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Buckets in a Deep Well:
Essays About Shakespeare's History Play Characters and
an Original Drama

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts
at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Vita

Brian Charles Bassett is native of Leominster, Massachusetts. Most recently, he worked for the Cape Playhouse as its Education Director. Prior to this he lived in Richmond, Virginia, where he spent his days teaching creative writing at Northstar Academy, his nights directing the Kesem Inclusive Theatre Project for the Weinstein Jewish Community Center, and the time between completing his M.F.A. in Theatre Pedagogy from Virginia Commonwealth University. Prior to these activities, he worked as the dramaturge for Virginia Repertory Theatre's Fall 2018 production of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*, where he drew upon his experience teaching dramatic literature at Beacon High School, a therapeutic special education school in Watertown, Massachusetts.

Introduction

Like a trifler at the Boar's Head lucky enough to be there the night Falstaff and Hal put on their "play extempore" (Shakespeare 2.4.257) automatically shouting out "Falstaff!" (*Henry IV* 45:39)¹ to complete Falstaff-as-Henry IV's "now I remember me, his name is" (2.4.392), I've been lucky enough to write about characters for this thesis that left me at times responding to their words with as much gusto: Hotspur's baffled response to an unnamed letter-writing lord's equivocations about joining the rebellion ("He could be contented: why is he not, then?") (2.3.3) nearly had me taking to reddit.com's r/fantheories to postulate that, given the bureaucratise of the letter, this noncommittal lord must, somehow, have been authored by *Yes, Minister's* Humphrey Appleby. Sometimes this happened when doing something else entirely: encountering an online advertisement featuring the Burger King mascot prompted me to wonder if he has heirs, lest a succession crisis ensue. Another unanticipated response was elicited when my recreational reading led me to the following passage in "Aristotle's Dungeon," an essay by Gregory Littman featured in *Dungeons & Dragons and Philosophy*:

Good players, like good DMs, would be required by the Aristotelean approach to keep their characters' actions as realistic as possible. He wrote "The right thing . . . is in the characters just as in the incidents of the play to seek after the necessary or the probable; so that whenever such-and-such a personage says or does such-and-such a thing, it shall be the necessary or probable outcome of his character" (Poetics, lines 1454a32–36). For example, your Bahamut-worshipping, lawful good paladin should never ride by a peasant being attacked by bandits. (Littman 12)

¹ As this is a common theatrical interpolation not present in the text, I have cited an example of said interpolation from Gregory Duran's 2014 film production.

Aristotelian logic dictates that Oedipus *should* seek after the truth of his parentage because it would be unlike him to leave the matter a mystery. Littmanian logic dictates that a lawful good character *should* intervene on the peasant's behalf. The "internal logic" (Littman 10) of the mediums leads one to these conclusions, and these conclusions led my thoughts to "Shakespeare's *Wire*," an essay by Elisabeth Bronfen that elaborates upon the show's in-universe chess analogy to find similarities between Simon's Baltimore and Shakespeare's England. "Each figure," (90) she writes of the structures that dominate the dramas, "has a clearly defined place and role within a strictly hierarchical order in which power is incessantly renegotiated by virtue of political acts" (90). Bronfenian logic dictates that Avon Barksdale *should* lose the war with Marlo because, like Henry VI, he makes poor political calculations, failing to realize that "a shift in the particular circumstances at hand require a renegotiation not of the game's rules per se, but of the schemes that are open to its key players" (92).

The era of institutional storytelling on television brought about by *The Wire* was addressed in almost mournful fashion by Zeynep Tufekci, whose Scientific American blog post "The Real Reason Fans Hate the Last Season of Game of Thrones" posits that the series lost its way because its authors began to "steer the narrative lane" (Tufekci 2) of the show in a new direction: transitioning from "sociological" (2) to "psychological" (2) storytelling in its final act, *Game of Thrones* abandoned a narrative of plot points produced by characters who "evolve in response to the broader institutional settings, incentives and norms that surround them" (2) and opted instead to tell individualized stories that "depend on viewers identifying with the characters and becoming invested in them to carry the story, rather than looking at the bigger picture of the society, institutions and norms that we interact with and which shape us" (4).

Tufekki's comparison of these opposing narrative engines echoes Ruth Nevo's essay "The Genre of Richard II," according to which

The chief distinction between history and tragedy rests in the restructuring the narrative undergoes in order to bring out the protagonist's personal responsibility for events and his personal response to them. It is his distinctive aspiration, will, or purpose that becomes salient. In the history plays the protagonists are exhibited as struggling for freedom to initiate events... if they are made vivid, it is by a degree of idiosyncrasies and their response to their destined roles, but they are nevertheless governed by an overall ironic process of history. (Nevo 8)

What Bronfen describes as "a repetition of martial power relations" (93) Tufekki calls "society" (Tufekki 4) and Nevo the "process of history" (Nevo 8). All of this, I reason, amounts to the same dramaturgy: no individual Lancaster or York dominates the history plays in the same way that Macbeth and Hamlet do their individual tragedies; no single Lannister or Stark plays the prominent role in *Game of Thrones* that Walter White does in *Breaking Bad*; no Barksdale looms as large in *The Wire* as Tony Soprano in *The Sopranos*.

It is this dramaturgical premise— conflict that unfolds in a world in which a system is the center of the story, to which the characters react— that links the works I am analyzing in these essays. Many of the characters appear in more than one essay, but each essay primarily focuses on a single character's response to a power structure: Shakespeare's Richard Gloucester to the Tudor England of his audience in *Richard III*; Richard Nixon's campaign-produced version of himself to 20th century American democracy in "Checkers," Falstaff to organized society in *Henry IV, Part 1*, Marlo Stanfield to the drug economy of early 2000's Baltimore in *The Wire*,

the Duke of York to the disrupted monarchy of The Plantagenet era in *Richard II*, and Antony Jay and Jonathan Lynn's Humphrey Appleby to the world of competing interests that makes up the fictionalized English government of *Yes, Minister*.

To that end, I tried to find an organizing principle I could use to compare how characters in the sociological dramas I'm writing about react to respective institutions. This brought my mind back to *Dungeons & Dragons*. I have for a time had interest in the character alignment system, and it occurred to me that elements of this could be adapted to classify and compare these characters. I say that elements of the system could be adapted because I did not attempt to write about for example, whether or not *Richard III* and Marlo Stanfield are lawful evil characters, chaotic evil characters, or neutral evil characters. My interest here does not concern the morality of these characters, so the "evil" element of the alignment system has no analogy in my essays. I am quite interested, however, in the role that lawfulness plays in the character alignment chart, so I use the term "institutionalist" and "opportunist" to analyze a given character's relationship to a given set of institutions.

Determined to Disprove the Tudors:
Richard Plantagenet in *Richard III*

Examining the interplay between Richard III as a historical figure and dramatic character, Elizabeth Charnes's essay "Reading the Monstrous Body in *Richard III*" argues that Elizabethan historians engaged in "overemplotment" (348) of the Wars of the Roses, a term she borrows from culture critic Hayden White to compare the responses of historians and psychoanalysts to traumatic events: a culture (in the case of the historiographer) or patient (in the case of the psychoanalyst) experiences a trauma that has been "charged with a meaning so intense that, whether real or merely imagined, they continue to shape both his perceptions and his responses to the world long after they should have become past history" (348). Richard Plantagenet was not a historical monster in Elizabethans' perceptions as a result of events alone; Tudor historians actively participated in the process of monster-making "in order to enable and justify the 'cure' that, at least in terms of historiography, has always already preceded him" (351). Operating from the contra-Tillyard premise that Shakespeare's history plays do not endorse the Tudor myth, Charnes argues that Richard III the character is actively rebelling against the role historians cast him in: "The play maps Richard's desire for *disidentification*, his efforts to invade a taxonomy that is always used to enforce his alignment with this textual history" (351).

Richard's effort to seize the crown, then, is not the inevitable desire of a grasping historical monster but an attempt to "exchange his misshapen, half made up of body for the 'King's body' and its divine perfection" (354). He seeks to determine his own reputation with both the audience and the other characters through a charm offensive that will "replace stigma... with charisma" (355).

Richard's endeavor to swap the bunch-backed toad for the witty king is a more elaborate strategy, one which requires him to construct "a charismatic leader who manages to be for the group what he wishes to be for himself" (356) rather than "what he is for others (356). (Or, as we might put it when speaking of modern politicians, he must control the narrative.) The tactics to carry out the strategy are first launched with an inversion of the settled historical account—by informing the audience that he was "sent before his time...scarce half made up" he "replaces a language of over gestation, of prodigious belatedness, with one of underdevelopment, of rude and untimely prematurity" (357). As if writing a pugnacious memoir to set the record straight, Charnes's Richard has read Thomas More's scurrilous account and wants the audience to know that he wasn't born with teeth.

Like any able politician, however, Richard knows when to embrace the establishment when it suits him. More called him "malicious, wrathful, envious, and, from before his birth, ever willful" (118) but Charnes highlights how Richard's strategy involves "relying on the misogynistic tradition" (359), the same tradition that pervades the context of More's writing. Charnes's Metahistorical Richard therefore employs misogynistic appeals as a way of counteracting the Tudor narrative. The institution of the patriarchy may be his enemy in that it stifles his political ambitions as a youngest son, but he is willing to align himself with it if he can make it his enemy's enemy.

His impudence will be his undoing as much as his cruelty, and this process starts as soon as he is crowned. It is clear from even an initial study of the play that Richard's embrace of infanticide is possibly a bridge too far for Buckingham to cross. "I wish to the bastards dead" (4.2.20) is in my estimation the most memorable line in this scene, but what drew my attention in

this most recent reading is the fact that before this Richard thrice refers to Edward. Thinking about this in relation to A.L. French's idea that in the universe of the history plays removing a title renders the deposed an "unperson" (343), one sees that Buckingham's negative response is not due to a moral objection to infanticide. For Buckingham, the pure politician for whom manipulating the official record is sufficient to mold reality, once the princes were unpersoned they ceased to exist. There is no need to take further action.

Richard, however, concludes instead that he and Buckingham's success entitled them to ditch the artifices, and so makes the brutality that motivated their creation explicitly known: it doesn't matter whether one calls them princes or bastards, he wants them dead. By repeatedly referring to Edward by the name by which he was known as a prince and even explicitly recognizing his noble status, Richard figuratively restores this title and thus presents Buckingham with the prospect of murdering a prince and heir to the throne.

To this moment it is possible for Buckingham to rationalize their misdeeds because, within the fictional narrative they have created, the laws, notably the laws of title and heredity, have not been broken. Richard's calling one they've previously cast as illegitimate in their campaign by the name and title they possessed before their reimagining is tantamount to breaking character. This takes Buckingham out of the fiction and undermines his rationalizations. This in turn leads him to betray Richard, but not to the latter's undoing. It is merely an eventually vanquished threat, but it is nonetheless Richard's misuse of words, a failure of rhetoric, that does.

Richard is an opportunist who increases his status--both his power within the world of the play and popularity with the audience outside of it-- by rebelling against institutions outside of the play's world--the Tudor Myth and ableist prejudice--that prevent him from gaining status,

and embracing those institutions—patriarchy—that aide him. He fails because he upsets those institutions-- hereditary custom within the world of the play, the morality of the audience outside it--that will not tolerate such transgressions.

Tricky Opportunist: Richard Nixon
in *Checkers* and *Frost/Nixon*

The Richardists obviously have a point about Richard III: the media vilified him. I say “obviously” because one needn’t read past even the second page of Thomas More’s *The History of King Richard III* to encounter sentences like these:

Little of stature, ill-featured of limbs, crook-backed, his left shoulder much higher than his right, hard favored of his visage and such as is in princes called warlike, and other men otherwise. He was malicious, wrathful, envious, and, from before his birth, ever willful. (More 118)

The historian David Greenberg makes a similar point about Richard Nixon in *Nixon's Shadow: The History of an Image* when he says, speaking of contemporary comment on the politician, that “it may not need proving that Richard Nixon was the most despised politician of his time” (36). He can say this because even a short selection of the evidence Greenberg presents makes his point: Nixon was “hard and inflexible...with few of the saving graces of tenderness, humor, generosity toward the fallen” (44) according to the journalist William Castella; lacked “skepticism, detachment, humor, irony, tolerance – qualities generally considered hallmarks of a civilized mind” (45) in the view of *The Post*’s William Shannon; and employed “one of the slickest and sleaziest fake emotion routines that ever gulled a sentimental people” (53). The fake emotion routine about which Lerner wrote was “Checkers,” the speech Nixon performed on a television set home office to counter the “Tricky Dick” mythology forming around him during the 1952 presidential election.

