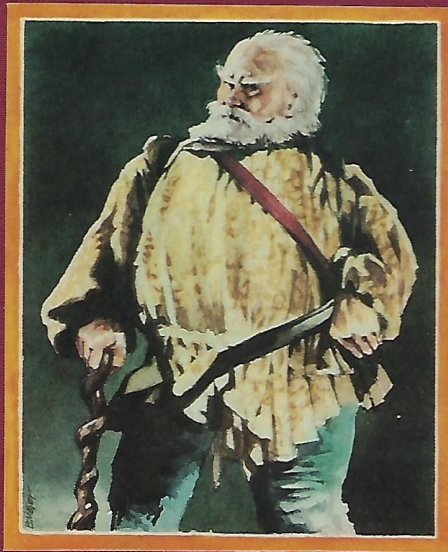


THE GUILD
Shakespeare



THE GUILD

Shakespeare

RICHARD II
HENRY IV, PART 1

BY
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

EDITED BY
JOHN F. ANDREWS

Foreword by Jeremy Irons

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FOREWORD

to

RICHARD II

by Jeremy Irons



Shakespeare's plays and the characters within them can and will be played in many different ways. That may help explain why they are continually being performed. Shakespeare's roles allow actors to expand and explore their craft to the utmost; one reason is that, unlike many lesser playwrights, he offers characters who can be found by minute examination of the text. This is particularly true of *Richard II*. Here we have a play that is written entirely in verse, and portrayal of its characters depends largely on speaking the verse correctly, with an understanding that is both intellectual and emotional.

JEREMY IRONS' Shakespearean roles include Don Pedro in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*, and the title role in *Richard II*. Among his many other acting credits are *The Real Thing* on Broadway, for which he won a Tony Award, the British television production of *Brideshead Revisited*, and the films *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, *Betrayal*, *Swann in Love*, *The Mission*, and *Dead Ringers*.

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THE GUILD SHAKESPEARE

When I came to play the title role in 1986 at Stratford-upon-Avon, there were already notable performances in the public's memory. Especially, I suppose, that of Sir John Gielgud, the master of brilliant verse speaking. The most interesting directorial interpretation seems to have been John Barton's RSC production in 1973, where Ian Richardson and Richard Pasco alternated in the roles of Bolingbroke and the King. Both David Warner and Alan Howard had also played the role and were liked by many. (As I write, I am reminded that Derek Jacobi is rehearsing his *Richard* in London.) Playing Shakespeare in England was ever thus. You are always trying to make your mark in the shadow of your peers.

As a play *Richard II* has the nature of a requiem, with Shakespeare, having early on set the King up for his fall, writing five "aria" scenes showing Richard's metamorphosis from God-King to Dead Man.

When I started rehearsal I decided to look at Richard not as he is often played—as a man changing and learning about himself as various calamities befall him—but rather as a man who, while adapting to violent upheaval in his life, shows us, the audience, his true mettle by the way he comes to terms with the loss of everything he loves. I preferred to look at him as one looks at an onion, and to peel off the skins as the play progressed.

I held in my mind the successful Hollywood movie mogul, complete with Rolls Royce, yacht, beautiful young wife, and always the best table at the best restaurants, who loses his job and finds that the Rolls, yacht, and Beverly Hills mansion have to go, discovers that the best table is no longer his, realizes that his friends are cutting him, and soon learns that ugly gossip and

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FOREWORD BY JEREMY IRONS

jokes are starting to circulate about him. Does he change as he turns into that middle-aged unemployed man next door? Or is it only our perception of him that changes? Does he change from a mogul into a man? Or do we merely come to perceive him as a man rather than as a mogul? I decided to explore the latter hypothesis.

Son of the Warrior-King Richard the Lionheart, scourge of the French, Richard II was born into his job in the English Court in Bordeaux, France. His father was killed when he was nine, and for several years the Kingdom was in effect ruled by his uncles Gaunt, York, and Gloucester, who constantly plotted to take the throne away from him. As he grew up, Richard took over more power. He soon showed, however, that he had not inherited his father's warrior spirit. He brought to an end the expensive One Hundred Years War with the French and began to encourage the arts. He became Chaucer's patron and started the building of Gloucester Cathedral, one of the most magnificent edifices of its time. He moved the Court back to London on his accession. Instead of allowing it to remain the military establishment it had been, moreover, Richard changed the atmosphere of the Court by introducing ladies into his Royal circle. One pictures the Court flowering, with fashion, music, and art becoming its chief preoccupations.

