

My Own Private *Henriad*:

Looking Back to Now Through Shakespeare's Second Tetralogy

by

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To Annemarie

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Abstract

The story of Shakespeare's so-called "second tetralogy" exists at the conjunctions of event, chronicle, and drama; of page, stage, and screen; of comedy, tragedy, and history; and of Shakespeare, adaptor, and audience member. While "Shakespeare's version"—itself a contentious phrase—is the perhaps the default referent for talking about the *Henriad*, the story has in part spiraled away from Shakespeare's gravitational force, finding new meanings and forms in a variety of alternate "material histories" which continually remake the story by mapping it onto contemporary political, artistic, and personal narratives. With such a wide variety of adaptations from which to choose, there is perhaps no singular, representative *Henriad* apart from the history of the histories that a critic individually constructs. Folios, quartos, chronicles, criticism, film, film scripts, theater, programs, lectures, writing, memory, and so on are all the heterogeneous stuff that a student of history can sift through, classify, and turn into narrative, and the resulting story is particular to his or her choices. This is my own private *Henriad*, a phrase which encompasses not only the way in which I have tried to construct a thesis narrative from a web of material histories, but also the way in which I have mapped the story of the *Henriad* onto my own, discovering that Hal's transformation into Henry V over the course of the second tetralogy speaks to my personal narrative.

As a prologue, I elaborate on the personal resonances of the story, also considering more generally how a student might go about trying to acquire a historical sense. I arrive at a model for talking about the *Henriad* as a multivocal, interrelated web of stories by adapting and rewording Ric Knowles's tripartite model for thinking about theater—the overlapping conditions of production, the raw theatrical event, and the conditions of reception—to film and other media in which the histories are adapted.

My first chapter focuses on production—or what I term "making history"—in which I examine what personal, artistic, and political motivations travel into an adaptation of the *Henriad*—whether filmic, theatrical, or written versions of the story—exploring the issues of intentionality, authenticity, and authority of directors and writers, as well as the expectations that audiences and readers hold for a "Shakespearean experience."

In the second chapter, I write about the live theatrical event—or "watching history"—traveling through the landscape of the *Henriad* on film, explaining how Laurence Olivier's, Kenneth Branagh's, and Orson Welles's narrative rearrangements and plot choices ally their films with "royal" or "tavern" readings of the *Henriad*.

In the third chapter, I focus on reception—the process of "talking back to history"—and how audiences receive particular adaptations of the *Henriad*, and I identify language as a central criterion in determining how audiences imagine an authentic, truly "Shakespearean" adaptation of the *Henriad*.

As an epilogue, I relate my first-hand experience of the Royal Shakespeare Company's performances of the second tetralogy as I travel to England at the end of this history in search of Shakespeare and the *Henriad*, primarily addressing the question of how "being there" has—or has not—changed my views on the story, but also describing the competing forces of history and tourism that awkwardly merge at British heritage sites.

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- B: Branagh, Kenneth. *Beginning*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1989.
- H4P1: Shakespeare, William. *King Henry IV Part 1*. Edited by David Kastan. London: Arden Shakespeare, 2002.
- H4P2: Shakespeare, William. *Henry IV Part Two*. Edited by Stanley Welles. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- H5: Shakespeare, William. *Henry V*. Edited by Gary Taylor. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- HH: Charnes, Linda. *Hamlet's Heirs: Shakespeare & the Politics of a New Millennium*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- R2: Shakespeare, William. *King Richard II*. Edited by Andrew Gurr. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- SIC: Adelman, Kenneth and Norman Augustine. *Shakespeare in Charge: The Bard's Guide to Leading and Succeeding on the Business Stage*. New York: Hyperion, 1999.
- TA: Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

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Prologue:

What Is My Method?

If my tongue cannot entreat you to acquit me, will you command me to use my legs? And yet that were but light payment, to dance out of your debt.¹

-Epilogue, *Henry IV Part Two*

“I begin with a desire to speak to the dead.”² Stephen Greenblatt’s words haunt me, even as they offer a framework for my own project. But how to go about that (academic) privilege of speaking to the dead? Sharing in Greenblatt’s desire to invite the dead into my apartment, but feeling uneasy about my capacity to play host, writing a thesis has been as much a question of *how* to speak to the dead as it has been a question of what to say.

T.S. Eliot’s response to this question in his 1919 essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent” has become itself a monolith of tradition and offers me a starting point. For Eliot, a work of art means only in relation to prior works, which he casts as monuments in a graveyard of dead poets. “No poet,” Eliot writes, extending his argument beyond poetry to all forms:

...no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead.³

¹ William Shakespeare, *Henry IV Part Two*, ed. Stanley Wells (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), Epilogue.17-19. Hereafter Cited in the Text as “H4P2.”

² Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 1.

³ T. S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 1st edition, ed. Vincent Leitch (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 1093. Hereafter cited in the text as “TT.”

The monuments of the dead form what Eliot thinks of as an “ideal order” shifted relationally and proportionally, for better or worse, by the induction (or interring) of new works of art. Since there are strict building codes in Eliot’s graveyard, a contemporary artist must be careful not to uproot, deface, or tower over the dead with his or her own architecture, exercising with care what Eliot calls the “historical sense.” For Eliot, that is an artist’s perception:

...not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. (TT, 1093)

I think, however, that the past can have presence without such relational inequity. That knowledge of the whole of Western literature is a prerequisite for the historical sense seems both elitist and misguided. Although the learned (having read a lot) perhaps have a stronger claim to historical *fact*, I think that historical *truth* is a separate matter, more a developing sense of and respect for the past as it unfolds through learning than a mastery of it.

Entering into the long tradition of Shakespearean criticism in particular has made me sympathize with Gary Taylor, who constructs Shakespeare as a black hole, writing:

Shakespeare himself no longer transmits visible light; his stellar energies have been trapped within the gravity well of his own reputation...If Shakespeare is a literary black hole, then nothing that I, or anyone else, can say will make any difference. His accreting disk will go on spinning, sucking, growing.⁴

⁴ Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989), 411.

Through the uneasy feeling of speaking into such a huge and inveterate tradition, I have learned that history is really about connection-making, the place where tradition and my local, little life meet to converse. It is learning to put one's ear down to two paces of the vilest earth to hear the cries from its tongueless caverns. Linda Charnes is helpful here in explaining the sense of expectation with which one enters into history. She writes (her emphases):

I do not mean historiography as the art of writing events into that reified form we call history, but rather, a particular "structure of feeling": a certain *je ne sais quoi* which lets us feel as if we are still living in a world marked by the passage of *meaningful* time.⁵

Perhaps it is this drive to make time meaningful that has led me to map Shakespeare's histories onto my own. Thesis writing has been a history cycle in its own right: coffee up, coffee down, a (mostly blank) screen and a sunrise, and I hear the boyish voice of Keith Baxter (Welles's Hal) asking Orson Welles's scraggly-haired Falstaff lying comatose on a tavern bench: "What a devil hast thou to do with the time of day?"⁶ College is a time for learning and self-improvement, but it is also a time of waiting, a time of coming to terms with being a pseudo-aristocrat who has until now cruised through life on account of privilege, and a time in which any ambition of contributing to the world is a matter of the future. The complacent specter of Falstaff is inviting, and yet I am not *entirely* a "huge hill of flesh," as Hal calls Falstaff, living to the contented drum of inactivity (H4P1, 2.4.237). My history has been one of double vision: over the course of this project, I have walked the line between Hal and Henry V, a distinction which is not just a typographical shift at the conclusion of *Henry IV Part Two*. It is a fundamental ethical decision

⁵ Linda Charnes, *Hamlet's Heirs: Shakespeare & the Politics of a New Millennium* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 43. Hereafter cited in the text as "HH."

⁶ William Shakespeare, *King Henry IV Part 1*, ed. David Kastan (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2002), 1.2.5-6. Hereafter cited in the text as "H4P1."

for me at a crossroads in life: will I remain languishing in the tavern, or will I move on to the court?

The ghost of Henry IV offers an opposing voice to Falstaff's, a voice which reminds me of the world's expectations—that in the “closing of some glorious day,” I *must* move beyond the tavern and assume a life of greater responsibility (H4P1, 3.2.133). Rather like Henry V, I have seen from the beginning that the end crowns all, knowing all along that I must (eventually) speak back to the dead, if not for the same romantic reasons with which I began this project, but for an impulsive drive to slog forward through history, to move onto to adulthood and other Agincourts by completing the task. It is a loathsomely pragmatic and managerial sentiment, evoking Hal's statement of purpose soliloquy in *Henry IV Part One*, in which he alerts the audience that his fellowship in the tavern is a mere stepping stone to his eventual redemption:

So when this loose behaviour I throw off
 And pay the debt I never promised,
 By how much better than my word I am,
 By so much shall I falsify men's hopes;
 And like bright metal on a sullen ground,
 My reformation, glittering o'er my fault,
 Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
 Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
 I'll so offend, to make offence a skill;
 Redeeming time when men think least I will. (H4P1, 1.2.198-207)

With kinks in arguments, faltering syntax, a case of writer's block, and the end of history (March 17) fast approaching, this also has been my internal monologue throughout the writing process.

And yet, there are also moments quite in opposition, when I feel Charnes's sense of a *je ne sais quois* that animates history, moments when William Shakespeare, Orson Welles, and Jack Falstaff are suddenly apparitions in my apartment, stopping time and its redemption to remind me of myself, bidding me to follow the tavern track of history, and I remember that like Falstaff, I must speak with a passion—not to falsify men's hopes.

History is not just what happened, but what one makes of it. But what one *can* say about history is a function of institutional pressures, both real and imagined, just as much as what one wants to say. Welles has said of Falstaff that he is not a jester, but a wit, "obliged to sing for his supper," entirely dependent on Hal's favor.⁷ While it seems reasonable enough that a thesis, as the *Honors Handbook* stipulates, should have a thesis, it has been a challenge to funnel a year-long project into neat, Apollonian packaging. Anything that I have written seems not to satisfy my vision, and with each press of the backspace key, I conjure another voice of the dead: Prufrock's "'That is not it at all, / That is not what I meant, at all.'"⁸

Speaking with the dead (productively) has brought on an identity crisis not unlike Hal's in the histories. How and why does a wastrel grow up, and what moves forward the transformation? The afterthought to this which plays out in *Henry V* involves the challenges that one encounters after the reformation: how does a grown-up leader manage to unify disparate voices from the territories into one French-loathing fighting force more interested in glory than in morality, into raiders willingly conscripted into carrying out his dubious justifications for a pre-emptive strike? "What ish my nation?" the Irish captain MacMorris asks the Welsh Fluellen

⁷ Richard Marienstras, "Orson Welles: Shakespeare, Welles, and Moles," in *Orson Welles: Interviews*, ed. Mark Estrin (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 161. Hereafter cited in the text as "MI."

⁸ T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, Shorter 5th edition, ed. Julia Reidhead, 862-866, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), ll.109-110.

during the siege of Harfleur in *Henry V*, reflecting a kind of belligerent and confused conflict between the self and the corporate: "...Ish a villain, / And a bastard, and a knave, and a rascal. What ish my / nation? Who talks of my nation?"⁹ Caught in an English historiography in which the extent of his investment is challenged, MacMorris's frustration is understandable. "What ish my method," I have asked myself. In trying to find an organic voice for speaking with the dead, I have felt a bit like MacMorris—insecure, feeling at times like a critic, but at other times full of high sentence, as though I have merely rented a scholarly voice at a distance from myself. Finding a method has been a chase for my undisguised voice, and I have wound up where I started: at the Boar's Head.

So this is Falstaff's thesis, Falstaff's shock and awe. It pays homage to that "huge bombard of sack," that "villainous abominable misleader of youth," that "old white-bearded Satan" (H4P1, 2.4.439; 2.4.450; 2.4.451). It is not exactly a reaffirmation "Merrie England"—good cheer, jigs, Maytime, and such—but rather an acknowledgement of loss, a coming to terms with the sad subjection of the tavern to the court. It is a lament for the inevitable loss of good natured but always dying society, a victim of the things that will as they will, those responsible forces which push life onward implacably. Falstaff's thesis is an ideal which longs to grind history to a halt, preserving the pleasures of the unofficial moment, longing to stop off at the Boar's Head for an eternal round of sherris sack and plays extempore, where the pressures of the world fade away into superfluous play. It is a celebration of a fantastical teller of tales in the face of his mortality, a lament for his slow-cooker death by historical machinery.

Falstaff's shock and awe is a restorative fantasy in which the fat lover of sugar and sack emerges from a park bench in Elysium to rule over the world in his cooking pot crown, drowning

⁹ William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, ed. Gary Taylor (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3.4.63-65. Hereafter cited in the text as "H5."

honor and responsibility in surfeit-swells. It is an alternate history that omits Hal's rejection of Falstaff from a new world order and its affirmation of Machiavellian ethics. "I know thee not old man. Fall to thy prayers," Henry V tells Falstaff at the end of *Henry IV Part Two*, as a hopeful Falstaff travels to the court, exuberant that the old king is dead and assuming that his newly crowned friend will ensure his security of part of a new world order, an order with room for elaborate stories and excessive consumption (H4P2, 5.5.46). But Falstaff is a victim of a regardless world, a world in which history's winged chariot is always hurrying forward, leaving Falstaff behind to die offstage in *Henry V*. Hal's realization of kingly responsibility, his assertion of power and renunciation of his former tavern ways reveals exactly what he means when he promises earlier—that he will "command all the good lads in Eastcheap" when he is king (H4P1, 2.4.13-14). He will banish Falstaff upon pain of death, give Bardolph the hanging of thieves, and send the rest to ransack France. It is tough to be a decider, and the fall-out of some decisions cannot be shown on the official stage of history.

Falstaff's shock and awe is also an absurd fiction. Like Orson Welles's Falstaff, who is also my Falstaff, I recognize the futility of any illusions of grandeur about my place in history: writing an honors thesis obviously never can rebuild fallen levies or disarm cruise missiles, let alone light-up the Boar's Head with laughter and good society like a Falstaffian tale. The wisdom of Falstaff, however, or at least the wisdom of Orson Welles's Falstaff, is his understanding of the act's futility and an acceptance in the face of the inevitable drawing of the curtain of his moment in history.

History moves, which, if not the death of good society, is a loss of things as they were when they were exactly right; little lives are rounded with a sleep, Hotspur's heroic, happy dead rush to "die all, die merrily," the heath whistles on little figures struggling along through deep

space as flies to wanton boys, and Falstaff disappears around the corner into the shadows, trying to convince himself that he “shall be sent for soon at night” (H4P1, 4.1.133; H4P2, 5.5.87).

History ends, in Eliot’s phrase, “Not with a bang but with a whimper.”¹⁰ Now that we have acknowledged the end, I will ask, “What, shall we be merry? Shall we have a play extempore?” (H4P1, 270-271).

I take as my object of inquiry the story as it floats about in its loosest form. The story of Shakespeare’s so-called “second tetralogy” exists at the conjunctions of event, chronicle, and drama; of page, stage, and screen; of comedy, tragedy, and history; and of Shakespeare, adaptor, and audience member. The living and breathing figures of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries later became the subjects of chronicles, who in turn became the dramatic subjects of Shakespeare’s stage, who in turn, with the publishing of the *First Folio*, became increasingly significant as textual figures, until, notwithstanding the countless number of stage performances along the way, the same cast reappeared on film, stage, and the internet in various forms in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Explaining what she calls the “Hamlet effect,” a premise of history which stipulates that every positivistic historiography has within it a more problematic account of history that the former overwrites, Linda Charnes writes, “Every *Henriad* produces a *Hamlet* as its symptom” (HH, 52). Every *Henriad* produces a *Henriad* as its symptom too. Much depends on the *szhujezet*—the meanderings of the plot—in a given form or adaptation of the story, a variable which depends on how much of the story one tells, through what medium one tells it, how it is performed, and the impressions with which a reader, spectator, or auditor enters and exits from history.