The following argument might be called “tricky” in a (hopefully) less galling sense. It borrows a concept from Margaret Shewring, who argues in *King Richard II* that what we call *Richard II* is not even a play as traditionally understood, but a cultural artifact, “a series of ‘documents’, including historical events and historical writing, as well as theatre, that can best be understood as all, reciprocally, *Richard II*” (28). Using Richard II’s nominal successor as a parallel, I will seek to examine Richard Nixon as a figure within two Shewringian “documents”—Nixon’s own “Checkers” speech and David Frost’s book *Frost/Nixon*. This Nixon is an opportunist who increases his status by rebelling against an institution, namely the “Tricky Dick” narrative (which, though as accurate as a pithy nickname can be and not strictly posthumous, functions like the Tudor Myth despite these distinctions because it too prevents the “protagonist” from gaining his desired status) and embracing those institutions—suburban American culture of the period, the mid-century vision of the American Dream—that aide him. He fails because he, like Richard III, commits profane acts that so damage his social standing that he is no longer able to influence it.

Richard Gloucester aims to recast his actions as both the fun to watch chess movements of a charismatic athlete and the natural consequence of his treatment as an outcast. The Nixon of “Checkers” employs a variation of the former strategy in which he replaces the “Tricky Dick” image with a wholesome, honest Richard who’s been unfairly maligned by opposing forces. Like the pre-regicide Richard of the first three acts of *Richard III*, the pre-Watergate Nixon does not deny the allegations or try to downplay their consequences, but embraces his deeds, reframing them within the context of additional information about his expenses. In his exchange with Anne, Richard validly placed his actions in the context of the legitimately awful civil war, thus

mitigating their severity. He then situated his own motivations in the context of a chivalrous lover, further distancing himself from the uniquely evil beast Anne initially portrays him as. The Nixon of "Checkers" was able to locate rival candidates in a world of corrupt politics and at the same time distance himself from corrupt behavior. The home office setting made him look the modestly remunerated suburban lawyer laying out his not especially high income, thus rendering claims that he secretly took lavish bribes suspect.

Richard transforms the audience into Falstaff-as-Prince Hal of the tavern scene; one could imagine us quipping "I would your grace would take me with you: whom means your grace?" (Shakespeare 2.4.424-425) when hearing Queen Margaret's recitation of his sins. This is because, like Falstaff, he is so effective at spin-doctoring: More's dour portrayal of a "deep dissembler" (118) becomes Richard's gleeful boasts about the "plots" (Shakespeare 1.1.32) he has "laid" (1.1.32). He is indeed as "arrogant of heart" (More 118) as More says he is, but Richard makes us love him for it. When he brags to us about his tactic of preemptively blaming others for nefarious deeds he has committed, he does more than cast himself as one who is arrogant of heart but also, by making us privy to his clever machinations, elevates us to knowledgeable courtiers, delighted to be in the inner circle of the cool kid.

Nixon is not cool, so his image-revision is different. He does, like Richard, make us privy to personal information, but that information concerns his family finances, a suitable subject given the image this Richard is trying to project:

Well in addition to the mortgage, the 20,000 dollar mortgage on the house in Washington, the 10,000 dollar one on the house in Whittier, I owe 4500 dollars to the Riggs Bank in Washington, D.C., with interest 4 and 1/2 percent. I owe 3500 dollars to my parents, and

the interest on that loan, which I pay regularly, because it's the part of the savings they made through the years they were working so hard -- I pay regularly 4 percent interest.

And then I have a 500 dollar loan, which I have on my life insurance. (6)

As Richard III's audience we are Jacks invited to hear about classified material in the royal palace; as the object of our attention Nixon makes himself into our middle class neighbor who frankly tells us about his bills. In the course of refuting the accusations of the city slickers, Nixon the friendly neighbor simultaneously replaces various characteristics of Tricky Dick. He is not a nefarious campaigner, but a victim of a communist-sympathizers who "have accused us that have attempted to expose the communists;" (9) not a self dealing stooge of big business, but a middle class lawyer who is proud that, even though it isn't enough to pay for a mink coat, "every dime that we have got is honestly ours," (6) a tender man who tells his republican-cloth-clad wife that she would look good in anything;" (6) not the secretive recipient of seedy funds but the proud new owner of Checkers, "the little cocker spaniel dog," (7) a campaign gift Nixon explicitly acknowledges as such.

Richard loses our allegiance after he assassinates the princes. (As a former student of mine put it "he's no fun anymore.") As Shakespeare scholar Peter Saccio has explained, prior to this Richard is committing acts that, however unacceptable to the audience in a real world context, are nonetheless enjoyed as fantasies (Saccio). Scheming against other opportunistic adults, even fratricide, can be witnessed with open glee, but by orchestrating the death of the princes Richard is committing a taboo of a higher magnitude, one that even in a fictional context is not vicariously enjoyed by the audience. He is no fun anymore because one does not even jokingly take pleasure in his actions.

At the same time, if the infanticide were wiped from the audience's memory at the end of Tyrrell's speech, I imagine that he would still fail to amuse in the subsequent scenes. This seeming absence influences no scene more than his back and forth with Elizabeth, an inversion of the prior scene with Lady Anne in which the clever inversions of her opponent's words (and even dark comedy such as her line about the princes having been "cozened" (4.4.225-226) by their cousin) are produced by Elizabeth. Regardless of how one accounts for it (the strength of Elizabeth as a rhetorical opponent, the relative weakness of Anne as one, guilt about his actions, simply the fact that he can no longer plausibly argue against the facts) Richard's persuasive performance here is feeble, as succinctly assessed by Stephen L. Tanner in his Shakespeare Quarterly essay "Richard III Versus Elizabeth: An Interpretation:" "He says, 'Be not too hasty to confound my meaning/I mean...'" In persuading Anne he never had to repeat his meanings" (471). In the earlier scene, Richard is tasked with spinning damning evidence in support of the mythical Yorkist monster interpretation. In a metatheatrical sense, Anne is as much an adherent of this view as Richard is an opponent. Through this lens she sees a "pattern" (1.2.54) in the body of Henry VI and, like Hal with Falstaff, assumes that a plain tale--the facts--will put him down. Richard successfully recontextualizes this pattern, however, and is not derailed.

Prior to Tyrrell's mournful report that "the tyrannous and bloody act is done" (4.3.1) we have already witnessed plenty of such acts throughout the course of the English history plays. Regimes are replaced and their leaders pierced by arrows, swords, or both; peace is made with heads more often than with hands; unsuccessful rebels are put down by force, guile, or--in the case of the Henry IV plays -- force first and guile second; many are murdered. What distinguishes Tyrrell's soliloquy from similar exhalations is that before this moment we are meant to

understand that he is an especially coldhearted killer. Anne may have been unable to bring Richard to account but, to return to the political scrum metaphor, she was also working with less robust opposition research. In his argument with Elizabeth, he cannot repeat this success because he has now revealed himself as a uniquely violent political actor within even the war-ravaged world of the English history plays. He is no longer one of various leaders who commit tyrannous acts in the midst of a civil war, but a tyrant whose willingness to cross ethical boundaries horrify one who was especially sought out for this act, one whose haughty spirit had combined with his humble means to make him uniquely corruptible. Elizabeth's strategy is to stay on message, to return to his crimes so consistently and effectively that Richard spends his energy trying to defend himself. This strategy is so effective that Richard does not state his objective in speaking to her until well into the conversation. When he finally articulates it, she exposes his hypocrisy through a darkly comedic, deliberate misreading of his language:

QUEEN ELIZABETH

What good is cover'd with the face of heaven,
To be discover'd, that can do me good?

KING RICHARD III

The advancement of your children, gentle lady.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Up to some scaffold, there to lose their heads? (4.4.245)

Richard's final play is a sort of bargain: "If I did take the kingdom from your sons, to make amends, I'll give it to your daughter" (4.4.301). The trouble with his this, of course, is that he took the kingdom from her sons by taking their lives. He cannot grasp the fact that there is no

political reward that would make up for the personal loss of her children. Richard II did not understand the implications of politically murdering Hereford; Richard III only understands this form of murder. He killed her sons and thinks that he can absolve himself by giving a political birth to her daughter.

Nixon's interviews with David Frost occurred after the "cultural triumph for the image of Tricky Dick" that was Watergate (Greenburg 71). Like Richard in his exchanges with Elizabeth, any attempt to argue for a positive interpretation of his behavior is met by facts that plainly go against that interpretation. Nixon the monologist of "Checkers" carefully builds a cohesive image of an honest broker out of republican cloth, a plain desk, and, importantly, detailed (for a political speech, anyway) financial information. This image was meant to replace a "tricky dick" image that was vaguely drafted from thin evidence of campaign fund malfeasance.

In his bid to replace a "tricky dick" image that is by this time vibrantly drawn from taped evidence with that of an elder statesman, the Nixon of the Frost/Nixon Watergate interview fails to draw a coherent image at all. Asked about a conversation with his aide Charles Colson in which the president conspiratorially wondered "If we didn't know better, we would have thought the whole thing was deliberately botched," (Frost 104) Nixon rambles:

Let me say as far as what my motive was concerned... my motive was in everything I was saying or certainly thinking at the time, ah...ah...was not, ah...to try and cover up a criminal action but...to be sure that as far as any slip-over or should I say, slop-over, I think would be a better word, any slop-over in any way that would, ah...damage innocent people or blow it into political proportions. (Frost 104)

Like Humphrey, Nixon's speech becomes unintelligible when he is thrown off balance. Here, he seems to say that his motive was to prevent a political crisis that would harm innocent people. If Tanner is correct that Richard's stammering 'Be not too hasty to confound my meaning/I mean...' (Tanner 471) is an indication of his being outmatched, the moment is therefore an illustration of the modern political adage "if you're explaining, you're losing" hundreds of years before its appearance.

In this essay I have sought to bring Charnes's Richard III through Shewring's "series of documents" frame (28). Within this proscenium, the theatrical, fictional Richard III, determined to revise the image of the historical Richard drawn by Tudor historians, coheres with the televisual, historical Richard Nixon intent on revising the image put forth by the media ecosystem of the mid-to-late 20th century.

Prior to what I suppose must be called "Towergate," Richard is able to minimize the severity of his actions because, within the context of internecine conflict portrayed in the plays, assassinating a deposed king is not uniquely evil (we know that Henry IV ordered such an action earlier in the cycle.) Nixon, likewise, is able to avert political failure before Watergate because his actions were not unique; other politicians had practiced malfeasance that, at least as he presents in the "Checkers," are worse. After "Towergate," Richard is not able to spin his actions because he has done things that even corrupt players in the world like Tyrrell and Buckingham find repugnant. Richard cannot contextualize his deeds in conversation with Elizabeth because they are profane even within the framework of the Wars of the Roses. He can no longer persuade the audience to see him as an unethical rogue, not only because of the murder of his nephews but

because that act has become part of the pattern of butcheries Anne attempted to lay out in the play and which More drew of his real world counterpart.

After Watergate, Nixon is no longer able to substitute Tricky Dick with an advantageous self-portrait of the elder statesman who made ethically questionable decisions for the sake of the greater good. He has been recorded acting like the corrupt politician his checkers-era critics said he was; Frost's colorless recitation of these instances is to Nixon what Elizabeth's recording of Richard's crimes is to Richard: it cements the opposing narrative.

Merry Opportunist:

Falstaff in *Henry IV, Part One*

In "The Battle Between Carnival and Lent," Michael Bristol points out how Falstaff is the trope carnival figure who is frequently admonished for his "disrespect of time, place and person" (363) by the "stockfish" (363) Hal. Hal's project of establishing a "Lenten civil policy" (365) enumerates a broader religious definition of Falstaff as the carnival figure who is unfit for civil life. Interpreted within Bristol's framework, Hal is already working on this project from his first scene in the play, bookended as it is by Hal's identification of Falstaff with the carnival conception of time and the former's "I know you all" soliloquy, which for Bristol functions essentially as Hal's policy speech outlining the aims of this Lenten political party:

This project is very much out in the open, publicly acknowledged in respect of the contemporaries space-time of the performance, as Hal informs the audience of his overall intentions

I know you all, and will awhile uphold
The unyoked humour of your idleness:
Yet herein will I imitate the sun,
Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
To smother up his beauty from the world, I
That, when he please again to be himself,
Being wanted, he may be more wonder'd at,
By breaking through the foul and ugly mists

Of vapours that did seem to strangle him.

If all the year were playing holidays,

To sport would be as tedious as to work;

But when they seldom come, they wish'd for come,

And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents.