During his father's and his grandfather's time, the Court had been funded by the booty plundered from France. Now with the long years of war ended, Richard began to tax his people to raise more revenue. Nowadays we pay taxes without a second thought, but then it was innovative, and to many quite appalling. Gaunt criticized Richard for letting "this Land by Lease; . . . Land-

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lord of England art thou now, not King." But times were changing. A "middle" or tradesmen's class was emerging, and Parliament—the "Commons"—was developing in power and influence. In fact, modern democratic England as we know it was beginning to develop.

As I thought about the role, I concluded that Richard's major fault was his failure to realise that it was not enough to be "The Deputy elected by the Lord" alone. Contrary to his beliefs, "The Breath of worldly Men" was starting to be a force to be reckoned with. I did not see him as naive in any way—just blind to the forces of social change that were at work.

After the death of his beloved first wife in childbirth, in order to cement the peace with France, Richard married a nine-year-old French princess with the proviso that he should not consummate their relationship until she turned twelve. Realizing how vulnerable his position was without an heir, Richard sought to provide himself with a successor. I consider it an example of his political cunning that he banished Bolingbroke just long enough for his wife to turn twelve and have the chance to provide him with an heir, thereby strengthening his position before his cousin's return.

Critics have made much of the ease with which Richard gives up the crown once he realises his people are not behind him. There is historical documentation that he did not like the job and would have preferred to abdicate in favour of his cousin Aumerle. Richard's Catch-22 was his implicit belief in Divine Right: he could not not be King. Even if he were deposed, he would still be God's elect, though he might be spared the burdens the position carried with it. It is interesting that, having received his death

blow, Richard utters to the murderer "Exton, thy fierce Hand / Hath with the King's Blood stain'd the King's own Land." Even though he is being stripped of everything, he still knows he is King.

In such turbulent times as the late Middle Ages, to have the Monarch inviolable was an effective device to prevent constant usurpation. Having broken the line of Divine Right by taking the throne, Bolingbroke finds, as he becomes Henry IV, that the crown sits very uneasily on his head. As he watches revolution erupt around him, he gets a foretaste of the Wars of the Roses that will plague his successors.

I loved the opportunity that playing Richard night after night gave me to learn and to experiment as an actor. I thought it a privilege to allow the audience to get to know this complicated man, and as they watched Richard losing friends, wife, country, and finally, his life, I tried to touch a chord in them of how they had felt when they had lost someone they loved. I tried to play Richard with humour and irony, and to avoid the ever present pitfalls of pathos. And I was constantly aware that I was speaking some of Shakespeare's most beautiful verse and exploring some of his most original thoughts.

Although I have outlined some of the paths my mind explored, I cannot in this limited space cover all of the ideas we tried in our production, some of which succeeded, some of which failed. I only hope one day to have the chance to play Richard II again. I hope also that the poetry of this play will work its magic in the same way on you as it continues to do on me.

Editor's Introduction to

RICHARD II

and

HENRY IV, PART 1



With the two plays in this volume we begin our exploration of Shakespeare's "English epic": an eight-part sequence on the historical and political roots of the Elizabethan order.

Before Shakespeare turned his hand to the works that we will look at first, he had already produced four dramatic chronicles on the dynastic conflicts that tore England apart in the late fifteenth century: three plays on the troubled reign of *King Henry the Sixth* (probably written between 1589 and 1591) and a fourth play on the tyranny of *King Richard the Third* (probably in 1591–92). By the time the playwright completed his second historical mini-series with the tragedy of *King Richard the Second* (probably in 1595), the two parts of a history of *King Henry the Fourth* (probably in 1596–97), and a culminating drama on the triumphs of *King Henry the Fifth* (probably in 1599), he had enriched the lives of his contem-

poraries with four additional "mirrors" in which they might contemplate the sources of their identity as a people. Along the way, meanwhile, he had written a ninth history play (*King John*, probably in 1596) on the lessons to be learned from an earlier English monarchy. And a little more than a decade later he would round out his dramatic career with a tenth historical pageant (*King Henry the Eighth*, probably in 1613) on the ruler whose majestic daughter had bestowed her name on England's greatest age.

