes of Henry IV’s cynical description of those who attempt to find the key victory in the sky rather than on the battlefield: “Then with the losers let it [the sun and the wind] sympathize, / For nothing can seem foul to those that win” (*I Henry IV* 5.1.7-8).

hand of fate but that of another soldier who has felled Salisbury and Gargrave. In fact it is not really a soldier at all, but the inexperienced son of the Gunner. To top it off, the shot has been fired as much for personal reasons as it for military ones, for the Gunner and his son are more concerned with advancement than with destroying the enemy (*IHVI* 1.4.5-21). This battle scene sets the template for many more to come, scenes in which characters credit fate for events that are actually far less supernatural in nature. This tendency to give control over to *fortuna* often proves to be debilitating, for it allows characters such as Henry to blame their actions on something other than themselves (Berry, *Patterns of Decay* 32-33). For example, Henry's only reaction to the news that France has been lost, a loss for which Henry bears a great deal of responsibility, is that it is "cold news . . . but God's will be done" (*3HVI* 3.1.86).

This may be Henry's reaction, but Shakespeare suggests that our actions are actually responsible for more than we would like to think and that we cannot, as Henry tries to do, put "complete faith and trust in the efficacy of God in human affairs" (Knowles, *Arguments with History* 27). As Cox notes, Shakespeare presents this idea by using the motifs of religious drama and then turning them on their head (*The Dramaturgy of Power* 93), while Berry argues that "the play does not invite us to share the view of Divine Providence advanced by . . . Henry" (*Shakespearean Structures* 6).<sup>250</sup> For example, when Henry hears that Jack Cade's forces have been defeated, he thanks heaven

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<sup>250</sup> This blurriness can also be found in Machiavelli's works, which are ambivalent about these issues. For example, Machiavelli sometimes argues that one needs to possess *virtù* in order to better take advantage of the opportunities *fortuna* provides: "the only gift that Fortune accorded . . . was the opportunity that gave [princes] the substance they could mold into any form they pleased. Without that opportunity, their skill would not have flourished, and without that skill, the opportunity would not have presented itself in vain" (*P* 6.23). In the original Italian Machiavelli places even more emphasis on the importance of the occasions offered by *fortuna*: "esaminando le azioni e vita loro, non si vede che quelli avessino altro dalla fortuna che la occasione; la quale dette loro materia a potere introdurvi dentro quella forma parse loro; e senza quella occasione la virtù dello animo loro si sarebbe spenta, e senza quella virtù la occasione sarebbe venuta invano" (15).



for intervening on his behalf: “heaven, set ope thy everlasting gates / To entertain my vows of thanks and praise” (2HVI 4.9.13-14). However, the moment he hears that York’s forces are in the field against him, Henry VI blames heaven not only for not intervening on his behalf, but for intervening against him outright. Henry VI uses the image of uncontrollable and unpredictable waves to convey his feeling of helplessness against what he sees as the onslaught of *fortuna*:

Thus stands my state, ’twixt Cade and York distressed,  
Like to a ship that having scaped a tempest  
Is straightway calmed and boarded with a pirate.  
But now is Cade driven back, his men dispersed,  
And now is York in arms to second him. (2HVI 4.9.31-35)

This image of *fortuna* is analogous the one provided by Machiavelli above in the quotation from *The Prince*, and it is one that Shakespeare employs several times throughout his plays.<sup>251</sup> For instance, in *3 Henry VI* Edward describes those leading Henry VI away from the Battle of Towton as “a sail filled with a fretting gust / Command[ing] an argosy to stem the waves” (3HVI 2.6.35-36). However, is it really *fortuna* that has put Henry VI and his state in this state, or is it the machinations and strategies of his enemies combined with his own inability to combat them?

Henry VI sees York as yet another catastrophe sent by *fortuna* following the defeat of Jack Cade, but he does not realize that York is the one who is personally responsible for setting up Cade’s rebellion in the first place (2HVI 3.1.354-74). York is not simply an agent of *fortuna*, but a self-determining strategist looking to further his own ends. Critics such as Carroll have argued that Cade’s rebellion represents “one of

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<sup>251</sup> Rebhorn speculates about why Machiavelli chose this as an image of *fortuna*, speculation that leads to an intriguing comment about *virtù*:

When Machiavelli compares Fortune to “one of these destructive [*rovinosi*] rivers,” perhaps he does so in order to imagine the Prince as actually *building* something in opposition to it, although what he builds consists of “dikes and embankments” (25.295), not houses, let alone cities. (“Machiavelli’s *Prince*” 91)

the most notorious instances of plebian revolt in English history” (“Language, politics, and history” 145). It does, but one should not overlook York’s role in helping to bring it about. This interpretation hinges on how one interprets York’s role in the rebellion:

The Cade uprising has attracted a great deal of critical attention in recent times. It has proved a talking-point in the debate on the nature of subversiveness in Shakespearean drama: whether marginal, dissident and oppressed elements within the playworld are represented in order to be contained by the society’s political orthodoxy, as the new historicists have it, or can be construed (if only retroactively) as a radical challenge to such orthodoxy, according to the cultural materialist theory . . . it depends on the extent to which [Cade] is taken to be a creature of York. (Greene 78)

Earlier York declared that he has planned all along to “reap the harvest which that rascal sowed” (2*HVI* 3.1.380).<sup>252</sup> As Brockbank notes, York is the “‘labouring spider’ . . . behind the inception of the Cade rebellion” (“The Frame of Disorder” 59), while Bevington likewise argues that York is the one who “deliberately incite[s] the mob to violence” (*Tudor Drama and Politics* 236). Saccio points out that Shakespeare greatly amplifies York’s role in the uprising much beyond what the chronicles suggest

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<sup>252</sup> This interpretation has been challenged in recent years by critics who have seen the Cade rebellion in a more subversive light, with some seeing the rebellion as a call for revolution and others seeing it as a parody on the political squabbles of the nobles: “the Cade material discloses tensions in the social order and the ideology that sustains it, transforming the nobles’ earlier infighting to visible, brutal violence” (Hodgson, *The End Crowns All* 63). A similar argument is made by Berry, who argues that “Cade is neither York’s equivalent nor his opposite, but his *reductio ad absurdum*” (*Patterns of Decay* 46). Likewise, Champion argues that “Jack Cade’s activities grimly reveal a society that has virtually collapsed from within,” and that they are “possible only because of a total power vacuum in the English government, a moment when the nexus of competing self-interests that normally drive society become mutually destructive” (*Noise of Threatening Drum* 81-82). In the Arden edition of *2 Henry VI*, Knowles describes the Cade scenes in terms of Bakhtinian Carnival (Arden *2HVI* 66-67, 103-05), a point that he also makes in *Arguments with History*, in which he argues “Cade is many things – historical personage, clown, jester, Lord of Misrule and mock-king – all deriving from carnivalesque modes of inversion” (34). This interpretation had been anticipated in Barber’s “The Saturnalian Pattern,” in which he argued that “the scenes of Jack Cade’s rebellion in that history are an astonishingly consistent expression of anarchy by clowning: the popular rising is presented throughout as a saturnalia” (123). Likewise, Weimann and Bruster contend the Cade scenes represent a “politically radical comic inversion” (17) and a “bloody Saturnalia” (43). For more on different critical approaches to the Jack Cade rebellion, see Patterson, “The Peasant’s Toe” (32-51); Cartelli, “Jack Cade in the Garden” (48-64); Knowles, “The Farce of History” (168-86); Fitter, “Emergent Shakespeare and the Politics of Protest” (129-58); Hedgerson, “Staging Exclusion” (195-245); and Greenblatt, “Murdering Peasants” (1-29). A wonderful summary of many of these positions is provided by Sahel, who sees the rebellion as “the clearest voicing of a theory of revolution in Shakespeare” (139).

(*Shakespeare's English Kings* 125), amplification that shows just how fascinated Shakespeare was with dramatizing York's machinations for the throne, machinations that imply conscious, self-directed action.<sup>253</sup> York's rebellion follows Cade's as the result of strategy or *virtù* and not *fortuna*, as Henry VI acknowledges when he pairs them together: "Thus stands my state, 'twixt Cade and York distressed . . . now is Cade driven back, his men dispersed, / And now is York in arms to second him" (*2HVI* 4.9.31-35).

Nevertheless, Shakespeare dramatizes a world in which his characters both seem to be able to strike out on their own while suggesting that *fortuna* may be responsible for their ultimate downfall. As Guicciardini argues, much can be accomplished with cleverness and moderation, but it is not enough, for you still need to have good fortune (*Ricordi* C.30). Nowhere is this tension made more clear than with Margaret's prophecies in *Richard III*. Champion argues that the use of prophecies in the first tetralogy mark a significant development in Shakespeare's drama, one that helps to give plays such as *Richard III* a strong sense of narrative unity. This sense of unity was certainly well exploited by Jane Howell, who ended her BBC production of *Richard III* with Margaret cradling a dead Richard on top of a pile of corpses that represented both the fruition of her prophecies and all those who had lost their lives during the preceding plays. Margaret is one of the greatest examples of *virtù* in the first tetralogy, but after she loses everything, she enters the Yorkist court to bewail her state and rain down quick

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<sup>253</sup> And so Howard and Rackin are right to argue that Cade's "status as York's henchman clearly undercuts [his] credibility as a spokesperson for popular grievances" (*Engendering a Nation* 80), although one should avoid going so far as Hodgson does when she contends that the play represents "York as Cade's apotheosis" (*The End Crowns All* 66) or Walsh does when he argues that Cade is "York's creature" (*Shakespeare, the Queen's Men* 124). In keeping with these arguments, critics such as Pearlman have argued that Shakespeare, "by making him a tool of York, . . . eliminates the possibility that Cade can lay claim to the slightest political credibility" (36). This oversteps the mark. York may have instigated and benefited from the rebellion, but that should not entirely exclude its being an expression of popular unrest, for he is not the one who directs the rebellion's "remarkable progress" (Champion, *Perspective* 35).

curses on all of her enemies: “Can curses pierce the clouds and enter heaven? / Why then give way, dull clouds, to my quick curses” (*RIII* 1.3.194-95). All those assembled will eventually rue the day that they mocked her prophecies which thus acquire something of the status of *fortuna*.