¹⁰ T. S. Eliot, “The Hollow Men,” in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, shorter 5th edition, ed. Julia Reidhead, 879-881, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 1. 98.

Shakespeare's histories do not have a single beginning, middle, or end. One may think of the histories as a chronological story charting English history that begins at *Richard II* and ends at *Richard III*. Shakespeare, however, wrote history backwards, writing the four plays which focus on the latter part of history—the three *Henry VI* plays and *Richard III*—in the 1590s, before he wrote *Richard II*, the two parts of *Henry IV*, and *Henry V*, which historically preceded the other plays. While some performances have grouped the eight plays together—forming what Royal Shakespeare Company director Michael Boyd calls an “octology”—the plays have also been grouped traditionally into sets of four—“tetralogies”—with the qualifiers “first” and “second” attached according to when the plays were (probably) written instead of their historical chronology.¹¹ The second tetralogy, the subject of my work, is sometimes nuanced further, since *Richard II* has seemed a prologue to some readers, and so the latter three plays—the *Henry IVs* and *Henry V*—have sometimes been referred to as the “*Henries*” or the “*Henriad*.” There are, however, more history plays beyond the eight that I have just named, as the set excludes *King John*, *Edward III*, and *Henry VIII*, not to mention Shakespeare's other plays that have been labeled as comedies, tragedies, or romances instead of as histories, even though Shakespeare adapted some of them from historical documents. *Julius Caesar*, for instance, perhaps because it charts Roman history instead of English history is usually thought of as a tragedy, though *King Lear*, labeled a tragedy, was likely adapted from one of the same sources that Shakespeare used to write his histories: Holinshed's *Chronicles*. All of this grouping, however, belies the possibility that each play could be read or watched individually and the possibility that those who adapt the plays might cut, rearrange, or condense the story. While of all this might sound as

¹¹ Royal Shakespeare Company, Program, *Richard II* (Stratford: Royal Shakespeare Company, 2008).

elaborate and as confusing as Canterbury's explanation of the Salic Law, it is just to say that if history has a beginning, a middle, or an end, much depends on who tells the story.

Writing a history of the histories is itself a form of adaptation, an interpretative act situated in the present that transforms the story into something relational but newly askance. As Linda Hutcheon writes, "Adaptation is repetition, but repetition without replication."¹² Should a thesis account of Shakespeare's histories be any different?

This, then, is my own private *Henriad*, which, like most Shakespearean history, is as much a function of chance as of a meticulously plotted vision. At least in Shakespeare's textual version, Exton kills Richard II not because he had planned to before, but because he mishears Bolingbroke, presuming that Bolingbroke expressed his wish to have Richard murdered when he said, according to Exton, "Have I no friend will rid me of this living fear?", a line which has no clear referent for "this living fear", not to mention that Bolingbroke never speaks this line, save its presence in a scene missing from the text or the implication that he spoke the words offstage.¹³ Even so, this "instruction," combined with what Exton reads as a "wishtly" look from Bolingbroke, is the evidence on which Exton decides to kill Richard (R2, 5.4.7). History is full of noise, a tale of sound and fury, and it does not make outlines. An overly focused narrative based on systematic choices further misses the fun of playing with history extempore.

Shopping in the Royal Shakespeare Company's costuming archives, Barbara Hodgdon speaks of the importance of memory in reanimating artifacts into stories:

¹² Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 7. Hereafter cited in the text as "TA."

¹³ William Shakespeare, *Richard II*, ed. Andrew Gurr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 5.4.2. Hereafter cited in the text as "R2."

...an archive does not resemble human memory or the unconscious: it takes in heterogeneous stuff, then orders, classifies and catalogues it. So reordered and remade, this stuff remains mute until someone uses it, turns it into narrative - or performance."¹⁴

Like a shopper, as Diana Henderson says, “we pick and choose our histories,” and the talent is in the choices.¹⁵ With a growing number of adaptations, notwithstanding that we lack direct access to the Elizabethan stage and history, it is impossible to access one singular, representative story. Folios, quartos, chronicles, criticism, film, film scripts, theater, programs, lectures, writing, memory, and so on are all the heterogeneous stuff that a student of history can sift through, classify, and turn into narrative, and the result is particular to his or her choices. My history, then, is not an inventory but an act—what Hodgdon calls a performance (SA, 139).

Stephen Greenblatt opens his biography of Shakespeare with the words “Let us imagine,” an opening not altogether that different from the Chorus’s bit at the opening of *Henry V*: “And let us, ciphers to this great account, / On your imaginary forces work” (H5, Prologue.17-18).¹⁶ While Greenblatt is an academically sanctioned storyteller of history, whereas the chorus makes no claims to truth, at the core of both works is the shared understanding that imagination is important to telling a good story.

So, what is my method? Sharing Linda Hutcheon’s “perverse de-hierarchizing impulse,” I want to think about the *Henriad* as being not dominated by Shakespeare’s version, since it is only one link in the chain of storytelling which, although it has developed

¹⁴ Barbara Hodgdon, "Shopping in the Archives: Material Memories," in *Shakespeare, Memory, and Performance*, Ed. Peter Holland (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press), 2006, 139. Hereafter cited in the text as “SA.”

¹⁵ Diana Henderson, *Collaborations with the Past : Reshaping Shakespeare across Time and Media* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 2006, 36.

¹⁶ Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World : How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company), 2004, 23.

diachronically, exists synchronically (TA, vii). While “Shakespeare’s version”—itself a contentious phrase—is the perhaps the default referent for talking about the *Henriad*, the histories have sprawled away from Shakespeare’s gravitational force, finding new meanings in performances over time that map onto contemporary political, artistic, and other cultural narratives. Adaptations of Shakespeare’s histories rely in part on Shakespeare and his cachet—the sense of gravity and high art seemingly attached to the name “Shakespeare”—as well as the sense of a ritualized importance in the retelling of history and the re-speaking of key lines. Adaptations also, however, rely on deviating from ritual in order to re-author the story. As Hutcheon notes, adaptation is “...a derivation that is not derivative—a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing,” a metaphor that captures both the idea that adaptations overwrite their older forms, but that those forms they still lie underneath their adaptations (TA, 9). She continues, “Recognition and remembrance are part of the pleasure (and risk) of experiencing an adaptation; so too is change” (TA, 4). As Hutcheon suggests, something always happens in the rehearsal of old stories. The film adaptations of Shakespeare’s histories on which I focus not only re-author Shakespeare’s plays, but also they reauthorize the performance of history by, as Shakespeare himself had done, making old stories newly relevant to contemporary topical events and concerns.

While I focus the body of my work on three landmark film adaptations of the *Henriad*—Laurence Olivier’s *Henry V* (1944), Orson Welles’s *Chimes at Midnight* (1965), and Kenneth Branagh’s *Henry V* (1989)—I also bring forth other media and forms in which the story presently exists in hopes of more completely mapping out my own private *Henriad*. I examine my web of *Henries* through Ric Knowles’s tripartite model for thinking about theater, a model which captures the fluidity of a theatrical event and which applies equally well to film. Knowles

separates a theatrical event into three overlapping poles which exist in a kind of equilibrium: the conditions of production, the event itself, and the conditions of reception, which I have reworded in less scientific jargon as “making,” “watching” and “talking back to” history.¹⁷ My first chapter focuses on production—or what I term “making history”—in which I examine what personal, artistic, and political motivations travel into an adaptation of the *Henriad*—whether filmic, theatrical, or written versions of the story—exploring the issues of intentionality, authenticity, and authority of directors and writers, as well as the expectations that audiences and readers hold for a “Shakespearean experience.” In the second chapter, I write about “watching history,” traveling through the landscape of the *Henriad* on film, explaining how Laurence Olivier’s, Kenneth Branagh’s, and Orson Welles’s narrative rearrangements and plot choices ally their films with “royal” or “tavern” readings of the *Henriad*. In the third chapter, I focus on how audiences receive particular adaptations of the *Henriad*—or how they “talk back” to history—and I identify language as a central criterion in determining how audiences imagine an authentic, truly “Shakespearean” adaptation of the *Henriad*. As a coda, I relate my first-hand experience of the Royal Shakespeare Company’s performances of the second tetralogy as I travel to England at the end of this history in search of Shakespeare and the *Henriad*, primarily addressing the question of how “being there” has—or has not—changed my views on the story, but also describing the competing forces of history and tourism that awkwardly merge at British heritage sites. And so I pray you:

Admit me chorus to this history

Who Prologue-like your humble patience pray,

Gently to hear, kindly to judge, [my] play. (H5, Prologue.32-35)

¹⁷ Ric Knowles, *Reading the Material Theatre* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press), 2004, 19.

Or better yet, in the spirit of Falstaff's thesis: "Give me a cup of sack to make my eyes look red, that it may be thought I have wept; for I must speak in a passion..." (H4P1, 2.4.374-377).

Chapter 1:

Making History

The fact is that a man who wants to act virtuously in every way necessarily comes to grief among so many who are not virtuous. Therefore if a prince wants to maintain his rule he must be prepared not to be virtuous, and to make use of this or not according to need.

–Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*¹⁸

In the “prologue” of their corporate handbook *Shakespeare in Charge: The Bard's Guide to Leading and Succeeding on the Business Stage*, Kenneth Adelman and Norman Augustine declare that “The bard boom has hit the boardroom.”¹⁹ The phrase has an off-putting commercial tackiness about it, a cloying wit more reminiscent of *Cosmopolitan* magazine than of literary criticism, and yet it *is* a (bizarre) form of it which offers both an emblem of Shakespeare’s varied status in the afterworld and an instance of a particularly “liberal” reuse of him. Adelman and Augustine’s handbook relies on the conjunction of Shakespeare’s plays and Shakespeare’s cachet, treating his plays as parables by pastiching moments of exceptional behavior from a variety of characters into a sketch of effective leadership. Since most of Adelman and Augustine’s intended audience—executives—likely would not be familiar with textual moments that exist more on the fringe of the Shakespearean canon, if not also “Shakespeare’s greatest hits” moments like the battle of Agincourt in *Henry V*, Adelman and

¹⁸ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. George Bull (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 50.

¹⁹ Kenneth Adelman and Norman Augustine, *Shakespeare in Charge: The Bard's Guide to Leading and Succeeding on the Business Stage* (New York: Hyperion, 1999), xii. Hereafter cited in the text as “SIC.”

Augustine depend on Shakespeare's cultural authority to establish their own, treating his words and characters as instructive *sententiae* largely unfettered by historical or dramatic context.

To pinpoint what constitutes effective leadership, Augustine and Adelman "detach" Shakespeare's characters from his plays by describing them through the methodological idiom of business. Henry V is their paradigm:

While Henry doesn't have the luxury of a policy-planning staff and off-site strategizing meetings, he proves himself a great leader in identifying and then pursuing a clear vision. He shows stunning imagination by transforming his seemingly insurmountable military possibilities into startling assets. (SIC, 24)

The corporate vocabulary might seem an overstretching of Shakespeare, but in a sense, it is a reusing of Shakespeare and a remaking of Henry V which sends one back to the play in search of relevant connections: To what extent *is* Henry V actually like a CEO overseeing a corporate England? While one may disagree over Augustine and Adelman's positive assessment of Henry V's leadership, there *is* a kind of corporate fantasy to Henry V's rhetorical pitch to the troops before Agincourt in Shakespeare's text:

He that shall see this day and live t'old age,
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,
And say "Tomorrow is Saint Crispian."
Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars
And say, "These wounds I had on Crispin's day." (H5, 4.3.44-48)

Henry V indeed attempts to "incorporate" his troops in this attempt to sell individual battle wounds in the name of the (battle) company, highlighting the ritualized remembrance of collective battle scars for the years to come as an incentive for personal sacrifice. Adelman and

Augustine provide a reading of the plays which takes a similar trajectory to what Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes call “presentism,” a method of criticism which moves from an interrogative agenda set in the present, to the text, to a thematic that speaks back to the present in order to produce a reading that can “talk to the living” in addition to the dead.²⁰ This is not unlike what Adelman and Augustine are doing when, in search of a lesson on leadership, they consult *Henry V*, coming away from it convinced that the prince is a paradigm for leadership.

But can a Shakespearean corporate handbook be thought of as an adaptation, as, to recall Hutcheon’s phrase, “a derivation that is not derivative” which adds another potential layer of productive reading, or is it simply a corruption of Shakespeare’s plays that misuses (or mismanages) Shakespeare? Perhaps the greatest difference between presentist analysis and a corporate handbook is in the authority of the source. Since I write within an academic setting, I automatically sense more credence in an academic voice. While both analytical strategies share similar methodologies, it is a question of overreaching—how much can one “stretch” Shakespeare to fit a contemporary mold? James Fugitte, CEO of Wind Energy Corporation, presents an extreme example of stretched analysis in his claim that Falstaff, of all characters, represents a model businessman: “It’s a Falstaffian world. When I began my career, there was a scarcity of capital. Now there’s an abundance of capital.”²¹ Falstaff is abundantly fat and abundantly talkative, but he is hardly wealthy; he constantly shirks his tab at the Boar’s Head, and as Welles has noted, his long-term economic future relies entirely on being in good stead with Hal.

²⁰ Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes, eds, *Presentist Shakespeares*, (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), 4.

²¹ Harriet Rubin, “Lessons in Shakespeare, from Stage to Boardroom,” *New York Times* (10 November 2007): B4.

My resistance to Fugitte is partly rooted in the text, though I would also argue that the Falstaff in the text is not Falstaff himself exactly, since the idea of Falstaff grows and changes with each adaptation. In this context, New Criticism seems a useful methodology, offering the guiding force of the well-wrought text, but New Criticism is also limiting in that it undervalues newly generated shapes or versions of the plays, whether in performance or in criticism. No one person, however, knows all Falstaffs, and the significance of a “Falstaffian world” depends on who is listening.

If one steps back from the conversation, it is perhaps equally maverick to compare Henry V to George Bush II, an analogy recently of interest to journalists and academics alike. The volume of attempts to link Bush with Henry V evidences the continual layering of new histories atop the histories. If Shakespearean corporate handbooks convert Shakespeare to economic capital, the Bush-Henry V linkage reflects a drive to convert Shakespeare to a sound-byte. The history ball started rolling with Bush’s first post-9/11 speech, after which Peter Robinson of the *National Review* wrote:

Since the events of September 11, he has undergone a transformation as dramatic as anything in Shakespeare. Gravity, moral seriousness, stature, authority — all have descended upon him like a mantle. Prince Hal has become Henry V.²²

Chris Matthews combined a similar conversion narrative with an added twang of tribalism: "In Bush, the country discovered it had a young leader rising to the occasion, an easy-going Prince Hal transformed by instinct and circumstance into a warrior King Henry."²³ Political analyst

²² Paul Robinson, “A Call to Arms: A Symposium on Bush’s Speech to Congress,” *National Review*, (21 Septemer 2001) 5 February 2008 <<http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/comment-symposium092101.shtml>>.

²³ Scott Newstrom, “Right Pitches Dubya as Henry V,” *Poppolitics.com* (29 May 2003) 5 February 2008 <<http://www.alternet.org/story/16025/>>. Hereafter cited in the text as “PPCOM.”