There is no reason to assume that Shakespeare anticipated at the outset that he would produce so panoramic a survey of "the matter of Britain." By the time he drew his unprecedented undertaking to a close, however, he must have realized that in the grandeur of its scope and vision his cycle of English history plays was an accomplishment to rival the greatest literary achievements of Greek and Roman antiquity: the epics of Homer and Vergil, and the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Seneca.

Like his classical forebears, Shakespeare chose for his "argument" a theme that was both sweeping and complex: a story with bold, clear outlines, but one that lent itself to a fascinating array of complications and permutations in the details of its elaboration. It was in its most fundamental form an outworking of the Biblical treatment of Man: his creation in the image of God, his fall from grace through Adam's rebellion against the Creator, his banishment from Paradise to a life of travail and discord, his reconciliation with God through the "new Adam" sent to redeem him, and his eventual deliverance to a new Paradise in the afterlife. This was a story that Shakespeare and his fellow Elizabethans knew intimately, and it was in many ways the "grammar" by

which they were taught to read the world and the "map" by which they were urged to chart their journey through it, both individually and as a society. It was, moreover, a narrative that potentially underlay and commented on all other narratives: a paradigmatic "subtext" in continual interplay with even those non-religious texts that seemed to have the least to do with it.

In the late Middle Ages the Biblical story of Man had been the basis for a variety of didactic entertainments, among them the "Morality Play" (allegorizing the temptation, sin, suffering, remorse, repentance, and regeneration of a typical Everyman) and the "Mystery Play" (a cycle of mini-dramas on the pivotal events of Biblical history, from Man's Fall in the Garden of Eden, to Man's Redemption in the Garden of Gethsemane, to Man's Bliss in the Paradise of the New Jerusalem). During the mid-sixteenth century these two strands of medieval drama evolved into a new form of political allegory, now referred to as the "Tudor Interlude." Here characters with names like Commonality, Respublica, and Widow England contended with vices like Avarice, Insolence, and Oppression until they eventually brought about the triumph of Honesty, Justice, and Peace.

By the late 1580s the crude didacticism of the earlier drama was widely dismissed as ludicrous. Allegories and Mystery Plays were now giving way to the more realistic, subtle, and secular dramaturgy of playwrights who had learned to convey by indirection what their predecessors only knew how to drive home with personified homilies. The more sophisticated writers of the Renaissance had devised ways to depict real human beings convincingly. And their exposure to such worldly thinkers as Machiavelli had given them a more skeptical outlook on many of the concepts

in the older drama. For all their "modernity," however, the best of the late-sixteenth-century dramatists continued to build on the underlying form of the old Morality Plays, as if in the process of evolving a more credible way of fleshing out complex characters and situations they had also acquired a deeper appreciation for the structural soundness, the sturdy "soul," of the original dramatic frame.

Given this background, it should not surprise us that when Shakespeare set out to produce the first of his English history plays, he drew on a collection of narratives that had themselves been allegorized to fit a Morality Play pattern. Writing under the influence of such chroniclers as Polydore Vergil (circa 1470–1555), Edward Hall (circa 1498–1547), and Raphael Holinshed (circa 1529–80), and depending primarily on the 1587 second edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, Shakespeare treated the anarchic reign of King Henry VI (1422–61) and the thirty-year bloodbath known as the Wars of the Roses (1455–85) as a period of retribution for a sin the English people had committed when they removed from his throne a rightful monarch (King Richard II, 1377–99) and installed in his place a usurper (King Henry IV, 1399–1413). Following his sources, Shakespeare portrayed England as a collective Everyman: falling into error by rejecting the Lord's anointed Deputy, subjecting themselves to a wrenching period of anarchy and mayhem, enduring a three-year reign of terror under a tyrant sent to scourge the nation (King Richard III, 1483–85), and returning to peace and stability only when in the fullness of time God sent a deliverer (Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond) to slay the scourge, unite the feuding factions by marriage, claim the Crown as a legitimate

descendant of the grandfather of Richard II, and restore order as the first monarch of the new Tudor dynasty (King Henry VII, 1485–1509).