Unlike Joan, who fails to conjure fiends to do her bidding in *1 Henry VI*, Margaret actually does appear to succeed in getting the heavens to help her achieve vengeance:

“What is so extraordinary in the rhapsody of cursing . . . is the exactness of the fate

Margaret assigns to each of those accursed, and the rigour with which each one comes about” (Greene 152-53). That at least is the view that will be adopted by all of her

enemies when they begin to suffer defeat. When Rivers, Grey, and Vaughan are brought out to be executed, Grey exclaims that “Margaret’s curse [has] fall’n upon [their] heads,”

and Rivers regards these curses with far more reverence than he had when she made them (*RIII* 3.3.15-18). Margaret’s “quick curses” are once again brought home to Hastings as

he is about to be executed as a result of Richard’s machinations: “O Margaret, Margaret, now thy heavy curse / Is lighted on poor Hastings’ wretched head” (*RIII* 3.4.91-92). Not

only does Hastings now give credence to the role of prophecy and *fortuna*, but he also tries to emulate Margaret and make some dire predictions of his own: “Miserable

England! / I prophesy the fearfull’st time to thee / That ever wretched age hath looked upon” (*RIII* 3.4.102-04). This pattern is repeated again and again as defeated Yorkists

begin to give substance to the role that Margaret’s curses played in their defeat.<sup>254</sup>

Elizabeth acknowledges to Margaret the truth behind her prophecy that “the time would come / That [she] would wish for [Margaret] to help [her] curse / That bottled spider”

Richard (*RIII* 4.4.79-81). Buckingham says that Margaret’s curse “falls heavy” on his

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<sup>254</sup> For more on the role of prophecy in the English History plays, see Garber, “What’s Past is Prologue.”

“neck,” so much so that he can actually quote it: “‘When he’, quoth she, ‘shall split thy heart with sorrow, / Remember Margaret was a prophetess’” (*RIII* 5.2.25-27). Richard never makes a similar concession, but it could be argued that he meets an end very much in keeping with Margaret’s prophecies (*RIII* 1.3.215-32).

Is Margaret a prophetess? That is the interpretation Howell makes in her film version of the play, which ends with Margaret standing atop a pile of dead bodies laughing at the role she has played in their defeat.<sup>255</sup> That interpretation is warranted, but Siemon is right to point out that Margaret’s prophecies are flawed from the outset, for one of her very first predictions never comes true (365). Margaret is wrong when she says that Elizabeth will no longer be powerful, for Elizabeth’s daughter Elizabeth of York goes on to marry Henry VII and reign as Queen of England: “most of Margaret’s curses come to pass, but this one is not entirely fulfilled, as any Elizabethan would have known” (Siemon, Arden *RIII* 182). Is this one flaw enough to discount the role that *fortuna* plays in the destruction of the Yorkists? It is difficult to say, but Providence is clearly not as all-encompassing as one might think. Also, all of the characters who acknowledge the role of prophecy ignore or downplay the role that they themselves have played in their own defeats. This is also apparent when one merely blames Richard and sees him as the Scourge of God.<sup>256</sup> In addition to ignoring the role of Richard’s *virtù*, there is something quite hypocritical and self-serving in blaming Margaret, Richard, or *fortuna* for one’s

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<sup>255</sup> For more on this production, see Willis, *The BBC Shakespeare Plays* (165-86) and Taylor, “Two Types of Television Shakespeare” (86-96).

<sup>256</sup> The view that Richard acts as the Scourge of God could be described as follows:

God may intervene as first cause in human history . . . or he may work through a second cause, man, to carry out his providential purposes. Sometimes an evil person was chosen as a scourge of God (*flagellum dei*) for the sins of man. This accomplished, the scourge of God is then scourged by God. (Knowles, *Arguments with History* 43)

Whatever the validity of such a view, to subscribe to it completely would involve denying any possibility that Shakespeare’s characters have any potential for dramatic autonomy, which is something that I am not willing to do.

failures. As Manheim notes, such “chaos” may be “caused exclusively by human irresponsibility, not Divine Providence” (103).

Richard is able to succeed because of his own strategic ingenuity, but his cause is very much assisted by the greed and mistrust that is rife throughout the Yorkist court, greed and mistrust that anyone could see without any powers of divination. Perhaps Margaret is simply better able to see the trap that those around her are setting for themselves. In fact, her own powers of observation may be enhanced by the fact that she is no longer a player in the game but has been relegated to the position of spectator. At one point in the play she says that she has been watching events unfold from, as it were, behind the curtain: “Here in these confines slyly have I lurked / To watch the waning of mine enemies. / A dire induction am I witness to” (*RIII* 4.4.1-5). Is it not conceivable that Margaret employs these same powers of observation when she made her quick curses? Just as Richard can see the flaws and cracks in the Yorkist court, so too can Margaret, but whereas he uses what he sees to divide and conquer his enemies in order to seize the crown, Margaret looks on with delight at the coming destruction of the Yorkists. It is in this same scene Elizabeth declares that Margaret is indeed a prophetess (*RIII* 4.4.79-81), even though Margaret’s advice to her about how to be the same suggests a kind of active engagement more in keeping with *virtù* than *fortuna*:

Forbear to sleep the night, and fast the day;  
Compare dead happiness with living woe;  
Think that thy babes were sweeter than they were,  
And he that slew them fouler than he is.  
Bettering thy loss makes the bad causer worse.  
Revolving this will teach thee how to curse. (*RIII* 4.4.118-23)<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> As Rackin notes that Margaret and Elizabeth “will be united with each other . . . in a chorus of distinctively female lamentation: all victimized and bereaved, all gifted with the power to prophesy and curse and articulate the will of providence” (*Stages of History* 177). While this may be true to a certain extent, Elizabeth does not merely resign herself to grief; instead she seeks an alliance with Richmond and

This advice also places her earlier curses in a different light: were they prophecies, or were they simply verbal assaults against her enemies? Margaret can see that Richard is planning and maneuvering for the crown, so her declarations that he will betray everyone in the room may carry little significance beyond that of keen observation.

This brings me to the prophecy made by Henry VI concerning the future ascension of Richmond to the throne as Henry VII:

If secret powers,  
Suggest but truth to my divining thoughts,  
This pretty lad will prove our country's bliss.  
His looks are full of peaceful majesty,  
His head by nature framed to wear a crown,  
His hand to wield a sceptre, and himself  
Likely in time to bless a regal throne. (*3HVI* 4.6.68-74)

It is an important scene, and it has been debated by everyone concerned with both the Tudor myth and Shakespeare's dramatic exploration of it. What are we to make of this prophecy? Cox and Rasmussen note while "Hall frequently treats providential interpretations sceptically," he is far more reverential "in Richmond's case" (Arden *3HVI* 321). Likewise, Martin notes that Holinshed is even more willing to ascribe to Henry VI the gift of prophecy when it came to this decision (Oxford *3HVI* 281). This is also the view of Rackin, who argues that while the first three plays of the first tetralogy present a Machiavellian world, the final play in the series is entirely providential, "imposing a providential order that makes sense of the Machiavellian chaos he depicted in the *Henry VI* plays" (*Stages of History* 65). Rackin feels that this change is due more to Tudor politics than dramatic necessity. However, it is not really a question of whether or not Shakespeare is willingly acknowledging the Tudor myth or whether he is acknowledging

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Stanley and also tricks Richard into thinking that she will allow him to marry her daughter, a ruse that helps contribute to Richard's downfall.

it under pressure from the state; what is far more interesting is how Shakespeare presents that acknowledgement dramatically. Henry VI does say that Richmond will go on to become Henry VII, but Henry VI is a character in a play, and as such he is subject to the demands of the playwright. As Smith notes:

it's probably more accurate, and more fruitful, to interpret Shakespeare's historical plays as documents of changing contemporary views of historical narrative and of causation, rather than as ideologically committed political drama. They prompt questions, rather than providing answers. Shakespeare isn't writing for the authorities, neither ideologically or practically. And just as Shakespeare's sources and his culture mobilised a range of ways of thinking about historical events, from the Providentialism of the medieval church—'things happen according to God's will'—to . . . Machiavelli—'things happen because humans make them so', so too different characters and different plays give us different views of why things happen. (138)

One such character is Henry VI. Henry VI's actions are grounded in strategy to a much deeper degree than many critics have acknowledged up to this point. Richmond is, however tenuously (Martin, Oxford *3HVI* 281, 350-51), a Lancastrian. Given this, what are we to make of the fact that a Lancastrian king prophesies that the throne will one day be taken back by another Lancastrian? Is Henry VI merely acknowledging the role of *fortuna*, or is he trying to ensure the Lancastrians will have another Lancastrian to rally around if anything were to happen to him and his son? *Fortuna* sometimes plays a role in the outcome of human actions because of, rather than simply in opposition to, *virtù*.