David Gergen bought into the notion that Bush (and America) were caught in the *Henriad*, commenting that "...when trouble hit, how rapidly we left behind the pages of Henry the 4th" (PPCOM). Yet Gergen was dramatically skeptical of how Bush would handle the pages of *Henry V*: "Now, to be sure, he has not won his Agincourt, but he has set sail, and for that the country can be grateful" (PPCOM). Each of these comments uses Shakespeare to add drama to an unfolding story, reflecting the media's desire to make history meaningful, but probably also to create a memorable sound-byte to bolster ratings.

The similarities between Bush and Henry V go beyond what the media constructed as a moment of rhetorical success after 9/11. Both figures were privileged youths with a proclivity for drink. Both grew into questionably responsible leaders who preemptively invaded sovereign countries under questionable pretexts, with weapons of mass destruction standing in for the Salic Law. Further, having won the election without the popular vote, Bush inherited his first office with questions outstanding, which is perhaps (remotely) analogous to how Henry V inherited the throne in the wake of his father's usurping of Richard II. Both had the unfinished business of taking care of what Dad left behind.

For all of the potential structural similarities that one could read between the two figures, given his errors in judgment (not to mention grammar) over the past few years, retrospectively, it is hard to project a Dubya capable of donning a mantle of moral seriousness. One needs only to glance at Henry Five's soaring rhetoric at Agincourt or his wit in the tavern to find irreconcilable difference between him and Bush. Bush can hardly, as Hal says of himself, "drink with any tinker in his own language," and "strategery" is an utterance that resists versification (and dictionaries) (H4P1, 2.416-17).

Linda Charnes also has reservations about the analogy on which journalists have been so quick to pounce. After surveying attempts by mainstream media voices to link the two, she writes, “But of course it is relevant in deeply structural ways that superficial journalistic analogies almost always ignore” (HH, 104). To take that kind of argumentative distance from the Bush-Henry V analogy, a move which I am admittedly taking to a third iteration, reflects a kind of nervousness toward mapping Shakespeare’s histories neatly onto contemporary events, though it also establishes her authority as an academic critic by positioning herself safely looking in at a popular conversation from outside the fish bowl. What constitutes a productive reading of history is tied to the beliefs of the competing institutions which survive Shakespeare in the afterlife, voices that are inevitably inflected, at least in part, by a need for a niche.

No matter the source, the corporate and political Henry V analogies reflect a shared desire to make Shakespeare act, to use him and his work as argument, an aim that not only resembles thesis writing, but also what spectators hope to obtain from a performance. During a question and answer session after the Michigan Shakespeare Company’s performance of *Henry V* last summer at Jackson Community College, a woman seated about fifteen rows above the majority of the audience was the first to comment to the cast: “I want to know why you didn’t make it address Iraq more,” she said haughtily. At the end of quiet winding roads hidden from even the interstates and the Meijers, found only through the guidance of chalk-written signs, in a quiet and half-empty theater in a quiet and half-empty parking lot, disturbed only by the gentle buzz of a lawnmower, we lay our scene about as far from politics as imaginable. Even so, this woman in the audience expected that the staging of Shakespeare’s histories somehow would matter, that the performance *should* present a critique of American politics—no matter that the plays on the Elizabethan stage addressed topical issues, no matter that they chronicle English

instead of American history, and no matter that the gathering in Jackson was perhaps even smaller than Henry V's happy few at Agincourt. Even so, the cachet of Shakespeare's name was enough to sustain the hope of a meaningful intervention.

The lesson here is that an adaptation of the histories starts even before the curtain opens, for spectators and artists both bring their histories with them into a staging of the histories. Ed Simone, director of the MSC's production, explains the many vectors that traveled with him personally into his version. He writes:

What helped shape this production? Iraq, certainly. And Gaza. And other global and personal bits and pieces of our lives that have many sides and consequences; that raise many questions but provide few, if any, hard answers.²⁴

Simone's comment points toward the multivocal act of history making. In addition to the more widely relevant political narratives of the present which feed into the play, fragments of the director and actors influenced the production. He frames the play with the "Shakespeare as instructor" trope similar to Adelman and Augustine's logic, noting that the plays maintain their relevance, "Partly because world leaders are still behaving the way Henry behaved, and Shakespeare has some stuff to say about it."²⁵

What Shakespeare has to say, exactly, is a function of the ever-changing "it" and not always of the Elizabethan topical issues that Shakespeare himself was addressing, let alone the more recent Bush-Henry V connections. For Michael Bogdanov, who co-directed (with Michael Pennington) the English Shakespeare Company's *Wars of the Roses* cycle, which ran 649 performances all over the world from *Richard II* through *Richard III*, the connection of

²⁴ Michigan Shakespeare Company, Program, *Henry Five* (Jackson: Michigan Shakespeare Company, 2007), 15.

²⁵ Michigan Shakespeare Company, *Quarto Published for Festival Friends Everywhere* (Jackson: Michigan Shakespeare Company, 2007), 3.

Shakespeare to the political present is an imperative function of theater. "You cannot ignore the war in Iraq," he has said, intriguingly marking the resonance of events that occurred years after the performances of his versions in the 1980s:

The siege in Chechnya, two hundred and fifty children injured and others dead, the planes that crash, the trains that are blown up, and pretend that these events have nothing to do with Shakespeare. You can't close your eyes to plays that deal with Elizabethan brutality and terrorism and pretend that it all happened in a bygone era.²⁶

The unsatisfied woman in Jackson likely would have preferred Bogdanov's directorial ambition of making the past socially active. With Shakespeare's cachet established, why not use him to address current ills? Bogdanov's Chechnyan narrative is familiar but re-spun: Shakespeare's histories map onto a contemporary political reality, but the signifiers and signifieds change according to the particulars of the adaptor. If Shakespeare is about "now," and if now is about whatever one experiences, Shakespeare's empire seems infinite, which comes with its artistic risks. If Shakespeare shares the supposed function of the news—to hold the politicians accountable—then the artistic value of a production seems less relevant than a reading of the plays which uses Shakespeare to confirm one's political sensibilities.

And yet to politicize Shakespeare is to make compelling connections across periods of time, between fiction and reality, and between artistic and non-artistic forms. Adelman and Augustine's corporate handbook and Bogdanov and Pennington's socially conscious theater are more similar in function than one might imagine: both capitalize off Shakespeare's cultural influence, albeit through entirely different mediums and strategies, and they produce polar opposite readings of Shakespeare's politics of history. How did Shakespeare "intend" to

²⁶ John Drakikis, "Michael Bogdanov in Conversation," *Shakespeare Survey* 60 (2007): 197. Hereafter cited in the text as "MBC."

construct Henry V? Perhaps it is the wrong question to ask, since the intentionality of Henry V's contemporary "revivers" is what actually takes the stage, and the results are mixed: Whereas Adelman and Augustine construct Henry V as an emblem of "true grit, grand strategizing, sheer competence, dogged perseverance, and creativity," a master manager to be celebrated, the English Shakespeare Company envisions him as a "dirty rat" (SIC, 2).²⁷

Each of these attempts to reread Shakespeare presumes an authentic *Henry V* that Shakespeare "intended." Authenticity and intentionality, however, are matters of perspective. The ways that each adaptation declares its authenticity are varied. While the journalistic and academic analogies rely on more formalist approaches to literary criticism in producing an authentic *Henry V*, Adelman and Augustine latch onto character, constructing Shakespeare as a purveyor of "human nature" by highlighting the varied range of his characters:

Across the Shakespearean stage strolls every type of human, leader, manager, advisor, consultant, communicator, and customer. Each of these characters can deepen our awareness of the real people we work with and meet every day. (SIC, xiii)

For them, Shakespeare's breadth of players reveals that he is a "people person" and thus a source of lasting wisdom that can speak to essentially any personality at any moment in time:

"[B]usiness involves people, and people—fundamentally—don't change. The essence of business is thus remarkably constant" (SIC, xii). Their authentic Shakespeare originates in an essential quality of an effective manager: good character. Since all the (business) world is a stage, Shakespeare provides a lasting taxonomy, a handy program to sort through the corporate

²⁷ Michael Pennington has said of Henry V: "He never stops talking - The Breach, St. Crispin's Day, the joyous horn-interlocking word play with Falstaff. You cannot be *serious*. How can you believe this man? What a dirty rat." Michael Bogdanov and Michael Pennington, *The English Shakespeare Company: The Story of the Wars of the Roses, 1986-1989* (London: Hern, 1990), 49. Hereafter cited in the text as "ESC."

cast. Simone's remark that Shakespeare "has some stuff to say" contains the assumption that the contemporary stage is an accurate channel through which Shakespeare can say some stuff, albeit centuries after his existence and with entirely different topical concerns, correlating performance criticism with authenticity. For Bogdanov, the authentic Shakespeare is a more abstract thematic. It is not so much Shakespeare speaking when one restages the plays but the *way* that theater engages audiences that is Shakespearean. Says Bogdanov:

Shakespeare is about communication. I don't believe it's about Aristotelian catharsis; I believe it's about engagement. I don't believe it's about Brechtian alienation; it's about engagement. In other words, arousing passions in people that make them want to shout, stand up and be counted, go out into the street still arguing, boo, cheer, but at some point make contact between their lives as they live them now and what is being said onstage.

The best theatre does that all the time, and I believe that Shakespeare at his best did and he does that. (MBC, 208)

Bogdanov presents Shakespeare as the romantic radical, a conception which longs to recreate a theater that actually makes a difference to spectators beyond their blasé approval or disapproval of the show and a theater that is accessible to a wide range of people, the latter backed up by the ESC's lowering of prices for their shows. Contemporary theater, unfortunately, costs rather more than the one penny that a groundling could pay for a place center stage at the Globe. There is further something un-Shakespearean about expecting audiences to argue, boo, and cheer over Shakespeare, even if one alleviates the problem of the economic exclusivity of the theater, since Shakespeare's somewhat remote Elizabethan English risks alienating an untrained spectator who is struggling to understand it. Shakespeare himself did not simply recite Ovid or other antiquated or uninteresting sources, but rather he re-authored them to the stage.

Bogdanov's role as a kind of Robin Hood of theater is admirable in his desire to reclaim Shakespeare from the quiet and the stuffy, but is it even possible to make contemporary spectators argue, boo, and cheer over performances spoken in early modern English and iambic pentameter? To slip out of "my" historical realm into the *Henry VI* plays, to play Jack Cade's advocate for a moment (an oxymoron, since Cade would have all lawyers killed), to bridge English history and the Elizabethan stage to now, perhaps it would be necessary to dash Shakespeare's sacred poetry and to perform something like *No Fear Shakespeare* that all people could understand enough to want to stand up and be counted. However, having experienced an adaptation that does something like this in Gus Van Sant's *My Own Private Idaho* (1991), which is a loose refashioning of the *Henriad* into a story about street hustlers, Shakespeare in modern idiom can risk the absurd. The Hal figure in the film, Scott Favor, for instance, reduces Hal's famous soliloquy about falsifying men's hopes ("My reformation, glittering o'er my fault, / Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes / Than that which hath no foil to set it off" (H4P1, 1.3.202-4) to the clunky and unsubtle:

It will impress them more when such a fuck-up like me turns good than if I had been a good son all along. All the past years I will think of as one big vacation. At least it wasn't as boring as schoolwork. All my bad behavior I'm going to throw away to pay my debt. I will change when everybody expects it the least.²⁸

Shakespeare, it would seem, loses some of its electricity in translation, though where Van Sant failed (perhaps intentionally?) to retain the intrigue that Hal generates in the speech, another might succeed in a making a truly Shakespearean adaptation of Shakespeare.

²⁸ Gus Van Sant, dir., *My Own Private Idaho* (1991), VHS (Home Vision Entertainment, 2005).

“Shakespearean” is, in another sense, a market value. Just as Shakespeare was subject to censorship by the Privy Council and had to be careful not to offend the wrong audience member, how one constructs Shakespeare through contemporary media is not only a function of a writer or a director’s vision, but of the institutional pressures that shape the production. Bogdanov’s productions had a radical gimmick for critiquing contemporary British jingoism: a banner that was unfurled during *Henry V* that said “Fuck the Frogs,” evidently a common slandering of the French by the British. Bogdanov saw potential in the conjunction between high art and controversy:

Some spectator found the moment offensive, others misunderstood, most applauded. A letter from a member of the public: “The use of the word was offensive and the term ‘Frogs’ hardly helps promote racial harmony and dispel old prejudices. I was ashamed to be English.” Precisely. The case rests. (ESC, 48)

Bogdanov’s strategy for getting spectators to “stand up and be counted” was to challenge the superego, and while I was excited to view this gimmick, it was excised from the recorded performance that I watched, which had been televised as well at the time. What travels into an adaptation is subject to rules as much as artistic ambitions.

Laurence Olivier, in attempting to link his film and himself to an authentic Shakespeare, went so far as to envision himself as a stand-in for Shakespeare himself, proclaiming, “...my country was at war; I felt Shakespeare within me, I felt the cinema within him. I knew what I wanted to do, what he would have done...”²⁹ Olivier thought himself quite successful in speaking to the dead, and while he suggests that his adaptation of *Henry V* was about mobilizing Shakespeare for national morale in a moment of national danger—the film was released in

²⁹ Laurence Oliver, *On Acting* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 190. Hereafter cited in the text as “OA.”

England in November of 1944, just a few months after D-Day on June 6, 1944—it is as much about establishing the “I” within tradition (OA, 196). “It seemed to answer every problem,” Olivier has said, casting history making as both personal and cultural therapy.³⁰

Olivier’s production of history not only involved the overlap of contemporary and past histories, but also an overlap in Olivier’s role within the project. Assuming the roles of director, lead actor, and Fleet Air Arm member, commissioned by the British government to produce the film, Olivier’s role in history reflects the overlapping vocation of artistic and political acting. In the filming of the production, Olivier assumed something of the leadership of Henry V in France, winding up with a sprained ankle and both arms in slings on account of showing his actors how to fall down from the trees onto the French cavalry.³¹ Also in the spirit of his historical counterpart, who, as the story goes, had a large scar running from mouth to ear from battle at the age of twelve, Olivier suffered a cut lip through to the gum when a horse smacked into a camera that he was peering through (FGH5, 20). In addition, the filming of Agincourt had to be moved to Ireland on account of low flying aircraft (FGH5, 19). Filming war is hell, and it takes a responsible actor-director-king-Shakespeare-soldier to lead a company.

Within the film, Olivier relies on the trope of reconstruction to substantiate his claim to an authentic Shakespearean voice, marking his version “filmed Shakespeare” as opposed to the more democratic conjunction of Shakespeare and film. The opening credits claim historical authenticity by alerting the spectator that the film is a production of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men at the Globe Theater on May 1, 1600. The credits dissolve away into a panoramic, aerial shot of an idyllic, fairytale-like London based on Jan Visscher’s 1600 engraving. The camera gradually

³⁰ Laurence Olivier, *Confessions of an Actor* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), 97-98. Hereafter cited in the text as “CA.”