[1.2 168-169, 177-180]

Under the supervision of a comprehensive social discipline, a holiday will be an isolated episode, a limited release that is all the more appreciate for its rarity. (365)

He does permit Falstaff to smother him up for quite a while, and appears by this time in their relationship to have developed a pattern in his interactions with his chief companion. Like Anne and Richard's back and forth, the first exchange between Hal and Falstaff starts with the interrogator's statement outlining an establishment definition of the opportunist—Anne defines Richard as the villain the Tudors believed him to be, Hal defines Falstaff as the drunk, lascivious thief the religious calendar implicitly worked against—followed by the opportunist's reinterpretation.

Like Richard, Falstaff is initially successful in recasting his social role.

Alert to the power of connotation, he reimagines his cohort not as "thieves" (1.2.22) or even necessarily as "squires," (1.2.22) but--as if spinning out new definitions in an improv game--as possibly also "foresters" (1.2.23). Or "gentlemen" (1.2.23). Or "minions" (1.2.24). This persuades Hal to abandon his position as the establishmentarian scold upbraiding Falstaff for his pretentious request for the time—to pause his work enacting the Lenten civil policy—and to take up that of "us that are the Moon's men" (1.2.29).

Hal may stress his base qualities, but Falstaff functions like any court favorite in the history plays, as frequently (and, of course, as temporarily) in the royal presence as Bagot, Bushy, and Green. Despite his physical stature marking him as the target of ridicule as often as Richard III, he manages to use this stature as a means of advancement, entertaining the Prince with his talk of “levers to lift” (2.2.31) him in the Gadshill scene, for example, or his ironic description of himself as "portly" to the delight of the tavern audience (2.4.389).

As previously discussed, one explanation for Anne’s implicit acceptance of Richard's proposal is his relativistic argument that his actions are not any worse than other partisans in the civil war. The other is his brazenness. It is one thing to point out that he is not the only combatant to weave a pattern of butcheries; it is another to claim that these butcheries stem from a love for a grieving relative of a victim. Another plausible explanation for Anne's contradictory actions, therefore, is simply that she does not know how to respond to Richard's absurd spin doctoring: there are no firm moral principles to which one can appeal in a time of civil war, and no counsel present to ground her. This gives him space to manipulate. (This theory is helped by the fact that Richard acknowledges to the audience the confusion he purposely brings about by accusing others of his crimes.) Regardless of which particular aspect of the exchange one credits for the turn of events, Richard successfully takes the Tudor narrative of the unlovable monster and replaces it with the charming lover.

Set in the context of the history plays, however, I think Richard’s performance here, for all its deviously clever transformations, is a sort of warm up act to Falstaff’s superior set:

PRINCE.

We two saw you four set on four and bound them, and were masters of their wealth. Mark now how a plain tale shall put you down. Then did we two set on you four, and with a sword, outfaced you from your prize, and have it, yea, and can show it you here in the house; and, Falstaff, you carried your guts away as nimbly, with as quick dexterity, and roared for mercy, and still run and roared, as ever I heard bull-calf. What a slave art thou to hack thy sword as thou hast done, and then say it was in fight! What trick? What device? What starting-hole? Canst thou now find out to hide thee from this open and apparent shame?

POINS.

Come, let's hear, Jack, what trick hast thou now?

FAL.

By the Lord, I knew ye as well as he that made ye. (2.4.237-246)

Falsely assuming that a plain tale (Anne's factual argument that Richard is a homicide, a devil, a black magician; Hal's eyewitness knowledge of Falstaff's actual behavior at Gadshill) shall put the spin doctor down, the inquisitor is thrown off balance by the opportunist's brazen, unanticipated claim. The latter dynamic was visually illustrated in the 2012 production at the Globe when Jamie Parker's Hal physically staggered, as if frightened by Roger Allam's improvisational magic as Falstaff. This staging decision is fitting, as at this moment Falstaff reaches the height of his ability to turn himself through words from a common, cowardly crook into an uncommonly comedic courtier: it is later in this same scene that, owing to this privileged position, he escapes arrest due to the Prince's intervention.

Falstaff's influence is not to last, of course, as Hal's "I do, I will" (2.4.54) presages a moment prior. Hal's warning is in a sense a metatheatrical version of Buckingham's betrayal of Richard: where Buckingham breaks the metaphorical play of pretending that their actions in gaining the throne for Richard are less brutal than they are, Hal breaks the play within the play to signal that he will one day cease pretending that he is/will be a permissive, madcap royal who grants thieves the privileges of gentlemen.

The opportunists discussed in these essays want to advance their social status regardless of the impact their actions have on the institutions they interact with. In each case, the institution functions as both a vehicle to aid this advancement and an obstacle against it. What aligns Richard Gloucester and Richard Nixon is their similar responses to their institutions, both when rebelling when those institutions stand in opposition to their dramatic action and when embracing those institutions to attain it. While it feels strange to compare him to corrupt politicians, Falstaff is also an opportunist who seeks to define his social status against opponents who present contrasting, institutional definitions. He is initially successful because, despite Hal's attempts to define him as a reprobate, he is able to maintain his status as a charming thief in Prince Hal's circle, thus escaping the retribution society normally meats out to one who behaves as he does. He fails because the political circumstances change when Hal becomes Henry, and he is denied the position from which to maintain that allegiance.

Institutional Opportunist:

Marlo Stanfield in *The Wire*

Henry VI is correct when he says that “civil dissension is a viperous worm that gnaws the bowels of the commonwealth” (Shakespeare 3.1.15). This dissension has led to deposition, executions and banishments, but the war between the Yorks and the Lancasters will lead to worse still.

The adult Henry VI was not executed until after Edward Plantaganet’s compromise to become heir resulted in the latter’s assassination, Henry VI rose again after Edward IV’s initial reign, and Edward IV regained power. The adult Richard II was not assassinated until after a laborious attempt to get him to sign his deposition failed and a plot to restore him was uncovered.

Richard III has Hastings executed without a trial and secretly orders the assassination of two children. Prior to Richard’s rise, political assassinations were committed after several other events involved in the conflict had taken place. Richard II damaged the mechanisms that regulated political violence and Henry IV committed regicide, but in both cases these were not the first course of action the characters took to achieve their ends. None of those actions were as socially taboo as Richard’s infanticide, and they were not without precedent in the England Shakespeare portrays, as Richard’s catalogue of regicides on the ground of Barkloughly Castle makes clear:

For heaven’s sake let us sit upon the ground

And tell sad stories of the death of kings:

How some have been deposed, some slain in war,
Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed,
Some poisoned by their wives, some sleeping killed,
All murdered. (3.2.151)

For all that, the England of Richard III is in a worse state.

One facet of Elisabeth Bronfen's elaborate analogy in "Shakespeare's Wire" articulates how "the visceral power play between opponent kingpins is pointedly staged for the players themselves as well as members of the community at large, often just innocent bystanders accidentally drawn into their war" (Bronfen 104). Bronfen does not elaborate on the innocent bystanders' experiences, but any fan of the program will recognize this as a fact of the characters' relations. As with Shakespeare's England, the squabbles of the powerful spill out into what are meant to be peaceable, shared locations. Where some of this—such as the psychological impact of the displayed bodies in the drug war— can be inferred, there are other times when Simon viscerally portrays the direct impact the drug drug war has on the populace: a family is seen preparing for a presumably unremarkable day when a stray bullet from the drug war kills the unnamed mother's son; a state's witness is murdered for identifying a murderer in court; a woman who overdoses on drugs at a party is rolled up into a rug and thrown into a dumpster. All of this occurs under the Barksdale regime and, like Richard II's ordered assassination of Woodstock, one might even point to Avon's ordered murder of Gant as the central catalyst that sets the action toward the bloody conflicts the drama chronicles and the uniquely tyrannous reign of a Marlo. Regardless of where one locates this turn to tyranny, however, it is clear that the terrace is already preyed upon by a viperous worm.

As with the state-run institutions depicted in the histories, Simon shows us that the drug empires can get worse. The Barksdale organization's rules of course result in violence, but they also regulate its use, as made evident by Slim Charles's decision not to attack Marlo: he is unable to reach Avon and therefore cannot receive approval to do so. We also witness its leader as a private citizen capable of private concerns apart from his existence as a calculating drug lord whose organization harms his community. When we first meet Avon, he is cooking at what appears to be a church event. He greets D'Angelo and Darnell and holds their child, remarking upon the infant's strong grip. Later, we see him take D'Angelo to visit an aging relative in a nursing home, where he speaks frankly about the mortal implications of their occupation.

The civil war that leads to Creon's display of Polyneices outside Athen's gates is not shown in *Antigone*, but Creon justifies his order to refuse burial partly on the harm this act caused the society. Athens is under duress before Creon takes this profane step, but his action is so profoundly inimical to a functioning society that he stands apart as an exceptionally malign ruler. It is a taboo on the same order of magnitude as Richard's infanticide. Avon's display of Brandon's body is antisocial, in the sense of causing harm to society: we see the trauma it causes Wallace, and one can assume it also has a traumatizing effect on the other residents of "the towers" who, unlike Wallace, were not in some way corrected to the murder. Omar is not the least of these victims, and his cry when identifying the body punctuates this point. But he is given the opportunity to identify the body. Were Brandon murdered during the war with Marlo, Omar would never have seen Brandon again. By putting the murdered people where, as the underling Kevin says as he is carted off to where the victims' "people won't know where to find" them, Marlo becomes a tyrant as transgressive as Richard and Creon.

Bronfen compares Marlo only to Richard III, but her emphasis on the importance of identity calls back to mind French's analysis of Richard II. Speaking of Marlo's fall, she writes that "though not fatal, this sentence is tragic because, without his name on the street, Marlo, whose self-definition was based entirely on his self-declared usurpation of sovereignty, no longer exists in the game" (102). As cited previously in these essays, French frames titles as the grantor of existence within the nobility, what Bronfen also calls a game. For all his similarities to Richard III, then, through his relationship with identity we can see that Marlo's arch brings us back to Richard II.

The opportunists discussed in these essays want to advance their social status regardless of the impact their actions have on the institutions they interact with. In each case, the institution functions as both a vehicle to aid this advancement and an obstacle against it. What aligns Richard III and Richard Nixon is their similar responses to their institutions, both when rebelling when those institutions stand in opposition to their goals and when embracing those institutions to attain them.

Bronfen highlights Marlo's near-violent encounter with the police as evidence of the lengths he will go to to protect the foundation of his power. York the institutionalist risks his life to uphold the monarchy in as functional a fashion as possible. Richard II and Richard III, opportunists both, use the institution to advance themselves and abandon its rules for the same purpose. Risking his legal life in a standoff with the police, Marlo becomes not an opportunist like the Richards, nor an institutionalist like York: his actions never weaken the institution of the drug trade, and his embrace of reputation as the key to power within the system strengthens it as a mechanism that organizes power within it.

Therefore, in his decision to challenge the police he shows himself to be both an opportunist who is, like Richard III at Bosworth, taking a personal physical risk in order to maintain his own status and, albeit incidentally, an institutionalist whose actions contribute to the structure of the institution. He is not motivated to maintain the drug economy for the sake of the institution itself, so in that he is unlike York. But by serving his own opportunistic ends he, like York, endangers his own life whilst reinforcing a central element of the institution in which he operates.

Subsumed by the Institution:

The Duke of York in *Richard II*

According to AL French's essay "*Richard II and the Woodstock Murder*" Woodstock's assassination prior to the opening of the play is central to understanding the play as a whole, and is, furthermore, as important to the history cycle as the assassination of Richard II. It leads to the theft of Gaunt's property and the disinheritance of Bolingbroke, thus "making Bolingbroke a non-subject: not only lacking in inheritance, not only lacking rights, but also lacking any place in the social moral moral order." (341) Bolingbroke's title is his identity; removing it is "tantamount to yet another murder—the extirpation of the Lancastrian branch of the royal family" (342), an act that is offensive to not only Bolingbroke but his entire class, as "no nobleman could brook being legally erased" (342). French's reading shines so bright a light on the stakes that, when he cites Bolingbroke's assertion, upon his return to England, that he has done so "to seek that name in England" (342) his objective is given an almost existential caste:

Bolingbrook himself complains to York in this scene—and York is won over by the plea—that his status as a person has been degraded to that of what he calls a "wandering vagabond" (119) a sort of displaced and dispossessed person. He goes on to use to York the very argument that York used to Richard, namely that if Richard is king by inheritance, by the self-same logic Bolingbrook is Lancaster. Since he is denied the help of lawyers to argue his case (128 f.), he has virtually been put outside the law, so that no redress is left him but to come back and argue the matter "personally" (134) which, paradoxically, means breaking the law in order to restore it. (342)

By making Bolingbroke a “non-entity,” Richard completes an anarchic process that took place in three major stages. First, he secretly murdered Gloucester rather than holding a trial. He then interrupted the trial by combat, a process that, while of course violence itself, is carried out within the confines of a stable state system that is distinguishable from street violence, as Shakespeare indicates to us by showing each of the ceremonial steps that occur prior to the moment when the fight is about to begin. The final step is the disinheritance of Bolingbroke, which removes the nonviolent methods through which Bolingbroke could protest. (“Attorneys are denied me.”) By doing so, Richard sabotaged what I will bureaucratically call the violence filtration systems of the state: institutions that might deter violence (in the case of the court) or seek to contain it (in the case of the trial by combat) cease to function, ultimately setting in motion the seemingly perpetual violence of the Wars of the Roses.