By the time Shakespeare began work on *Richard II* in 1595, it was clear that Elizabeth would be the last of the Tudor monarchs. She was by now an aging Queen, long past the time when she might have married and provided a lineal heir to the throne. And despite the urging of her closest advisers, she refused to name a successor. There were rumors of rebellion and whispers of coercion to force her hand. And there was widespread fear that if something should happen to the Queen, England would be thrown once more into the maelstrom of civil war. It was, in short, a time of considerable tension, and it was thus a time when another look at the origins of the Wars of the Roses would be of more than passing interest to the average member of Shakespeare's audience.

Once again Shakespeare turned primarily to Holinshed's *Chronicles*, and once again he produced a play that echoed the form and content of the late-medieval Morality Play. He put into the mouths of Richard and his supporters many of the same "lessons" the playwright's earlier tetralogy had emphasized: that those who deposed a King were like Judas in their betrayal of the Lord's anointed; that they no more than Pilate could wash their hands of responsibility for the crime; that God would punish them and their descendants, even to the third and fourth generations; and that the King who had usurped the scepter would find himself plagued by the disloyalty of those who questioned his title, the insurrection of those who helped place him on the throne, and the torment of a conscience that would forever deny him peace.

All this must have seemed familiar and reassuring to audiences who had had their theological and political presuppositions confirmed by Shakespeare's earlier sequence on the Wars of the Roses. But what were they to make of a second strand in *Richard II*, the clear implication that, for all his legitimacy as the Lord's anointed, Richard was also a King whose policies and actions had threatened to undermine the very concept of legitimacy? If Richard was the agent of his own downfall, as the play seemed to say, if he provoked his people to remove a King in order to preserve the laws that upheld Kingship itself, what became of the received Tudor interpretation of this pivotal event as a crime the nation had committed against a Divinely appointed King?

Could monarchs as well as subjects be held accountable for initiating civil disorder? And if so, if in some sense all were guilty, could it not follow that a guilty *de facto* monarch (one who maintained order despite his lack of a clear title to the Crown) might sometimes serve a kingdom better than a guilty *de jure* monarch (one with a legal claim to the Crown) who proved unfit to rule?

These must have been troubling questions in the waning years of the Elizabethan era, because it is clear that the popularity of *Richard II* was a source of anxiety for the government. When the play made its initial appearance in print, in a good quarto edition in 1597, it contained no dethronement scene, probably because the Court censor would not have allowed such a shocking event to appear in a printed play. Whether the dethronement was enacted on the stage in the Queen's lifetime is anything but certain. It is conceivable that Shakespeare didn't even write such a scene for the play until shortly before the Fourth Quarto ap-

peared in 1608, five years after Elizabeth's death, with a title-page advertising "new additions of the Parliament Sceane, and the deposing of King Richard, as it hath been lately acted by the Kinges Maiesties servantes, at the Globe."

All we know for certain is that *Richard II* as performed in the late 1590s was considered politically sensitive. And that it was possible to read the play as potentially seditious was confirmed on February 7, 1601, when followers of the Earl of Essex commissioned a Globe performance of Shakespeare's tragedy on the eve of what proved to be an abortive insurrection. Essex was apprehended on February 8 and executed for treason a little more than two weeks later. Shortly thereafter Shakespeare and his company were acquitted of any complicity in the uprising. Several months later, however, still smarting from the incident, Queen Elizabeth told one of her advisers, "I am Richard II, know ye not that? . . . this tragedy was played forty times in streets and houses."

But if from their different points of view both Essex and the Queen could interpret *Richard II* as a drama with the power to suggest rebellion, there must have been others (such as the 1601 Globe audience, which was evidently *not* moved to support Essex's mutiny) who came away from the theatre with a very different sense of what the play was all about.