³¹ Harry Geduld, *Filmguide to Henry V*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), 20. Hereafter cited in the text as “FGH5.”

moves along the Thames, capturing the shiny reflections of multi-colored houses on the crystal-clear water, and eventually descending into Olivier's "reconstruction" of the Globe Theater. After pausing on a musician trumpeting the last call, the camera spirals downward into the lively bustle of theater patrons, actors, musicians, and fruit vendors talking, laughing, and moving toward their seats for the play within the film. The camera finally settles at a fixed position on the upper balcony as though it were a spectator in the Globe, nestling into its seat in preparation for the performance. The same scroll that introduced the film reappears to introduce the play within the film, and as Prologue enters to begin the performance, the audience applauds, and the show begins. The film's opening lulls the spectator into a colorful, picturesque, harmonious world, filled with nostalgia for the lively community of the Elizabethan theater and for a time when England looked more like a Renaissance painting than a battered target for German V-2 rockets. The "authentic" world that Olivier sets up in his film is ideally suited to England's needs for national solidarity and pride in a grave historical moment in which the preservation of England was far from certain, creating a beautiful and almost entirely bloodless history framed not by cycles of violence, but by the comforting and quaint image of a celebrated emblem of English cultural heritage.

Forty-five years later, like Olivier, Kenneth Branagh also melds fiction and reality, mapping his own actor-director narrative onto Henry V's. Though he lacks Olivier's ability to self-dramatize, Branagh echoes his predecessor's understanding of the "gravity" of playing the role of Henry V when he writes in his autobiography:

Henry was a young man, and so was I. He was faced with an enormous responsibility. I didn't have to run the country and invade France, but I did have to control Brian Blessed [who played Exeter in the film]...³²

Like Olivier, Branagh invokes the trope of a company of actors as a company of soldiers to emphasize his importance within film and theater history. Explaining his sentiments during the first cast meeting, he writes, "...the atmosphere was thick with a sense of rare occasion. A disaster it might be, but a singular one. Everyone was glad to be there. We few, we happy few" (B, 222). The filming itself proved as taxing as Olivier's experience filming or Henry V's at Agincourt. Branagh writes, "I arrived home exhausted and somehow defeated and, for no good reason, burst into tears. I felt as if I had come back from the war" (B, 236).

While both Olivier and Branagh seem to have engaged in similar forms of narrative mapping their personal stories onto the historical, Branagh's method of adaptation departs from Olivier in how he argues for the authenticity of his production. While Olivier begins in the authenticating Globe, Branagh, needing to leave his own mark on the histories, could not do the same: he marks his departure from Olivier by beginning the film in a modern, empty sound stage. While Olivier conveniently deferred to Shakespeare's intentions, which, séances withstanding, were really just his own, Branagh followed the bloodline, consulting the Prince of Wales himself—Charles—for acting clues in preparation for his role as Henry V in Adrian Noble's 1984 production, a role that was a primer for Branagh's subsequent ambition to direct a film version.

Branagh's account of interviewing the prince reads like a Socratic dialogue, with Charles playing an agreeable Glaucon to all of Branagh's preconceived assertions about the role. Asking

³² Kenneth Branagh, *Beginning* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1989), 141. Hereafter cited in the text as "B."

whether the suppression of character traits necessary to being a member of royalty caused Henry's violence and extreme behavior, Prince Charles "concurred: yes, there was a tremendous pressure and temptation to be at times either very silly or very violent" (B, 142). Asking the Prince whether newspaper coverage affected him, the response was, "Yes, it had, profoundly. And it had, as [Branagh] suspected was true of Henry, produced an extraordinary melancholy" (B, 143). Asserting that because the Prince was so isolated, his only comfort could be faith, "Prince Charles was in total agreement" (B, 143). Even though Charles offered Branagh little more than agreement to his already formed opinions about Henry, Branagh tacks on another assertion to which Charles would probably also agree wholeheartedly:

Prince Charles's comments were immensely helpful and I had the impression that he shared with Shakespeare's Henry a desire to strike a delicate balance between responsibility and compassion. (B, 144)

Having taken a history lesson—or rather credentialed his own—from an authoritative source, Branagh felt prepared to play in history, since "Prince Charles had enormously increased [his] understanding of many aspects of the role" (B, 144). While both Branagh and Olivier mine sources of cultural authority in constructing their readings of the *Henriad* as authentic, what such sources have to offer is less important than what the directors can ventriloquize through them.

Orson Welles finds his place in history not by identifying with Henry V like Olivier and Branagh, but instead with Falstaff. Welles has said of Falstaff, "I think that in all of Shakespeare, he's the only good man." (MI, 161) Welles sees Falstaff as "a wit rather than a clown," not simply a comedian, but instead a deeper character than his moments of comedic

performance suggest.³³ In Welles's view, Falstaff's sense of humor derives from his necessity to perform in order to maintain his social position. Says Welles:

The truth of Falstaff is that Shakespeare understood him better than the other great characters he created, because Falstaff was obliged to sing for his supper. He had to earn everything he ate by making people laugh. It's not that he was funny; he had to be funny. (MI, 161)

While Welles speculates that Shakespeare had an intimate understanding of Falstaff, Welles himself seems also to have such an intimate understanding, as many have noted that Welles's biographical narrative oddly mirrors that of Falstaff. Keith Baxter, the film's Hal notes:

You felt that there was a great deal of him in Falstaff—this sort of trimming one's sails, always short of money, having to lie, perhaps, and to cheat. He obviously felt there was a lot of himself in the character.³⁴

Baxter's suggestion that Welles, like Falstaff, had an understanding of the somewhat shameful relationship between performance and socio-economic class practically compels me to commit the "biographical fallacy." Welles's Falstaff does not exude unbridled good nature and humor that one might stereotypically project onto Falstaff, and his performance seems to reflect a personal reading into the character. While Falstaff dominates the narrative and tavern scenes, there is an underlying sadness reflective of his transient position as an entertainer, his subjection to the Prince, and the fact that his performance, as Welles has said, is "always a preparation for the end" (CRI, 261). Welles's Falstaff is more introverted and more conscious of his status as a

³³ Juan Cobos and Miguel Rubio, "Welles and Falstaff" (1966), in *Chimes at Midnight*, ed. Bridget Lyons (London; New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 261. Hereafter cited in the text as "CRI."

³⁴ Bridget Lyons, "Interviews: Keith Baxter," in *Chimes at Midnight*, ed. Bridget Lyons (London; New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 282. Hereafter cited in the text as "BI."

lower-class entertainer than is generally expected of a king of “Merrie England.” It is Falstaff’s unwillingness to dance which conflicts with the expectations of viewers who endorse “royal” readings of the play, who want Falstaff to do a stand-up comedy routine before he is banished, since if Falstaff is *just* a comic, then Hal would seem less of a Machiavel. But this is Falstaff’s history, Welles’s history, and not Hal’s or those who want to celebrate responsible leadership, and at the end of the routine, an all too real fate awaits Falstaff and a problematic, haunting narrative of personal exclusion amidst historical progression confronts the spectator. Falstaff may be the life of the tavern in the film, but throughout, the tavern is always interrupted and imposed upon by the court, and the Prince is always about to depart for the court. Merrie England does not suddenly die at “I know thee not”; in Welles’s view, Falstaff heard the chimes from the beginning.

The directors, audience members, and critics of these “material histories” alike carry unique echoes, ghosts, and ambitions that not only reflect how and why these different voices enter into Shakespeare’s histories, but in stretching and reconfiguring history to fit the always-changing now, they change the story, casting themselves as the makers of history.

Chapter 2:
Watching History

The danger of cinema is that you see everything, because it's a camera. So what you have to do is to manage to evoke, to incant, to raise things which are not really there.

-Orson Welles³⁵

Traveling through the landscape of the *Henriad* on film, I have inevitably evoked, incanted, and raised up that which is not really there, selecting from and rearranging Branagh's, Olivier's, Welles's and other *Henriads* into my own adapted story. History, as the chorus of *Henry V* says, requires the interpretive will of its audience:

For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,
Carry them here and there; jumping o'er times,
Turning the accomplishment of many years
Into an hour-glass... . (H5, Prologue.28-31)

Rewinding and replaying my plot of histories, trying to catalogue the swirling specters of the dead into an argument and a story, I have begun to see the history of the histories on film in double vision.

Orson Welles has commented on Shakespeare's skill in "showing the same thing twice, a mirror image of this or that thing" (MI, 165). Taking the idea of mirroring even further, Welles says, "Parody is specifically Shakespearean" (MI, 165). Within the textual *Henriad*, one can see Shakespeare developing this kind of mirroring relationship between the tavern and the court as the *Henry IV* plays jostle back and forth between scenes in Eastcheap and scenes in the court.

³⁵ Cited in Jack Jorgens, *Shakespeare on Film* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1991), 35. Hereafter cited in the text as "SOF."

Olivier, Branagh, and Welles each animate and reinterpret this dichotomy, extending it beyond words on a page, redefining it in terms of narrative focus (the progression of time), spatial relationships, and theatricality. Whereas Olivier and Branagh construct *Henriads* that privilege the responsible progression of the court's history, Welles focuses on the underwritten narrative of the tavern, showing how the unflappable, unfeeling forces of history, which are always moving forward and redeeming time, intrude upon and ultimately trample over the tavern. Whereas Olivier and Branagh's taverns function as sentimental devices which are not integral to the movement of history, Welles's tavern is the centerpiece of his history, a place which resists the pressures of history and longs to bring time to halt. Welles's tavern is powerless to stop history because it is subject to the court and always dying on account of it.

Time in each adaptation has a different shape. Olivier's history is symmetrical, beginning and ending in his "reconstructed Globe." It is not cyclical, for the plot moves the spectator linearly "in" and "out" of the performance; the gradual and smooth transition of the narrative—starting at the title scroll, flowing into the panoramic scanning of London, circling downward into the Globe, settling in a fixed position above the stage evoking the actual experience of a live performance, and finally moving into the relatively more fictitious world of *Henry V* within *Henry V*—encourages the spectator to "consent" to the performance and to accept the film's vastly fake fields of France as real. There is another sense, however, that the feeling of metatheatricality in the opening "Elizabethan" sequences never entirely fades away; since it always seems like a representation in a live theater, the film maintains a loose connection to the "real world" once removed. One feels both the plunge into a more removed, fairytale world and its simultaneous connection to a land far, far away.

The play within the film narrative structure creates the effect of a move into relative realism. A sense of realism mounts from the theatrical opening, reaching its keenest sense at the battle of Agincourt before fading in parallel symmetry. This creates, as Dudley Andrew says, “the central illusion of moving or peering toward something real, as down a tunnel”—toward the battle of Agincourt.³⁶ A *Wall Street Journal* reviewer picks-up on this effect: “The camera leaves the Globe Theater behind, and the play is performed in realistic locales, and with the seriousness Shakespeare intended in his story of Harry’s invasion of France.”³⁷ It is a testament to Olivier’s sleight of hand that the colorful, nearly cartoonish, Renaissance theme park within the film seems real, seems to reflect Shakespearean “seriousness.” While Agincourt, the centerpiece of history as Olivier conceives of it, may be the most “real” point in the film, Olivier’s Technicolor world of battle looks more like an arts and crafts fair than one imagines a war to look like. The colorful assortment of flags, armor, outfits, and tents make the affair seem more of a festival than a fight. The distant shots with which Olivier films the battle sequences avoid any intense images of hand to hand violence and frame the battle instead as a grand, sweeping, historical epic. The scene seems nostalgic for a time in which war was neatly organized—fought in lines with attentiveness to stagecraft—and without the confusing ruptures of order that modern horrors such as rockets, machine guns, and concentration camps presented. In around twenty minutes of combat footage, Olivier’s Agincourt has only one image of blood, which is conveniently an atrocity committed by the French, not the English: a brief shot of a dead English boy after the French raid the English camp to slaughter the English pages.

³⁶ Dudley Andrew, “Realism, Rhetoric, and the Painting of History in *Henry V*” from Andrew, *Film in the Aura of Art* (Princeton University Press, 1984), 132. Hereafter cited as “DA.”

³⁷ “The Theater: Triumph in Technicolor,” *The Wall Street Journal* .” (19 June 1946): 10.

Other accounts of Agincourt, however, suggest that the battle was not such a picturesque affair. John Keegan, for one, offers a less colorful, more visceral depiction of Agincourt. He writes, “The dead undoubtedly lay thick at Agincourt, and quite probably, at the three places where fighting had been heaviest, in piles.”³⁸ Keegan notes that many of the six-thousand French who died in battle were executed by the English while lying wounded on the battlefield (FOB, 97). After the initial rout of the French, for what Keegan explains as “strategic reasons,” Henry V ordered all of the French prisoners to be killed. The English officers voiced opposition to the king’s command because the prisoners held potential value from ransom, but nevertheless, Henry V stood firm, ordering his archers to begin the mass execution. Henry V, however, did spare some of the richer prisoners for ransom in order to assuage his officers, though he executed half of the French prisoners before it apparently lost its strategic necessity (FOB, 197). At least in Keegan’s account, Agincourt was a battle filled with horrors and atrocities that Olivier omits from his pageant-like construction of the war. The French, “bowing” to the English without much resistance, function in Olivier’s film more as a source of theatrical amusement than a formidable opponent, a comfortably farcical portrayal of the English “enemy” perhaps influenced by a cultural fantasy of war’s cleanliness that would comfort potential audiences.

There is not much in Olivier’s film that troubles the progression of history or a “royal” reading of the *Henriad*. Given his almost entirely celebratory portrayal of Henry V, it initially seems counterintuitive that Olivier goes out of his way to film a scene that Shakespeare omits from the stage: Falstaff’s death. Accompanied by William Walton’s sentimental score, the camera introduces the scene with a low angle establishing shot of Falstaff’s bedroom window, which is the only illuminated *mise-en-scène* element onscreen. The camera slowly arcs upward

³⁸ John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (New York: Viking Press, 1976), 92. Hereafter cited in the text as “FOB.”

toward the window and eventually moves through the window into the room, giving one the sensation of a voyeuristic assault on Falstaff's bedroom. Falstaff's face is blurred in the shadows of the room and partially hidden by his mountainous belly. He is engaged in an activity that for him is second only to drinking sack—sleep—and one feels a sense of tranquility and warmth in watching him rest. His wishful words before the battle of Shrewsbury in *Henry IV Part 1* seem to have been fulfilled: “I would ‘twere bedtime, Hal, and all well” (H4P1, 5.1.125). Falstaff's peace is short-lived, however, as suddenly he sits up, looking disheveled and confused, and has a flashback to Hal's betrayal speech in *Henry IV Part 2*. As the new Henry V spells out his rejection of Falstaff in voice-over, Falstaff's mouth opens in horror at the painful memory of his former friend's “I know thee not, old man...” speech. As Hal's speech continues, Falstaff's gaping mouth gradually closes, and his expression turns from one of horror to one of resignation: Seemingly accepting the reasons for which Hal has rejected him, and with a look of understanding, he dies. Jorgens reads this scene as a moment in which Olivier balances out his otherwise immaculate image of Henry V. He writes:

Perhaps the scene, with its low-key lighting and somber passacaglia suggesting fate or death, should be taken as a reminder of the darker side of Henry's character, of the *cost* of kingship. (SOF, 126-27)

The scene, however, offers no meaningful lament for Falstaff. The only glimpse of Falstaff in the film is that of a decrepit, scraggly, dying old man, a farcical Falstaff whose images fails to capture what makes Falstaff matter. Falstaff as flashback offers only a minimal reminder of the costs of kingship that fades with the scene: here, he is *reduced* to the cost of Hal's kingship. Not only does this sentimental representation of Falstaff trivialize the tavern narrative from the *Henry*

IV plays, it also diminishes the extent to which Falstaff's presence problematizes the "glorious war" narrative.