I will now examine how the Duke of York responds to this institutional crisis via a circuitous route that, despite his apparent waffling of loyalties, ultimately reinforces his unswerving allegiance to the institution at even the highest personal cost. I hope to show that, far from being an uncertain dotard overmatched by events or a power-hungry schemer, York is an institutionalist first and foremost, one who is animated primarily by a loyalty to the English monarchical system.

We first witness York’s conflict when, seeming to sense that Richard will seize Henry’s land after John of Gaunt’s death, he pleads with Richard not to retaliate against Henry, stressing that, despite Gaunt’s wrathful final words, Henry (who, as far as York knows at least, is still banished) still loves Richard. This does nothing to dissuade Richard from seizing Henry’s

inheritance to pay for war in Ireland, after which York cautions Richard, and in so doing elucidates the mechanics of the hereditary monarchy:

Take Herford's rights away, and take from Time

His charters and his customary rights;

Let not tomorrow then ensue today;

Be not thyself; for how art thou a king

But by fair sequence and succession? (2.1.201)

By seizing Henry's property, Richard is violating the same principle of inheritance that the latter's throne is based upon. Though presumably a strong believer in the divine right, York nevertheless reveals (and fears) its constructed nature and, once these fears come to pass, struggles to maintain that construction.

Left in charge whilst Richard is away, York confronts Bolingbroke and his party of supporters. Having known even before he arrives, however, that the might of the realm is on Bolingbroke's side and seeing as much in this moment, York acts in a manner that is up for interpretation: he might, as Claus Peymann (whose production forced the interpretation by substituting York for Aumerle as Richard's murderer) behave like "an opportunist, turning to whoever happens to be the most powerful person at any given moment" who cynically joins Henry as "a henchman of the new dictatorship" (153-154). He might more reasonably struggle to "maintain his old belief system in the New World of Bolingbrook," as Michael Boyd argues. He begins the exchange by berating his nephew for a treasonous disruption of the political order:

Why have those banish'd and forbidden legs

Dar'd once to touch a dust of England's ground?

But then more “why?”—why have they dar’d to march

So many miles upon her peaceful bosom,

Frighting her pale-fac’d villages with war

And ostentation of despised arms? (2.3.90-95)

While conceding the fact that Richard continued this unwise activity despite his advice (“Laboured all I could to do him right”) (2.3.142) York makes clear his view that Bolingbroke and his supporters are traitors seeking to carve out their own way; in other words, they are pursuing an extralegal solution to the problem. Bolingbroke justifies his actions by claiming that he is essentially now a different person, declaring “as I was banish’d, I was banish’d Herford” (2.3.113). Richard violated the law, and this leaves no solution for Bolingbroke but to act treasonously and seek to reclaim the titles by force.

York understands all of these arguments well, and cannot be surprised that Bolingbroke is doing as he is. However, he does not abandon the principle of his position— he even goes so far as to say that, were it not for the fact that Bolingbroke has the support of the nobles, he would, in his role as the chief executive while Richard is away, execute all of them— but recognizes political reality. (The BBC's 2014 production establishes this in wonderfully simple, efficient fashion when David Suchet’s York immediately glances about, registering the strength of Bolingbrook's coalition) (*Richard II* 45:32) His exchanges with Bolingbroke and his supporters show that York deeply grasps the impossible nature of the situation he is in: wrestling with it in real time, he amends himself throughout the scene, eventually concluding that the reality of the situation leaves him no choice:

Well, well, I see the issue of these arms.

I cannot mend it, I must needs confess,
Because my power is weak and all ill left;
But if I could, by Him that gave me life,
I would attach you all, and make you stoop
Unto the sovereign mercy of the King; (2.3.151-156)

Where Bolingbroke's language is legal, York's is corporeal. He earlier refers to Bolingbroke's "legs" (2.3.90) touching "England's ground" (2.3.91), thus bringing out the common language understanding of these actions. It may be perfectly true in a legal sense that Bolingbroke's disinheritance eliminated Hereford, rendered Bolingbroke an "unperson" (French 343) and consequently allowed him to invade, metaphorically reborn as Lancaster; a plain language reading says that he was ordered by the head of the legal system to leave and not to return before seven years had passed, which they haven't. (Would Bolingbroke argue that his legs are no longer Hereford's, but now Lancaster's? What about his torso?) And whatever he calls himself is irrelevant, according to York's reasoning here, to the fact that Bolingbroke's presence in England is "frightening her pale-fac'd villages with war" (2.3.94). When he refers to "the issue of these arms" (2.3.151) he takes the concept that is central to Bolingbroke's argument — issue as a metaphor of inheritance— removes this abstract definition, and then replaces it with its plainer meaning as a result, a consequence. The issue of these arms, the literal result of Bolingbroke's assemblage of an army, is the exertion of power through violence. At a more fundamental level than his earlier speech, here York lays bare that which animates political power.

Given that York was the first to voice the argument against the disinheritor, it is obvious that he simultaneously understands Bolingbroke's legal point but is also aware of what common sense tells one; viz., that that legal argument is a bit absurd. Bolingbroke ends his defense by asking "what would you have me do?" York might ask the same question. If he could, he would stop Bolingbroke. The "issue" of the military strength Bolingbroke presents is what settles the matter—ultimately Bolingbroke has the physical force to "seek his name" and, as York understands even if Bolingbroke is not saying or thinking it, the force to usurp Richard. He will "remain as neuter" because the ability to physically coerce is possessed by Bolingbroke.

This scene alone, in my estimation, negates any argument that York is an opportunist who is merely doing all he can to remain close to power. I say this not because he states objections; an opportunist might mouth objections as a way of masking his nature, to make a show of becoming convinced by the argument of his future ally. He does more than voice objections, however. Even laying aside the danger he places himself and his family in (an odd thing for an opportunist to needlessly risk) the painstaking way in which he lays out the messy, dangerous crisis reaches its conclusion with a statement of neutrality that explicitly states as its rationale the fact that Bolingbroke has a lot of soldiers. These are not the actions of an opportunist.

Prior to the march to Flint Castle, York chastises Northumberland for calling Richard merely Richard and not King Richard; while at Flint he elaborates on Bolingbroke's divine king rhetoric about Richard, noting his eye "lightens forth/Controlling Majesty" (3.3.70-71) and then implicitly cautions Bolingbroke about taking further action, adding "Alack, alack for woe/That any harm should stain so fair a show (3.3.71-72) Here, again, York uses Bolingbroke's language to make a point about the gap between the latter's words and intentions, albeit in a different

fashion. Rather than attaching a new meaning to Bolingbroke's words, as he had previously, here he expresses a similar sentiment to Bolingbroke, but then concludes by articulating what he clearly sees as the proper action to follow such words. If, he seems to be saying to Bolingbroke, Richard is worthy of all this magisterial language you are using to describe him, if he is, as you say, "a blushing disconted sun," (2.3.64) then surely you would conclude that no harm should come to him? As he tried to steer Richard away from abnormal political behavior, he is doing the same here with Bolingbroke.

York's presence in the march to Bristol Castle seems to allow him to lend implicit support to the rebellion without implicitly abandoning his neutral compromise; most importantly, it allows him not to explicitly "break our country's laws" (2.3.101) and therefore abandon the institutional principle to which he is ultimately loyal. It is not unreasonable to conclude here that York is contradicting himself, that he is waffling because he either does not know what to do and is struggling with the matter in real time, or that he is making a show of same as some sort of political strategy to remain in his power position regardless of what happens. Almost as if he is debating the problem in the legal environment and wishes to lay it out for the historical record, he is consciously creating a show of seemingly contradictory statements in order to set down in public what he views as the proper way to manage this situation, a bureaucratic guide about how to handle such a legal crisis that is almost mathematically balanced in its setting forth of divergent views. He does not soliloquize about the conflict that will ensue, but bloodlessly outlines the points of the debate:

YORK My lords of England, let me tell you this:

I have had feeling of my cousin's wrongs

And laboured all I could to do him right.
But in this kind¹⁴³ to come, in braving arms,
Be his own carver and cut out his way¹⁴⁴,
To find out right with wrongs, it may not be,
And you that do abet him in this kind
Cherish rebellion and are rebels all. (2.4.140-147)

The fact that York is not a political opportunist does not come to reflect well on his character, however. Like Falstaff will in the subsequent play, York shows us the perils that attend excess: he is so attached to the institution of the monarchy that he sets aside questions of familial loyalty in service to that institution, and subsequently is willing to arrange his own son's execution because the system deems it so. Because the play does not show otherwise, one can safely assume that York, despite his apparent suspicion that Aumerle may not be his biological son, does love him; we can infer that his excessive loyalty to this institution causes his own suffering, and the play shows us quite explicitly the agony that his wife the Duchess of York undergoes. York is an institutionalist who aims to maintain the social system despite the impact on individuals, even at great personal cost --he will shift political allegiances, risk his life, and sacrifice his own son in order to maintain the system.

Officially Institutional:
Humphrey Appleby in *Yes, Minister*

Paul Eddington once remarked that *Yes, Minister* at times “reached such depths of cynicism” that some of the scripts induced “vertigo” (Adams 71). I imagine that “The Whiskey Priest” was amongst those to bring about the condition. The episode’s conflict is set in motion when Hacker is privately informed by a whistleblowing Major that the English military is selling weapons to “Italian Red terrorist groups” (“Whiskey Priest”). Hacker approaches Humphrey the next morning, and attempts to introduce the subject by saying that he must talk to him about “something that concerns me deeply” (“Whiskey Priest”). Humphrey asks if he is “referring to the amendment to the administrative order on stock control and government establishments, or the procedures for the renewal of local authority leaseholds in special development areas” (“Whiskey Priest”). Hacker refutes this, and tells Humphrey that the matter is to do with “a great issue of life and death” (“Whiskey Priest”). Humphrey inquires if it should “wait till after work?” and is told that this matter of life and death “is work.” (“Whiskey Priest”). Humphrey, surprised, agrees to the discussion. Rather than relaying his conversation with the Lieut. to Humphrey, Hacker asks Humphrey about the arms selling process, eventually asking if there is any way of controlling “who the arms are really going to” (“Whiskey Priest”).

Humphrey insists that there is control because an “end-user certificate” must be produced by the dealer, therefore rendering it “officially impossible” for weapons to come into the possession of “non-approved hands.” (“Whiskey Priest”). When pressed as to whether officially impossible differs from impossible, Humphrey attempts to end the conversation. The fact that it is “officially impossible” is all that matters— whether the end-user certificate is effective is

irrelevant, what is important is that there is an official record. He then deflects all of Hacker's attempts get him to take a moral stand— stating that the issue is "not our problem" because their branch of government is not responsible for arms sales; that "only Italian lives, not British lives" are put at risk by the sale, that Hacker should not pursue the matter because doing so would violate the "two basic rules of government" because one should "never look into anything you don't have to" and, should it become necessary to assemble an investigation, one should always "know in advance what its findings will be"; that if it is, as Hacker insists, a matter "of good and evil," then it is therefore "a church of England problem"; that this is the inevitable consequence of selling weapons as "they will inevitably end up with people who have the cash" to obtain the weapons; that government has nothing to do with morality, but rather stability, "keeping things going, preventing anarchy, stopping society falling to bits" ("Whiskey Priest").

Humphrey is offended when Hacker asks if a civil servant has ever quit "on a matter of principle" because his role in the government is to "carry out government policy" despite the fact that "almost all government policy is wrong" ("Whiskey Priest"). What matters to Humphrey is that that policy is "frightfully well carried out" ("Whiskey Priest").