For if the first half of *Richard II* focuses primarily on the arrogance, folly, and irresponsibility of a King who seems hell-bent to destroy the very foundations of his own position, the second half of the play focuses primarily on the internal struggles of a man who gradually comes to terms with the failures that have brought him low. The Richard whose pomp is finally stripped down to a bare cell in Pomfret prison (V.v), the Richard who

condemns himself for his fall and who prays that there may yet be a gate by which he may enter the Kingdom of Heaven, is a very different man from the impudent King who scorned his dying Uncle's good counsel in II.i and went on to confiscate his banished Cousin's inheritance. In a way that anticipates King Lear, the Richard we see at the end of the play becomes an emblem of "unaccommodated Man," and we cannot help feeling that in some sense his tragic suffering has been purgative.

By the same token, the rise of King Henry IV comes across as anything but an unambiguous triumph. If the first half of the play shows King Richard at his worst, it also shows Henry Bullingbrook at his best. Here is a man who appears solely concerned with righting a wrong in the approved chivalric manner, a man who has good reason to accuse the King of murder but who refrains from doing so, a man who accepts without demur an arbitrary judgment that condemns him to banishment, and a man who says farewell to his beloved England without a word of disloyalty to the King. Shortly after Bullingbrook's departure for France, Richard speaks ill of his Cousin's cunning and ambition, but up to this point we have seen nothing that would lead us to suspect that Richard has any reason to fear Bullingbrook as a rival. By the end of the play, through what he later calls "indirect crook'd Ways" (2 *Henry IV*, IV.v.180), Bullingbrook is on the throne. He is beginning to realize that he has acquired Richard's "Cares" along with his Crown. And like Pilate, he is in quest of a way "To wash this Blood off from my Guilty Hand."

So who has won and who has lost? It would appear that, like the "Perspectives" described by Bushy in *Richard II*, II.ii.14-27, the play offers different pictures when looked at from different

angles. From one point of view, Bullingbrook concludes the play as a victor. Like the Sun, he has melted the "Mock'ry King of Snow," and he is now the "All" to Richard's "Nothing." But at what price? Has he gained the world at the cost of his own soul (Matthew 16:26)? And who will make good on all the "Bloody Crowns of Mothers' Sons" this Crown will deposit in England's coffins? In one of the most memorable moments of the play (IV.i.182-87), Richard compares Bullingbrook to a Bucket "on High." One would expect the new King to be full, but in Richard's image he is empty, "ever dancing in the Air." Richard, meanwhile, is "The Bucket down and full of Tears." For Richard at this moment, his tears are symbols of loss and defeat; but by the end of the play, it is possible to "read" them in other ways as well.

This weighing of viewpoints, this insistence that we look at everything from multiple coigns of vantage, is one of the hallmarks of *Richard II*. It is reflected in the balanced, symmetrical patterning of every aspect of the play: the rhetorical and syntactic parallels that give its verse such power and beauty; the intricate wordplay (often setting "the Word itself against the Word") in even the most ordinary of phrases; the paradoxes of rising and falling, ascending and descending; the repetition, with variations, of such potent images as the Garden, the Sun, the Body, the Family, the Mirror, and the Crown. It is reflected in the self-conscious theatricality of Richard and other characters: the awareness that life offers us many roles to play, and that we are always in some sense acting (frequently on different levels, and even different stages, at the same time). It is reflected in the play's interrogation of what constitutes a self. And above all else, it is

reflected in the play's implicit message that a final judgment on the issues it raises can only be rendered from a perspective beyond the confines of what Richard calls "this Little World."

What is true of *Richard II* is applicable in a different way to its sequel. *Henry IV, Part 1* is often praised for the brilliance with which the dramatist counterpoises one image, one attitude, one set of values, against competing images, attitudes, and sets of values elsewhere in the play. To some degree Shakespeare does this simply by shifting the audience's focus from one setting to another: from the sober Court of the King and his counselors to the boisterous Tavern of Falstaff, the Hostess, and "all the good Lads in Eastcheap"; from the fortress-like Castles of Hotspur, Glendower, and the feudal Nobility to the thief-infested Highways of Gadshill and Peto and the other preying "Gentlemen of the Shade." Each locale has its own idiom, decorum, and atmosphere, and one of the delights of the play is the virtuosity with which Shakespeare manipulates them, not only to display England in all its facets, but, even more important, to set off the crown jewel of the piece: "the nimble-footed Madcap Prince of Wales."