## 7.2 ON *VIRTÙ*

If the nature of *fortuna* always perplexed Machiavelli, so too did the nature of *virtù*. Machiavelli's concept of *virtù* essentially takes the humanist idea—as derived from Protagoras—that humanity is the measure of all things and applies it to politics. This is why Machiavelli makes use of examples from the past, for he believes that one



can learn how to affect one's fortunes, "see how they conducted themselves in war and examine the reasons for their victories and defeats, in order to imitate the former and avoid the latter" (*P* 14.58). Such readings would be superfluous if everything were simply determined by Providence. Just before his death in 1527, Machiavelli wrote to his son Guido to make his goodbyes and impart what fatherly advice he could. Amongst other things, Machiavelli tells his son that "everyone will help you if you help yourself" (*L* 316). Machiavelli's advice sounds very close to the old adage that God helps those who help themselves. This phrase has been widely used and circulated, but it is oddly contradictory: if one is helped because one has helped oneself, then where exactly does God come in? In *The Aeneid*, Virgil famously writes that "*audentis Fortuna iuvat*" (10.284), which again presents us with the same contradiction. If the bold act boldly, what role does Fortune actually play?

This contradiction is best understood by looking at Machiavelli's conception of *virtù*. What exactly does Machiavelli mean by it? To begin with, he does not mean "virtue" in the moral sense—classical, Christian or otherwise—and many have argued that *virtù* often requires one to act in direct contradiction of virtue (Keeton 264-65). The word itself derives from the Latin words *vir*, meaning man, and *virtus*, meaning valour or courageousness. Ruffo-Fiore argues that the word is probably best understood in terms of all the synonyms that have been attached to it:

Though not exhaustive, the list of possible synonyms includes: ability, force, courage, boldness, efficiency, energy, vitality, wisdom, capacity, power, action, valor, strength, bravery, self-discipline, determination, fortitude, prudence . . . *Virtù* conveys a sense of energetic, active, conscious involvement in determining the political, civic, and military life of the state. In the sense that *virtù* opposes passivity, it is anti-Christian; otherwise it transcends conventional goodness or badness; yet the constructive use of energy for good ends is preferred to its evil use for

wicked ends. In swift, effective action the new prince can successfully convert his will into reality and affix his mark on history. His will is neither arbitrary nor capricious, but clearly aware of the possibilities and opportunities inherent in a situation and capable of utilizing all resources in translating thought into action. Important to *virtù* is the ability to understand, accept, and adapt to change dynamically and avoid stagnation. (37-38)<sup>258</sup>

In one sense then, almost all the political actors that Machiavelli describes and Shakespeare dramatizes can be said to possess *virtù*, for they are all trying to make use of prowess to convert their will into reality and affix their mark on history. As Moseley notes, “their very rejection of the rules of the games helps them to win it” (68).<sup>259</sup> They may not always win it, and they may not always be aware of all of the possibilities and opportunities of any given situation or able to utilize all the available resources, but they do all make efforts in that direction. Shakespeare’s dramatization of these efforts, the ways that they succeed and the ways that they fail, suggest that *virtù* does have a very important role to play.

For Machiavelli, there is nothing more important than remaining strong, for that is the only way that one could successfully gain worldly glory. Can one actually keep oneself from ever falling? It should come as no surprise that Machiavelli had such a large impact on the plays of Christopher Marlowe, particularly with his overreachers like Tamburlaine the Great and Barabas (Khoury 329-33). However, whereas Marlowe seems more concerned with whether or not it is possible to keep from ever losing one’s strength, Shakespeare is interested about overreaching alone but about the reach as well.

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<sup>258</sup> Other critics have been equally reliant on synonyms when trying to describe *virtù*, as Roe notes: Machiavelli’s word *virtù* has less of Christian virtue, i.e. meekness and humility, and much more of the Roman values of strength and manliness (note the Latin etymology: “vir” equals man and “vires” is strength). It is indeed impossible to translate, as the many English versions of *The Prince* bear witness: it can mean strength, dexterity, resourcefulness, courage, cleverness, and—very occasionally—virtue, as the context requires. (“Shakespeare and Machiavelli” 361-62)

<sup>259</sup> “Prowess” is the word preferred by Bull in his translation of *The Prince* (25).

Aside from Richard III, the best example of a character trying to achieve *virtù* would be the Duke of York, for he works tirelessly to achieve his ambitions and snatch the crown from Henry's head. York has been able to play the fox and remain flexible, but his rise and ultimate fall present a strong dramatic exploration of both the possibilities and the limitations of *virtù*. In *1 Henry VI* Mortimer informs York of his claim to the throne and advises him to wait until the opportune moment to strike (*IHVI* 2.4.101-29). York does his best to follow Mortimer's advice, although it is quite clear throughout both *1 Henry VI* and *2 Henry VI* that this is easier said than done. York is actually accused by Somerset of hiding the true nature of his ambitions at one point in *1 Henry VI*: "Your private grudge, my lord of York, will out, / Though ne'er so cunningly you smother it" (*IHVI* 4.1.109-10). However, York does manage to smother his private grudge, even going so far as to stop himself in mid-sentence from speaking—"An if I wist he did — but let it rest" (*IHVI* 4.1.180)—in order to avoid betraying his true thoughts.

York is able to smother his private grudge and suppress his voice, for he has a goal in mind and he is willing to do whatever it takes to achieve it. However, Shakespeare makes this striving for political power compelling by dramatizing the degree to which such smothering and suppressing is clearly affecting the hot-tempered York, for it goes against all his most basic instincts. This can be seen at the end of *1 Henry VI* when news arrives that Henry VI means to make peace with the French, news that almost causes York to lose his self-control. Warwick counsels York to "be patient" (*IHVI* 5.3.113), but York is so incensed that he actually asks the Cardinal to speak so that he can avoid saying something he might regret later: "Speak, Winchester, for boiling choler chokes / The hollow passage of my poisoned voice / By sight of these, our baleful

enemies” (*1HVI* 5.3.120-22). York is angered not merely by the sight of the French, but by the realization that Henry VI’s peace treaty will inevitably lose York land and possessions that, as he admits to the audience later, he already feels are his (*2HVI* 1.1.234-35). York is clearly struggling to hold his tongue, and it is Shakespeare’s dramatic presentation of this struggle that makes York’s *virtù* so dynamic and gripping. If York remained in control of himself and his emotions, his fight for the crown would be far less engaging; the fact that he has tremendous difficulties keeping his feelings in check shows the degree to which true *virtù* is difficult to maintain.

The dramatic nature of York’s struggle becomes all the more explicit and exciting in *2 Henry VI*, for the character begins to involve the audience in his schemes and machinations. His forthrightness with the audience is effective for his earnestness and candour about the nature of his designs, but this is increased tenfold when one also considers his silence preceding these soliloquies, for one becomes aware of the degree to which these thoughts are boiling under the surface. York is trying to embody *virtù*, but it is clear that he is constantly fighting a battle against his own instincts to declare his intentions. If *virtù* can be described as the struggle over both internal and external forces in pursuit of worldly glory, then it is clear that York has as much trouble with the former as he is about to have with the latter. This becomes quite clear at the end of the first scene of *2 Henry VI*, a kind of dramatic revolving door of politic strategists, with characters waiting for others to leave before declaring their intentions to betray them. The scene ends with York’s declaration that he plans to betray them all (*2HVI* 1.1.204), showing that he has been able to hide his true intentions while encouraging others to reveal theirs. York manages to keep within the frame of this portrait later in the play



56). Such a declaration indicates that at this point in the first tetralogy York is practically the embodiment of *virtù*. He is the Cesare Borgia who will not accept things as they are and who will do everything that he can to change things to his advantage.<sup>261</sup> However, the tone of anger and annoyance in York's voice suggests that such self-control has limits. It also suggests that as much as Shakespeare is interested in *virtù* as a dramatic fight against the power of *fortuna*, he is equally interested in it as a dramatic fight against oneself and one's own limitations.

For the moment York's plan appears to be working beautifully, and the audience is allowed to share in his many asides detailing his plans for power. York manages to outfox his enemies into removing Humphrey while ensuring that they will suffer from the deed while he benefits from it. I have described how York seizes the opportunity presented to him when the conspirators offer him an army to quell a rebellion in Ireland, an army that he swiftly uses to try to force Henry VI to yield the crown. In keeping with the demands of *virtù*, York has "not a thought but thinks on dignity," while his "brain, more busy than the labouring spider, / Weaves tedious snares to trap [his] enemies" (2*HVI* 3.1.337-39).<sup>262</sup> York's strategies are beginning to bear fruit, and he is quite hopeful that by the time he arrives from Ireland the crown will be his for the taking:

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<sup>261</sup> Again, Machiavelli's obvious admiration for Borgia is tempered somewhat by his acknowledgement that Borgia's successes were all ultimately undone by *fortuna*:

Machiavelli explains his ruin as a caprice of fortune — 'fortune' being an obscure, indeterminate idea to which he never succeeded in giving expression in a bold spiritual affirmation, sometimes regarding it as the force and logic of history, but more often as a mysterious, transcendent grouping of events, whose incoherence is unintelligible to the human mind. (Chabod 69-70)

It certainly must have been disheartening for Machiavelli to witness the end of someone who could have fulfilled what had been one of Machiavelli's strongest passions: the unification of Italy. However, I disagree with Chabod's criticism of Machiavelli's supposed inability to describe *fortuna*, for Machiavelli's multifaceted approach to the topic is far more engaging and dynamic. It is also more honest, for it seems to acknowledge that definite knowledge about such topics can never be fully achieved.

<sup>262</sup> Later Shakespeare would use the same image when Iago declares his plan to "whisper. With as little a web as this will I ensnare as great a fly as Cassio" (*Othello* 2.1.168-69).

Why then from Ireland come I with my strength  
And reap the harvest which that rascal [Jack Cade] sowed.  
Humphrey being dead, as he shall be,  
And Henry put apart, the next for me. (2HVI 3.1.379-82)

Just as York's anger in his previous soliloquy indicated a potential for error, so too does his pride in this speech.

