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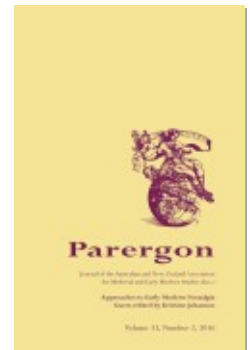
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In the Mean Season: *Richard II* and the Nostalgic Politics of Hospitality

Kristine Johanson

In Shakespeare's Richard II, the language of absent hospitality refracts the dire economic and food crises facing mid-1590s England, and it interrogates the contemporary response to the problem of dearth through its use of images of desolation, dearth, and grief. As absent hospitality proves to be a consequence of tyranny, the idealised past is invoked as a model for political action, to reclaim what is lost for the future. The respective future-oriented nostalgias of Gaunt and Northumberland articulate that possibility of reclamation, which Richard II ultimately rejects in its suspicion of past, present, and future.

In 1596, as a means of 'stay[ing]' the on-going dearth in England at the time, the Privy Council issued a directive on hospitality; it, and the directives already in place by 1595/96, when *Richard II* was first staged, together with England's larger socioeconomic situation, provide a significant discursive context for the play.¹ Firstly, the dearth itself provides a context that would certainly have stimulated a collective consideration of the past and its superiority to the present time of famine. Secondly, issuing a directive represents the crown's recognition that a structure of useful aid was lacking or, at the least, failing; the crown then identified hospitality as both a needful tradition and one that had deteriorated. In what follows, I argue that England's absent hospitality provides a political ground for John of Gaunt's and the Duke of Northumberland's reclamatory nostalgia, but that both absent hospitality and nostalgia evidence how the play represents a 'mean season', a flawed in-between time that reveals the imperfection of past and future.

In producing an historicist analysis and attending to hospitality, this article offers a convergence of critical approaches to *Richard II* that have characterised recent work on the play and Shakespeare studies more broadly. Historical analyses have been interested in identifying contemporary political parallels between Essex as Bolingbroke and Elizabeth as Richard, even before the 1601 revolt and Elizabeth's famous retort to William Lambarde, 'I am Richard II,

¹ See Chris Fitter, 'Historicising Shakespeare's *Richard II*: Current Events, Dating, and the Sabotage of Essex', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 11.2 (2005), 1.1–47, online at <<http://purl.oclc.org/emls/11-2/fittric2.htm>>. Critics still debate the precise dating of *Richard II*. While its language binds it with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet* (1594/95), Fitter has argued for 1596, linking Shakespeare's construction of Bolingbroke and his handling of source material to Essex and events of 1596.

know ye not that?', while issues of sovereignty and popularity, the former of long critical interest, still indicate the political stakes of the play.² Jeffrey Doty's examination of 'popularity' convincingly argues that the play offers a model of political critique for its audience, one that in effect asks an audience to 'analyse analysis', and I would add that the play's *argumentum in utramque partem* structuring invites that critical perspective with regard to nostalgia.³ Critics of *Richard II* have often identified a sense of 'nostalgia' in the play: the celebration of a chivalric code that was praised (and lamented as lost) in Elizabethan England and Gaunt's famous 'Scept'r'd isle' speech are just two commonplace examples. Yet David Norbrook is not alone in rejecting E. M. W. Tillyard's claims that *Richard II* expresses a nostalgia for the medieval past. As Norbrook writes, 'if the Elizabethans did feel nostalgic for the medieval past, it was not necessarily for mystical bodies that they yearned'. His admission that the Elizabethans may have gleaned 'object lessons' about how to avoid absolutism in the play hints at a future-oriented nostalgia.⁴ On the whole, however, criticism interested in the play's patterns of political thought has not been concerned with nostalgia. Hospitality, too, has been increasingly of interest as a critical lens for Shakespeare studies outside of an exclusively historicist practice. Julia Reinhard Lupton uses James C. Gibson's theory of affordances as a means of thinking about hospitality phenomenologically, while Derrida's *Of Hospitality* is a springboard for other scholars.⁵ While I do not take up Gibson's or Derrida's respective theories in my analysis, their (and Lupton's,

² Cf. Stephen Orgel, 'Prologue: "I am Richard II"', in *Representations of Elizabeth I in Early Modern Culture*, eds Alessandra Petrino and Laura Tosi (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 11–43; Fitter, 'Historicising Shakespeare's *Richard II*'; Jeffrey S. Doty, 'Shakespeare's *Richard II*, "Popularity", and the Early Modern Public Sphere', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 61 (2010), 183–205; Joseph Campana, 'The Child's Two Bodies: Shakespeare, Sovereignty, and the End of Succession', *ELH*, 81 (2014), 811–39.

³ Doty, 'Shakespeare's *Richard II*', p. 192.

⁴ E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1944); David Norbrook, 'A Liberal Tongue: Language and Rebellion in *Richard II*', in *Shakespeare's Universe: Renaissance Ideas and Conventions: Essays in Honour of W. R. Elton*, ed. John M. Mucciolo, with Steven J. Doloff and Edward A. Rauchut (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), pp. 37–51 (pp. 38–39); and cf. Peter G. Phialas, 'The Medieval in *Richard II*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 12 (1961), 305–10 (p. 308).

⁵ Julia Reinhard Lupton, 'Making Room, Affording Hospitality: Environments of Entertainment in *Romeo and Juliet*', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 43.1 (2013), 145–72; Julia Reinhard Lupton, 'Macbeth's Martlets: Shakespearean Phenomenologies of Hospitality', *Criticism*, 54 (2012), 365–76; Julia Reinhard Lupton, 'The Affordances of Hospitality: Shakespearean Drama between Historicism and Phenomenology', *Poetics Today*, 35 (2014), 615–33; David Ruiter, 'Shakespeare and Hospitality: Opening *The Winter's Tale*', *Mediterranean Studies*, 16 (2007), 157–77; but Daryl W. Palmer's *Hospitable Performances: Dramatic Genre and Cultural Practices in Early Modern England* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1992) took up concerns with hospitality much earlier.

and David Ruiters's) interests in what hospitable practices signify by being (or not being) performed do inform my interpretation of absent hospitality.