For Hacker, the embrace of realpolitik does not require the moral vacuity he later ascribes to Humphrey. One can understand that politicians "have to swallow things we don't believe in sometimes, vote for things that we think are wrong" but also realize that "there has to be a sticking point somewhere" ("Whiskey Priest"). Hacker may not have a pure allegiance to moral principles, but he is also not reflexively allied to the institution of government regardless of its actions. If this exchange shows Hacker in his best light, it spotlights the negative consequence of Humphrey's institutionalism. At its most basic level, the two face a problem that is similar to the

Duke of York's: the institution they are a part of is not functioning how it should. If the monarchy depicted in *Richard II* were operating as intended, Richard would respect the hereditary rules that allow it to run, and Bolingbroke would not invade England. Even if York were able to stop Bolingbroke, he would still be representing a government that does not follow its own rules. Once Richard disinherits Bolingbroke and the latter rebels, York has no choice but to support a government that is breaking the hierarchical foundation upon which it rests, regardless of where he places his allegiance.

When we see the Major inform Hacker of the fact that the military is not following its own system through which nuclear weapons are managed, we are learning, as we do in the early goings of *Richard II*, that there is a break down of the state mechanisms that are, at least in theory, meant to limit violence. Violence is going to exist regardless, the logic of both the legal trial and the user ID certificate goes, so it must be regulated in some way. Feuds will occur, so it is best to manage them through a system that, via the ceremony and regulations of the trial by combat, lets it occur without spontaneous street violence. Nuclear weapons exist, so the system of arms sales is set up so that the government can manage where the weapons go and chaotic violence on a nuclear scale will not occur.

Here is where the the problem facing *Yes Minister's* version of York diverges: supporting the Major in his quest to stop the arms sales does not simultaneously undermine the system it is set up to run. The Major's critique is analogous to York's critique of both Richard and Bolingbroke: this is not how the system is designed to operate. Even if it were moral to sell arms to terrorists, even if one accepts the Chief Whip's Andrew Undershaft-echoing argument on Humphrey's side in a subsequent scene—that it is immoral to stop the sale because it would

damage the livelihood of the workers who make the weapons—Humphrey’s option is to support the intended mechanics of the institution he supposedly values or back a dysfunctional process that goes against the process the institution has assembled. From a purely bureaucratic perspective—that is to say, from the point of view of one who wants to perpetuate the institution as it is designed, regardless of any moral or philosophical considerations—the question of which course to take is obvious.

As discussed, one can interpret York as a proto-bureaucrat because he does not articulate a philosophical rationale for his support of the institution, despite the high personal cost doing so nearly incurs, both for himself and his family. Humphrey, fittingly for the sitcom form generally and for *Yes Minister* specifically (particularly given the literal caricature sequence at the opening of each episode), is a caricature of York the proto-bureaucrat. Even though doing so clearly presents a danger to the functioning of the institution as it is designed, Humphrey opposes taking action to reform the system because doing so could lead to questions about how the system currently operates, perverse as it may be.

Humphrey is a vision of what might be, an imagining of a bureaucrat like York if the latter’s desire for the institution to function as it was built becomes a need for the institution to perpetuate itself in whatever form it takes, regardless of whether or not it is functioning according to its design.

One may reason that York implicitly makes a Hobbesian, stability-based argument for supporting Bolingbroke when he makes the “issue of these arms” argument analyzed above (2.3.151). He will “remain as neuter” (2.3.159) and eventually join Bolingbroke in order to keep the peace, in order to maintain societal stability. The vision of the English government that *Yes*

Minister presents, then, is one in which this finely balanced bureaucratic ballet has gotten clumsy. Where York makes an implicit argument for Hobbesian political action through analysis of current political circumstances, (Bolingbroke clearly has a large army and could launch a Civil War, so supporting him will reduce the chance of that happening) Humphrey explicitly appeals to Hobbesian reasoning to support his resistance to taking action, but provides no evidence – explicit or implicit – that refusing to aid the Major would "stop society falling to bits" ("Whiskey Priest"). It appears that it would only disrupt the way in which the system currently works: as a mockery of itself, a pantomime in which it is unsurprising when "officially impossible" acts occur ("Whiskey Priest").

Humphrey's other argument is that the legal trade of nuclear weapons may only hurt Italian lives. This implies that there are circumstances in which questioning the system might be valid – if it harms anyone he knows. Morally repugnant as York's later decision to argue for his son's execution for plotting against the crown is, we can see by contrast with Humphrey that a commitment to the system that is free of any personal considerations is not one in which the rule applies only so long as it does not impact you. Were York to take Humphrey's approach, Aumerle's life would not have been put in jeopardy, but only because of his personal connection to the most inner circle of the king's court.

In "The Whiskey Priest" we see in him modified qualities of York; the Humphrey of "Equal Opportunities" acts a bit like Richard III. As an opportunist, Richard appeals to the chauvinism of the male elite in order to climb the Plantagenet period's metaphorical greasy pole. As a perverted institutionalist, Humphrey uses gender norms to his advantage, but to a different end. Where Richard is active, Humphrey is reactive: he does not inject gender politics into the

rhetorical battle like Richard does, but is forced to respond when Hacker, mulling Annie's suggestion that he raise the number of women in government, realizes that this would be a principled (and therefore vote-winning) stand to take and informs Humphrey that he will be seeking to increase the number of female undersecretaries, beginning with the promotion of Sarah Harris, a current Undersecretary, to Secretary. Humphrey's institutionalism in this case finds him flat footed: it has never occurred to him that there might be an effort to change the patriarchal status quo, so he merely stammers and offers sexist platitudes upon first hearing Hacker's intentions. Once given the time to plot out a response with his mentor Arnold, Humphrey undertakes this modified version of Richard's strategy by praising Sarah's appearance in the presence of Annie, hoping that this will make the latter jealous and prompt her to dissuade Hacker from proceeding. Whereas Richard rises to power in part by very publicly building an evil mythology around Elizabeth, Humphrey seeks to provoke gendered behavior in order to maintain gender disparity in the civil service.

Building on the work of a theatrical ancestor in York, Humphrey makes explicit what York's shifting allegiances bely—an unwavering loyalty not to an individual, but an institution; a loyalty so strong that all interests outside of the institution are cast aside. Sir Humphrey's version of this, however, is perverted by not only a lack of moral concern, but, regardless of those moral elements of governance, a lack of commitment to how the institution of the English government is technically designed to operate. This unprincipled stand is reflected within the framework I have applied to these characters: he possesses altered qualities of an institutionalist, but resembles an opportunist in his willingness to shift arguments (as he does in “The Whiskey

Priest,") and appeal to gender norms to accomplish his goal (as he does in "Equal Opportunities").

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Artistic Statement

The goal of this project is to loosely adapt *Richard III* into an engaging, intelligent piece of theatre that highlights one of the major themes of the original text: the treatment of the Other by mainstream society. This task presents various problems. When teaching adaptation to dramatic literature students, I stressed that adaptors focus on or enhance certain aspects of the original text (a certain character, a theme, the setting, etc.) while de-emphasizing, adjusting, or eliminating other aspects. Elia Kazan's adaptation of John Steinbeck's *East of Eden*, for example, focuses on only the second half of the book, with particular emphasis (camera time, dialogue) placed on the biblical father/son/brother/brother relationships within the family. Kazan's adaptation alters the plot, and this decision leads to a focus on a theme. Regardless of what came first--the page cuts or the thematic focus--each is dependent on the other. Had Kazan first focused on the theme he wanted he would have subsequently cut the book down; had he first cut the book down he would have subsequently focused on the desired theme.

As noted, I have chosen to highlight the Otherness of Richard that he points out ("Dogs bark at me as I halt by them") and that other characters, most significantly his mother, The Duchess of York, berate him for ("thou camest on earth to make the earth my hell") (Shakespeare 1.1.4-4.1.7). I also wanted to highlight Richard's jealousy of, and resentment towards his brothers ("But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks, Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass") (1.1.6). At the same time, I wanted to alter these elements to suit the story I am telling. As such, Ricarda does not have a physical disability but, rather, a mental one.

While the text does not explicitly define what that disability is, I was inspired by autism. I thought about the current focus on autism within our news media (which, when done right, I think is a good thing) and the subsequent conversation around it in our society (which, in my

experience, is done wrong), the treatment of autism in schools (I have taught various students with autism, with a fair amount of success), and the psychological impact this can have on people with autism. More specifically, I drew inspiration from a former autistic student of mine at Beacon High School, a therapeutic special education school in Watertown, Massachusetts. Or, even more specifically, the state of mind that this former student of mine could get into when frustrated by teachers like me and therapists. At these times this student grew exceptionally angry and would rage against our attempts to normalize her (I learned the term “neurotypical” while on the receiving end of one of these outbursts).

While I was a willing participant in this “normalizing” endeavor (we would, for example, attempt to “coach” her in appropriate social interactions) and feel that Beacon had a positive impact on her, I could not help but see how frustrating it must be to be a subject--sitting in Individual Education Plan meetings where people talk about you while you are sitting right in front of them, listening to journalists on tv and people in coffee shops discuss (often demonstrably inaccurately, as evidenced by the claims that autism is linked to vaccines) the causes of, and cures for your disability--it must be maddening! What better way to translate this for the stage than to depict a person with a disability and royal heir who seeks the throne so that she no longer has to be a *subject*?

This does not, however, mean that I consciously thought about these problems. With no eye towards its long term future, I just started writing the opening monologue one night when I could not sleep. This opening monologue was originally spoken by my Richard, just as the opening soliloquy of *Richard III* is spoken by The Duke of Gloucester, later Richard III. Over time I realized that, excepting a vague reference to the character’s back pain, I had not yet dealt with Richard’s hunch back--this is such an important part of Shakespeare’s character that it

seemed to me that I wasn't really adapting *Richard III* until I solved that problem. The journey from that realization to the solution outlined above is a bit hazy, but ultimately I decided that the Richard I had--smooth, smiling, urbane--was closer to Buckingham, Richard's smooth, smiling, and urbane coconspirator who, as pointed out by Simon Russell Beale (who played Richard for the RSC) is the one who thinks up the brilliant religious act Richard puts on while pretending not to want the throne. I always liked this interpretation of Buckingham (and sly machiavels generally) and so decided that that opening monologue would be spoken by Buckingham. Buckingham and Richard, then, sort of split the duties of the Richard role: Buckingham charms the audience and the other characters while Ricarda grapples with not being shaped for sportive tricks, which in this play is not lascivious acts but rather general, not always sexual, seduction.

Thus, I began to resolve two aspects of the problem--which characters (or, more specifically in this case, which characteristics) to focus on and what my thematic focus was going to be. Some of the cuts I made as a matter of course; productions often cut the various smaller characters in *Richard III*, as well as some of the scenes. While this does not mean that these decisions are always uncontroversial-- over the years, many productions have cut down the female parts (in other words the characters who see Richard's totalitarian impulses for what they are) in order to focus on Richard-- there is nevertheless an established convention. It seemed like common sense to me to cut down the number of characters, for example, so there were certain characters (e.g. Lord Rivers) whom I cut from the get-go. It also seems like common sense to me to try to keep the number of characters to a minimum while still being able to tell the story.

In the original play, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, seeing that King Edward is sick and soon to die, takes various steps to acquire the throne. Realizing that both the king's sons and his brother Clarence are in line to the throne before him, he proceeds to kill Clarence and discredit

the legitimacy of the princes, whom he later kills once he becomes king. Unlike some of the minor characters, I did not decide to cut Clarence and the princes from the start. Rather, I decided to cut Clarence after working on his first scene and getting nowhere and decided to cut the princes when there was no longer room in the plot for them.

Despite having cut Clarence, I knew that the King would have to die, and so decided that that murder would be of the King. I first, however, had to decide on the character of the King. I had long admired an adaptation of sorts that, rumor has it, George R.R. Martin includes in *A Game of Thrones*, the first book of his Song of Ice and Fire series. King Robert Baratheon, ruler of Martin's sprawling, fantastic seven kingdoms, is allegedly modeled on Falstaff, Shakespeare's famous fat knight. Thus, George RR Martin created a Falstaff with unlimited access to sac and whores. At the same time, Robert could not be strictly modeled on Falstaff because the question of how Falstaff-- he who avoids battle and calls the honorable "he who died a Wednesday"-- would usurp a crown in the first place would certainly arise (Shakespeare 4.1.5). Therefore, Martin made this characteristic one that, while present in Robert Baratheon from the outset, is one that becomes more prominent once his accession to the throne grants him greater access to the aforesaid vices. While this characteristic is so prominent that it ultimately undoes him, George RR Martin establishes that, in addition to his former prowess as a warrior and thus usurper, Robert is still capable of employing realpolitik, a trait that is made apparent at various moments but most notable when he decides to assassinate an adolescent potential usurper a continent away.