It has often been said that pride comes before the fall. Such an occurrence can be seen to reflect the will of some higher power, such as *fortuna*. However, it could merely suggest that one is more apt to make strategic mistakes when one becomes affected by hubris. This is the case with York, for the moment he arrives back in England things begin to unravel. In keeping with the figure of *virtù*, York arrives on the stage with his army declaring that he has come "to claim his right / And pluck the crown from feeble Henry's head" (2HVI 5.1.1-2). All throughout this play York has been able to succeed because of his tremendous skill at dissimulation. However, now that York has landed with his army, the time for dissimulation is over. York has made his move, only he does not realize just how obvious his move is to everyone else. No one honestly believes that this is merely about arresting Somerset, and so York's declaration that he "must dissemble" now that Buckingham has arrived suggests that things are spinning out of his control (2HVI 5.1.13).

York has placed himself in a strategically disadvantageous position, and Henry VI is quick to capitalize on it. Why does York, who throughout this play has managed to maintain such complete control, make such a blunder here? He blunders precisely because he cannot control himself and his emotions. This becomes perfectly clear when Buckingham asks York to explain the meaning of his actions and York turns to the audience in an aside. Up until now the audience has been prepared to expect York to use

his asides to let them in on his schemes; however, now York merely uses it to express a ridiculously vengeful sense of righteous indignation:

Scarce can I speak, my choler is so great.  
O, I could hew up rocks and fight with flint,  
I am so angry at these abject terms;  
And now like Ajax Telamonius,  
On sheep or oxen could I spend my fury.  
I am far better born than is the King,  
More like a king, more kingly in my thought. (*2HVI* 5.1.23-29)

There is no subtlety here, and no sense of strategic artistry; there are only the ravings of a once strategic figure who is losing his bearings. His choler should be great because his plan has been discovered and is now in jeopardy, not because he feels himself to be better born than Henry VI. York makes reference to Ajax because he feels that it reflects the degree of his anger, but it also reflects something else:

Ajax, the son of Telamon, enraged after defeat by Ulysses in the contest for Achilles' armour, went mad and slew a flock of sheep belonging to the Greeks, before committing suicide. (Knowles, Arden *2HVI* 343)

In *The Iliad* there is a clear distinction between the wily schemer Odysseus, who knows how to employ effective strategies to suit his ends, and the brave yet reckless Ajax, who charges into danger without first considering his options. One should note Richard's later comparison between himself and the "sly[] . . . Ulysses" (*RIII* 3.2.189). And so, York's comparison between himself and Ajax is more true than he realizes. He may not commit suicide, but he does kill his best possible chance of seizing the crown. Not only this, but he is also completely unaware of just how much he has bungled. This is made clear by his sudden declaration to the audience that he must wait "awhile / Till Henry be more weak and [he] more strong" (*2HVI* 5.1.30-31). At the beginning of the play, such a speech would have sounded like the calculated plans of an accomplished strategist; now



it merely sounds like the naïve declaration of someone who does not realize that he has already failed. The problem is that the master of timing has arrived on the scene too late. If the Cade rebellion had still been going on when York arrived, he would be able to take better advantage of the situation. However, by arriving late, York puts his ambitions out in the open and forces everyone to take sides.

Earlier York seemed to be almost the exemplar of *virtù*, but now he is being crushed under the weight of his earlier success, for it blinds him and makes him vulnerable to the trap he has set for himself. If York does not disband his army, he will be labeled a traitor. However, if he does disband it he will place himself unarmed at the mercy of his enemies. His hand is forced by Margaret when she walks into the court with Somerset, for now York really only has one of two options: accept defeat or declare war. Throughout *1 Henry VI* and *2 Henry VI*, York has managed to follow Mortimer's advice and act with *virtù*. He has managed to outwit and outfight all of his enemies and has placed himself quite close to taking the crown. However, at the very moment when he could seize complete power, York loses it. This moment shows Shakespeare's dramatic exploration of the nature of *virtù* and reveals that the greatest adversary may not be *fortuna* or any other external force, but one's own limitations. This is made all the more clear when York explodes in rage and unleashes all of the fury and venom he had been hiding for so long: "Then, York, unloose thy long-imprisoned thoughts / And let thy tongue be equal with thy heart" (*2HVI* 5.1.88-89). His rage in this scene recalls the madness of Ajax, so that many in the court are convinced that York has actually lost his wits: "To Bedlam with him! Is the man grown mad?" (*2HVI* 5.1.131). His actions throughout much of this scene suggest a genuine loss of restraint. His cause is saved only

by the arrival of Warwick and his father Salisbury, who manage to rally the Yorkists and aid them greatly in their victory at the Battle of Saint Albans.

York's case indicates the very real limits to strategy. As Grady notes, Shakespeare seems to be far more aware of these limitations than most writers on the subject, including Machiavelli:

even more pointedly in Shakespeare's dramas of political crimes than in the mobile, self-destructing exempla of *The Prince*, the distinctions Machiavelli tries to build up come to seem unstable, even impossible, as in play after play what at first had appeared to be a crime sufficient to achieve the prince's ends is soon revealed to have been insufficient and in need of renewal. (248)

However, such renewals soon lead to exhaustion. At the beginning of *2 Henry VI* no one seems to typify the nature of *virtù* better than York; yet, by the end of the play, this is no longer the case. Even the Yorkist victory does little to indicate that York will be able to completely fulfill his earlier promises and declarations to the audience. This failure becomes even more apparent as *3 Henry VI* opens and the Yorkists seem to be in complete control of the situation. Despite such control, York fails to seize the crown from Henry VI and actually agrees to a deal that once again is entirely to his disadvantage. Henry VI's maneuverability in this scene tells us something new and unexpected about him, but what does it tell us about York? Why is York, the seeming master strategist, so blind to his blunder that he needs his own children to point it out to him (*3HVI* 1.2.7-33)? Edward and Richard do eventually manage to convince their father about how "sweet a thing it is to wear a crown" (*3HVI* 1.2.29), and that York declares that he "will be king or die" (*3HVI* 1.2.34), but once again his seeming declaration of *virtù* is undercut by the fact that it is already too late. York will not be king or die; York will only die. Even his mocking remarks about "simple Henry" and "his oaths" (*3HVI*

1.2.58), words that ought to remind us of the strategic schemer of 2 *Henry VI*, only serve to demonstrate the degree to which York has failed before he even begins. Margaret is already on the way to destroy him, and York will mismanage his affairs once again by leaving the safety of his castle and fighting her despite the odds: “Five men to twenty: though the odds be great, / I doubt not . . . of our victory” (3*HVI* 1.2.70-71). As Tacitus remarks in the *Annales*, one of the few consistent occurrences throughout history is the mockery of our hopes, plans, and schemes: “Quanto plura recentium seu veterum revolvo, tanto magis ludibria rerum mortalium cunctis in negotiis obversantur” (3.18).

Such mockery is about to begin, for York’s ambitions will soon be rewarded with a paper crown being placed on his head. Earlier he would have been far too foxy to allow himself to fall into such a trap, but now he practically plunges into it. Before he had been an exemplar of the power of *virtù*, but now, he has shown just how powerless such power can be. How could this happen? Smuts argues that *virtù* brings success, but only “for a time” (27). In the beginning it had seemed as though York had done everything right. Machiavelli writes that Borgia had also done everything right, and “if in the end [he] did not prevail, it was not his fault, but the result of the extreme malignity of Fortune” (*P* 7.27). Shakespeare’s portrayal of York is far more complex, for it is not only the extreme malignity of Fortune that undoes York, but his inability to overcome his own shortcomings. Shakespeare’s portrayal of York suggests that there is more to be gained in this world than mere “worldly glory” and that which “makes men strong” (*D* 2.2.232). York may not succeed as a politic strategist, but this does not make him a complete failure. Machiavelli might have seen York as such, but Shakespeare shows that York does succeed in his final moments at conveying a deeper humanity than one would have

thought possible based on his earlier actions. York's final confrontation with Margaret is so famous that it inspired what Taylor has called the very "business of Shakespeare criticism" (Oxford *IHVI* 1): Robert Greene's infamous attack against Shakespeare in *Greene's Groatsworth of Witte* (1592).<sup>263</sup> Greene's attack was not against a dramatist who has concerned himself merely with the squabbles of what one commentator snidely calls a pack of "brawling barons" (Kiernan 120) or another the quarrels of "children—prep school children" (Willis, *BBC Shakespeare* 167). Greene's attack was against a dramatist who had taken what could have merely been a ridiculous brawl and made it into something truly dramatic. Martin notes that "in an irony typical of Shakespeare's view of history and politics, York gains his greatest dramatic power at the very moment his worldly power is swept away" (Oxford *3HVI* 15). Shakespeare has explored the elements of politic stratagems, of Machiavellianism, of *fortuna* and *virtù*, and he has found the very essence of tragedy.<sup>264</sup>

It is a sense of irony typical of Shakespeare's later tragedies as well, which is perhaps why to Brockbank the scene anticipates the suffering one finds in *King Lear* ("The Frame of Disorder" 61). It is very likely that Shakespeare found this tragic sense when writing York's reaction to the death of his son Rutland, a death that changes everything. This is not the death of an opponent or ally in a chess game of strategy; this

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<sup>263</sup> For more on this attack, see Chillington Rutter, "Of tygers' hearts and players' hides" and Carroll, "Greene's 'Vpstart Crow' Passage: A Survey of Commentary." Rackin and Howard make the rather intriguing argument that Greene's attack on Shakespeare allows for a comparison to be made between the playwright and Margaret: "It is a nice irony that the first mention we have from any of Shakespeare's contemporaries about his theatrical work should equate him, if only fleetingly, with Margaret at her moment of greatest hubris and cruelty" (*Engendering a Nation* 95-96). For more on this issue, see Lee, "Reflections of Power" and Norvell, "The dramatic portrait of Margaret."