Two seminal texts establish a means of bridging the theoretical distance between nostalgia and hospitality: Raymond Williams's *The Country and the City* (1973) and Felicity Heal's *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (1990). Williams's image of an unending, time-travelling escalator exposes the impossibility of satiation for the nostalgic; for every generation, its predecessor offers salvation, some respite from the perceived degeneration and decline of the present.⁶ The escalator captures the sense of a ceaseless march into the past to search for perfection, and Williams's work exposes the creation and successive inheritance of pasts perfect. Published almost two decades after Williams's, Heal's definitive study of early modern hospitality relies partly on Williams's recognition of a mythos emergent and emerging from the dichotomy of rural and urban, country and city. But, as Heal argues and as early modern literature and ballads make clear, this dichotomy is characterised as hospitable (country) and inhospitable (city). Moreover, a second dichotomy appears alongside it: that of the hospitable past and the inhospitable present.⁷ Such an opposition situates hospitality as both a product and an inherent quality of an idealised past, and in so doing contributes to the creation of a 'myth of hospitality', the notion that there once was a space and time – a past England – when hospitality was readily available.

But what marks the nostalgic, backward-looking 'myth of hospitality' of Heal's study apart from the individual on Williams's metaphorical escalator is how that turn backward is used for the present and to think about the future. The hospitable past *could* return. It is accessible.⁸ Indeed, using the *ur*-narrative of hospitality, the discourses of the hospitable countryside or the hospitable past could be, and were, used to censure 'the attitudes of [the] present-minded urban man' and effect a 'call to action', by demanding the replication of hospitality based on the persuasive rhetoric of ancestral pride. They 'demand[ed] that the landed orders replicate the behaviour of their forebears'.⁹ The discourses of country/past hospitality insist on return and on political action; significantly, it is both return and political action that *Richard II*'s nostalgia insists upon. As I outline below, pervasive absent hospitality is used in *Richard II* to signal England's degeneration and Richard's misrule linked to his hostile practices. Absent hospitality signifies

⁶ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 9–12.

⁷ Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 112.

⁸ See my introductory essay, 'On the Possibility of Nostalgias', this issue, pp. 1–15.

⁹ Heal, *Hospitality*, p. 113.

social and political failure in the play, and it rebounds throughout the drama in the form of shadows of the dissolution of the monasteries and images of grief, the latter used to highlight England's injustice. Departing from critical understandings of nostalgia as absorbed wholly by the past, I argue that nostalgia in *Richard II* crucially offers discourses of return to suggest that the better past is not lost, but accessible. *Richard II*'s context of economic scarcity and government directives concerning hospitality highlight how, through this absent hospitality, the play responds to, and offers, a chronicle of its times.

I. Elizabethan Hospitality

By November 1596, when *Richard II* had likely already been staged and was nearing its 1597 publication, the economic situation in England was bleak. As John Guy writes, the dearth coincided with real agricultural prices rising and real wages falling; further, from 1596 to 1598, 'Perhaps two-fifths of the population fell below the margin of subsistence'.¹⁰ This situation was a worsening one, one that the government had attempted to cauterise in previous years. In 1594, 1595, and 1596, the Privy Council issued orders 'for the reliefe and stay of the present dearth of graine'.¹¹ An overview of the orders for each year suggests that the dearth's severity increased over time, as directives and proscriptions became more detailed and restrictive. The 1594 and 1595 declarations focus primarily on who may buy and sell corn and order the creation of 'juries' in each parish to conduct effectively a census of corn: who uses it, who has it, who may have it, who sells it, who makes malt with it, who has made agreements to buy and sell it. The proclamation also made provisions allowing needy parishes to seek relief from their neighbours, and it directed communities not to provide for beggars and vagabonds.¹² By the proclamation of November 1596, the severity of the dearth must have significantly increased, particularly if considered in light of the 1594 and 1595 directives. In 1596, the Privy Council demanded the:

[1.] observation of former orders against ingrossers, & regraters of corne, 2. And to see the markets furnished with corne. 3. And also against the carying of corne out of the realme. 4. And a prohibition to men of hospitalitie from remooving from their habitation in the time of dearth. 5. And finally a strait commandement to all officers having charge of

¹⁰ John Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 404.

¹¹ Privy Council, *The renewing of certaine orders devised by the speciall commandement of the Queenes Majestie, for the reliefe and stay of the present dearth of graine within the realme* (London: Christopher Barker, 1594).

¹² See Margo Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 135–37.

forts to reside thereon personally, and no inhabitant to depart from the sea coast.¹³

The Council demands again the ban of exports of corn (as it did in 1594–95), but this proclamation explicitly encourages its citizens to inform on those they suspect of exporting, and it offers a financial incentive.¹⁴ The declaration that those stationed on the seacoast must remain implies a need not only for defence, but for military power to check the imports and exports of the country.¹⁵ The increasing extent and gravity of the government's directives suggests the dire situation in England by November, when the Privy Council ordered the practice of hospitality.

The fact that between the 1536 Poor Law and the 1590s crisis, no Tudor government had issued an order of hospitality, highlights the uniqueness and importance of the 1596 proclamation.¹⁶ It explicitly demands that those able to provide hospitality must remain where they are, and those who have left their estates must immediately return. It declares that

her Majestie is particularly informed of some intentions of sundry persons of abilitie to keepe hospitalitie in their Countreys, to leave their said hospitalities, and to come to the Citie of London, and other Cities and townes corporate, thereby leaving the reliefe of their poore neighbours, as well for foode, as for good rule, and with covetous minds to live in London, and bout the Citie privately, and so also in other Townes corporate, without charge of company.¹⁷

In dictating the behaviour of those who provide or could provide hospitality in the country, the government politicises hospitality, implying that those who have left 'their Countreys' privilege themselves before the commonwealth. The 'bad' nobility are chastised for shirking their duties to their neighbours and lacking Christian virtue through their 'covetous minds' and absent *caritas*. Indeed, rejecting the duties of hospitality in favour of life in London was a self-interested calculation: the capital had more food and fewer hands that needed to claim it, as the city had access to imported grain.¹⁸

Yet the proclamation also demonstrates the Privy Council's interest in maintaining order and stability at a time when the lack of food, especially

¹³ Privy Council, *The Queenes Majesties proclamation* (London: Christopher Barker, 1596), title page.

¹⁴ Privy Council, *The Queenes Majesties proclamation*, fol. 377. Informers on those found guilty would receive 'both the halfe of the value of the Corne transported, and the halfe of the fines imposed upon the offenders'.

¹⁵ Heal, *Hospitality*, p. 118.

¹⁶ See Heal, p. 99.

¹⁷ Privy Council, *The Queenes Majesties proclamation*, fol. 377.

¹⁸ Guy, *Tudor England*, pp. 404–05.

affordable food, could incite political unrest. Food riots occurred ‘spasmodically’ in London, the southeast, and the southwest in 1595; in the mid-1590s, London was generally spared the starvation that afflicted regions north of the capital.¹⁹ Heal argues that ‘[i]t was in this context [of anxiety about supply and the dangers of disorder] that the notion of hospitality was invoked, as a specific against dearth and as a means by which rural relationships might be stabilised’.²⁰ The interest in ‘stabilisation’ is explicit in the 1596 proclamation, which states that one role of those who provide relief is ‘good rule’. Social stability, good rule, and the ability to provide: these are the qualities and outcomes of the envisioned practice of hospitality in the closing years of the sixteenth century. In the Privy Council’s proclamation exists the implied image of a future hospitable England, no matter how chastised the nobility are at present.