Feeling that King Edward in *Richard III* is a boring character and, as stated, having admiration for what George RR Martin (allegedly) did with Robert Baratheon, I decided to model my king after Falstaff as well. I was, however, presented with a similar problem--how

would I demonstrate his prowess as a king? While there is not much of a focus on war, I decided that war in the world of my play is more in line with that of a modern state; i.e., the leaders themselves do not go into battle, as is the case with the worlds portrayed in Shakespeare and Martin and the history that inspired them. Therefore, I decided that, instead of making my Falstaff in a former warrior, I would portray him as a drinking and whoring king who, despite all that, possesses considerable political skill. I modeled the premise of the scene after that of Falstaff's first scene in *Henry IV*. We first meet Falstaff while he is lying on a bed in a London apartment of Hal's, half awake and hung over and inquiring about the time of the day. Hal proceeds to mock him for this question, asking him "what a devil" he "hast to do with the time of the day" when his only activities involve eating capons and sleeping with prostitutes (1.2.4). Falstaff, the ultimate spin doctor, then twists this back on itself by implicitly addressing Hal's critique, urging Hal, when he becomes king, to alter society's perception of late sleepers from that of "thieves of the day's beauty" to "squires of the night's body," elaborating upon this with the gusto of an advertising executive thinking up clever cologne titles: "let us be Diana's foresters, gentlemen of the shade, minions of the moon" (1.2.6-8).

My scene, likewise, begins in matching fashion--King Edward, half awake and hung over, asks Buckingham if it is past nine o'clock. Buckingham proceeds to mock Edward for this question, asking him why he is asking if it is nine o'clock when his true concerns regarding that number only relate to nine "bottles of liquor," nine "thousand dollars dissolutely spent" and other vices. Like Falstaff, Edward effortlessly reframes this by saying that yes, of course he is only concerned with these things and, in a manner that is intended to echo his speaking pattern in a political context, asserts that Buckingham is indeed correct and that he is, of course, only concerned with nine of anything if "nine hundred grain distributors are unable to eat three square

meals despite laboring for nine hours daily” or “nine thousand brewers of hops are unable to purchase the materials necessary to accomplish their admirable task.” Thus, the scene establishes the two characteristics I was trying to show--Edward is a vice-ridden, but capable politician.

The scene also establishes important context for the relationship between Edward, Buckingham, and Ricarda. By casting Buckingham as the Prince Hal to Edward’s Falstaff, the scene establishes an important conflict of the play--Buckingham is Edward’s adopted child even though he already has a child in Ricarda. Like Richard, Ricarda has a resentment of the only parental figure present in the play, and is jealous of the affections given to her (in her case unofficial) sibling.

I decided early on to cut out the ~~character~~ Tudor propaganda device Richmond (who exemplifies the scholar Emma Smith’s idea that the fact that a character is alive at the end of a Shakespearian tragedy is a symbol of his irrelevance) and make Buckingham my usurper. I also decided to alter the method of usurpation. Rather than having Richmond usurp the crown via a traditional battle, I decided to have Buckingham usurp the crown via a rhetorical coup. I am currently still working on the aftermath, but I have written a scene that mimics the post assassination scene in *Julius Caesar* that portrays Antony using his superior rhetorical skills to turn the people against Brutus. While I had always loved this scene and wanted to somehow work an adaptation of it into my play, I did not sense the opportunity until after having Ricarda murder Edward. This set up a chance to have Buckingham, still shaken by the murder of his adoptive father, playing that up and meekly asking Ricarda if they can hold a joint press conference. This then gives him the opportunity to spill the beans and, framed as a confession that he did nothing to stop her, reveal that Ricarda murdered the king. This then causes Ricarda to give up all pretense and let loose on the journalists and society at large, parodying the style of

various conversations (presumably that she overheard or saw on television) about her “condition.” This has opened up perhaps the goal that has the potential for the greatest payoff--to make Ricarda, despite her likeness to *Richard III*, ultimately a *Richard II*-like figure in her ability to elicit radically different audience responses from the beginning of the play to its end. Just as one might transition from detesting the King Richard who calls a dying Gaunt a “lunatic lean-witted fool” to sympathizing with the deposed Richard who drinks his griefs whilst Bullingbrook mounts up on high, I want the audience to detest Ricarda at the moment she utters her aforementioned opening line, but sympathize with her by the play’s end. This will be accomplished when, as referenced above, she is publicly questioned about murdering the king, and, like Richard and his inversion of the deposition, turns what should be an interrogation of her into a chastisement of the in-universe society for their perverse fears and fascinations regarding her.

This is all I have of the play so far. The major upcoming problem I have is the ending. I have long imagined the play to end with Buckingham on the throne, but thus far I am not sure of how to get to that point. One thought I have had is to adapt more from Julius Caesar by displaying crowd scenes that show how Buckingham has gained the support of the masses. This could then lead to an ouster of the queen when continued violence and protests force it to happen. The other solution would be to have a parliament step in and remove her from office. The third option would be combine these two--the parliament ousts Ricarda and, due to public pressure, puts Buckingham in her place.

Objectives

While I broadly stated the objective to be to create an intelligent, engaging play, more specifically I want to write a play that, before any performance takes place, the actors are excited

to perform. I want, for example, for the actor playing Ricarda to relish the opportunity to chill the audience with her opening line (“how would you like it if men with knives followed your children home from school?”), chew up the scenery with schadenfreude after embarrassing Buckingham (“Buckingham. Did. Not. Speak. Words”) and , ultimately, win the audience's sympathy with her unhinged, schizophrenic mockery of all the parties who've wronged her. My hope is that, if the actors are engaged, the audience will be as well. I also want to create a unique portrayal of a person with a learning disability, and to, at least for the audiences who see the play, change some of the associations with learning disabilities.

There is a podcast called Autastic which stars two comedians with autism in their lives. The first, Kirk Smith, has a son with a autism, while the second, Graham Kaye, has a brother with Autism. While the subjects vary from week to week, there are some overarching beliefs that influence the show, one of which is that media about autism is often maudlin and depressing. The stated aim of the podcast, therefore, is to talk about autism in a way that, while realistic, is neither maudlin nor depressing. The comedian Ron Funches was once a guest on the program, for example, and talked about a stand up bit that addresses his view that his autistic son is “a huge asshole” on account of that, of the thirty words his son possesses, his three favorite are “more, pancakes” and “biatch” (Kaye). My play is not necessarily not depressing, but I think it shares some of the DNA of Autastic in that it aims to present a learning disabled person not as a figure of sympathy or derision but as real person, one who responds to difficult circumstances in ways that, while abhorrent, are nonetheless human.

I also relish presenting a person with learning disabilities who is not stupid, whose intelligence (as was the case with Deb, the student who inspired Ricarda) can frighten others. Making the other characters (and, hopefully, the audience) feel the way that I did when

encountering such serious, often rabid smarts is far more effective than the endless instances in which I have told people how, despite the fact that it was a “Special Education” school, my former students are really smart. I cannot stand the way in which learning disabilities are often spoken of in everyday conversation (and, like Ricarda, the way in which I suspect they are thought about) amongst the general public. This view is typified by an interaction described by David Sedaris (whom I normally adore) in his essay “Author, Author.” In it, he converses with a Special Ed teacher who, on account of the fact that the student spelled the word correctly, was impressed when a student wrote on the blackboard that she is a “cockmaster” (Sedaris 144). The reason I say that this typifies the view of learning disabled students in our society is not because the teacher reflects this view--she works with them every day and is entitled to make a joke--but that that is the end of that conversation. The only impression one is left with about this population is confirmation that they are of a lower intelligence than the rest of us.

I have been using various methods to complete this play. This is made evident to me by the range of programs I must access whenever I need to reach certain material, e.g., a chart I made in Apple’s “Pages” program to break down the ways in which Falstaff, at various points in Henry IV, demonstrates his skill as a spin doctor. The studying methods also include less conventional ones, such as talking into the voice recorder app on my phone while driving (the voice recorder app is, of course, turned on before I start driving) and more typical “tortured artist” methods such as random notes scribbled on an envelope. One method that I found particularly helpful drew (as did the graphic organizer and voice memos) on my experience teaching students with different learning styles--at various points in the process I have used a cork board and colored paper to first visualize the plot of *Richard III*, then the plot of my script coupled with *Richard III*, and, now, just the plot of my script. Another method has been born out

of necessity--because of a condition I have that can make typing painful, I often use the “Dragon Anywhere” app on my ipad and iphone, which allows me to speak instead of typing. I have also at times (when no one else is home and the shades are drawn) performed a few scenes.

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HE CANNOT LIVE

A play in one act

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ACT I

SCENE 1

(With the house lights remaining lit, lights up on the living room of a well-appointed, expensive apartment. Evening. An announcement is made that, due to a technical difficulty, the play will begin in five minutes. Five minutes passes. Buckingham enters from the back of house.)

BUCKINGHAM

So we don't have a lot of time there are some people coming

(to the presumed location of the lighting technician)

hey Catesby could you bring down the house lights?

(The house lights go down.)

A little more light up here?

(Stage lights increase intensity.)

That's great, thank you.

(to the audience)

As I was saying we're a bit short on time...they'll be here soon...

(half to himself, looking at his watch)

...we should've started earlier come to think of it...

(to the audience)

...anyway when they do get here they'll be talking about some things I've done that, taken out of context, seem...

(Thinks for a moment, then refocuses on audience.)

...before they knock the door down--they're those kinds of people--I wanna go over a couple of important facts. Firstly, now is the winter of our discontent...that is the first fact you should know.

(Thinks.)

Scratch that. Now IS the winter of our discontent but that's not the first fact you should know. OK so there was this war...wait. Scratch that too. Let's take it from the top. There was this king. His name was Henry Lancaster...of the Lancaster family. Now he...

(Thinks.)

hold on a second...

(rolling out a dry erase board, talking to himself)

...this was a smart purchase...

(refocusing on audience, holding up a visual aid to represent "Henry" and placing it on board as he speaks. See notes below for a full list of Buckingham's visual aides.)

So Henry was king of..

(gesturing vaguely to the board)

...the realm...

(reassesses and posts "backstabbing" symbol on the board)

Think Richard III/Game of Thrones/The Life of Rabid Hyenas with David Attenborough... that kind of situation.

(Buckingham's phone starts to ring. It does so intermittently throughout the scene, but the calls are, until indicated otherwise, declined.)

So he's on his throne being relatively kingly...ok scratch that— he wasn't being relatively kingly. Now I don't want to speak ill of the dead--he died of very natural

causes which I'll explain in a second but he...ok he didn't die of very natural causes. He died of *highly unnatural* causes. So I don't want to speak ill of the dead due to highly unnatural causes but he...ok it's true that he died of highly unnatural causes, but that's not very specific and I want to be clear with you guys. I do not want to mislead or hoodwink or ob...something or other...obf...obfuscate! I do not want to obfuscate...I am not the...

(thinking through the word)

...obfuscatory...type. I can't speak for other people you might meet tonight—I'm not going to name names, but there are some people who might really, really obfuscate...you. A lot. Anyway, Henry was assassinated. So I don't want to speak ill of the dead due to assassination but he...ok last revision I swear—I just...I feel like we're getting to know each other and I wanna be up front with you guys. Henry was poisoned.

(Places "poison" visual on board.)

Slowly and painfully. And the poison—which was organic, by the way, so I wasn't completely lying when I said that he died of natural causes—the poison caused a lot of gas, and Henry...

(Pause. sadly)

Henry farted to death. So anyway I don't want to speak ill of the dead due to poison that also caused pain and farts but he was totally not kingly...frankly, he was barely even princely...that's not true. He wasn't ever princely...he was...on a good day, and I mean a GOOD day like a REALLY good day, he was...Earl...ly.

(to himself)

Or even piss-boily, honestly... so anyway the Yorks and their

(proudly straightening his tie)

important supporters, we decided that Henry was not sufficiently kingly, and so we started a minor war to replace him with Edward, Duke of York.

(cheerfully)

Eventually we won, Henry was poisoned in the manner previously described and Edward is now king. And he is a good king. He certainly has a fault...

(he mimics drinking, thinks)

...or two...

(he mimics cocaine use,)

...or three...

(he mimics sex)

But he's totally kingly. So all of that discontent—the war, the gassy, unkingly king, all of that—has passed, so to speak. It is dead. Now is the winter of our discontent.

(Pause.)