<sup>264</sup> As Woodbridge argues, the early history plays in particular were often classified as both histories and tragedies, a classification that applies particularly strongly to *Richard III* (216). In *The Mirror for Magistrates* York strikes a particularly tragic note concerning his fall, a note that also ascribes York's fall to the whims of *fortuna* (Tragedy 13.155-61).

is the death of a son. Despite depicting politics as an incessant life and death struggle, this is not the kind of situation that Machiavelli's writings prepare one for. Machiavelli may "underestimate the human factor" (Cronin 124), but Shakespeare certainly does not.

As Martin notes, York's

death scene, in particular, redefines his characterization from that of a political overreacher struck down by capricious fortune . . . to someone who belatedly develops a near-heroic capacity for suffering. (Oxford *3HVI* 12-13)

Belatedly or not, York's final moments in the face of his enemies suggest a kind of stoic calm and produce a kind of pathos in the audience that seems to anticipate Shakespeare's later tackling of these topics in the tragedies (Watson, "Tragedy" 317-18). As Hampton Reeves notes, Shakespeare did not get this scene from the source material: "York and Margaret did not meet on the battlefield, Margaret did not kill him" (7).<sup>265</sup> Why does Shakespeare create these scenes independently of his material? Perhaps he sees that strategy opens the door to other dramatic possibilities. As Cox notes in a phrase that deliberately echoes *Macbeth*: "the archetypal dramatic analogue of York's death contributes more than anything to our feeling that nothing in York's life became him like

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<sup>265</sup> As Edward Hall portrays it:

Yet this cruell Clifford, & deadly bloudsupper not content with this homicide, or chyldkilling [of Rutland], came to the place wher the dead corps of the duke of Yorke lay, and caused his head to be stryken of, and set on it a croune of paper, & so fixed it on a pole, & presented it to the Quene, not lying farre from the felde, in great despite, and much derision, sayng: Madame, your warre is done, here is your kinges raunsome . . . . (qtd. in Bullough 178)

While Hall records that the historical York was already dead by the time Clifford confronted him, Holinshed writes that

some write that the duke was taken alive, and in derision caused to stand upon a molehill, on whose head they put a garland in steed of a crowne, which had fashioned and made of sedges or bulrushes; and having so crowned him with that garland, they kneeled downe afore him (as the Jewes did unto Christ) in scorne, saieing to him; Haile king without rule, haile king without heritage, haile duke and prince without people or possessions. (qtd. in Bullough 210)

For more on this scene, see Billington, *Mock Kings in Medieval Society and Renaissance Drama*, in which she describes it as a "classic mock king image" (145), and Liebler, "King of the Hill."

the leaving it” (*The Dramaturgy of Power* 95).<sup>266</sup> This scene explores just what happens when *virtù* comes into conflict with *fortuna*. Despite spending much of the tetralogy acting as the representative of *virtù*, in his final moments York comes down fairly on the side of *fortuna*, even going so far as to prophesy that the end of the Lancastrians will come at his own son’s hands (*3HVI* 1.4.35-37), which of course it does. Shakespeare never allows any question to remain uncomplicated.

### 7.3 FORTUNA VERSUS VIRTÙ?

In one sense, *fortuna* and *virtù* are made compatible by their very incompatibility, for they are constantly coming into contact as one and then the other seems to dominate human action. This dynamic struggle is wonderfully described by Machiavelli towards the end of *The Prince*:

I am not unaware that many believe that the things of this world are governed to such an extent by Fortune and God that men, with all their foresight, cannot change them; that in fact there is no improving them. Those who believe this deem that they need not toil and sweat, but can let themselves be governed by Fortune. This opinion has been more prevalent in our times because of the great upheavals that we have witnessed and witness every day, and which are beyond anything we could have foreseen, and there have been times when even I have to some extent inclined to this opinion. Nevertheless, Fortune seems to be the arbiter of half our actions, but she does leave us the other half, or almost the other half, in order that our free will may prevail. (*P* 25.94)

What is so fascinating about Machiavelli’s description is that he does not give full control to either *fortuna* or *virtù*. Neither one has complete dominance over our actions, for the two are in constant conflict over which will achieve dominion at any given time. Some critics, such as Poppi, see the glass as being half empty and focus on the negative side of

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<sup>266</sup> Just as Cox believes that the opening of *3 Henry VI* was patterned on the fall of Lucifer in mystery plays, so too does he feel that this scene openly evokes the crucifixion of Christ, an evocation that one can also find in Holinshed’s description of York’s death (*The Dramaturgy of Power* 95). This same argument is also made by Leggatt (*Shakespeare’s Political Drama* 23).

this analysis: “Machiavelli . . . set pessimistic limits to human initiative by assigning half of what happens to the hostile domain of *fortuna*” (660). However, as Gibbons notes, Machiavelli may “concede[.]” “that fortune is of great importance to princes; but he ascribes equal importance to the possession of free will” (211). Machiavelli describes *fortuna* as “one of those violent torrents that flood the plains,” so that “everyone flees” it and “yields to its force without being able to stand up to it” (*P* 25.94), but

man should not neglect to prepare himself with dikes and dams in times of calm, so that when the torrent rises it will gush into a channel, its force neither so harmful nor so unbridled. The same is true with Fortune, who unleashes her force in places where man has not taken skillful precautions to resist her, and so channels her force to where she knows there are no dikes or dams to hold her back. (*P* 25.94)

*Fortuna* may be a violent torrent, but people are nevertheless capable of preparing themselves against it. *Fortuna* may not be defeated, and those who do not prepare for its wrath will undoubtedly be swept away with the rest, but one can plan, organize, and strategize in such a way as to obtain a fighting chance against “the turning of Fortune’s wheel” (*P* 25.95).<sup>267</sup>

Such a dynamic portrayal is also part of the first tetralogy, as Shakespeare dramatically explores the many different ways in which *fortuna* and *virtù* interact, collide, and coexist with each other. If those who are already brave and who act bravely are favoured by Fortune, where exactly does Fortune come into it? Perhaps the basic paradox is the point that one is always involved with the other and that neither can ever achieve absolute control over our affairs. One of the more interesting instances of this tension occurs in *I Henry VI* as Joan—“the only woman who fights in single combat in the ‘Histories’” (Banks 173)—tries to win Burgundy over to the French side. It is

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<sup>267</sup> In the original Italian Machiavelli does not use the term “Fortune’s wheel,” opting instead for the much more ambiguous “variazione” or “variation”: “Da questo ancora dipende la variazione del bene” (73).

particularly interesting because Joan has been described as both a witch, which suggests a kind of kinship with *fortuna*, and a strategist of great courage and cleverness.<sup>268</sup> Even Joan's language suggests both possible readings, for sometimes she sounds like a prophetess while at others she appears to be the most masterful of strategists. This becomes clear when Joan sees an opportunity to break the bond between Burgundy and the English, treating the French as an audience to her strategy:

Your honours shall perceive how I will work  
To bring this matter to the wished end.  
Hark — by the sound of the drum you may perceive  
Their [the English] powers are marching unto Paris-ward.  
There goes the Talbot with his colours spread,  
And all the troops of English are after him. (*IHVI* 3.3.27-32)<sup>269</sup>

Acting as though she were a chorus, Joan tells her audience to “perceive”—a word she uses twice in this speech—how she will bring her stratagem “to the wished end.” Even the sounds of the English drums are used by Joan to present an image to her audience's eyes, and she points out Talbot as if he were moving according to her stage directions:

“There goes the Talbot with his colours spread.” All of this indicates the ways in which politic stratagems can be seen in a dynamic and dramatic light, for Joan is preparing her

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<sup>268</sup> Foakes argues that “Shakespeare (or his collaborators)” tinkered with her character to make her appear less heroic, particularly at the end of the play (43), which is “in striking contrast to Hall” (Greene 71). This issue has been tackled by Howard, who argues that Joan is “a strong woman . . . who challenges masculine authority . . . Joan of Arc . . . challenges gender roles by being more successful in battle than most of the men around her, whether French or English . . . Despite her prowess in battle, she is demonized as a whore” (“Feminist Criticism” 414). Likewise, Howard and Rackin contend that her dramatic power comes from the very forces that so threaten the males around her: “Her very subversiveness . . . paradoxically authorizes her dramatic power” (*Engendering a Nation* 107). For more on this issue, see Bernhard, “Topical Ideology” (40-65) and Albert Tricomi, “Joan la Pucelle and the Inverted Saints Play” (5-31). A helpful summary of most of the key critical arguments surrounding Joan can be found in Bevington's “*I Henry VI*” (312-15) and in Burns' edition of the play (Arden *IHVI* 23-47). For a discussion of the numerous ways Joan has been portrayed on the stage in recent years, see Greene, *Shakespeare's Serial History Plays* (71-75).

<sup>269</sup> Citing this passage, Jorgensen argues that Shakespeare could have familiarized himself with troop maneuvers and drilling patterns “at Mile End, where citizens soldiers drilled on holidays, [and] Londoners could readily become familiar with the uses of the drum for the march, and particularly with the prominence of this instrument in basic drills” (25).



audience for the drama that is about to unfold. It also raises a question: is the coming defection of Burgundy pre-ordained, or does it come about as a result of strategy? In other words, is it *fortuna*, or is it *virtù*?