In addition to government directives, hospitality also circulated in religious discourse during these years. In 1596 (that year again), *Three Sermons, or Homelies to Moove Compassion towards the Poore* appeared; throughout the first sermon, the author cites the Gospel of Matthew, in which the corporal works of mercy are found. The writer concludes with an explicit reference to these works and their role in gaining salvation: ‘Come, yee blessed of my Father, inherite the kingdome prepared for you, from the foundations of the world: For I was hungred, and ye gave me meat &c.’ Further, he stresses the theological benefits of giving:

Salomon saith: Cast thy bread upon the waters, for after many daies thou shalt find it. As if he shold say: bestow thy alms, where it may seem to be lost: yet doubt not of thy rewarde, for surely thou shalt not lose it.²¹

This verse’s significance does not lie only in the explicit parallel the author makes between casting bread away and its return; the literal image of giving away bread (‘a dominant trope’ in late Tudor discussions of hospitality) would have had a profound resonance for both audience and readership in 1596.²² In these religious and political discourses, hospitality becomes a source of political and social stability, an idea refracted in *Richard II*, where hospitality is a sign of a better past and future but is ultimately unobtainable.

Despite these discourses, and despite the circulating dichotomies that idealised the past and the rural as hospitable loci, hospitality as a practice was evidently absent in the 1590s. To the Elizabethan regime, this absence

¹⁹ Guy, *Tudor England*, pp. 404–05.

²⁰ Heal, *Hospitality*, p. 118.

²¹ Anon., *Three sermons, or Homelies* (London: J. Windet for Andrew Maunsell, 1596), sig. B^v.

²² Heal, *Hospitality*, p. 129.

became an intolerable fault. But Andrew McRae proposes that, in view of the hospitality emergency of the 1590s, it was only in times of desperate socioeconomic crisis that social discourse and government policy would be forced to reorient its focus to subjects and customs associated with the past.²³ That is, the invocation of past practice became a politically useful tool to influence individual and collective behaviour. The late Elizabethan government's demands for hospitality reproduced the centralisation of eleemosynary practices that followed the 1536 Poor Law and the Dissolution. The 1536 law sought to re-situate the provision of hospitality from the individual almsgiver at the door to a central public authority that would integrate poor relief into a governmental responsibility.²⁴ Implicit in this shifting of roles is the shifting of relationships, restructuring the personal relationship between the alms-recipient and the provider into one where the state becomes the personal benefactor to the poor; the state becomes arch-host.

That hospitality played an important social role in early modern England is clear not only from extant personal testimonies, but from the post-Dissolution response to hospitality as well.²⁵ Prior to the Dissolution, monasteries were an integral and assumed part of its practice. Some priors built almonry houses specifically for the giving of alms to those who came to the gate; others fed their pilgrim- and travelling-guests alongside those who were present for a feast.²⁶ It was the monasteries' social utility that constituted their leaders' and patrons' arguments for their preservation; and as Eamon Duffy and Heal both observe, the hospitality of the religious did not go unnoticed even by their denouncers.²⁷ Yet '[t]he consensus of historians is that parish handouts, monastic hospitality, and personal holiday and funeral almsgiving were simply unequal to the task of curbing poverty in the early modern period'.²⁸ More ritual or cultural tradition than programme

²³ Andrew McRae, *God Speed the Plough: The Representation of Agrarian England, 1500–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 58–59, 60: 'the Edwardian tendency to idealize the poor and dispossessed is overwhelmed by a gathering [Elizabethan] attack on the morality of those on the margins of parish life.'

²⁴ McRae, p. 98.

²⁵ Cf. Thomas Norton's letter to Francis Mylles, Folger Shakespeare Library, MS X.c.62; and the anonymous *Rites of Durham*, ed. J. T. Fowler (1593; Durham: Surtees Society, 1903); see also Margaret Aston, 'English Ruins and English History: The Dissolution and the Sense of the Past', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 36 (1973), 231–55 (p. 243); and Philip Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism, and Memory in Early Modern England and Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 73.

²⁶ Heal, *Hospitality*, p. 230.

²⁷ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400–1580*, 2nd edn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 384; and Heal, *Hospitality*, pp. 231–32.

²⁸ Todd, *Christian Humanism*, p. 136.

of relief, the practice of hospitality was regardless recognised by successive governments as a significant tradition. Henry VIII sought to replace religious communities' hospitality in his 1536 Poor Law and through those who bought the abbeys and their lands from the crown, as the government 'insisted' that the farmers and new tenants provide hospitality as their predecessors had done.²⁹ Yet as Karen Stober argues, 'whatever they [the pre-Reformation monasteries] represented to the lay community at that time, their sudden disappearance cannot have been perceived with indifference'.³⁰

Evidence from Shakespeare's plays and poems demonstrates that absence of indifference in the late sixteenth century, suggesting a translation of social utility into literary utility.³¹ Commonplace examples include the anachronistic presence of a ruined monastery in *Titus Andronicus* (c. 1591) and the hint of one in Sonnet 73. In Act v of *Titus*, the monastery becomes the site of an important plot development. A Goth warrior reports to Titus's son Lucius, now commander of the Goth army, that 'from our troops I strayed | To gaze upon a ruinous monastery' and that he 'earnestly did fix mine eye | Upon the wasted building' when he hears a baby cry and discovers Aaron and his child.³² The soldier's report repeats within the small space of three lines the interest of this building. It draws him from his own troops, *fascinating* him so that he 'earnestly did fix' his view on the building, its dilapidated state emphasised by 'ruinous' and 'wasted'. This unnamed character's brief narrative merges distant past, immediate past, and present, inviting the audience to imagine any one of the ruined monasteries that still dotted London and elsewhere in England, and this experience of a post-Reformation monastery outside pagan Rome highlights how the historical space of hospitality still circulated in the late Elizabethan collective imagination.³³ Similarly, Sonnet 73 draws on the image of ruin in its first quatrain:

That time of year thou mayst in me behold,
When yellow leaves, or few, or none, do hang

²⁹ Heal, *Hospitality*, p. 233.

³⁰ Karen Stober, *Late Medieval Monasteries and their Patrons: England and Wales, c. 1300–1540* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007), p. 190, n. 1.

³¹ The interest in these spaces of suggested hospitality is evident in John Stow, *A Brief Survey of London* (London, 1598; 1603).