Branagh mirrors Olivier's strategy in adding flashbacks which sentimentalize Falstaff's death, though Branagh gives greater dramatic weight to that death by weaving together a selection of painful memories—"Henry IV's greatest hits"—into the flashback moments in his film. With Bardolph, Pistol, and Nym crowded around Falstaff's dying body, the camera follows the gaze of a pensive Pistol backwards through time into the world of memory where a lively Boar's Head tavern crowd surrounds the animated, joke-telling Falstaff, who via a few abrupt insults to Bardolph, instantly establishes himself as the life of the party. Hal upsets the dynamic when he enters, and as Falstaff pitches his "Banish plump Jack and banish all the world" speech in search of reassurance, Branagh's Hal provides no response other than a stoic, chilling glare that itself seems to erase Falstaff (H4P1, 2.4.466-7). His response "I do, I will" is internalized, converted into voice-over, though clearly spoken in the look, enhancing at once both Hal's psychological resoluteness, cruelty, and deceptiveness (H4P1, 2.4.468). Falstaff, however, is not deceived, for his eyes suddenly bulge as though he heard the speech. He hears death in Hal's silence: backing away, he looks hurt and, in a horrified whisper, modifying lines spoken between Shallow and Falstaff elsewhere in the text, Falstaff says, "We have heard the chimes at midnight, Master Harry. Jesus, the days that we have seen," to which Hal responds, again in voice-over, though a much more powerful and cold version of it than in Olivier's film: "I know thee not, old man." It is a chilling sequence which highlights not only Hal's cool premeditations, but the inevitability of death for Falstaff, who, perhaps preternaturally, or perhaps because he knew the old story, discerns the plot of history without having heard the news directly.

Yet with respect to the rest of the film, this rejection is an isolated moment, a memory that fades away. The problematic counter-history of Falstaff has a more powerful place in Branagh's narrative than in Olivier's, but it is a fleeting one, and like Hal's dark rhetorical tone at the beginning of the film, it is both forgotten and redeemed at Agincourt, where pain is washed away with glory and the end justifies the costs of war, warrants ruthless leadership, and diminishes the importance of who the king has rejected to become the hero of the story.

The film shows the gradual transition of a king who begins making hard decisions in a dark, fiery cellar to one who grows up on the job, struggling to redeem himself as he slugs through France and eventually redeems himself at Agincourt. The kind of king that Branagh reads into history is made emblematic by the tracking shot where Henry, having been victorious in a particularly muddy and brutal rendition of Agincourt, afterwards lugs the body of the dead Boy over his shoulder through the battlefield to the accompaniment of the triumphant music of "Non Nobis, Domine." It is a climactic sequence which lasts nearly four minutes, celebrating the king's victory over hardship and marking the maturity of a king who understands and regrets the costs of making history, but ultimately triumphs over them. Branagh's history is teleological—gradually ascending in suspense and emotion toward this moment—and though it does not hide the struggles which lead to its glorious end or the contradictions of the king, it has an end that overwrites the costs. If Falstaff's death is the film's most painfully exposed memory, the fat knight only fits into history's margins and is quickly forgotten in the wake of the king's reformation.

One might wonder about drawing a comparison between Branagh's and Olivier's films, which focus exclusively on *Henry V*, in which Falstaff never appears on stage and figures into it only insofar as reporting his offstage death affects the other characters, to Welles's film, which



Figure i. Muddied and bloodied after Agincourt, Branagh's exhausted Henry V reveals a mixture of despair for the dead boy on the cart and relief that the hard-fought day is his.

focuses instead on the *Henry IV* plays. However, the narrative scope of history is a choice, and that there is nothing organic about how much of the *Henriad* that a director chooses to stage or to omit; while the plays offer convenient divisions, looking at the overarching architecture of history—the plays in conjunction—offers a broader sketch of what history leaves behind to reach the more easily celebrated events of *Henry V*. Unlike Branagh’s and Olivier’s films, the tavern narrative in *Chimes* is not just a distant memory seen from a “royal” perspective that looks back on the *Henry IV* plays as pre-history. The tavern and Falstaff are the narrative foci of Welles’s history, though also, in a way, counter-historical. Welles’s history begins outside of history, with the two tiny figures of Shallow and Falstaff stumbling through snowy deep space into what Welles’s film script calls a “large barnlike room,” a space far from the political realm. Shallow reminisces, “Jesus, the days that we have seen. Ha, Sir John? Said I well?”, to which Falstaff responds, “We have heard the chimes at midnight, Master Robert Shallow,” acknowledging the inevitability of death even at the film’s beginning.³⁹ Hearing the chimes at midnight from the onset, Falstaff marks his own story as, to recall Welles’s phrase, “always a preparation for the end” (CRI, 261).

History, however, has another, more official beginning. The initial opening, which, as Bridget Lyons writes, “gives the impression of being the memory of the two old men by the fire,” gives way to the opening of official history, introduced by a shot of a group of horseman furiously galloping across the screen, with Pomfret castle in the background.⁴⁰ The change in setting is accompanied by a change in music from the light, lollygagging recorder music in the

³⁹ Orson Welles, “Chimes at Midnight,” screenplay, in *Chimes at Midnight*, edited by Bridget Lyons (London; New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press), 32. Hereafter cited in the text as “CM.”

⁴⁰ Bridget Lyons, “The Shakespearean Camera of Orson Welles,” in *Chimes at Midnight*, ed. By Bridget Lyons (London; New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press), 5. Hereafter cited in the text as “SCOW.”

opening sequence of Shallow and Falstaff to Angelo Lavagnino's rapid score which Welles describes in his film script as "a strongly rhythmic martial theme, akin to the music of a morris dance..." (CM, 32). The music evokes a sense of forward motion and action and signifies that in contrast to the opening sequence, in which Falstaff and Shallow wander and reminisce free from obligation and absent from time, history has finally begun. It is only at this point that the credits roll, which creates the effect that the scene involving Shallow and Falstaff was somehow outside the diegesis, that the *real* narrative begins to playback when the soldiers and castles appear onscreen, and that Falstaff and Shallow inhabit a realm separate from the frenetic activity of history. Welles thus opens his film with a double vision of history, with the world of the court moving on a purposeful trajectory, and with the tavern world ambling, seemingly absented from historical time.

Welles makes use of film's visual capacity to enhance the tavern-court dichotomy. Throughout the film, when characters exit the tavern, Welles uses deep focus shots from outside of the tavern that show the menacing, stonewalled English castle looming in the background. The persistent spatial connection between the world of the tavern and the world of the court alerts the audience that the tavern is always subject to the brutal political landscape that sits only a hundred yards or so away. In contrast to the narrow stairways and variant architecture of the tavern, the court is vaster, colder and more open—bare—except for the King's throne and his audience of subjects, comprised of shadowy figures whom Baxter describes as "black storm troopers" (BI, 275). The most striking feature of the court is the diffused light that pours in through the cathedral window and spills onto King Henry IV's seated figure—one image of brightness in an otherwise empty environment, appropriate to a place which undermines the excessive world of the tavern.

If the focal point of Olivier's history is the pageantry of Agincourt and if the focal point of Branagh's history is the glorious aftermath of Agincourt, the focal point of Welles's history is a moment out of officialdom: the play with a play. The play extempore reflects a longing to preserve the tavern space and the unofficial moment before the forces of history inevitably intrude; it is also, however, the site of the shift in the relationship between Hal and Falstaff, as Hal seems to undergo his reformation when he tries out the role of his father. Initially, Hal seems tied to the tavern space, a willing participant in its fun and games. When Falstaff asks, "...shall we have a play extempore?", Hal is obviously excited by Falstaff's request and responds with boyish exuberance, "A play!" (CM, 85) Hal provides a more lukewarm answer to Falstaff in the text, responding to Falstaff's request with placation: "Content, and the argument shall be thy running away" (H4P1, 2.4.281-82). It is a change which conveys both Hal's boyish unpredictability and complicates the reading of Hal as a character who has elected to reform from the start.

At the beginning of the play extempore, it is clear Falstaff and Hal co-rule the tavern. Falstaff's pillow crown and ability to please the crowd with his wit mark him as a mock king of the tavern. Hal demonstrates an intimate connection with the tavern space; he moves through it with ease, a point best captured by the sequence in which, four swift and effortless movements, he knocks Falstaff's pillow to floor, swings off the supporting beams, strips away Doll Tearsheet's outer garment, and kisses her deeply and forcefully. While Falstaff lacks Hal's agility, he dominates the tavern with sheer bulk, his giant body ambling through the tavern while smaller bodies react to his words and movements. He is planet-like: his massive gravitational force pulls the others into his orbit. He enacts his status as a "villainous abominable misleader of youth" as three little kids hoist his absurdly fat body, now topped by a crown superior to the



Figure ii. Welles's Falstaff wearing his cooking pot crown in *Chimes at Midnight*.

pillow—a cooking pot—into an elevated chair—his “throne”—to play a comedic version of Hal’s father scolding his wayward son.

A shift in camera angles during the play within a play marks a shift in the relationship between Hal and Falstaff. When Hal assumes the role of his father, there is seemingly an internal change within him, and he and the camera begin to strip Falstaff of his gravitational powers. While Hal rattles off a list of insults to Falstaff in the character of his father, as the act progresses, as his voice gains momentum and becomes increasingly authoritative and ceremonious, Hal’s tone suggests that the act has gone beyond acting and that he is becoming his father as he speaks. As Falstaff tries to continue the act, dramatically tossing his hat into the air and exclaiming, “If sack and sugar be a fault, God help the wicked!”, Welles frames Falstaff with a high-angle shot from over Hal’s shoulder that places Falstaff at Hal’s feet and reduces his figure in comparison to the towering figure of Hal (H4P1, 2.4.458). This is a reversal from the low-angle shots that had previously framed Falstaff, enhancing his figure so much that he practically filled the entire screen. As the reduced Falstaff rises to his theatrical climax to deliver his “Banish plump Jack and banish all the world” lines, history interrupts. The sheriff pounds on the door, and Falstaff has no chance to gauge whether the performance had been fiction or reality. Abruptly jumping in front of Falstaff, Hal cuts off the performance, staring at Falstaff and saying callously, “I do, I will.” For Falstaff, however, the show goes on. As he reaches out to touch Hal’s arm, the film cuts to a distant shot of Hal, his gaze still locked onto Falstaff. While Hal clearly means what he says, Falstaff misreads, interpreting the words as a performance.

If the tavern is a theater which foreshadows Falstaff’s death, the theater of the court etches it in stone. The official coronation of the Prince is a moment in which Falstaff expects

another play within a play, but instead he gets the cold and hollow rejection of a former friend. Welles considers the sequence to be one of the most terrible scenes in dramatic literature, noting that the phrase “I know thee not” has a “demagogic cruelty to it.” (MI, 165) As Falstaff rushes into the court to congratulate Hal and to receive the favors of the new king, history warns him off, with a column of soldiers holding upright spears and impeding his progress to Hal. Falstaff eventually succeeds in pushing his way through the soldiers, stopping the procession by calling out to his friend, “God save thy grace, King Hal, my royal Hal! God save thee!...God save thee, my sweet boy!” (H4P2, 5.5.40-42). Framed from behind with a low-angle shot, Hal begins his speech with his back to Falstaff, saying at a near whisper, “I know thee not, old man. Fall to thy prayers.” Hal slowly turns in silence, and, oddly, he smirks. For a moment, it seems as though the king is simply playing a theatrical role, imitating his father as he did earlier in the tavern. Falstaff takes the cue and begins to laugh, assuming that it is all fun and games as usual. But Hal regains his kingly composure and sternly cuts off Falstaff’s laughter: “Reply not to me with a fool-born jest” (H4P2, 5.5.54). Here Falstaff faces the finality of what Hal has hinted at all along. Falstaff’s look, however, is not one of utter disdain or horror at Hal, but of admiration. Baxter explains:

It says a great deal for Orson that, although he felt so strongly that Hal was a monster, the shot of Falstaff looking at me—proud of me for being so magnificent—is terribly moving. (BI, 275)

Hal is still performing, only he has learned a new performance style—that of the court—in which he must act like a responsible King, even if he retains some emotional ties to his former tavern self. And Falstaff, perhaps in a moment of selflessness or pride, comes to the stage of official history and plays the sacrificial role. As the coronation proceeds, as the King and his column of

soldiers march forward, carrying history onward with them, Shallow and Falstaff are left behind in the empty space outside the court to ponder what went wrong. Having been banished by Hal, Falstaff moves slowly off through a distant archway, his figure dwarfed by the towering walls of the court, telling himself at an unconvinced whisper that he “shall be sent for soon at night” (H4P2, 5.5.87). In the shadows is the silhouette of the Boy, evoking an ironic version of Henry V’s line before Agincourt: “This story shall the good man teach his son” (H5, 4.3.56). Falstaff is left finally to face the reality that Hal was no longer acting in their play extempore but instead in the theater of hollow, political rhetoric.

History has come full circle with a final image of death, and then it moves on. What follows Falstaff’s exit is a montage—an afterthought to his history. If Branagh and Olivier flash back to mark the less central moments of their histories, Welles does so by flashing forward. A shot of the Archbishop of Canterbury in front of the cathedral telling Prince John that he “likes this fair proceeding of the King’s” is followed by the “fair proceeding” itself: soldiers pushing Doll Tearsheet aside as she tries to intervene in the sheriff’s order to carry Falstaff to the Fleet. A shot of a resigned Bardolph speaking Nym’s line in the text—“The King is a good King, but it must be as it may,” is appropriately reattributed, since Henry V later authorizes Bardolph’s hanging (H5, 2.1.120). A shot of troops mobilizing at Southampton follows, and it is clear that the king has moved on to act like a king, having taken his father’s advice to “busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels” (H4P2, 4.3.343-4). *Henry V* needs no further explanation, for it is the inevitable fallout of an exclusive society and a chain of events tied to the necessities of kingship. The film ends with what it has foreshadowed all along: as the taverners push what Samuel Crowl calls “the largest coffin in the history of film” across deep space to its burial, with the court looming in the background, *Henry V*’s Chorus’s request that the audience “let this acceptance

take” for the sake of what the “stage hath shown” would have been an appropriate voiceover for the end of Welles’s film—less acceptance in the sense of allowing a kingdom for a stage, but more like what Pistol says to the hostess as he (reluctantly) departs for war: “I cannot kiss, that is the humour of it; but, adieu” (H5, Epilogue.13-14; 2.1.54).⁴¹

Welles’ film suggests that there is potentially more riding on drama than pretense; *Chimes* shows acting to have real, tragic consequences that redefine the power relationship between Hal and Falstaff. Falstaff is after all an entertainer and not a critic, and it is his inability to read Hal that turns inevitable history to profound tragedy. Even though Falstaff had plenty of warnings—as Welles points out, “...the farewell is performed about four times during the movie, foreshadowed four times”—he lacks the capacity to make history into a play extempore (CRI, 261). What Welles considers to be the rejection of “Merrie England” is also a rejection of the playfulness of the play. If only Falstaff had donned a critical lens in lieu of his cooking pot crown, if only he had looked deeper into Hal’s performance, and if only he had recognized the point at which the actor becomes the role, perhaps he would have seen that a subject—even a fat one—cannot weigh down the passage of history and the rise of kings. Perhaps then, “I know thee not” would have been less devastating.

⁴¹ Samuel Crowl, “The Long Good-bye: Welles and Falstaff” in Samuel Crowl, *Shakespeare Observed* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992), 49.

Chapter 3:
Talking Back to History

If the spirit of Shakespeare, wearying a little of “wit combats” with Aeschylus and Euripides, Racine and Moliere, has risen now and again during the past three centuries from his couch of flowers in Elysium to revisit the glimpses of the Moon, he must have wondered which of his official interpreters, the actor or the scholar, was misinterpreting him most.