The English “powers are marching unto Paris-ward.” This march is towards something that will strengthen their power and lessen the power of their strongest ally in the region: Burgundy. Perhaps this is why Burgundy keeps to the rear of the march, as if he were deliberately lagging behind: “Now in the rearward comes the Duke [of Burgundy] and his: / Fortune, in favour, makes him lag behind” (*IHVI* 3.3.33-34). Burns concurs with Joan’s interpretation and notes that “Fortune is on the French side, and so has temporarily separated Burgundy from his English allies” (Arden *IHVI* 216). But is this so? Is it fortune that makes Burgundy lag behind, or is it the actions of his English allies, who seem to have taken his services for granted and thus make what is about to happen possible? Hall notes that the historical Burgundy’s betrayal came immediately after the coronation of Henry VI in France “was sworne, and this knot was knit” (qtd. in Bullough 64). The fact that Burgundy is in the rear is important: either he has been placed there by his English allies as an indication of his status in their alliance, or he has deliberately lagged behind because he is discontented with the way that things are and is actually more open to French entreaties than most of the French realize. Joan does entreat Burgundy and wins him over with a wonderful piece of rhetoric, for she appeals to his sense of honour and his self-interest.

Here Joan attempts to “enchant” Burgundy with her words (*IHVI* 3.3.40). Rutter argues that Joan’s language is worth noting in this scene: “Her words ‘enchant’, and Burgundy is ‘bewitched’ by the business her maidenly body performs upon him” (191).

Likewise, Taylor makes note of the fact that the word “enchant” is “a loaded term” (Oxford *IHVI* 184), while Burns suggests that here and elsewhere throughout the scene Joan’s powers of persuasion suggest an “overlap between rhetorical and magical power” (Arden *IHVI* 216). In keeping with Rackin’s point that the *I Henry VI* dramatizes “a conflict between English men and French women” (*Stages of History* 154), Willis suggests that this is typical of the ways that women are demonized in the first tetralogy:

In Shakespeare’s first tetralogy, witches, wives, and mothers are endowed with similar nightmare powers; by both magical and nonmagical means they manipulate males and make them feel as if they have been turned back into dependent children. (100)<sup>270</sup>

Certainly this is how the English would choose to interpret Joan’s supposed powers of *fortuna*, but there is something inherently strategic and non-magical about the way that she manages to win Burgundy over to the French side, something that suggests *virtù* instead. First Joan tries to cast the French as Burgundy’s fellow countrymen (*IHVI* 3.3.38), so that he becomes the “undoubted hope of France” (*IHVI* 3.3.41). Given that Burgundy has been fighting against France for the entire length of the play, this seems to be an odd claim to make. Burgundy’s manner suggests that he too thinks it odd, but nevertheless he stays on to hear what Joan has to say (*IHVI* 3.3.43).

What Joan ultimately does say is interesting, for it seems to highlight the degree to which self-interest, regardless of whether it is openly acknowledged or not, seems to motivate much of what we are about to see. Burgundy does not betray the English because of Joan’s reliance on *fortuna* or witchcraft but because of “the force and subtlety

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<sup>270</sup> As Grene notes, many productions tend to switch the demonization of Joan over to Margaret once the former has exited the stage. At the same time, productions have often used the same actress to play both Joan and Margaret (Grene 114). Saccio notes that “Margaret in effect takes over from Joan the role of the foreign sorceress who scourges England” (*Shakespeare’s English Kings* 110). For more on this, see Willis, “Shakespeare and the English witch-hunts”; Banks, “Warlike women”; and Levine, “Ruling Women.”

of her rhetoric” (*Shakespeare’s English Kings* 109). Critics such as Pearlman may dismiss this scene as “mere playacting” (27), but it is clear that Joan’s performance is actually both powerful and strategic. At first Joan describes the pain and torment suffered by the French at the hands of the English. This description of death and destruction is certainly powerful, and Burgundy is moved by it as he wonders aloud about whether “her words, / Or nature makes [him] suddenly relent” (*IHV* 3.3.58-59). What really wins him over is not this appeal to his sense of justice and righteousness, but her following appeal to his self-interest. Joan points out that the English are not Burgundy’s allies at all; they are just using him to win France for themselves. Once they no longer need him they will dispose of him in no time at all:

Who join’st thou with but with a lordly nation,  
That will not trust thee but for profit’s sake?  
When Talbot hath set footing once in France  
And fashioned thee that instrument of ill,  
Who then but English Henry will be lord,  
And thou be thrust out, like a fugitive? (*IHV* 3.3.60-67)<sup>271</sup>

The irony here is that Burgundy has escaped one thumb in order to place himself under another, for the French use Burgundy the same way that the English have. Nevertheless, Joan’s accusations against the English clearly seem to have the desired effect, for while her words—enchanted or otherwise—about Burgundy’s fellow countrymen make him begin to relent, her words about how he is being used by the English provoke this

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<sup>271</sup> This possible motivation for Burgundy’s betrayal can also be found in Holinshed, who notes that while the historical Burgundy justified his betrayal of the alliance in the name of his people, his real reason may have been his desire not to remain under England’s thumb (Nicoll and Nicoll 101-02). Hall suggests that the historical Burgundy’s actions were seen as being politic by the English:

Wherefore all they, whiche wer present, beyng sore moved with the craftie deede, & untrue demeanor of the duke [of Burgundy], (whom they so much trusted) could neither temper their passions, nor moderate their yre, nor yet bridle their toungues: but openly called hym traytor, deceiver, and moste inconstant prince. (qtd. in Bullough 65)

Their anger was not without cause, for the loss of Burgundy essentially led to the loss of France: “it is clear that after the defection of Burgundy the English lacked the resources to take or hold all of France” (Saccio, *Shakespeare English Kings* 100).

response: “I am vanquished: these haughty words of hers / Have battered me like roaring cannon-shot / And made me almost yield to my knees” (*IHVI* 3.3.78-80). Joan points out that the English do not trust Burgundy “but for profit’s sake” and that once Henry is made King of France Burgundy will simply be “thrust out” by his ungrateful former allies “like a fugitive.” She is also quick to point out that the English let Burgundy’s enemy the Duke of Orleans go, practically “in spite of Burgundy and all his friends” (*IHVI* 3.3.73). The English have been using Burgundy—Joan even mockingly suggests that Talbot has “fashioned [him] that instrument of ill”—and they will quickly discard him the moment his services are no longer required.

This is a prime example not of *fortuna* but of *virtù*, and it is Joan’s appeal to Burgundy’s self-interest that really does the trick. Burgundy, like most people, certainly is not quick to admit this, and his rationale for aligning himself with the French at least outwardly suggests that he is repentant for his previous alliance: “Forgive me, country, and sweet countrymen; / And, lords, accept this hearty kind of embrace” (*IHVI* 3.3.81-82). Nevertheless, that “kind of” seems to suggest that something far less lofty is motivating his actions. Burgundy’s final words on the matter are concerned not with right and wrong, but with how he leaves the English because he can no longer trust them (84). Joan has won him over not by appealing to his mercy or sense of charity, but by appealing to his self-interest. Nor has she, regardless of what her enemies may say, won him over by witchery or *fortuna*. The use of bewitchment has been stressed in other productions such as Adrian Noble’s 1988-89 RSC production:

in the scene where Joan seduces Burgundy away from England, he was initially so revolted by her that he was on the point of running her through with his sword. She fearlessly urged him on, and then—desperately, as if bewitched—he threw it on the ground in front of her. (Potter 176)

However, to stage the scene in this way is to ignore the real reason why Joan was able to win Burgundy over so easily. Likewise, while Burns notes that when the ESC put on the play in the 1980s the company “reassigned (and even invented) lines to build up the character of Burgundy, creating a soliloquy to prepare for his change of sides” (Arden *IHVI* 42), such reassignments and inventions are unnecessary if one takes the motive of self-interest into consideration.

Machiavelli agrees repeatedly that regardless of what people are willing to own up to, people will not help you unless it is in their interests to do so, and “you can only place your hopes in your own industry” (*CC* 424). Burns argues that Burgundy’s switch is a token of independence (Arden *IHVI* 217). Joan declares that Burgundy’s reversal was “done like a Frenchman: turn and turn again” (*IHVI* 3.3.85). One could describe this wonderful aside as simply another example of jingoism—or as Wilson calls it, “an outlet for the growing sense of exasperation, anger, and even despair which was felt in London at the impending failure of the invasion of France launched in the autumn of 1591” (xvi)—were it not for the fact that it can be so universally applied. This is all quite dynamic, so much so that Alençon even remarks that Joan has “played her part” well (*IHVI* 3.3.88). In addition to being a remarkable piece of oratory, it is also quite problematic. Has Joan succeeded as a result of *fortuna*, or as a result of her own *virtù*? It appears to be the latter, but then Joan is the one who will later try to call forward fiends to aid her in her fight against the English (*IHVI* 5.2.22-50). However, her evocation of the fiends does complicate the issue.

Such ambiguity continues throughout the first tetralogy, as characters continue to grapple with the roles that *fortuna* and *virtù* play in their affairs. This becomes even

more apparent when one looks at the tremendous number of reversals that occur in the first tetralogy, and reversals analogous with Machiavelli's lament that

one can see a prince prospering one day and coming to ruin the next without having changed his nature or conduct in any way . . . . [this is because] the prince who relies entirely on Fortune will fall when Fortune changes. (P.25.95)<sup>272</sup>

As Rackin notes, "force" may rule in "a Machiavellian universe," but force is subject to its own constraints and limitations: "the verdicts of force, however, are always provisional, always subject to contradiction by the next turn of fortunes of battle" (*Stages of History* 51). For example, when Edward loses his crown to Warwick, he initially insists that such a reversal of *fortuna* does not change the fact that he is king: "Edward will always bear himself as King. / Though Fortune's malice overthrow my state, / My mind exceeds the compass of her wheel" (3HVI 4.3.45-47). This is one of the greatest proclamations in the name of *virtù* in the first tetralogy, if not the entire canon. However, the moment Warwick takes the crown from his head, Edward's tone is suddenly much more resigned: "What fates impose, that men must needs abide; / It boots not to resist both wind and tide" (3HVI 4.3.58-59).<sup>273</sup> Again we are presented with the image of wind and tide in relation to *fortuna*, and again we are also presented with a character who utterly resigns himself to *fortuna* the moment he feels that he has lost. What are we to make of such acquiescence, of Edward's complete reversal on the topic after things have turned back in his favour and he manages, in keeping with *virtù*, to "repurchase[]

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<sup>272</sup> Machiavelli uses the Italian for variation—"varia"—to describe *fortuna* in terms of change and flux: "dico come si vede oggi questo principe felicitare, e domani ruinare, senza averli veduto mutare natura o qualità alcuna . . . . quel principe che s'appoggia tutto in sulla fortuna, rovina, come quella varia" (73).