³² William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, in *The Oxford Complete Works of Shakespeare*, eds Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) (hereafter *Complete Works*), v. 1. 20–21; 22–23.

³³ Jonathan Bate, drawing on Samuel Klinger's work, argues that this moment participates in larger Reformation references throughout the play to align the Goths with Reformation reformers. See William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. Jonathan Bate (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 19–21.

Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.³⁴

Here, the decayed religious space, the 'choir', is not only associated with the speaker's own decay. The image of decay multiplies through the implicit vision of the choir's former inhabitants, invoked by the 'sweet birds' who replaced them and who now themselves are gone. The recent absence ('where late') of a joyful experience ('sweet birds sang') will be compounded in *Richard II* in a parallel narrative provided by the Duchess of Gloucester's sense of desolation and loss.³⁵ Additionally, Shakespeare's fascination with the word 'ruin' further grounds his creation of absent hospitality. He uses 'ruin' forty-one times in eighteen plays, and teases out his interest in its linguistic potential in Sonnet 64, where he writes, 'Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminat'.³⁶ Here, 'ruin' expands into 'ruminat'; or, using the 1609 quarto spelling, 'Ruine' entirely encompasses 'ruminat'.³⁷ Both cases demonstrate Shakespeare's obsessive wordplay but also the writer's ability to see ruin paradoxically exceed its boundaries, to appear perhaps where it is unexpected, as it does in *Titus*. Both cases emphasise Shakespeare's interest in these images of absent hospitality that appear in and pervade *Richard II*.

II. Inhospitable England

The *topoi* of dissolution and desolation that articulate absent hospitality in *Richard II* create within the play tangible representations of an immaterial past for an audience that would never have known pre-, nor possibly even post-, Reformation hospitality. These representations become tangible through characters' evocation of images resonant in the mid-1590s; paradoxically, they remain immaterial because the consistent invocation of these images reinforces their absence and their consignment to the unknown past.³⁸ Consequently, the language and *topoi* of hospitality invigorate and command the sense of nostalgia produced in the play. Images of desolation and grief nurture the nostalgic longing for the past that Gaunt's and Northumberland's speeches generate, images that are questioned by the apocalyptic future prophesied by Carlisle at the play's end. Within *Richard II*, nostalgia and its persuasive capabilities rely on hospitality as that element of an idealised

³⁴ Shakespeare, Sonnet 73, in *Complete Works*, lines 1–4.

³⁵ For a fuller treatment of 'late' and its post-Reformation significances, see Philip Schwyzer's article in this issue.

³⁶ Shakespeare, Sonnet 64, in *Complete Works*, line 11.

³⁷ Helen Vendler (*The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 301) draws attention to how it also contains 'ruinate'.

³⁸ They would have been accessible to readers by 1598 in Stow's *Survey*.

past that evokes individual experience and a personal sense of what is lost. The conjunction of both individual and national loss that provokes the idealised past of *Richard II* necessarily casts a shadow across representations of the present. Compounding the effect of this nostalgia and its constitutive element of absent hospitality, is its participation in establishing *Richard II* as a commonwealth play: Shakespeare's tragedy fixates on the state, and fate, of England.

What enables the play's pronounced relief of the past against the present are the competing constructions of history and the interrogation of the state of England that the first act establishes. The unfolding plot that occurs through and around the arguments of John of Gaunt, the Duchess of Gloucester, and Bolingbroke indicts King Richard; given the play's alignment of the country with the king, this must be understood as an indictment of the present. The act's forensic rhetoric encourages auditors to question how images of the past and present are crafted. Moreover, what such rhetoric reveals about the past incites reflection on and potential critique of the present. In rhetorically shaping England's glorified past, the nobility lend that past a legitimacy with which the present is forced to contend, thus highlighting implicit and explicit nostalgia throughout *Richard II*. This opposition of the past's legitimacy and authority with the present is suggested from the play's opening lines, in the opposition of 'old' and 'time-honoured'. Richard calls on 'Old John of Gaunt, time-honoured Lancaster' to bring forth his son Bolingbroke.³⁹ Contrary to common critical interpretations of these epithets, the use of 'old' and 'time-honoured' immediately introduces to the play a historiographic dichotomy of negative and positive perceptions of the past.⁴⁰ The 'irreverence' with which Richard later uses the phrase 'aged Gaunt' (ii. 1. 72) gestures to the phrase's negative use. Bushy's announcement that 'old Gaunt' will soon be dead further confirms that in calling Gaunt both 'old' and 'time-honoured', a temporal opposition is established (i. 4. 54). The derisory invocation of 'old' and 'aged' by Richard and his flatterers suggests a second, supplementary

³⁹ William Shakespeare, *King Richard II*, ed. Charles R. Forker (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2002; repr. 2004), i. 1. 1. Subsequent in-text references by act, scene, and line number are to this edition.

⁴⁰ Cf. Forker's note to *Richard II*, i. 1. 1, pp. 179–80; for Norbrook ('A Liberal Tongue', p. 43), 'Old' is a touchstone of the play because of the frequent invocation of 'old' and 'aged', but it is also a touchstone of criticism of *Richard II* (as my own present discussion exemplifies); Phyllis Rackin ('The Role of the Audience in Shakespeare's *Richard II*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 36 (1985), 262–81 (pp. 264–65)) identifies the parading of the 'old feudal order' in Act 1, Scenes 1 and 3; for George Gopen ('Private Grief into Public Action: The Rhetoric of John of Gaunt in "Richard II"', *Studies in Philology*, 84 (1987), 338–62 (p. 340)), Gaunt is 'a convenient symbol for the old ... and thoroughly medieval order'; while, conversely, David Bergeron ("Richard II" and Carnival Politics', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 42 (1991), 33–43 (p. 38)) locates an 'old order' in Bishop Carlisle.

dichotomy in the opposition of the old order that represents the good of the commonwealth and the 'liberal largesse' of Richard's regime (i. 4. 44).⁴¹ The phrase 'time-honoured' infers that the passage of time honours individuals: here, John of Gaunt. (Shakespeare's use of the adjective is unique in his own works and appears to be so in the literature of the period. Where 'time' and 'honoured' are paired in texts of late Elizabethan England, it is usually to clarify that at a specific time an individual was honoured.)⁴² Significantly, then, Shakespeare's formulation establishes the agency attributed to time within *Richard II*. As the play unfolds, audience and readership are asked to adjudicate representations of time – of past and present – and to view them through a lens of interrogating what is 'time-honoured'.