-John Dover Wilson

In his account of the Royal Shakespeare Company’s 1951 performances of the second tetralogy directed by Anthony Quayle and Michael Redgrave, John Dover Wilson expresses disappointment with Richard Burton’s performance as Henry V, particularly with Burton’s quiet rendition of the “Band of Brothers” speech before Agincourt. Dover Wilson writes:

I quite see how Mr. Burton's version of the King, consistent though it was with the whole design, may have left with others that slightly unsatisfying feeling of having been robbed of a climax.⁴²

Dover Wilson’s response reflects a feeling of deprivation, a sense that the performance did not deliver on what it owed. For Dover Wilson, “purple” Shakespearean passages such as the pre-Agincourt speech carry the expectation not just of history, but of histrionics, and if an actor does not ascend the vocal registers with a view to a cigarette in the exhausted aftermath, something has gone missing.

⁴²John Dover Wilson and T. C. Worsley, *Shakespeare's Histories at Stratford, 1951* (London: M. Reinhardt, 1952), 87.

The concept of being robbed of a climax assumes a baseline for appropriate delivery of “Shakespearean” language in performance, a kind of language which values fidelity and authenticity more than an actor’s creativity. Language, more than any other literary or dramatic feature of Shakespeare’s work, seems to be the keystone in identifying Shakespeare as Shakespeare and in preserving him as such. It is the rehearsal of mainstream English in particular that generally signifies the “Shakespeareanness” of a Shakespearean performance. As Hodgdon writes:

[M]ainstream as well as academic critics prefer to hear Shakespeare sound "English" - spoken in the pre-signified rhythms of Received Standard Pronunciation (RSP). Thus naturalizing national identity to performance, the voice becomes both author-itative and authentic, promising (cinematic) access to early modern origins.⁴³

While Received Standard Pronunciation may allow access to Dover Wilson’s erudite and classicized Shakespeare resting “on his couch of flowers in Elysium,” to speak the language of contemporary power is not necessarily to speak early modern. Ralph Alan, another corporate “coach” of Shakespeare, offers a view of Shakespearean language that challenges that of the pre-signified rhythms which usually signify the authentic Bard: He states:

Shakespeare's language is not old English. It's young English. It has all its hormones and is full of life. Organizations try to hide the force of human truth in every kind of Latinate term we can find, like “re-engineering” or “Six Sigma.” Shakespeare empowers people to trust their own language, not the bureaucratic line.⁴⁴

⁴³ Barbara Hodgdon, "Spectacular Bodies: Acting + Cinema + Shakespeare," *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare on Screen*, ed. Diana Henderson (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 98. Hereafter cited as “SB.”

⁴⁴ Harriet Rubin, "Lessons in Shakespeare, from Stage to Boardroom," *The New York Times* (10 November 2007): B4.

What Shakespeare is *supposed* to sound like is not an accurate reflection of a historically “true” Shakespearean voice, but rather a reflection of how and why modern spectators imagine Shakespeare’s voice to sound. While Alan argues that Shakespearean language is itself playful and willing to try out new forms of itself, Dover Wilson’s prescriptive notion of “misinterpretation” cited in my epigraph to this chapter presents a more exclusive, touchy Shakespeare who fears for his own corruption, a Shakespeare who resists a wide range of accessibility. One must be “cultured” to interact productively with Dover Wilson’s Shakespeare at the risk of offending him. The existence of Sparknotes’s “No Fear Shakespeare,” a tool which modernizes Shakespeare’s language, is just one testament to the anxieties of readers in seeking a way to make Shakespeare more comprehensible. “No Fear Shakespeare,” however, is perhaps more often perceived as unscholarly than as inviting. Carlin Romano of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*’s evaluation of “No Fear Shakespeare” sums up “high” art’s hold on Shakespeare: “To screw up literature or not to screw up literature - that is the question.”⁴⁵

While Hal can “drink with any tinker in his own language,” traditionalists like Romano and Dover Wilson hold that one should not tinker with Shakespeare’s language. It is paradoxical that a tool designed to increase the popular draw of Shakespeare would elicit such venom. While, as Douglas Lanier points out, “Shakespeare is everywhere in popular culture,” he also seems to stand apart from it, since Shakespeare’s image as “*the* icon of high or ‘proper’ culture” is incompatible with popular culture’s supposed lack of sophistication.⁴⁶ Although the

⁴⁵ Carlin Romano, “Shakespeare with ‘No Fear,’ No Flavor,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (24 February 2008) 3 March 2008
<http://www.philly.com/inquirer/columnists/carlin_romano/20080224_Shakespeare_with_No_Fear_no_flavor.html>.

⁴⁶ Douglas Lanier, *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture*, (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3.

reconstructed Globe on the South Bank of present-day London is one emblem of a longing to re-popularize Shakespeare and to reenact the myth of democracy in the Elizabethan theater, with respect to Shakespeare's drama itself, culture seems to cling to the sacredness of his poetry above any notions of accessibility.

The range of receptions to different renderings of Shakespearean language in film adaptations of the *Henriad* reveals general support for performances that channel "authentic Shakespearean language" and displeasure for those who do not. Laurence Olivier seems to have delivered on the voice of Henry V that Dover Wilson longed for from Burton, with most of the film's reviewers lavishing synonymous praise on Olivier for his rendering of the role. The sententious but often grouchy Bosley Crowther was gracious, writing in the *New York Times* that Olivier "sets a standard for excellence" in his performance, pinpointing Olivier's "full and vibrant use of his voice" as the source of his success.⁴⁷ The *Wall Street Journal* thought Olivier's performance lived up to the written text, describing his voice as having a "strong, sonorous ring to match Shakespeare's lines."⁴⁸ The *London Times* appreciated Olivier's confident portrayal of a king without doubts, writing that Olivier played the Agincourt sequence on "...on a high, heroic note and never is there danger of a crack."⁴⁹ A *Washington Post* reviewer appreciated Olivier's "perfectly harmonized" mood and tempo.⁵⁰

The reviews share an appreciation of Olivier's charismatic, reassuring manner of speech which casts the king as an unquestionably a good leader. The use of music in the film to frame big speeches is one device that produces such a sense of, as the *Washington Post* reviewer puts

⁴⁷ Bosley Crowther, "The Screen," *New York Times* (18 June 1846): 30.

⁴⁸ "The Theater: Triumph in Technicolor," *Wall Street Journal* (19 June 1946): 10.

⁴⁹ "Shakespeare in Technicolor," *Times* (23 November 1944): 6. Hereafter cited in the text as "SIT."

⁵⁰ "Henry V' Is a Daring And Fruitful Wedding Of Stage and Screen," *Washington Post*, (8 November 1946): 14. Hereafter cited in the text as "WP."

it, “a good and kingly king” (WP, 14). When Olivier delivers his “Once more unto the breach...” speech, for instance, as the English begin their invasion of France, it is one of the few instances in the film in which there is no supporting extra-diegetic sound (H5, 3.1.1-34). While suspenseful music precedes and follows the speech, accompanying the flurry of soldiers charging “unto the breach,” when Olivier speaks, all motion stops, and, aside from the sound of waves crashing onto the shore, there is utter silence. Olivier’s authoritative and eloquent voice echoes: surrounded by a circle of soldiers, he is the center of attention, and history seems to have stopped to listen to his speech. The camera initially frames Olivier with a close shot as the speech begins, but it gradually backs away so that his audience of soldiers becomes increasingly large. As Olivier’s voice grows in magnitude working up to the climatic battle cry of “God for Harry! England and Saint George!”, so too does the scope of the moment, seemingly inflated by his language. (H5, 3.1.34)

Given that the reviewers tended to praise the film for its supposed authenticity and fidelity to Shakespeare, one nearly forgets the secrets of the textual Henry V. One *Times* reviewer lamented the prior violence done to Shakespeare in film representations of his work, having “had his plays cut, hacked, mutilated, and put through the mincing machine of the camera” before Olivier’s film, which managed to “preserve the spirit” (SIT, 6). The critical acclaim for Olivier’s performance is as much a product of what he does not say as what he does say. Shakespeare deals with King Hal and England much more complexly and much less cleanly. In reading Shakespeare’s text, one might question Henry V for coldheartedly rejecting and banishing Falstaff; one might question Henry V for consenting to Bardolph’s hanging; one might question Henry V’s dubious citation of the Salic Law as an excuse for pre-emptive war against the French; one questions Henry V’s rhetorical ruthlessness, especially his terrifying



Figure iii. Laurence Olivier's Henry V commands the camera and draws an attentive crowd for "Once more unto the breach."

threats at Harfleur when he warns the governor that “[t]he gates of mercy shall be all shut up,” threatening to “mow like grass/ [Harfleur’s] fresh fair virgins and flow’ring infants,” to “defile the locks of [its] shrill-shrieking daughters,” to have the town’s fathers “taken by their silver beards, / And their most reverend heads dashed to the walls,” and to have the town’s “naked infants spitted upon pikes” (H5, 3.3.81-123). Though the devices of the reconstructed Globe and historical play create the illusion of Shakespearean authenticity, with the exception of Falstaff’s death, which is softened through sentimentality, all of these moments have been cut along with most other lines that might tarnish the king’s image. In fact, Olivier cuts Shakespeare’s *Henry V* text in half—from around 3,000 lines to around 1,500 lines (CA, 102). The Harfleur speech, presumably, was the first to go.

Yet, even with these drastic excisions, the film somehow captured the “spirit” of the text and had most spectators convinced that Olivier was indeed voicing an authentic Shakespeare. This particular spirit of the *Henriad* accommodated the cultural needs of its historical moment. Filmed for and during World War Two, at a time of great national uncertainty and anxiety, the omission of any textual detail that might challenge the perception of Henry V as anything but unblemished makes sense in that context. History, however, moves on, while the film remains the same, and it is inevitable that the conditions of reception at least change in part, no matter how radical the spectator’s historicist impulse, and a contemporary spectator will inflect the particularities of his or her historical moment onto the film. While a spectator living in a country whose leaders have made questionable foreign policy decisions might cynically dismiss Olivier’s performance as propagandistic, within the world of the film’s production, Olivier proves himself a timely magician in England’s historical moment, turning half of a Shakespearean text into what has been widely regarded as a “faithful” rendering of the conclusion of the *Henriad*.

Branagh has likewise won praise for the leadership he exudes in playing Henry V, though the reviewers identify qualities different from Olivier's suave reassurance, constructing Henry V as more of a troubled but honest everyman. Vincent Canby of the *New York Times* summarizes the way in which Branagh's performance seems powerful even without the poetry:

One does not have to be an anglophile to be moved by Mr. Branagh's Henry when in the late afternoon after Agincourt he turns bewildered to the French herald and asks which side has carried the day.⁵¹

Reviewers appreciated Branagh's accessibility as a king, who according to Stuart Klawans of the *Nation*, "has the face of a commoner"⁵² and who, as Julie Salamon of the *Wall Street Journal* writes, speaks the poetry "...without affect. Nothing's prettified."⁵³ While Branagh does not speak the language of ceremony, for reviewers, it is a performance "Shakespearean" in its own right, but Shakespearean in a refreshingly earthy and honest sense. As Desson Howe of the *Washington Post* writes, Branagh's film had the capacity to "drag William Shakespeare by the doublet and shake him out of the academic coma our school teachers and knighted thespians have put him in."⁵⁴

It is not that Branagh presents an unblemished king; unlike Olivier, he chooses *not* to cut lines that might tarnish the image of the king, wanting to "explore all the paradoxes and contradictions" of the character (B, 139). Ultimately, however, the film constructs Henry V's moments of rhetorical violence, particularly those at Harfleur, as strategically necessary—a political façade. When Henry V, his face covered with mud and blood, coerces Harfleur's

⁵¹ Vincent Canby, "A Down-to-Earth 'Henry V' Discards Spectacle and Pomp," *New York Times* (8 November 1989): C19.

⁵² Stuart Klawans, "Henry V," *Nation* (11 December 1989): 725.

⁵³ Julie Salamon, "Film: The Young Man Who Would Be King," *Wall Street Journal* (9 November 1989): A14.

⁵⁴ Desson Howe, "Making 'Henry' Fit for a King," *Washington Post* (15 December 1989): G65.

governor to yield the city, he afterwards staggers away from the city walls in relief, struggling to drink from his canteen, choking on the water, but nonetheless responsibly ordering Exeter to “[u]se mercy to them all” before collapsing in exhaustion (H5, 3.1.134). It is clear from the king’s body language that his threats to the governor were purely rhetorical—a performance—and as soon as the battle has been secured, his conscience is restored. It is as though one language—that of the body—effectively erases another—the threatening power of the words themselves.

The language of Branagh’s Henry V is redemptive and progressively mature. The dark, machinating voices of Canterbury and Ely in the court scenes at the film’s opening—scenes in which the court resembles a fiery cave or sewer more so than an actual court—are spoken at a whisper, accompanied by a visual language of close shots and half-illuminated faces which suggest the dark, divided forces which drive forward England’s plans for war. When Henry V first enters the film, one might mistake him for Darth Vader, a black silhouette against an illuminated, smoky doorway, processing slowly to his throne to the tune of music resembling John Williams’s “Imperial March.” It is suspenseful, dark music which hardly resembles the stirring “Band of Brothers” speech that precedes the battle of Agincourt and, finally, the glorious “Non Nobis, Domine” choir music that accompanies the tracking shot in the aftermath of Agincourt. While the musical language of the film generally moves from sinister to holy over the course of the film, in between, there are moments of emotional ebb and flow that control the mood of the film and register auras of suspense, hardship, and always in the end, triumph.

Branagh performs the redemption of the king most powerfully during Henry V’s “Upon the king...” speech the night before the Agincourt battle (H5, 4.1.118-272). Having debated the responsibilities of kingship with his men in the disguise of a fellow soldier, Henry V’s soliloquy

begins with him cloaked, sitting by the fire of the misty, moonlit campsite amidst the sleeping bodies of the Boy and his other soldiers. The shot set-up is such that the bodies look as though they are dead, prefiguring the carnage to follow at Agincourt and enhancing the sense of responsibility that the king has to his men. Music creates a sense of emotional ebb and flow to the speech, the musical climaxes queued by moments of private repentance, with the grand finale arriving when Erpingham, who had interrupted the king's monologue to inform him that the nobles were jealous of his absence, leaves the screen, and the repentant Henry, with his face filled with emotion, kneels to the ground and pleads with God to "steel [his soldiers'] hearts" for the battle to come (H5, 4.1.277). He implores absolution for his family's shadowy prehistory—his father's usurping of Richard II's crown:

I Richard's body have interrèd new,
 And on it have bestowed more contrite tears
 Than from it issued forcèd drops of blood. (H5, 4.1.283-85)

As the speech ends, the music fades, dawn drifts in, and Gloucester enters to lure the teary-eyed king out of his privacy, it is clear that the king has made peace with his troubled past as well as with what is to come on the Agincourt's killing fields. The emotional turmoil in Branagh's language provides his character with a sense of identifiable "humanness"—of a king who is flawed but a work in progress—that is perhaps explains the general critical acclaim for his performance even though his language lacks Olivier's unshakeable ceremony.

While reviewers have tended to admire Olivier's unabashedly confident rhetorical performance and Branagh's emotionally taxing but honest performance of Henry V, they have resisted the devaluation of language in *Chimes at Midnight*. The muted and scratchy presentation of Shakespearean language in *Chimes* has challenged audiences with the question of whether

Shakespeare is still Shakespeare when language is secondary to the visual—when Shakespeare is out of sync.