<sup>273</sup> Berry uses reversals to illustrate what he perceives to be the play's lack of dramatic unity: "The structure of the play is . . . indistinct. Unlike Part II, Part III does not move toward a central emotional climax, nor does it embody a unified action" (*Patterns of Decay* 52). Such reversals need not be a detriment to the play's structure, for they can actually serve to give the play a very peculiar kind of dramatic intensity.

“England’s royal throne . . . with the blood of enemies” (3HVI 5.7.1-2)? As these reversals show, there are limits to politic stratagems, limits that underscore the diverse ways that *fortuna* and *virtù* interact and collide.

Similar reversals can be found at several points throughout the first tetralogy, such as when Henry VI is temporarily placed back on the throne by Warwick. Despite the fact that it is obvious that Henry VI has been made king again due to Warwick’s military might, Henry VI insists that it is *fortuna*, and not *virtù*, that is more responsible:

But Warwick, after God thou set’st me free,  
And chiefly, therefore, I thank God and thee.  
He was the author, thou the instrument.  
Therefore, that I may conquer Fortune’s spite  
By living low where Fortune cannot hurt me,  
And that the people of this blessed land  
May not be punished by my thwarting stars,  
Warwick, although my head still wear the crown,  
I here resign my government to thee,  
For thou art fortunate in all thy deed. (3HVI 4.6.16-25)<sup>274</sup>

Henry VI’s language suggests the partitioning of power and responsibility described by Machiavelli. Warwick is half responsible for what has happened, for his power aids God in winning the crown back for Henry VI. Henry VI may feel secure in the answer he has come up with, but it is likely that the audience is not. Who is the author? Who is the instrument? What makes it all the more bewildering is that Henry VI proposes to avoid the supposed malice of *fortuna* by using Warwick as a kind of shield. Warwick is fortunate in all his deeds and as such seems to be in *fortuna*’s favour, and so Henry VI suggests that his own lack of luck may somehow be averted by his presence. Warwick

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<sup>274</sup> Wilders sees this scene in terms of irony, for Edward’s escape has completely altered the playing field: “[Henry’s] belief that his restoration is the work of providence would have few ironical implications were it not for the dramatic context in which Shakespeare has placed his words . . . In these circumstances Henry has little to be thankful for and the ironies which surround his words again make his faith appear foolish” (56). While Henry’s faith in *fortuna* may be foolish, elsewhere he has shown some cleverness in his dealings with Warwick and Clarence.

agrees with Henry VI's proposal, praising his monarch for his wisdom and agreeing with him that he is right to try to avoid "Fortune's malice, / For few men rightly temper with the stars" (3HVI 4.6.28-29). Although Warwick's words about the power of *fortuna* seem to echo Henry VI's, they fulfill a very political purpose. If Henry VI wants to give up his power to Warwick because he believes that the stars are aligned against him, is it not in Warwick's interest to agree wholeheartedly with such views?<sup>275</sup> And yet, despite Warwick's manipulation of the belief in *fortuna* in this scene, when he meets his end he too will speak in providential tones, even if only to acknowledge that whatever the successes granted by *virtù*, they are ultimately trumped by death:

who lived king but I could dig his grave?  
 And who durst smile when Warwick bent his brow?  
 Lo, now my glory smeared in dust and blood.  
 My parks, my walks, my manors that I had  
 Even now forsake me, and of all my lands  
 Is nothing left me but my body's length.  
 Why, what is pomp, rule, reign but earth and dust?  
 And live we how we can, yet die we must. (3HVI 5.2.21-28)

Is this the end result of all that worldly glory? Can a kingdom be worth less than a horse? Champion argues that death reflects "macrocosmic divine control" (*Perspective* 68-69), but this is not so clear. Similarly, Moseley argues that ultimately "death and fortune govern all, even the great, and within the hollow crown of earthly power death the antic sits grinning at the empty pomp and self-importance of struggling men" (68). Again this is not fully clear, particularly Moseley's automatic coupling of death and fortune. Death may very well undo all that *virtù* has done, but death in and of itself does not somehow confer control on *fortuna*. Despite their ability to hamper and halt the affairs of humanity, the two are not necessarily one and the same.

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<sup>275</sup> At the same time, it has already been shown that Henry's shows a remarkable strategic flexibility in this scene, behaviour that suggests that *fortuna* may not hold the complete sway that it appears to.



#### 7.4 FORTUNA AND VIRTÙ?

So where does that leave us? Perhaps it is not possible, or even desirable, to provide a definitive answer to the question of just how *fortuna* and *virtù* relate to each other. Machiavelli worried that the former would ultimately win out, but he never gave up hope that the latter might still have a chance. Shakespeare appears less interested in rooting for one side or the other; instead, he seems more concerned with dramatizing the inevitable conflicts that occur when the two come into contact. A final case in point should reveal this even more clearly. Eleanor insists that her husband Humphrey should be more ambitious and determined to take the crown for himself. Humphrey refuses his wife's entreaties, all the while insisting that she should be content with her situation:

Art thou not second woman of the realm,  
And the Protector's wife, beloved of him?  
Hast thou not worldly pleasure at command,  
Above the reach or compass of thy thought? (2HVI 1.2.43-46)

Such an entreaty goes against the very dictates of *virtù*, and Eleanor will pay absolutely no heed to them. She refuses to allow herself to be hampered by anyone or anything, not Humphrey nor *fortuna* itself:

Follow I must; I cannot go before  
While Gloucester bears this base and humble mind.  
Were I a man, a duke and next of blood,  
I would remove these tedious stumbling blocks  
And smooth my way upon their headless necks.  
And, being a woman, I will not be slack  
To play my part in Fortune's pageant. (2HVI 1.2.61-67)

In addition to bringing to mind Richard's speech in 3.2 of *3 Henry VI* when he also describes his plans to remove the tedious stumbling blocks that stand between him and the throne, Eleanor suggests the tension between human agency and fate, between our plans and strategies and the plans of others, between *virtù* and *fortuna*. Eleanor says that

she will act and not be acted upon, but she will be destroyed too, not by Fortune but by her husband's enemies and her own foolish actions. Knowles notes that "clearly, given what ensues, it is Eleanor who has provided the 'stumbling block' which results in her own 'ruin'" (Arden *2HVI* 170). Both she and her husband will ascribe her fall to *fortuna*, but the audience may be less convinced that this is actually the case.

Such lack of clarity shows itself again when Eleanor arranges for her servant Hume to foretell whether or not she will meet with success in her endeavors. Eleanor is attempting to act as an exemplar of *virtù* who will not play her part in Fortune's pageant, and yet she insists on finding out what *fortuna* has in store for her first. Just as Margaret's entry into the first tetralogy has been paired with Joan's exit, so too has Eleanor's reliance on witchcraft been linked with Joan's (Hodgson, *The End Crowns All* 61). What makes the scene all the more perplexing is that the whole affair has nothing to do with witchcraft. It is a trap, for Hume has been paid off by Eleanor's enemies and is deliberately encouraging her to do something that will bring about her ruin. And so the scene where Eleanor believes that her future will be foretold is important when it comes to understanding the relationship between *fortuna* and *virtù*, all the more so because of its overtly theatrical and dynamic elements.

As Hume and the others enter they use words such as "performance" (*2HVI* 1.4.2), "behold" (*2HVI* 1.4.4), and the distinction between "aloft" (*2HVI* 1.4.8) and "below" (*2HVI* 1.4.10), which all strengthen the idea that what we are preparing to see is a performance. This will be a play within a play that will metadramatically showcase the many different ways in which *fortuna* and *virtù* interact. It is a very Shakespearean approach to the problem. The "conjurer" Bolingbroke gives Mother Jourdain and John

Southwell what appears to be acting advice: “Mother Jourdain, be you prostrate and grovel on the earth; John Southwell, read you; and let us to our work” (2*HVI* 1.4.10-11). All of this is underscored when Bolingbroke, changing from prose to verse and acting as though he were a prologue to a play, prepares the scene when Eleanor arrives (2*HVI* 1.4.15-22). The performance that follows reveals both the strategy of Eleanor’s enemies and her own desire to seize control for herself. It is both an entertainment and a political trap. When York and Buckingham enter, they proclaim that they have “watched [them] at an inch” (2*HVI* 1.4.42). In other words, they have been watching everything from the beginning. Eleanor is presented with a performance to help her in her own designs, not realizing that she is playing a part in another performance that has been orchestrated to destroy both her and her husband Gloucester (Knowles, *Arguments with History* 28). York even praises Buckingham by saying “methinks you watched her well” and notes that this is a “pretty plot, well chosen to build upon” (2*HVI* 1.4.55-56).