Supposedly. I mean that's what everybody says but like

(sitting down, speaking intimately)

I don't know guys sometimes I think...

(The apartment buzzer starts to buzz and does so intermittently until the door begins being knocked upon.)

Sometimes I think it's not for me. Sometimes...

(He pauses to collect himself.)

...sometimes I think, I don't wanna spend my life

(wistfully, clearly sad that he is no longer doing these things)

not spreading rumors about my enemies and not pitting said enemies against other enemies and not organically poisoning those enemies I was just talking about...sometimes I wish...ok this cannot leave this room but sometimes...

(He exhales)

...sometimes I wish the war were still going on.

(He exhales largely.)

Wow. I can't tell you how good it feels to get that off my chest.

(Going back to the board.)

So where were we? Oh—I have a friend, her name is Ricarda and she is in direct line to the throne. And she...look she probably wouldn't be a great queen...

(thinking)

she'd most likely be a pretty bad queen...to tell you the truth she'd definitely be a really, really bad qu...ok so you know how Caligula made a horse his like right hand horse or whatever? Making Ricarda queen would be like making a horse that was part cobra and part honey badger and like 25% one of those fish that you can't put in the bowl with the other fish because it will just fuck the other fish up to death...it would be like making that horse slash honey badger slash whatever that fuckin crazy fish is called your queen.

(Thinks.)

Which is why the fact that I'm trying to make her the queen might not make *total* sense. Or any sense. To *you*. You might be confused. Like, wait a minute this dude just said

(going back to the board)

Ricarda is like a sloth-scorpion or whatever why would he want her in charge of the whole friggin realm?" That is a good question. I get it. But here's the thing about the friggin' realm.

(He sits down again, looks at his watch.)

We're kind of squeezed for time but I should definitely tell you...this is really important so make sure you put this in your brain box—

(The phone rings again at this moment. He picks up.)

I'm sorry I have to take this.

(to the phone)

Henry Stafford, 2nd Duke of Buckingham speaking...Anne Neville, Earl of Warick!!!
How ARE you and I mean REALLY how are you...

(to audience)

I am so sorry...

(back to phone)

...did I what? Is WHO here? They must have knocked on the wrong door because I haven't heard a pin drop but I'll...yep I'll...well I'm sorry you feel that way but I...who poisoned who to death? Wait. Scratch that. I think it's who poisoned WHOM to death...

(to himself)

...cuz the poisoner is the one acting on th—

(cut off by Anne, turning his attention to her)

—well, you're entitled to your opinion...I'll consider that proposition and then I'll get back to you...yep...OK thank you SO MUCH for calling talk to you...talk to you soon...

(refocuses on the audience)

we're gonna have to wrap up early so I'll just go over the take aways one more time—

(numbering on his fingers, periodically gesturing and/or adding events to the board)

Henry was king he farted and died...Edward is king now ...Ricarda and I...wait a minute I didn't even tell you who I am, did I? It's because I feel like we already know each other. You know how sometimes you meet someone or ____

(Buckingham lists a very ballpark figure of however many people are in attendance)

someones and you really... anyway I'm Henry—

(going back to the board)

not the flatulent King, the friendly Duke—and as mentioned, Ricarda and I have a plot to remove Edward from the throne—not murder, just remove...I don't have time to explain that right now, but the point is we plan on removing him.

(He starts to open the door before turning back)

Again, though, it's super important that you keep this between us... we don't really want

(He gestures off stage)

them to know about all these secrets of ours because some of said them are real peace and harmony types...I promise I'll fill you in on the rest later...I just...

(He refers to the door)

ya know...

(He starts to go to the door before turning back to put the board away. He opens the door. Andrew and Anne enter.)

NOTES

1. "...” indicates that the thought is trailing off and/or he is cutting himself off with a new thought.
2. Buckingham should use his dry erase board each time he introduces a new character and/or event. While I do not have instructions that must be followed by the director unless said director wishes to face legal action, I imagine the characters being introduced using laminated pages featuring a representation (a caricature, an illustration) of each so that they can be moved around (e.g., when Buckingham talks about “removing” Edward) when necessary. I further imagine that these laminated pages are attached facedown to the board as rolls it out, but not yet placed on the board itself. These representations should include:
 - Ricarda
 - Buckingham
 - Backstabbing (concept)
 - Henry
 - Edward
3. Prior to answering the phone, Buckingham starts to reveal something about Ricarda to the audience. He does not address this again after the phone call. What he is about to tell the audience is up to the actor playing Buckingham and the rest of the artistic team. If the production has decided that your Buckingham is plotting against Ricarda from the

start, he is about to reveal this. If, however, the production has decided that he has no intention to plot against Ricarda at this point, he is about to tell the audience something else about her (e.g., her unlikeable personality) that accomplishes a different end (e.g., setting up a contrast that highlights his easy personality and garners more of the audience's affection) for a different reason (e.g., because he desires affection) that is not motivated by a plot to steal the crown for himself.

ACT I

SCENE 2

(Continues from scene one.)

ANNE

(wrathfully)

Diffused infection of a man.

(Buckingham goes to the fridge.)

BUCKINGHAM

Can I get you anything?

ANDREW

Slanderer of thy heavy mother's womb.

BUCKINGHAM

Let's see--Yerba Mate for Anne, don't think I forgot...

(Buckingham goes to the fridge.)

ANNE

Fouler than heart can think thee.

BUCKINGHAM

And Matcha for my friend Andrew...

ANDREW

Minister of hell.

BUCKINGHAM

I might be out of s...actually...no...no I've got...

ANNE

Dried neat's-tongue!

BUCKINGHAM

...Soy AND almond milk...

ANDREW

Bull's-pizzle!

BUCKINGHAM

The soy's sweetened is that...

(he gestures as if to say "ok?")

ANNE

Gamesome musher!

BUCKINGHAM

I'll use the almond milk.

ANNE

Dog!

BUCKINGHAM

Actually, I may have hemp mi....dog?

ANNE

Yes. Dog.

BUCKINGHAM

Just seems a little...underwhelming.

ANNE

Bunch-backed toad!

BUCKINGHAM

(thinking aloud)

Bunch-backed...

(to Anne)

...like a toad with a bunch of backs?

ANDREW

Bottled spider.

BUCKINGHAM

Spider, too? So like a spider, toad, dog man?

ANNE

Hell's black intelligencer!

BUCKINGHAM

(thinking aloud)

Or dog...toad...wait what was the first one again?

ANDREW

Foul devil.

ANNE

You tailor's-yard, you sheath, you bowcase; you vile--

BUCKINGHAM

(teacherly, quieting down the students)

Ok!

ANNE

(finishing previous word)

--standing tuck!

BUCKINGHAM

(teacherly, calming down the students)

Allright, let's...can we sit down and discuss this?

(Pause. Anne and Andrew eventually sit down.)

ANNE

(as she and Andrew sit down)

Beggarly knave...

(Pause.)

Let's call a spade a spade, or a...toad a toad...whichever. You're angry.

ANDREW

Angry!?!

ANNE

You killed my husband!

ANDREW

You murdered my father!

BUCKINGHAM

(Reflectively, half to himself)

Is there a difference between killing and murdering?

(Andrew knocks a lamp over.)

ANNE

Vile, *vile* hedgehog...

BUCKINGHAM

Perhaps we should all take a deep breath. Have you heard of mindfulness? It's really--

(Andrew removes a concealed gun. There is a knock at the door. Without waiting for anyone to answer, Ricarda enters. In deference to her position, all rise with murmurs of "your majesty." Owing to her lack of social graces and displeasure with the act of socializing, these murmurs reveal a reactive discomfort--they are uncomfortable because she is uncomfortable--on the part of Andrew and Anne. Excepting Buckingham and Edward, this discomfort in response to Ricarda's own social anxiety is typical of all of the characters in the play. This is not to say that Buckingham is never nervous around her, only that he is never nervous for that particular reason.)

BUCKINGHAM

(rising)

May I get you anything, my lordess?

ANDREW

(pointing the gun)

Sit down.

BUCKINGHAM

(to Ricarda, gesturing to Andrew)

I didn't have any soy milk, he—

ANNE

(pulling out a gun and pointing it at Ricarda)

You sit down too.

(Ricarda sits down.)

BUCKINGHAM

Ok, listen to me. There are reasons for my actions. Reasons I think you will understand if you just put that gun...not even away just aside for a moment...ok...now listen...regardless of who did what—I am not saying I did or did not do anything—regardless of all the circumstances, I am sorry about your father, OK? I am sorry that he is gone. On the other hand, he was kind of an ass.

(Andrew shoots past Buckingham. Cool and collected as he is, this does rattle him.)

What I was trying to say is, what I was trying to say—

RICARDA

(flatly, to Andrew.)

How would you like it if men with knives followed your children home from school?

(Long pause.)

BUCKINGHAM

There is a Whole Foods five minutes from here. I've definitely seen unsweetened soy milk there. I can run dow—

RICARDA

(to Andrew)

Answer the question.

(Pause.)

ANDREW

We apologize, Lord Buckingham. There has been a...a...

ANNE

A miscommunication. We are sorry to have disturbed you.

(Anne and Andrew exit. Lights out.)

ACT I

SCENE 3

(Buckingham's apartment, afternoon. Buckingham and Edward are lounging, smoking marijuana and drinking wine. A thought strikes Edward.)

EDWARD

Is it past nine?

(Edward takes a pill.)

BUCKINGHAM

Past nine what?

EDWARD

O'clock!

BUCKINGHAM

You want to know if it's past nine o'clock?

EDWARD

Yes, yes I do.

BUCKINGHAM

You, Edward Plantagenet, wish to know if, in accordance with that intangible yet paradoxically concrete concept which society has constructed in order to organize itself known as "the clock," it is past nine.

EDWARD

I'm beginning to regret having done so but yes, that is what I was asking.

BUCKINGHAM

"Is it past Nine?" He asks.

EDWARD

He does indeed.

BUCKINGHAM

Not "could you pass nine bottles of liquor in this direction so that I might drink them all with great rapidity" or "why, this oh-so-expansive belly of mine is well past nine inches, better start on a diet of sushi and (at the word "sushi," Edward makes an expression as if to say "ick!") spinach and parsley juice (Edward covers his mouth, pantomiming nausea at the thought) posthaste!" Not "what ever happened to that nine hundred dollars I so dissolutely spent in a matter of hours whilst visiting nine of our fair city's finest dens of vice for the playing of poker?" but, rather, is it past nine o'clock?

EDWARD

You imply that this is an odd question.

BUCKINGHAM

A rather direct way of putting it for so fine a politician, but yes, I imply that it is odd.

EDWARD

"Is it nine o'clock?" An odd inquiry for an individual with my particular proclivities to be asking. In support of this thesis, you have presented three supporting points. Given, firstly, my habit of drinking bottles several of the realm's finest and, secondly, my corpulent--or should I say

(As he says the word "corpulicious," he rubs his stomach and moves about in mock sexy fashion towards—and eventually up against—Buckingham.)

corpulicious--physique, and, thirdly, my fondness for Seven Card Stud should, taken together, illustrate the point that I, your King, have no business asking for the time of the day. In this you are correct in every particular. What concern have I, a man who

thinks only of booze, bread, and dice--what should this man, this politician whose mind is set squarely on material goods--as bread, booze and dice no doubt are--what does this man, this politician, this leader have to do with such abstract quantities as "9:00?" Are nine hundred grain distributors unable to eat three square meals despite laboring for nine hours daily? This I must know. Are nine thousand brewers of hops unable to purchase the materials necessary to accomplish their admirable task? Please, tell your king posthaste! Are nine percent of our country's casinos unable to turn a profit? Phone your political leader without delay! For your king, as you so rightly observe, is interested solely in the real and tangible and not the immaterial questions-- "is it nine o'clock?" What cares your king for nine o'clock?

BUCKINGHAM

It's 9:30 by the way.

EDWARD

WHAT?

(hurriedly grabbing his things.)

You kale-fed fart! Why didn't you say something?

BUCKINGHAM

What cares my king for 9 o'clock?

EDWARD

(on his way towards the door)

More than your sack

(He taps Buckingham's sack without stopping speaking.)

cares for tapping, I promise you that.

(Edward exits. Buckingham, naturally, rubs his sore sack. There is a knock at the door. [Ricarda enters.](#))

ACT I

SCENE 4

(Continued from Ricarda's entrance in scene 4.)

BUCKINGHAM

My future queen. To what to do I owe the pleasure?

RICARDA

Did you listen to it?

BUCKINGHAM

Listen to...

RICARDA

(Ricarda presses a button on Buckingham's television screen. It displays Edward, appearing on a news program.)