Yet *Richard II* also constructs time in its incarnation as 'the past' as an ideal, invoking hospitality to participate in that idealisation. The play's revealing second scene between the Duchess of Gloucester and Gaunt (without precedent in Shakespeare's historical sources), demonstrates the play's first explicit engagement with an idealised past, as the Duchess attempts to persuade Gaunt to pursue justice for her murdered husband, his brother. Glorifying his ancestry and his immediate family through the image of the Tree of Jesse, she chastises his inaction, demanding 'Hath love in thy *old* blood no living fire?' (i. 2. 10; emphasis added). When the Duchess cannot convince Gaunt to act, her unattainable wishes reveal Richard's impact on the state of England: it is inhospitable. She interrupts Gaunt's exit with an invitation she initially struggles to deliver:

Commend me to thy brother, Edmund York.
Lo, this is all. Nay, yet depart not so!
Though this be all, do not so quickly go;
I shall remember more. Bid him – ah, what? –
With all good speed at Pleshy visit me.
Alack, and what shall good old York there see
But empty lodgings and unfurnished walls,
Unpeopled offices, untrodden stones?
And what hear there for welcome but my groans?
Therefore commend me; let him not come there
To seek out sorrow that dwells everywhere (i. 2. 62–72).

The Duchess's house does not afford hospitality.⁴³ It is an unwelcoming environment, one that is host only to ubiquitous 'sorrow'. Her initial lines

⁴¹ Norbrook, 'A Liberal Tongue', p. 43.

⁴² For one of several examples, see Raphael Holinshed, *The Third Volume of the Chronicles* (London: Henry Denham, 1586), sig. Hhhhhhi^v.

⁴³ For a discussion and definition of 'afford' and 'affordances', see Lupton, 'Making Room, Affording Hospitality', p. 147.

reveal her desperation to force Gaunt to stay just a few moments more, and, struggling for a reason, the Duchess hurriedly issues an invitation before that invitation's impossibility strikes her. The uncertainty of what to say, encompassed in 'ah, what?', underlines the harried state of mind that lies behind her invitation; and that state destabilises her genuine desire to provide hospitality. The Duchess's attempts to make Gaunt stay demonstrate that desire, but instantaneously she herself recognises it as futile. Dissolved and desolated, her household is 'unpeopled', its hallways 'untrodden'. The palpable emptiness and sense of abandonment that her words create evoke the image of 'cold, | Bare ruined choirs'. Like the monasteries, the only remnant of the Duchess's past is the structure that surrounds her, Pleshy itself; those elements which lent it beauty and warmth no longer exist. 'Unfurnished walls' suggests that Richard's greed may even have demanded the tapestries from Pleshy's rooms, a parallel to the pillaging of the monasteries and a reading made more plausible by Richard's instinct to seize Gaunt's 'plate, his goods, his money and his lands' (II. 1. 210). Finally, the Duchess's lament that she has only 'groans' with which to welcome York points to a nullified tradition represented in the total breakdown of language into mourning and lament. The fact that in her home she is made incapable of providing hospitality even to her family further illustrates England's woeful state as a commonwealth that denies individuals the opportunity to perform their Christian duty to each other. The Duchess of Gloucester's rhetorical economy evokes a powerful image of ruin through its imaginative lacunae and its dependence, to some extent, upon an audience's collective memory. The description of Pleshy in the anonymous *Thomas of Woodstock* also depicts the manor, and the *Woodstock* dramatist's occasional focus on Pleshy and its status as a site of hospitality in that play affirms and highlights that hospitality's absence in *Richard II*.⁴⁴ Ironically, in Shakespeare's play, absence is used as a trope to provide rhetorical clarity for what is present: Richard's tyrannical behaviour. In narrating the misfortune that confronts her household, the Duchess's lament for lost hospitality illuminates further the king's negative impact on the commonweal, and it is the implicit and explicit argument that Richard is ruinous for England that structures the first half of *Richard II*.

In depicting the aristocratic need of hospitality through Act I, Shakespeare confirms Richard's role in eradicating a 'hospitable' England, employing this affirmation to characterise Richard's reign for the audience and consequently to assert the imperfection of the play's present. The Duchess of Gloucester's arguments demonstrate that her inability to provide hospitality is a direct

⁴⁴ Cf. Anon., *Thomas of Woodstock*, eds Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), III. 2. 9–14.

result of Richard's action, as I have discussed. Further, Richard's interference in a legal trial results in Bolingbroke's banishment from England: he is forced to leave '[his] mother and [his] nurse that bears [him] yet' (i. 3. 307). Ironically, Bolingbroke frames his response to banishment in terms of 'an enforced pilgrimage', as he calls his exile (i. 3. 263–64). The place he is forced from 'nurse[s] him yet', but he must turn away from that hospitable source and become a pilgrim; one of another group affected by hospitality's alteration in England. But while Richard possesses the power to alter Bolingbroke's pilgrimage, he has none against that of time, as Gaunt laments: the king can 'stop no wrinkle in [time's] pilgrimage' with Gaunt (i. 3. 230). Richard has made Bolingbroke a pilgrim who must seek hospitality outside his native country, and the scene's repeated use of the pilgrim image underscores Richard's role in making England inhospitable. Following Gaunt's death (to which Richard has made a 'pilgrimage' (ii. 1. 154)), Richard will even make Bolingbroke a 'vagabond' (ii. 3. 120). Bolingbroke's 'pilgrimage' drives Gaunt to an early grave, and these stock images of those craving hospitality at Richard's hand – the sick, the pilgrim – solidify the characterisation of Richard that Shakespeare initially urges: an uninterested, wanton tyrant. Richard consistently acts in a way detrimental to his commonwealth, and his deficiency is consistently bound to an absence of hospitality.

The tyranny suggested in *Richard II's* first act is confirmed by the dying Gaunt, who asserts and further discloses the time's dire situation by comparing past and present. I contest, however, the unmitigated nostalgia that critics often associate with this speech, as Gaunt does not appear initially nostalgic. Certainly the speech idealises England, and that idealisation further establishes and articulates a nostalgia that depends upon the construction of a past, perfect image of England. Yet Gaunt's rhetorical repetition of 'this' (sixteen times), emphasises consistently that the England of which he speaks is *now*, in the present:

This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by Nature for herself
...
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
...
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings,
...
This land of such dear souls, this dear dear land ...
(ii. 1. 40–43, 45–46, 50–51, 57)

In this speech, Shakespeare uses form to reinforce his focus on space: the iambs stress the land images – ‘earth’, ‘seat’, ‘world’, ‘stone’, ‘sea’, ‘plot’, ‘earth’, ‘realm’, ‘England’ – while the metre reinforces the image of England as an idealised space. Gaunt’s gendering of England as the metaphorical nurse and mother of her sovereigns (an echo of Bolingbroke at i. 3. 307) points most clearly to his idea that, as he speaks, she remains capable of preserving and producing kings.⁴⁵ He qualifies these rulers: they are ‘Feared by their breed’ and ‘Renowned for their deeds’ (ii. 1. 52, 53). Gaunt’s use of the adjectival past participle in ‘feared’ and ‘renowned’ perpetuates the notion that these images still characterise England while suggesting that this characterisation of kings *is* past; English kings *were* renowned, they *were* feared. In this speech, Gaunt first establishes a sense of what remains and of what is present, before exploding that notion in his condemnation of Richard.