For though this and Shakespeare's next history play both bear the name of the Prince's father, they are actually less about Henry IV than about the young man who will be commemorated in *Henry V* as "the Mirror of all Christian Kings."

To be sure, the elder Henry is very much present in *1 Henry IV*. We hear him fret about the son whose wayward behavior he sometimes believes to be Heaven's "Rod" to "punish my Mistreadings." We listen with a smile of irony as he admonishes his former allies to discard "the Garment of Rebellion" and "move

in that obedient Orb again / Where you did give a fair and nat'ral Light." We note the appropriateness of his sending "Counterfeit" Kings into battle for him at Shrewsbury.

But our real attention is focused elsewhere. We cannot help being charmed by the Prince's chief rival, a dashing young Hotspur who seems to the King to be the true "Theme of Honor's Tongue." And like the Prince, we fall "in love with Vanity." Falstaff may be the "Reverent Vice" of the old Morality Plays, the "villainous, abominable Misleader of Youth" who embodies all the appeal of "Riot and Dishonor"; but he is also a prose stylist nonpareil, a master escape artist, and a symbol of holiday revelry who is "not only Witty in [him]self, but the cause that Wit is in other Men" (*2 Henry IV*, I.ii.10-11).

For the most part, however, our eyes are riveted not on Falstaff, and not on Hotspur, but on "young Harry," who must somehow find a way to "imitate the Sun" and "pay the Debt [he] never promised." The Prince we see at the beginning of the play is cast in the role of the Prodigal Son: he gives every appearance of having squandered his patrimony in what the Bible calls "riotous living" (Luke 15:13), and he must now win his way back into his father's good graces and redeem the time he appears to have wasted. How he does so is what the play is largely about.

And how he does so is largely defined by the choices he makes about what he will and will not be. Like the Youth of the sixteenth-century Morality Plays, he finds himself in the company of Vice, here represented by a "Vanity in Years" who epitomizes the Biblical "old man," "corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Ephesians 4:22). The Prince knows that he must eventually "put off" the old man in himself if he is to exhibit the temperance (self-

control) expected of a King. But what he also recognizes is that he must "know" the old man in his kingdom (I.ii.216) if he is to exhibit wisdom, another virtue expected of a King. In *2 Henry IV*, IV.iv.68-69, Warwick tells Hal's father that "The Prince but studies his Companions / Like a Strange Tongue," and Hal implies much the same thing at several points in *1 Henry IV*.

But meanwhile there are other qualities to demonstrate, and in this play the most important of those is valor. Up to the Battle of Shrewsbury, everyone but the Prince assumes that Hotspur is the true emblem of chivalry. Hal seems to recognize from the beginning, however, that for all his courage Hotspur is a character with tragic flaws. Unlike Hal, he lacks the wisdom to "read" his companions, and is thus subject to the bad counsel of a real "Misleader of Youth," his uncle Worcester. Unlike Hal, Hotspur lacks the ability to control his anger, and is thus subject to confrontations that create unnecessary animosities. And, most crucially, unlike Hal, he lacks the maturity to see that "Honor" is not a possession to be idolized and hoarded for the aggrandizement of individual glory but a quality to be manifested in the service of a higher calling.

By the end of the play the Prince has gone a long way toward defining the character of a hero who can avoid the pitfalls that prove fatal to others. In the process he has introduced a new dimension to Shakespeare's treatment of English history, and that dimension will come to the fore in the two plays that follow *1 Henry IV*.

The text for this edition of *1 Henry IV* is based primarily on the First Quarto of 1598, with some readings from the edition of the play in the 1623 First Folio. The text for *Richard II* is based

primarily on the 1597 First Quarto of that play. For the Deposition Scene, beginning with line 154 in Act IV, this edition draws largely on the 1608 Fourth Quarto; in that scene as elsewhere, however, readings are incorporated from the First Folio when it appears to offer a more authoritative text.