INTERVIEWER

On the 15th of January the Post reported that your administration had planted spies within the committee. Your critics are outraged by this, but are perhaps more critical of you for ignoring requests for comment. What would you like to say to those citizens viewing this program right now, your critics, and other concerned parties regarding this incident?

EDWARD

I say thank you.

INTERVIEWER

(Confused.)

You...thank...them—

EDWARD

No. I thank you.

INTERVIEWER

(Confused.)

You...thank...me....

EDWARD

I thank you for finally inquiring about this incident. I have been waiting for quite some time to discuss it, and frankly wondered why no one had raised the matter.

INTERVIEWER

You have been asked repeatedly...

EDWARD

I have been pestered unrelentingly about an event, a scandal, a controversy which happens to match the description of the *incident* you noted above...i.e., the matter involving the surveillance, by my staff, of a political rival...

INTERVIEWER

So you admit...

EDWARD

You inquired as to my response to this *incident*. I agree that it is indeed an *incident*, as is jaywalking or illegal parking, which is to say that it is of no consequence.

INTERVIEWER

The fact that your staff spied on a political opponent is of no consequence?

(Pause. Edward thinks.)

EDWARD

Well, I suppose when you put it like that, it does appear to be of some consequence....perhaps even of great consequence...

INTERVIEWER

So it is consequential.

EDWARD

From the vantage point of subjects accustomed to polarized politicians who have no interest in hearing the other side's point of view, yes it is consequential that their leader so respects his opponent's political analysis and so desires to gain a feel for that opponent's private, honest thinking on issues of great import to my subjects that he should seek to acquire that information.

(Ricarda turns off the television.)

BUCKINGHAM

No one's going to buy that.

RICARDA

Perhaps, not that that matters.

BUCKINGHAM

Of course it matters. He will lose credibility.

RICARDA

That does not matter either. The purpose of this plot of ours was not to impugn his credibility as an honest politician. He is not an honest politician and everybody knows it. Its purpose was to shake him, to put him in a situation from which his charm cannot extricate him. It failed.

BUCKINGHAM

From a certain point of view--

RICARDA

Our attempt to remove him via traditional methods failed. We will now have to pursue another means.

(Pause.)

BUCKINGHAM

You are correct.

(Suspicious, Ricarda studies him.)

Out with tradition. When you are queen, we will sweep away the old order. When you are queen...

RICARDA

He cannot live.

(Pause.)

When I am queen, men will do as they have resolved.

BUCKINGHAM

I didn't resolve to kill him.

RICARDA

We decided to get rid of him!

(Pause.)

Once we've done that, I will rise to the throne. I will then enhance your position. That is *what we decided*.

(While Buckingham is talking, Ricarda looks at her watch, then takes a pill.)

BUCKINGHAM

I've got it! We will get him to start talking about his interview. He, being the arrogant politician that he is, will brag about his manipulations. All the while we'll be recording what he says, and then we will release that to the public.

RICARDA

No. Apart from revealing our hand—

BUCKINGHAM

We'll...make sure someone else is in the room and then we can blame that person for the recording...

RICARDA

He will talk his way out of whatever problems result. We have to kill him.

BUCKINGHAM

What if we incapacitate him in some way... something that prevents him from being able to perform his duties... an injury, perhaps? We'll...we'll break various limbs, you can choose which—

RICARDA

No.

BUCKINGHAM

We'll give him a hideous scar!

RICARDA

No.

BUCKINGHAM

Blind him!

RICARDA

No.

(There is a knock at the door.)

RICARDA

That must be the murderers. Come in!

ACT 1

SCENE 5

(Enter Murderer One and Murderer Two.)

Buckingham, this is...

MURDERER ONE

Tyrell, my--

RICARDA

Oooh, That will be a hard one to remember. Do you mind if I call you Murderer One?

MURDERER ONE

No, your...your high and mighty.

RICARDA

Excellent. Buckingham, this is Murderer One.

BUCKINGHAM

(Awkwardly)

Nice...to meet you.

MURDERER ONE

Great to meet you. I'm a big fan.

RICARDA

(To Buckingham, teasingly.)

Ohhh, he's a fannnn. Looks like *someone* is quite popular with the unwashed masses.

(Wounded, Murderer One sniffs his armpit.)

RICARDA

And THIS is Murderer Two.

BUCKINGHAM

(Awkwardly)

Nice...to meet you.

MURDER TWO

The pleasure is mine, sir.

RICARDA

Well, take a seat!

(They sit. Ricarda sits across from them and pulls out a clipboard. Buckingham sits at the counter, thinking and observing. Pause.)

So. Murderer One. Why do you want to kill the king?

MURDERER ONE

Well, I... I've always been interested in killing kings...from... from a young age.

RICARDA

So there is nothing particular about this king that motivates you to murder him. You would be just as happy murdering the next king – or queen.

MURDERER ONE

No! I mean, no, your majestical lady, I mean--

RICARDA

(turning to Buckingham)

Buckingham. Do you have any questions?

BUCKINGHAM

No.

(Derisively.)

Your majestical lady.

RICARDA

No questions?

BUCKINGHAM

No questions.

RICARDA

No concerns?

BUCKINGHAM

No concerns.

RICARDA

Is something the matter, Buckingham? I'm getting a vibe here.

MURDERER TWO

Yeah, I'm getting a vibe too...

(Buckingham shoots Murderer Two a look.)

Sorry, your gracious, I--

RICARDA

There is no need to apologize. It is evident that his gracious is upset about something. Perhaps he doesn't think you can do the job.

(To Buckingham)

Perhaps he wishes to murder the king himself.

(Pause.)

So. Murderer Two. If you had to describe yourself in one word, what would that word be?

BUCKINGHAM

Forgive me, my lordess. There is a matter I must attend to.

(To the murderers, then to all.)

It was nice to meet you. Goodbye.

(Buckingham leaves. Pause.)

MURDERER TWO

Quirky.

RICARDA

What?

MURDERER TWO

That is the one word I would use to describe myself.

RICARDA

I don't care.

(To both)

You'll receive a message with your instructions shortly. Don't fuck it up.

(Black out.)

ACT I

SCENE 6

(King Edward's hotel room. King Edward is asleep on the bed. The murderers stand over him, whispering.)

MURDERER TWO

But you're murderer one!

MURDERER ONE

So?

MURDERER TWO

So you should murder first!

MURDERER ONE

(incredulous)

Murder first?

MURDERER TWO

Yeah! You murder him first!

MURDERER ONE

You can't murder someone twice!

MURDERER TWO

So?

MURDERER ONE

(impatiently)

So, therefore, no one can murder first.

MURDERER TWO

But you're murderer one!

MURDERER ONE

(losing temper)

That's because I'm better at murdering not because I--

MURDERER TWO

You? Better at murdering? Don't make me laugh. Ha Ha Ha.

EDWARD

(waking)

Who's there?

MURDERER ONE

First--

(Murderer Two punches Murderer One)

EDWARD

First what?

MURDERER ONE

First...admirer...

EDWARD

(obviously not buying it)

And what about you?

MURDERER TWO

Second---

EDWARD

You are here to kill me.

MURDERER ONE

Yes.

EDWARD

Those are your instructions? To kill me.

MURDERER TWO

(offended)

It's not that simple, you know! It takes a lot of work!

EDWARD

I was not intending to imply otherwise. As your king, I am aware of and appreciate the hard work undergone by my subjects. Work that must be gone about, I need not add, if our kingdom is to function properly. I raise the matter of your instructions only because they lack specificity and thus leave much room for artistic choice.

MURDERER ONE

What's that supposed to mean?

EDWARD

You are instructed to kill me, but your instructions do not specify the manner in which your necessarily morbid objective is to be carried out.

(Pause. Murderers struggle to comprehend.)

She did not say how you should kill me. After all, you don't want to kill a king in just any old manner. Sure, you could kill me with an unsubtle shot to the brain, but where is the creativity in that?

MURDERER TWO

(Trying, but failing, to be threatening)

How about a knife through that fat belly of yours?

EDWARD

Effective, surely, but lacking inspiration.

(as if giving advice to an old friend)

Murderers, this is your opportunity to leave your mark on the body of a king. What kind of mark shall that be?

MURDERER TWO

(Ghoulishly)

Strangulation!

MURDERER ONE

Quit stalling!

(Pause.)

EDWARD

If you wish to conduct this matter hastily and with a brazen carelessness which, frankly, borders on the heedless, I cannot stop you.

(Edward presents himself to them.)

Commence with the--

MURDERER ONE

Beating. We'll beat him to death.

EDWARD

BEATING?

MURDERER TWO

Yeah. Beating!

EDWARD

Fine. But know that I object strongly.

(shaking his head)

Beating...

MURDERER ONE

What's wrong with beating?

EDWARD

Nothing whatsoever. It is perfectly suitable.

MURDER ONE

But you said—

EDWARD

For amateurs. Perhaps a third or fourth murderer...

MURDERER ONE

(outrageously offended, rolling up his sleeves)

Third of fourth murderer?

EDWARD

(gesturing to MURDERER TWO)

He thinks so too, I can tell.

MURDERER TWO

It is a bit unprofessional—

MURDERER ONE

I have half a mind to hit you for saying that.

MURDERER TWO

That would be the amateur thing to do...

(They begin to brawl, and Edward begins to tiptoe out before backing out, hands over his head. Ricarda enters, knife in hand. Seeing this, Murderer One and Murderer Two cease their fighting and stand to attention.)

RICARDA

Get out.

(The murderers leave. Pause)

EDWARD

Does he know?

RICARDA

Yes.

(Lights down.)

ACT I

SCENE 7

(Edward's funeral. Buckingham is speaking at the podium.)

BUCKINGHAM

Thank you, Queen Ricarda, for those moving remarks. We mourn with you, but none of us mourn like you. We have only lost a king, not a father. Which is why it pains me so greatly to say, with all due respect to the new and rightful queen, that our king was not an extraordinary man of exceptional character. He was a flawed man of imperfect character. He was lascivious; he was selfish; he was reckless. He gambled; he whored; he drank. He was fat. Really, really fat. Corpulent. Round. Rotund. I stress this not to chastise our king for his frailties, but to acknowledge his humanity, for, like his bulk, he wore his imperfections as unashamedly as he wore his crown. He knew that he was imperfect as the rest of us and would not have insulted us by pretending otherwise. With all due respect to the new and rightful queen, we should not allow any amongst us, no matter how high, to pretend otherwise. He did not hide these imperfections because he knew that we have them too. He ruled us as one of us. His reign, like all of us, was imperfect. But it was also, like all of us, fundamentally good. Did he speak misleadingly? Yes. Did he expand our free expression? Yes. Did he drink too much? Yes. Did he increase access to addiction services? Yes. Did he mismanage his finances? Yes. Did he increase the average income of his people? Yes. Did he act, in fashions catalogued in this speech and elsewhere, in a self-defeating fashion? Yes. Did he aspire, at all times and in all places, to lift up his people? Yes.

(Pause.)

Which is why I regret killing him.

(Pause. The attendees are, of course, shocked.)

Well, not really. I did not put the knife in his heart. Not literally. But I sensed danger for my king. I sensed--just a feeling, nothing tangible, a tingle--that he was not long for this world, but I did nothing. With all due respect to our new and rightful queen, I sensed that she...

(sadly, reluctantly)

...I sensed that she is a heartless, calculating, and cold-blooded homicide who presents a danger to the realm not seen in centuries. With all due respect to our new and rightful queen, the fact is that our people have reason to shiver in their beds and feel a chill in their bones at the very thought that such a serpentine machiavel should sit on the supreme seat of this sceptered isle. We live in a free and open society. As such, you may wish to ask your new and rightful queen certain questions.

(Turns to Ricarda.)

With all due respect, my new and rightful queen—

(Turns to attendees.)

—you might ask this--

(Turns to Ricarda.)

—to whom are you kind but those who seek to further your treacherous ends?

(Turns to attendees.)

You might ask this; you might also ask—

(Begins to turn to Ricarda, then turns again to attendees.)

—with all due respect to your new and rightful queen, of course—

(Turns to Ricarda.)

—to what land are you reverent but to that which surrounds your throne? You might ask this. You might also ask--

(Turns to Ricarda for a moment, then turns to attendees.)

—respectfully, for your new and rightful queen deserves your respect--

(Turns to Ricarda.)

—to what God are you beholden but to he who once toward Eve addressed his slithering way?

(Turns to attendees.)

You might ask this. But again, we live in a free and open society--it is not for me to dictate what you should ask of your new and rightful queen. I will leave that to you.