Indeed, Gaunt’s rhetoric shatters the intimate image of king-bearing England and her ‘dear souls’ when he makes the suggestion of the past an explicit argument in his speech. Having established the many virtues of England, he pronounces the country’s reality:

This land of such dear souls, this dear dear land,
 ...
 Is *now* leased out ...
 Like to a tenement or pelting farm.
 England ...
 is now bound in with shame,
 With inky blots and rotten parchment bonds.
 That England that was wont to conquer others
 Hath made a shameful conquest of itself
 (ii. 1. 57, 59–60, 61, 63–66; emphasis added).

Several specific, rhetorical shifts mark the change in how Gaunt conceptualises present and past England as his speech climaxes and concludes, highlighting his grief at England’s ‘conquest’. His interjection ‘now’, together with the first use of a verb (‘is’) that does not adjectivally modify his subject, establishes the tense, and Gaunt’s condemnation of what is ‘now’ explicitly identifies the present. Now England is no longer a ‘demi-paradise’. The Duke’s previous description and praise are no longer representative, for the country is not simply *shamed* – which would imply the consequence of past action – but rather is ‘bound in with shame’, a continuous, circuitous image

⁴⁵ Richard will invert this image of England as nurse and womb of the individual, instead constructing himself as mother and nurse. Returning from Ireland two scenes later, he greets the land: ‘As a long-parted mother with her child | Plays fondly with her tears and smiles in meeting, | So weeping, smiling, greet I thee, *my earth*’ (*Richard II*, iii. 2. 7–10; emphasis added).

that has no apparent end for Gaunt. His rhetoric's logical conclusion is that the 'this England' of fifteen lines prior is now 'That England', and accordingly the present tense has become the past. England 'that was wont to conquer others' now conquers 'itself'. Even this 'itself' possesses critical undertones, for it eradicates the 'herself' implied in the constructed image of England as nurse and mother. A self-perpetuating England has been replaced by a self-consuming one. The suspicion and critique of the present that Shakespeare slowly crafts through Act 1 finds its obvious, but not final, embodiment in Gaunt's rhetoric.

The lament for the England that did not seek to vanquish its own subjects is briefly but explicitly nostalgic. Gaunt juxtaposes the past with the present and thus condenses the lengthier argument he has been making: that the England that was is not the England that is, and this discrepancy he bases in Richard's (mis)rule. His lament that England is 'bound' evokes the rotten 'bonds' that have created Richard 'Landlord' (ii. 1. 113) and which, as a singular image, also evoke notions of duty: a king bound to his country; a subject bound to country and king.

Richard's role in creating an inhospitable England persists through the tropes of fasting and dearth that the play circulates, tropes which, again, were connected to the ongoing dearth–hospitality crisis of the mid-1590s. At the same time that the Privy Council was demanding that 'men of hospitalitie' leave London and policing the corn market to secure fair prices, they were also creating fasting days. In 1595, as in the decade before, orders for fasting accompanied orders for public prayer to be said on Wednesdays and Fridays.⁴⁶ While fasting in Elizabethan England remained a Catholic practice, 'among its distinctively protestant features was the sense that fasting should always be related to some particular cause or affliction'.⁴⁷ Fasting as a public practice represented the junction of 'prudential and providential' governance. As part of secular policy, it was a means of conserving food. As a religious practice, it acknowledged the role of sacrifice with prayer in imploring God to come to England's aid. Historians have observed the civic connection made between fasting and hospitality as part of a care for the commonwealth. Paul Slack explains how citizens in the diocese of Norwich were in 1595 'enjoined by their ministers to practice "hospitality", to refrain from all "excess in diet", and to have patience not to "give ear to mutinies"'; Heal notes the

⁴⁶ Paul Slack, 'Dearth and Social Policy in Early Modern England', *Social History of Medicine*, 5.1 (1992), 1–17 (p. 6).

⁴⁷ Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559–1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 260–63 (esp. p. 261).

‘undifferentiated charity’ instigated by Elizabeth.⁴⁸ Fasting and charity formed two elements of self-denial that was lauded as a virtue opposed to vanity, a vice that Shakespeare’s play (and *Thomas of Woodstock*) strives to associate with Richard II. In depicting the problems of the present through the language of the past, Shakespeare offers in effect a view from Williams’s escalator.

John of Gaunt’s punning on his name therefore must have resounded with an audience embroiled in policies and proclamations compelling them to abstain. On his deathbed, Gaunt describes to Richard ‘how is’t’ with him:

Within me Grief hath kept a tedious fast,
 And who abstains from meat that is not gaunt?
 For sleeping England long time have I watched;
 Watching breeds leanness, leanness is all gaunt.
 The pleasure that some fathers feed upon
 Is my strict fast – I mean my children’s looks,
 And therein fasting hast *thou made me gaunt*
 (ii. 1. 75–81; emphasis added).

In the same way that the Duchess, deprived of her husband, is deprived of the possibility of hospitality, so too Gaunt, deprived of his ‘pleasure’ – his son – is forced into a strict abstinence. In the world outside the play, his fasting would be associated with government-solicited collective action performed for the benefit of the commonwealth. Gaunt’s ‘watching’ connotes that his own fast, a consequence of his constant service to ‘sleeping England’ (and continuing in these images a parental metaphor), is one born of worry for the realm because of its ruler. As Richard implicitly made Gaunt lean through watching a troubled state, so he made him gaunt through Bolingbroke’s banishment. According to Gaunt, his fast has had little, if any, positive consequence for the country, and the explicitly negative consequences of fasting highlight England’s need, again affirming the troubled state of the present in the past and problematising any Elizabethan impulse to idealise this past marked by misrule.