Many modern productions have had a lot of trouble deciding how to portray this scene:

A scene such as this, with its use of the supernatural, poses certain problems for modern producers as to how seriously it should be portrayed . . . . There is every reason for regarding with cynicism the ‘prophecies’ produced . . . . Such cynicism was reflected in the BBC Television production . . . where the conjuring-scene was . . . obviously a hocus-pocus, with an assistant farcically banging on a sheet of ‘thunder’ to create atmosphere . . . . In this production there could be no serious idiom of the supernatural . . . . By contrast with this sort of cool handling of the conjuring, the *Plantagenets* version of the scene gave it full-dress treatment . . . . The attempt here was to induce a willing suspension of disbelief and recover the full theatricality, if not the sense of danger, that an original audience might have experienced. (Greene 143-44)

Is it really a pretty plot? Has it all been a performance, an act indicative not of “God’s providential ordering but [of] the actions of men” (Knowles, *Arguments with History*

28)? We are initially meant to believe so, for the scene has been set up by Eleanor's enemies to further their plans for worldly glory by getting her to announce her plans so openly that she will be punished (*2HVI* 1.2.95-99). As such, the performance would seem to indicate that it is a dynamic dramatization of the nature of *virtù*. However, there is a problem. What are we to make of the prophecies that have been made, prophecies that have been designed simply to trap Eleanor? Hume, the very person who set things up, insists that it is all merely fanciful "conjunction" (*2HVI* 1.2.99), but it is far more thorny. As with Margaret's prophecies in *Richard III*, the prophecies made by the spirit are surprisingly accurate. The critics may be divided over whether the whole episode is merely a show for Eleanor's benefit, but one can never overlook the outcome of it. What makes the scene all the more perplexing is that York is the one who reads the oracle after Eleanor and the others have been led away. York cannot make heads nor tails of what he reads—"these oracles / Are hardly attained, and hardly understood" (*2HVI* 1.4.70-71)—but what are we to make of a scene that begins by showcasing the power of *virtù* and ends by acknowledging the power of *fortuna*? Does one cancel out the other, or, as Machiavelli suggests, does such a situation reveal that while "Fortune seems to be the arbiter of half our actions, . . . she does leave us the other half, or almost the other half, in order that our free will may prevail" (*P* 25.94)?

By exploring these questions dramatically, Shakespeare appears to have come to a similar conclusion. Nevertheless, the issue remains unresolved. Lindenberger asks if the English History plays come down on the side of *fortuna* or *virtù*, only to acknowledge that "these questions must, of course, remain unanswered—or, at best, tentatively answered, with new answers following to modify or contradict earlier ones" (133). The

same point is made by Rackin, who argues that the English History plays “can better be construed as series of dramatic meditations than a sustained univocal sermon” (*Stages of History* 59). Perhaps then the interest lies not in the answers, but in the ways that Shakespeare poses the questions and dramatizes them, for this truly reveals Shakespeare’s dynamic engagement with politic stratagems and their relationship with drama. This engagement allows Shakespeare to explore strategy’s strengths and weaknesses while also developing and enriching his own approach to his topic.

## 7.5 SOME CLOSING THOUGHTS

In my Introduction, I noted that Shakespeare’s thinking in regards to strategy is very much in keeping with Nuttall’s description of his openness to the “just-possible” (382-83). Such openness is not lacking in deliberation or deliberateness, and it is certainly not – as Kermode describes it – “fortuitous” (*Shakespeare’s Language* 127). It is both open-ended and deliberate, for it shows the degree to which strategy opens itself up to exploration at the same time that it acknowledges both the restrictions and limitations of strategy and strategic thinking. A strategist may become adept at being both cunning and powerful, at using alliances to one’s advantage, at twisting the rules of the game to one’s advantage, or at deceiving one’s enemies into believing one’s intentions are friendly. All of these stratagems are used throughout the first tetralogy, and they have all been explored by the politic authors I have drawn on for inspiration and clarification. Machiavelli is certainly the most prominent of these, but his interest in politic stratagems is shared by Tacitus, Guicciardini, More, Hall, Holinshed, and – however disapprovingly – even Gentillet. Acting as guides through difficult but rewarding terrain, these politic writers have all enabled me to better illuminate my

subject. The benefit of consulting these writers corroborates Pechter's suggestion that there is a growing need to expand the conventional definition of source "to cultural contexts—the ensemble of shared beliefs and assumptions with (and upon) which the play would have registered its impressions" (129). As Hadfield argues, "it is the analogous relationship between the texts that is important rather than an exact citation" (70).

The reasons why such analogous relationships are present are hard to pin down. They could have arisen as a result of a direct awareness of Machiavelli, or they may have been as a result of Shakespeare's encounters with similar ideas in the plays of Marlowe, the histories of Hall and Holinshed or other politic historians, the fruits of direct experience, or some other source. As Schoenbaum and others have noted, Shakespeare's world was one that provided daily examples of politic stratagems being put on display ("*Richard II* and the realities of power" 102-03), and so it is quite possible that Shakespeare observed the nature of the politic stratagems going on around him, stratagems at which audience members would, as Raab puts it, "nod or shake their heads very vigorously, according to their temperaments and the degree to which they were prepared to accept the new world" (67). Shakespeare neither simply nodded nor simply shook, and he certainly did not "close[]" his "eyes" or shrug[] his "shoulders" (Raab 67). He was clearly fascinated by stratagems, and this fascination affected the dramatist that he later became. One of the strongest effects is the realization that politic motives operate in the multitude of minor characters as well as the major ones. One of the central findings of my dissertation is the inadequacy of thinking that there is a single single Machiavel working against a series of "dupes" (Manheim 86-87); instead, there are

numerous strategists with competing strategies who are trying to do what they can to achieve and maintain power. Most conspicuously, this broadening of strategic interest should affect our reading of *Richard III*, a play whose complexities and subtleties have often been overlooked because of the dominating presence of the central figure. The strategies of Buckingham and Stanley, for example, show that this single focus overlooks many fruitful elements.

Such elements show that the earlier plays of the first tetralogy are far from being, as Bloom puts it, “bad,” “inadequa[te],” and “botched” (43), or, as Greenblatt puts it, “crude” (*Will in the World* 195). Nor are they, as Pearlman contends, “shapeless and unfocused [or] . . . a hodgepodge of competing actions” (24). In my Introduction, I discussed strategy in action and concerns about the episodic nature of the first tetralogy and its seeming lack of coherence. The constant conflict, the actions and the reactions, and the maneuvering and the counter-maneuvering of politic stratagems actually help to give the plays a very peculiar kind of dramatic unity, one that clearly challenges arguments concerning the tetralogy’s lack of focus. I discussed this unity in terms of the competitive rhetorical model provided in Altman’s *The Tudor Play of Mind*, although I am interested in a rhetoric of action and not words. This interest also allows me to focus on the process or *praxis* of politics, for it is this process – with all of its convolutions and seeming contradictions – that I think interested Shakespeare so much as a dramatist. There is nothing strictly defined or confined by theories in this model; instead, it is a kind of flux. In the world of the first tetralogy, everyone is implicated in stratagems of one sort or another, but the characters are nevertheless differentiated, in part, because some can use the drama of strategy to better effect than others; the degree to which this can be

seen in relation to my discussion of Henry and Talbot. This is what makes strategy so dynamic and susceptible to dramatic exploration, particularly in relation to York's maneuverings against his enemies, Warwick's *volte-face* against Edward and Clarence's against Warwick, Edward's possible manipulation of Richard, and Stanley's quite deceptiveness.

In these early plays one can see the young Shakespeare beginning to think strongly about how drama works and how characters engage with each other. In later plays these explorations will focus more on the personal and the emotional motivations of and ties between characters, but in these early plays Shakespeare uses stratagems as means to explore his own interests in the art of politics and the art of drama. There are many strong areas of difference between Shakespeare and these authors, and Machiavelli in particular. For example, although might may seem to make right, Shakespeare shows that such might often proves to have little staying power. The ends may appear to justify the means but, unlike in Machiavelli's writings, the ends in Shakespeare never seem to be truly fulfilling or worth pursuing. As illuminating as Machiavelli's writings about strategy may be, they often ignore the fact that not every political act is decided by political factors and that, as Clifford's maniacal pursuit of revenge shows, strategic motivation cannot account for all of our behaviour. Likewise, a narrow focus on politics alone ignores the degree to which personal relationships must be accommodated in the larger human world within which politics takes its place. Edward, Elizabeth, and Stanley are all guarded and calculating, but they also understand that they must work with others in order to succeed politically. This finding stands in stark contrast to Machiavelli's emphasis on the individual prince who must fight alone using alliances only when



obliged to and for a purely utilitarian motive. Likewise, Machiavelli's contention that a prince must ruthlessly destroy every enemy is also undermined by Shakespeare's dramatic exploration, for in addition to being impossible to achieve, such ruthlessness will inevitably create more enemies than it will destroy.

Shakespeare is simply more aware that strategy has, whatever its possibilities, very definite limits, and his exploration of these limits sets him apart from Machiavelli and other politic authors. Aside from learning from a possible strategic blunder or learning about the malignant nature of *fortuna*, Machiavelli's interest begins to wane once a prince has fallen. This is certainly not the case with Shakespeare, who is as interested in those who fail strategically as he is in those who succeed. Machiavelli and other politic authors are engaged with providing a lesson, a purpose very much contrasting with Shakespeare, who is at least as interested in the questions as in the lessons afforded by the study of strategy and strategists. A failure could only appear to a lesson-maker as something to avoid, but to a dramatist a failure is just as dramatically interesting as a success. The first tetralogy demonstrates the strength of Shakespeare's approach. This thesis has demonstrated the multiple factors that make strategy so dynamic and so useful to a young dramatist in the process of discovering his art, a dramatist whose thinking was both open-ended and deliberate, and whose exploration reveals durable truths about the art of politics and the art of drama.

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