Critics have responded negatively to the film’s scratchy sound quality, a result of *Chimes*’s soundtrack being almost entirely post-synchronized. Much of that criticism has turned on a notion similar to Dover Wilson’s performance expectations for the 1951 performances of the *Henriad*, the idea that the spoken word (or lack thereof) in *Chimes* violates the sanctity of Shakespearean language, that it fails to capture the poeticalness of the poetry. Pauline Kael of the *New Republic*, for instance, writes:

It’s hard enough not to take Shakespeare adapted and transformed by other cultures....but the words of Shakespeare slightly out of sync! This is as intolerable as those old prints of *Henry V* that the miserly distributors circulate—chewed up by the generations of projection machines, crucial syllables lost in the splices.⁵⁵

Kael re-voices Dover Wilson’s “Bardolatry,” suggesting that a successful performance of Shakespeare depends on every one of his syllables being faithfully cherished and preserved. Textual fidelity, however, is clearly not Welles’s utmost concern. For in addition to “subjecting” Shakespeare’s language to poor sound quality, he also condenses the content of four plays into 115 minutes of film (an even more radical condensation than Olivier’s) in which many “crucial syllables” have been omitted. Kael turns her elitist lens onto matters of class, taking a sarcastic jab at the film’s “low lingo”:

⁵⁵ Pauline Kael, Review, *New Republic* (24 June 1967), in *Chimes at Midnight*, ed. Bridget Lyons (London; New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 298. Hereafter cited in the text as “KR.”

Yet, because of technical defects due to poverty, Welles's finest Shakespearean production to date—another near-masterpiece, and this time so very close—cannot reach a large public. There ain't no way. (KR, 300)

The inaudibility of the language in the film, however, while it has a practical cause, has thematically significant effects regardless of intentionality. It contributes to Welles's aim of presenting a fragmented version of history that draws out the tavern-court dichotomy in the film. For Welles, there "ain't no way" that high style, Branagh and Olivier-esque Shakespearean speech is suitable for Falstaff. Rather, his Falstaff stands in opposition to the highfalutin rhetoric that smoothes over and prettifies the ugly sports of history.

Condemning Welles's Falstaff as no more than "a dissolute bumbling, street-corner Santa Claus," Bosley Crowther writes, that *Chimes* has "no business intruding so brashly in the serious Shakespearean affairs of the Lancasters, the Percies, and the Mortimers," a comment which distills the histories to an exclusively royal narrative in its conception.⁵⁶ There is, however, a voice that represents what Crowther would consider "serious Shakespearean affairs" within the film. John Gielgud's Henry IV is the voice of nobility and ceremony within the film, the voice of a powerful king able to control history with rhetoric and voice which reflects the sort of lofty poetic diction for which Kael and Crowther long. It is also the voice of a tired old man using language to cover over his dark memories of illegitimate kingship. Bridget Lyons best describes Gielgud's vocal performance:

The soundtrack gives hollow echoes to the formal tremolo of John Gielgud's voice as he intones Shakespeare's verse—as opposite from the give-and-take of conversation as human speech can get—enforcing the sense of chilly isolation. (SCOW, 6)

⁵⁶ Bosley Crowther, "Screen: Orson Welles Is Falstaff in Uneven Film: Cannes Movie Arrives at Little Carnegie," *New York Times* (20 March 1967): 26.

Gielgud's intoning voice reverberates off the stone walls of the cathedral, representing a voice of authoritative history that exerts power through words that seem detached from feeling, dislocated from their auditors; the court simply hears his words as ritual. His performance simultaneously reflects the distance between king and subject, between performer and spectator, between a "Bardolatrous" Shakespeare and a more genuine, malleable, and relevant Shakespeare.

By contrast, although it is scratchier and more interrupted, the language of the tavern in *Chimes* reflects a less hollow form of communication than that of the court. The post-synchronization of the sound is not the only way in which the film detracts from actor's voices: Welles also uses a number of long, deep-focus shots to distance the spectator from the actor's voice. These, along with de-centered framings of figures, continuous (but fluid) movement of the camera, and rapid cutting in the tavern scenes, encourage the spectator to hone in on space and bodies in lieu of faces and voices. Downplaying the role of language in the tavern offers one way of replacing the artificiality of Gielgud's kingly voice with something more substantive: the body—and Falstaff's in particular. As Michael Anderegg notes, "Against language, Falstaff posits being, presence, physicality."⁵⁷

While the newspaper reviewers tend to view the linguistic deficiencies of the film as technical flaws, there is a way in which a spectator identifies with Falstaff in his inability to hear and to read history for exactly what it is. Michael Anderegg writes, "The difficulty of penetrating language, of determining the truth and weight of words, of reading history, comes to be, in especial, Falstaff's dilemma" (MA, 332). Falstaff's inability to process language is particularly evident in Hal's "I know you all..." speech, the first of many moments in which the

⁵⁷ Michael Anderegg, "'Every Third Word A Lie': Rhetoric and History in Orson Welles's *Chimes at Midnight*," in *Chimes at Midnight*, ed. Bridget Gellert Lyons (Rutgers: The State University, 1988), 298. Hereafter cited as "MA."

Prince hints at his ultimate betrayal of Falstaff (H4P1, 1.3.185-207). Instead of staging the sequence as a soliloquy as Shakespeare does in the text, Welles frames the sequence with a soap opera-like shot set-up: Hal speaks in the foreground with his back turned to Falstaff, who stands in the background looking over Hal's shoulder. Baxter delivers the speech at a near whisper, making it unclear whether or not Falstaff can hear Hal, despite their close proximity. Because Baxter reduces the language to a near mutter, a spectator is forced to read Hal and Falstaff by looking at their facial and bodily expressions, which makes it more difficult to assess what they might be thinking and feeling during the speech. As Hal tells Falstaff that he'll "so offend, to make offence a skill; / Redeeming time when men think least [he] will," Baxter winks—deepening the ambiguity of the moment.⁵⁸ While in the text, these lines mark the end of the speech, Welles repositions Hal's line from earlier in the play that Falstaff shall "have the hanging of thieves" to the end of this speech, with Hal speaking the words in seeming jest as he runs off toward the castle, playfully skipping and leaping into the air. While Hal's body language suggests that he is still a child, his words foreshadow his ultimate transformation into the mature, Machiavellian Prince. Indeed, this treatment of the speech in time and space creates a sense of confusion as to whether or not Hal is speaking the language of the court—the language of rhetoric—or the language of the tavern—that of the body; he seems stranded between the two. Yet if Hal does indeed foretell the death of Falstaff and the tavern, the sound reaches neither the spectator nor the one who needs to listen most: Falstaff.

In his attempt to block out all rhetoric and the promises of death embedded in Hal's words, Falstaff misses the mark: he is too consumed by sugar, sack, and plays extempore to see that history is closing in on the Boar's Head. The spectator, then, is left to play chorus to the

⁵⁸ Baxter laments the wink in his interview with Bridget Lyons: "I cringe every time I see it...It's the thing I think I do least well in the film. I hate it" (BI, 270).

erring tavern king. History does not turn to tragedy in big, “purple” moments of high drama, but rather in quiet moments of partial hearing, the moments that the reviewers would have banished from a “Shakespearean” performance.

The overall story that these film adaptations tell together as a history of the histories seems to equate elevated Shakespearean language with a “royal” reading of the *Henriad*, one that values the king’s moments of triumph and fulfillment of kingly responsibility, while the diminished language of *Chimes* tells a counter-historical narrative, one that laments the end of Falstaff. There is a mix of disdain and sorrow for the dissembling development of a leader in *Chimes*, and in focusing on the fallout of Hal’s manipulation of words in the story and by forcing the audience to see Falstaff off to the grave, wondering until the end when he will be sent for at night, one realizes that Branagh and Olivier are just full of hot Shakespeare. But what I read into history and take away from it is dependent on personal sensibilities and on where I choose to imagine myself in history. I second Holden Caulfield when he says of Olivier:

I just don't see what's so marvelous about Sir Laurence Olivier, that's all. He has a terrific voice and he's a hell of a handsome guy and he's very nice to watch walking or dueling or something but...[he] was too much like a goddamn general instead of a sad screwed-up type guy.⁵⁹

Perhaps Holden would have responded more favorably to Welles’s Falstaff. A little sadness and honesty read into Shakespeare’s language not only makes for a more compelling story, but it also challenges traditionalist assumptions about what constitutes “Shakespearean” language. If a performance silences or deemphasizes “Shakespearean” language, and if, like *Chimes*, it robs its audience of a climax, perhaps it is not so much un-Shakespearean as it is refreshingly real.

⁵⁹ J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (Boston: Bantam Books, 1989), 117.

Epilogue:

The End of History

Henry was buried with a spectacular effigy covered in silver and gold. But two gold teeth were pulled from that effigy during the reign of Edward IV, and worse desecration would follow. By 1599, all that remained of Henry's effigy was a headless torso.⁶⁰

-James Shapiro

To travel all the way to Westminster Abbey in search of Shakespeare and Henry V only to unwittingly cruise past both of their monuments en route to the "loo" is perhaps emblematic of the distracted historical sense of a contemporary undergraduate student. The inevitable stumblings of individual experience make absurd any hopes of conjuring up the dead: I always find that I turn up a few steps short, at a partial distance from tradition.

Ben Sheward, verger of the Abbey and our tour guide, is emblematic of the intersection of religion, history, and tourism that a visitor experiences today at Westminster. After solemnly reading the noonday prayer, Sheward, decked in clergy robes, hustled down from the pulpit and scurried behind the information desk, retrieving an English flag with which he led the tour group (flock?) exuberantly unto the breach through the abbey. Granting the group "special access" to the choir benches in the nave before the great altar, Sheward effortlessly shifted from historian, enthralling his audience with the story of the Abbey's construction, to constable, gruffly leading a ticket-less trespasser outside the ropes. There is, after all, a cost involved in experiencing the religio-historical vibes embedded in the Abbey's exclusive "champagne rooms."

One such (grave) "perk" of the tour was access to the Abbey's "center of holiness," a

⁶⁰ James Shapiro, *A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006), 71.

tomb surrounded by more tombs of other English kings, the west-most of which is that of Henry V, his likeness mostly obscured by a stone wall. Although the subject of my year-long project was reduced to a dimly lit, shadowy effigy, I knew that a long, varied, and continually evolving story laid within, part of which entailed the effigy's afterlife: its silver and gold having been stripped, it now was reduced to a block of oak. The sight of a figure who has lived for me on stage, on screen, in books, and in my mind over this past year, now monumentalized, emphasized for me the mystical way in which inanimate objects catalogue old stories and await a student of history (or a verger of the Abbey) to animate them.

Westminster Abbey is dense with the dead: each nook and cranny contains a cache of stories. As the tour moved into Poet's Corner and gathered around the bust of Shakespeare, who chose not to be buried in Westminster but instead in Holy Trinity Church in his hometown of Stratford, I realized that I was standing on the small square of stone pavement which commemorated Sir Laurence Olivier. This was about as close to the dead as it was possible to get, and yet it seemed like any old stone, only growing in significance as I traveled away from the place, back across the Atlantic, and back in time to a video recording of Olivier's televised funeral in the Abbey that I had watched in September.

On October 21, 1989, two-thousand people had gathered in the Abbey to commemorate Lord Olivier's life, a ceremony that brought together religion and art, past and present, theater and reality, life and death. Mementos representative of Olivier's life—including a sword passed along through generations of famous actors from Edmund Kean in the eighteenth century to Henry Irving, through the Terry family, to John Gielgud, and finally to Olivier—were presented like hosts to the high altar; luminaries such as Gielgud and Peggy Ashcroft read prayers and canonical English poetry, including Milton's "Lycidas"; the choir sung *Te Deums* and *Non*

Nobises; and a recording of Olivier reading the Saint Crispin Day's speech reverberated through the otherwise silent Abbey.⁶¹ It was an event that solidified an individual's place in the graveyard of English culture, but it was also a ritualized, communal remembrance of English identity—a reenactment of Henry V's call for remembrance on the yearly feast of Saint Crispin.

Following another trajectory of history, I entered the reconstructed Globe on London's South Bank in hopes of gaining some semblance of the authentic Elizabethan theatrical experience. Guided through the perfectly sterile reception area, through the museum, and out into the (fake) empty Globe, it occurred to me that the experience of its likeness in Laurence Olivier's film felt closer to the original. There was something off-putting and gimmicky about an establishment designed to usher Shakes-seekers through its confines into the gift shop within a half-hour, and I could only imagine the absurdity of playing Elizabethan groundling center of stage if I had visited in the summer when the shows were running. Fortunately for those who would attend a performance, certain concessions to the replica were made, notably a restriction on urinating on the theater lawn, apparently a commonplace in Elizabethan times, and the replacement of an authentic, hazelnut-shell floor with concrete to alleviate drainage woes. The irony of my experience is that the new Globe was meticulously reconstructed and is perhaps the most factually representative likeness of Shakespeare's theater that exists today, with all the known details collated and applied as much as possible without it being a health hazard, and yet it felt stale, uncharged with aura, and far from Shakespeare. "Shakespearean" is an adjective of fantasy, one that a student of history constructs, and with it comes considerable expectations. Without the imaginary act that *Henry V's* Chorus speaks of, which requires a spectator to do the work of piecing out the story in his or her own mind, "Shakespearean" feels flat, more facsimile

⁶¹ *Olivier Memorial Service* (1989) VHS, Put it on Video, 1989.

than fantasy.

The next day I sent my retinue—my parents and my girlfriend Annemarie—to the Tower, for I had an appointment to play scholar. Returning to the South Bank to the Royal National Theatre archives in search of a recording of a performance that I had to this point only read of, I watched Nicholas Hytner's *Henry V* (2005), which the NT had rehearsed during the outbreak of Iraq II and to which the performance responded. That I forewent a day of tourism to walk across Waterloo Bridge to a small cell across from the Old Vic to spend the day staring at a poorly lighted, blurry video tape of an event obviously not meant for film perhaps reflects my overreaching drive to connect art and politics, to forge a relevant link, as the Hytner production had, between the U.S. and British military enterprises of the present and Shakespeare's Henry V's invasion of France. Theater history, Shakespearean history, and British-American history conveniently coincided: rehearsals for the production began the night that Bush and Blair announced that they would bypass the U.N. Security Council and invade Iraq unless Saddam went into exile. Deploying numerous devices linking the two wars, the performance included the use of a screen above stage which displayed a home video style clip flashback to Falstaff and taverners in modern street clothes in a modern pub; clips of Henry V going on the news looking like Bush or Blair selling the war to national audiences; and a newsreel propaganda video accompanied by rap music after Agincourt that might have lead into "Anderson Cooper 360." The Hytner production was going to be my evidence that the history plays still mattered.

The reviewers of the production revived the Shakespearean authenticity debate. Jasper Rees of the *Daily Telegraph* billed Adrian Lester's Henry as a "King for Our Times,"⁶² and admired not only the way in which the role connected to contemporary political figures; he also

⁶² Jasper Rees, "A King for Our Times," *Daily Telegraph* (29 April 2003): A1.

mentioned that Lester is black—a fact which made the *Sunday Times* nervous enough that its reviewer countered stereotypical assumptions about black men by saying that Lester is the “father of a two-year-old daughter [who] doesn’t drink, smoke or do drugs.”⁶³ That the casting of a black actor, might, as Charles Spencer of the *Daily Telegraph* wrote, “raise some eyebrows” reflects the cultural stakes of casting English kings in a climate where Shakespearean “traditions” jostle with latent racism.⁶⁴ While Spencer considered Lester’s performance a success, deeming Lester’s casting as “a celebration of the multicultural nature of Britain today,” others bristled, not so much at a black Henry, but at Hytner’s nerve in staging such an unpatriotic production at the National. Toby Young of the *Spectator* was “reduced to a sputtering, eye-popping rage,” writing, “How dare he [Hytner] stage such an unpatriotic production of *Henry V* in the Royal National Theatre.” He continues:

Why not a production of *Macbeth* set in Baghdad with Saddam as the Scottish tyrant? Heaven forbid that one of Britain’s enemies should be attacked in the National Theatre rather than one of our leaders.⁶⁵

Young’s question suggests how Shakespeare and what we ventriloquize through him is as much a political question as it is an artistic one.