III. ‘A Dearth in this Revolting Land’

Sovereign or landlord, Richard fails to make a hospitable England, and its hostility to its inhabitants breeds a longing for a preferable past that catalyses political revolution. At the end of Act II, Scene 1, Lord Northumberland – implicitly looking into the future, and echoing Gaunt – describes England

⁴⁸ Slack, ‘Dearth and Social Policy’, p. 7; Heal, *Hospitality*, p. 128; see also Steve Hindle, ‘Dearth, Fasting, and Alms: The Campaign for General Hospitality in Late Elizabethan England’, *Past and Present*, 172 (2001), 44–86 (esp. p. 44). Hindle (p. 46) takes up the discussion on ‘general hospitality’; cf. Heal, p. 127.

as 'this declining land', and with the Lords Ross and Willoughby, he details the extent of the king's abuses: commons taxed grievously; nobles fined; new financial 'exactions ... devised' without restraint against subjects of the realm (II. 1. 240, 246–50). The plan to combat this hostility is bound up with Bolingbroke's opportunistic return from exile and the king's departure from Ireland. Northumberland declares:

If, then, we shall shake off our slavish yoke,
Imp out our drooping country's broken wing,
Redeem from broking pawn the blemished crown,
Wipe off the dust that hides our sceptre's gilt
And make high majesty look like itself,
Away with me in post to Ravenspurgh (II. 1. 291–96).

His argument frames defection to Bolingbroke as the only possible recourse to correcting present ills. Within four lines, Northumberland encapsulates the frustrations and desires that these men have expressed throughout the scene. The present state and government fail to reflect and represent their past *and* that past must be reclaimed, returned. A 'blemished crown', a dusted, gilded sceptre, and 'high majesty' that does not 'look like itself' are all images of inherent, but past, goodness that must be recovered: a crown burnished; a sceptre dusted off; majesty made recognisable. The image of dust alone, of the accumulation of filth, suggests that the passage of time has marred the image of royalty. Northumberland's rhetoric creates the powerful image of tainted kingship, and his imperative 'Away with me' is presented as the only means to reclaim the past for the future.

Remarkably, hospitality becomes one means of enabling that reclamation to succeed. Acting in Richard's absence, the Duke of York confronts Bolingbroke, Northumberland, and their supporters at Berkeley castle, and he initially rails against his nephew, for York is 'no traitor's uncle' (II. 3. 87). Echoing the Duchess of Gloucester's prolonged departure, York eventually takes his leave of the rebels, before immediately offering them shelter:

So fare you well
Unless you please to enter in the castle
And there repose you for this night (II. 3. 159–60).

Considering the political and legal ramifications of England's temporary regent offering refuge to a banished man and his armed supporters, this hospitable proposal is surprising, but it communicates York's own 'shifting allegiance'.⁴⁹ Richard's tyranny and Bolingbroke's claims persuade York

⁴⁹ I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer who pointed out this moment as another example of problematic hospitality in the play and who used this apt phrase to describe York's attitude.

to act for the latter, who lacks a home because Richard has denied him his inheritance.⁵⁰ In an England without Richard, hospitality is finally available, but with a price. Offering hospitality – an indicator of social cohesion and order – becomes complicated by its object, rebels who ‘wound’ (III. 2. 7). On the one hand, York’s act is exclusively subversive, inverting the social order in accepting rebellion. On the other, this subversion rejects the inimical status quo, and thus implicitly favours social order and cohesion. Hospitality here becomes an ambivalent practice. That ambivalence signifies both how far the idealised space and time of hospitable England has receded, and how imperfect the present is as even the act of hospitality, signifier of the perfect past, has become fraught with political consequence.

By crafting Richard’s role in creating an inhospitable commonwealth and thus a need for reclamation, Shakespeare provokes a repulsion to the king. However, this repulsion is qualified as the play’s unravelling pathos, evoked by Richard’s fall, recasts him as a pilgrim and then as a sorrowful – if potentially vengeful – maker of dearth. In Act III, Richard becomes the object of the inhospitable England that he himself has made, and he must now ask others for succour. He wishes to be a beggar or a pilgrim, offering:

... my jewels for a set of beads,
My gorgeous palace for a hermitage,
My gay apparel for an almsman’s gown,
My figured goblets for a dish of wood,
My sceptre for a palmer’s walking staff,
My subjects for a pair of carved saints
And my large kingdom for a little grave (III. 3. 147–53).

Richard’s rhetoric here, like his reversal of fortune as a whole, disrupts the pathos for his victims that Shakespeare steadily crafted through the play’s first half. Accordingly, the rhetoric of a lost hospitality that had functioned as a source of nostalgia and a lament for England under Richard’s rule now appears to be a lament for England, regardless of ruler. This multivalent discourse of lost hospitality suggests that England has become inhospitable to both ruler and ruled.

A scant eight lines later, Richard affirms England’s pervasive hostility as he recoils from the inhospitality he suffers and imagines punishing his country. He declares to the Duke of Aumerle:

⁵⁰ In addition to Richard’s seizure of Gaunt’s wealth at Act II, Scene 1, see also Bolingbroke’s accusation to Bushy and Green that they have ‘Disparked my parks, and felled my forest woods, | From my own windows torn my household coat, | Razed out my impresse’ (*Richard II*, III. 1. 22–25).

We'll make foul weather with despised tears;
Our sighs and they shall lodge the summer corn
And make a dearth in this revolting land (III. 3. 161–63).

In these lines, the king's vengeful wish for scarcity puns on the word 'lodge', and so even (or especially) in his bitterness he participates in the discourse of hospitality present throughout the play. While the primary sense of 'lodge' here signifies 'to beat down crops' through rain or wind (Richard's respective tears and sighs), the more common use (particularly by Shakespeare elsewhere in his works) of 'lodge' as a home or storehouse also enables a second reading, one which imagines Richard's fecundity (the tears and sighs he produces) as hoarding, 'lodging', the corn and thus creating a 'dearth' for his countrymen.⁵¹ This second available sense creates not the absent hospitality that the rest of the play constructs, but rather a pernicious present hospitality. The image of sheltering food to damage the commonwealth contrasts sharply with the social benefit that hospitality was supposed to produce. Moreover, Richard's threat of 'dearth' would have rung sharply in the ears of mid-1590s Elizabethans. 'Famine' was something that mostly happened elsewhere or in the past, something beyond the government's control; 'dearth' signified a dearthness, one half of the common 'dearth and scarcity' that dogged England in these years.⁵² But this threat also returns Richard to his role as inhospitable king, as the failed host who interrupts events he presides over (the trial), arbitrarily gives and takes time (to Bolingbroke), and illegally seizes what is not his (Bolingbroke's inheritance). Now, threatening to 'make a dearth', he jeopardises the sympathy won when he said he would, 'with rainy eyes[,] | Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth' (III. 2. 146–47). Richard's tears here possess a spiteful, violent power that seeks to make his rebellious subjects suffer, and these lines encapsulate Richard's complexity. He is both the tyrant still actively pursuing destructive policies towards his own kingdom, and the repentant man who will finally recognise his waste of Time (v. 5. 49).

Reflecting on the dissolution, desolation, and dearth that constitute the *topoi* of hospitality in *Richard II*, one little wonders that grief's prosopopoeic presence in the play is invariably connected to a language of absent or ironic hospitality. As the affect of loss, grief is the Duchess's sole 'companion' at Pleshy (I. 2. 55); Bolingbroke is its 'journeyman' (I. 3. 274); it keeps a 'tedious fast' in Gaunt (II. 1. 75); it is the Queen's guest 'in reversion' (II. 2. 38; and cf. II. 2. 7–9); and, 'hard-favoured', it lodges in Richard, himself

⁵¹ See *OED*, s.v. 'lodge, v.'

⁵² See Slack, 'Dearth and Social Policy', pp. 7–9. The informed, deliberate use of 'dearth' or 'famine' that Slack suggests did have its exceptions, as he notes that the use of 'famine' was more common in the north where areas were more seriously affected in comparison with London and southern areas.

a 'beauteous inn' (v. 1. 13–14). The Duchess's and the Queen's respective implicit and explicit 'welcomes' to grief as a guest, grief's explicit physical existence *within* both Gaunt and Richard (who unlike the Duchess have not lost someone through death), and the fact that this 'guest' affects characters across political lines, intimate that larger concerns for the state underlie the presence of grief in the play. The drama's 'principal voice', grief in fact seems to be the only guest in this play. As it is an unwelcome one, its ubiquity only underlines further the absence and impossibility of hospitality in *Richard II*, and the connection between grief and injustice produces a powerful lens through which to consider how the play exposes the consequences of absent hospitality.⁵³ For this absence represents a failing commonwealth, a failure evident through the rule of a tyrant who willingly perpetuates that absence. These elements together – tyrannical rule, a failing commonwealth, and its marker, absent hospitality – incite grief at the loss of an idealised past, and that grief urges the reclamation of a time that is believed to have existed and is now lost. The expression and recognition of loss inevitably create a dichotomy of a positive past and a negative present viewed through the lens of that loss. In recognising the discrepancy between past and present, what is affirmed is the interest in reclamation and the belief that what has been lost can be reclaimed. More than just the longing for the past's return, it is the language of that return's possibility that marks the nostalgia of *Richard II*.

However, the nostalgia that bred the rebels' future-oriented acts, when thrust into that future, dissolves, highlighting again the inherent imperfection, the fallibility, of any time, past, present, or future. Where Gaunt emphasised the nation's glorious past and grieved for the loss of England as a consequence of Richard's tyranny, Bolingbroke's acts of reclamation, his ascendancy to the throne, incite the Bishop of Carlisle's bloody predictions of what will come. Carlisle first threatens that 'future ages [shall] groan for this foul act' (iv. 1. 139), and 'groan' echoes not only the Duchess of Gloucester's 'groans' of welcome (i. 2. 70), but also the maternal image of England discussed above. Carlisle's threat suggests not simply general anguish, but birth pains. Anticipating the Duchess of York's plea to her husband – 'Hadst thou groaned for him | As I have done, thou wouldst be more pitiful' (v. 2. 102–03) – Carlisle declares that Bolingbroke's actions will give birth to future violence. Elaborating on that intimation of future violence, Carlisle recalls both Richard's and Gaunt's language and Shakespeare thus connects his future prophesy with past and present. Carlisle warns that:

⁵³ Charles R. Forker, 'Marlowe's *Edward II* and its Shakespearean Relatives: The Emergence of a Genre', in *Shakespeare's English Histories: A Quest for Form and Genre*, ed. John. W. Velz (Tempe: ACMRS, 1997), pp. 60–89 (p. 84); Peter Sacks, 'Where Words Prevail Not: Grief, Revenge, and Language in Kyd and Shakespeare', *ELH*, 49 (1982), 576–601.

[I]n this seat of peace tumultuous wars
Shall kin with kin and kind with kind confound.
Disorder, horror, fear and mutiny
Shall here inhabit, and this land be called
The field of Golgotha and dead men's skulls.
O, if you raise this house against this house,
It will the woofullest division prove
That ever fell upon this cursed earth (iv. 1. 141–48).

Here, the Bishop echoes Richard's conception of future civil war and the generations that will cry against their ancestors for planting such a seed, as he imagines, 'child, child's children, cry against you, "Woe"!'. Like Gaunt, Carlisle invokes 'this land'; yet the image he crafts is not of an 'other Eden', but of 'Golgotha'. 'This land' both cites and attenuates Gaunt's lines – 'this land of such dear souls, this dear dear land' (ii. 1. 57) – while 'This seat of peace' inverts Gaunt's 'seat of Mars' (ii. 1. 41), and the Bishop re-imagines 'this earth of majesty' as 'this cursed earth' (ii. 1. 41). That Carlisle is absent for Gaunt's speech highlights all the more how Shakespeare is re-writing Gaunt to deny present *and* future. For the Bishop, here, there is no past. Both men's respective rhetorics respond to their perception of tyranny and misrule and its consequences for the commonwealth. Moreover, both Gaunt and Carlisle are reacting to their respective presents: one functions as a lamentation for the past; the other as a lament against the future. Both laments envision desolation and thus participate in the rhetoric of absent hospitality that the play offers and aligns with misrule and the neglect of England. Considered together, Gaunt's and Carlisle's respective speeches confirm the play's status as a 'mean season', an age crawling between an unknown past and the future's 'cursed earth'.

IV. Conclusion

The cultural practice of hospitality remained of interest in late Elizabethan England, and *Richard II's* insistent, absent hospitality, its language of fasting and dearth, ground the play's medieval world in sixteenth-century problems and policies. Indeed, the absence of hospitality in the mid-1590s echoes throughout the play, as the *topoi* of desolation and dissolution recall a ruined tradition that the government sought to reinstate, to return to. In offering a vision of a medieval England that *should* be a space of hospitality and is instead hostile to that practice, the play interrogates constructions of an idealised past and suggests that returning to past practice will not, in fact, solve present problems.

In *Richard II*, Shakespeare rejects any comfortable vision of past, present, or future. The play reveals, rather, the constructedness of temporal narratives

(as the commonplace shifting of allegiance from Bolingbroke to Richard performs) and seeks to unsettle the audience temporally. Rendering the 'present', fourteenth-century England, imperfect, *Richard II* offers nostalgic narratives of a more distant, perfect past that suggest both the accessibility of that past and England's *right* to that perfect past. Hospitality, in this view, operates as one type of English political inheritance. But trying to reclaim that inheritance is futile. As Shakespeare intimates, there was no perfect, hospitable past, and consequently there can be no perfect, hospitable future.

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