In watching the Hytner production, I could barely even make out the stage, the exception being the unmistakable image of an actual armored car emerging onto the stage—intended, according to Hytner, to generate an authentic sense of the “very real experience of battle; what it might be like to be out there facing death.”⁶⁶ Given the faulty videotape, I would have had no

⁶³ “The King is Cool,” *Times* (27 April 2003): A1.

⁶⁴ Charles Spencer, “A Tale for Our Time Summons the Blood,” *Daily Telegraph* (14 May 2003): A1.

⁶⁵ Toby Young, “Unpatriotic Travesty,” *Spectator* (24 May 2003): 58.

⁶⁶ Claire Allfree, “A Serious Business,” *Metrolife* (29 April 2003): 17.

idea of that. Sound was really the best available documentation, which also became a challenge to piece-out when my headset gave out in one ear, prompting a resigned shrug and apology from the archivist. It was never clearer that history is not what happened, but what one makes of it, or at least what one *can* make of it. Filmed theater risks the distancing effect of the reconstructed Globe—becoming a shadow of itself and a memento that actually denies access to a past event.

I had missed out on this particular account of history, for the life of the event seemed absent in facsimile: isolated in a small computer lab on the third floor of an immaculately clean office building, the unworthy scaffold never transformed into the vasty fields of France; it would only do so, perhaps, for those who had attended, those who could remember and feel, once again, the presence of the event. Film, as opposed to filmed theater, is somehow more accessible. While the films remain ostensibly the same things formally, they evolve, gathering new associations as the conditions surrounding their viewing change. They are further meant to be replayed, an impossibility in the theater, since one's presence is part of a live performance.

The Bush/Blair-Henry V marriage had become old news anyway. The history ball kept rolling, gathering fresh associations. Jacob Weisberg, appearing on the "Colbert Report" to pitch his new book, *The Bush Tragedy*, added John McCain to the mix, linking McCain's expressed willingness to remain in Iraq for one hundred years to the Hundred Year's War on which Shakespeare's histories focus. Anything that is at all like Shakespeare, apparently, is worth the comparison. Another wayward royal, though not next in line to the throne, Prince Harry, had just made headlines for his heroics in Afghanistan, prompting Mark Tran of the *Guardian* to term his "metamorphosis from party animal to warrior" as reading "like a Hollywood script – or

Shakespeare's *Henry Five*.”⁶⁷ The continual reconfiguration of the play to accommodate essentially any Anglophone ruler or political system of beliefs is not necessarily, on the part of the media, an attempt to stretch Shakespeare's histories into a story that matters—as is my preoccupation—but rather an attempt to understand history as it is currently unfolding as meaningful by bolstering it with Shakespearean cache and the high drama widely associated with it. Every voice needs a new angle, or as Robert Fox of the *Guardian* has said of the much ado about Harry: “It isn't so much that all the world is a stage, as Shakespeare had it, but all the world now is a tabloid.”⁶⁸

The Royal Shakespeare Company's marketing of its 2008 "octology" of the histories from *Richard II* to *Richard III* reflected a drive to charge its own theater history with significance, billing its culmination of the eight-play repertoire over a four day period as “One of the Great Events of Modern Theatre.” The RSC intended their histories to go out with a bang, using a marketing strategy that combines the suspense of teleology with Bardolatry:

This is the final opportunity for audiences to see this once in a lifetime cycle as it reaches its climax at the Roundhouse. Eight plays, charting 100 years of English history, dramatised by the world's greatest playwright.⁶⁹

I was in Stratford, however, before the ultimate climax—only, as it were, for the penultimate climax.

Sitting next to the runway on the opening night of the sequence, close enough to feel the pounding steps of actors running onto the stage, there was an excitement to being there different

⁶⁷ Mark Tran, “From Party Animal to Soldier,” *Guardian* (28 February 2008) 3 March 2008 <http://blogs.guardian.co.uk/news/2008/02/from_party_animal_to_soldier_1.html>.

⁶⁸ Robert Fox, “Once More Unto the Breach,” *Guardian* (29 February 2008) 3 March 2008 <http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/robert_fox/2008/02/once_more_onto_the_breach.html>.

⁶⁹ Royal Shakespeare Company, Marketing Pamphlet, *The Histories* (Stratford: Royal Shakespeare Company, 2008).

from the second-hand feeling of watching film. A competing sense of being there was the homey, “small world” sense of the theater community. An elderly woman who sat next to me for two of the four performances told my parents and girlfriend that she had found her soul mate, since she and I were both “mad on the Bogdanovs.” I felt a certain sonic familiarity in reading the introductory article in the *Richard II* program about the role of the bible in the histories, and looking down, I was not surprised to see that Professor Ralph Williams was its author. Looking up, there was Professor Williams, encamped, like Woodstock's ghost, across the stalls. In addition, at least four other associates of the University had made the “Spring” break pilgrimage to Stratford, so I was as much conjuring the suburban tundra of Ann Arbor as the vasty fields of France.

Specters from my pre-history notwithstanding, as to the performance, the thing itself, Susannah Clapp of the *Guardian*'s observation that the “RSC's Courtyard is full of reproachful ghosts and echoes” neatly summarizes how watching the octology in sequence produced the sense that history was uncanny—haunted by recurring presences from the past.⁷⁰ The production's use of doubling unified elements within and between the plays, emphatically positioning *Richard II*, which I had previously thought of as a prologue to the *Henries*, within an already troubled history by having Chuk Iwuji's murdered Gloucester wander the stage as Bolingbroke accused Mowbray of his murder. Iwuji along with Roger Watkins, who had previously played John of Gaunt, reappeared as the keeper and groom to hear Richard's swan song, so that two figures of Richard's shadowy past haunted him just before his death.

Descending from the ceiling onto the stage was a piano with a masked man playing a minimalist hotel bar routine, who upon landing, thrust off the mask, revealing himself to be the same actor

⁷⁰ Susannah Clapp, “He Grew into the Role...,” *Guardian* (26 August 2007) 3 March 2008 <http://arts.guardian.co.uk/theatre/drama/reviews/story/0,,2156290,00.html#article_continue>.

who played Bagot, one of Richard's supporting "caterpillars of the commonwealth," and stabbed the king (R2, 2.4.165). History was neatly transformed from turning on Exton's motivated (mis)reading of Henry IV's intentions to the state turning inward and feeding upon itself, emphasizing the utter isolation of Richard by the play's end. Forbes Masson's Bagot continued to haunt the plays, reappearing in *Henry IV Part 2* as Rumour and again in *Henry V* as Chorus, sporadically remaining on stage to glare out at the audience, creating the sense of a story narrated by Cain wandering in the night.

Jonathan Slinger's Richard was another vision of mischief set afoot, not only for reappearing barefoot in his white nightie in *Henry IV Part 2* to haunt Bolingbroke, but for stealing the show on the opening night with a performance that dwarfed the rest of the week, rendering other, less risky roles flat. In white make-up and dolled-up with a curly red wig, Slinger grabbed the attention with a performance that rashly fluctuated from delicate and effeminate to immensely powerful and dangerous. Also dressed in white dress were his supporters, especially Isabel, who with her consistently dazed stare seemed a drug addicted, porcelain doll at risk of being shattered at any moment with Richard's rule, creating the sense that the royals were deeply troubled and fragile megalomaniacs, childish beneficiaries of a luxurious life, yet too nonchalant and impulsive to confront the troubles of the state with more than hasty regard. Slinger's Richard was high fashion, needy, and empty, and the moment when he plucked off his red wig while telling "sad stories of the death of kings" to reveal his bald, blistered scalp was an entirely believable disrobement of ceremony and a striking revelation of his inner anguish (R2, 3.2.156).

Marked by shiny black leather trench coats and gloves, Clive Wood's Bolingbroke and his rebel supporters were clearly more equipped to seize and retain power: Bolingbroke was a

cool thug unfazed by Richard's reactionary emotional outbursts in their moments of confrontation. Wood played the crown transfer scene with remarkable pragmatism, responding to Richard's angrily shouted attempt to emphasize that Bolingbroke was indeed usurping the crown ("Here, cousin, seize the crown...") with an annoyed groan at the glitch in the transaction and a remarkably patient response directed as though to a difficult toddler: "I thought you had been willing to resign" (R2, 4.2.181; 4.2.189).

Stagecraft also knotted the histories, with the demise of both kings—Richard II and Henry IV—through the tetralogy, marked by a column of sand falling from the ceiling shortly before their deaths, as though exorcizing divine right. Henry IV's transformation from an implacable power monger to a wearied king soon to die was emphasized by another recurrent situation: the same crate that had served, after Shrewsbury, as a more practical throne—when he hardly looked up from the newspaper to acknowledge the heads of traitors that were hurled toward him—reappeared in *Henry IV Part 2*, revealing a clearly exhausted king struggling to consolidate his rule and clearly living with the guilt of his questionable rise to power.

The French in *Henry V* were not only distinguished in decadence from the English with showy gold slacks, long turquoise robes, and jewelry, but with trapezes on which they contorted themselves and swung above the stage, where the piano from Richard II's court again floated above the stage, drawing a connection between the two groups of gentility. The Daulphin in particular resembled an upstart crow beautified with feathers, nauseatingly over-civilized and dramatic. Harfleur and Agincourt were staged as vertical warfare, with the English entrenched in caverns in the stage and the French dropping like timid spiders for the battles, drawing a visual distinction between the earnest, earthy English fighting tactics and the meandering, ineffectual puissance of the French.



Figure iv. The sand runs out on Jonathan Slinger's *Richard II*, with Hannah Barrie's Isabel looking on in the background.

Moments of talking to the audience added unexpected humor to the productions, most notably in *Richard II*, when the Servant and the Gardener entered the stage with loppers and a weed sprayer, which they sprayed over the audience as the characters spun out the elaborate metaphor of England as a garden “full of weeds” and “swarming with caterpillars” (R2, 3.4.44; 3.4.47). As the Gardener proclaimed that he would “root away the noisome weeds,” the Servant brandished his loppers at a group of elderly spectators in the front row, prompting one woman to raise her finger in the face of the actor as if to say, “Oh, no you don’t, young man!” (R2, 3.4.37-38). Similarly, David Warner’s Falstaff in *Henry IV Part I* turned his soliloquy before Shrewsbury about how he is ashamed of his soldiers into a litany of insults against the audience members sitting right of stage, calling them “cankers of a calm world and a long peace, ten times more dishonourable ragged than an old feazed ensign,” adding a level of sobering self-reflectiveness to what is already an ironically funny scene, especially considering the source of the words (H4P1, 4.2.29-31).

I found Warner’s Falstaff boring and agreed wholeheartedly with Annemarie when she wondered why I liked Falstaff so much: “He’s just some drunk guy.” This is nothing against Warner’s performance: my disappointment is more a function of the kind of Falstaff that I wanted from the plays, a more muted, sad, knowing, subjected, and generally complex Falstaff underneath the wit and fun—a Falstaff that is hard to reject and a figure that represents a competing world view to challenge the responsible progression of history. Hal was right to banish this Falstaff. There was nothing sad or surprising about his rejection at the end of *Henry IV Part 2*: the procession appeared upstage and moved down a metal stairwell into the ground, so that Hal never actually had to pass Falstaff—appropriately so, since the two characters created no semblance of a meaningful attachment.



Figure v. Geoffrey Streatfield's Hal and David Warner's Falstaff looking detached.

Geoffrey Streatfield's Hal/Henry V was equally safe, though the audience was at odds with that assessment, enthusiastically applauding his performance. This particular Henry V was handsome, earnest, and funny—good for England—but to me he seemed like a frat boy having played too much "Halo," exhibiting a kind of manic disregard for Falstaff and a panic about ruling that failed to create an interesting tension within the character or to capture the character's shifts from compassion to rage, wastrel to general, informality to ceremony. This Hal lacked ceremony, but he also lacked what the *Times*'s Christopher Hart called the "requisite ruthlessness,"⁷¹ far from how Kenneth Tynan described the cool and complex Richard Burton from over a half-century before: "...a brimming pool running disturbingly deep... He turned interested speculation into awe as soon as he started to speak."⁷² Streatfield limped through the Agincourt speech, perhaps wanting not to risk cliché by overdoing it. He was clearly selling a treacherous battle at low odds to tired soldiers, and there was nothing celebratory or even exciting about the moment. It was like a calculus teacher explaining why one would want to find a derivative, and I found myself feeling like Dover Wilson, of all things: robbed of a climax.

And so history went out not with a bang, but with a shrug. There was little that was shocking—or awing. Richard Morrison of the *Times* provided an honest assessment of experiencing the marathon of the histories:

You do sometimes feel, when you sit through cultural marathons such as Wagner's *Ring*, that part of the euphoria you experience at the end can be attributed to standing up and

⁷¹ Christopher Hart, "Henry V," *Times* (11 November 2007) 3 March 2008 <http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/stage/theatre/article2830851.ece>.

⁷² "Timeline," *The Official Richard Burton Website*. 3 March 2008 <http://www.richardburton.com/life_43bot.htm>.

restoring some semblance of circulation to your numbed buttocks.⁷³

Endurance notwithstanding, my feeling of privilege in watching the most royal of Shakespeare companies was also muted by having to jab at least one from among my sleepy retinue during each performance. There was a sense of waiting pervasive in the Courtyard, perhaps even from the (surely exhausted) company—waiting not only for the final climax of history, but for their new 112.8 million pound “Royal Shakespeare Theatre,” slated to be completed in 2010.

According to a woman at “Othello’s” restaurant, one of many gimmicky commercial capitalizations of the Shakespeare and RSC empires, Stratford felt like a ghost town not because of the apparitions of Woodstock, Richard II, and Henry IV, but because the town was awaiting Patrick Stewart’s arrival to play Claudius the following week.

Somehow it all seemed routine as Henry V earnestly plundered France and Kate at the end of history. And as Chorus asked the audience to “let this acceptance take” one last time for this project, crumpled and sore bodies gladly took him up on the offer, sleepily arising and funneling out of the theater into the cold and the wet, moving down Waterside past the Dirty Duck in quiet conversation (H5, Epilogue.14). Most would return for the rest of the shows, with the *Henry VI* plays and *Richard III* still to come over the weekend, but I had a flight to catch the next day, and history appropriately ended for me at an intermission. The end of history was not an end, nor was it a beginning, but just one place in the never-ending cycle of the histories. No matter that the end never crowned all, for I had already found my place in history long before: far from Iraq, Afghanistan, Bardolatrists, thesis deadlines, job interviews, worms, graves, and epitaphs, I sit a co-king of the Boar’s Head alongside Orson Welles’s Falstaff, trying on his

⁷³ Richard Morrison, “Royal Shakespeare Company: the Histories,” *The Times* (1 March 2008) 3 March 2008
<http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/whats_on/article3445128.ece?openComment=true>.

majestic cooking pot crown, in the midst of a play extempore.

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