

**SHAKESPEARE AND THE EARL OF WARWICK:  
THE KINGMAKER IN THE *HENRY VI* TRILOGY**

By

Helen Patricia Maskew

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis is an appraisal of Shakespeare's characterisation of Richard Neville, the Earl of Warwick, colloquially known by his soubriquet 'kingmaker'. Shakespeare's reification of the reputations of characters from the regal history of late medieval England substantially maintains our interest in historical figures such as Warwick. By a process of dramatic and literary osmosis, Shakespeare infiltrates the national consciousness with such figures, refreshing individual and collective memory.

The majority of the thesis is taken up with an examination of key scenes which I consider most successfully explore the roots of Warwick's reputation. Finally, I will consider Warwick's role in performance, though a discourse with three actors who have previously been assigned the role. I will examine their various approaches to the characterisation of the part.

In the course of distilling Warwick's clearly defined characteristics, Shakespeare examines fundamental questions of the delegation of right to rule and the accepted qualities required for effective leadership. In this context, the dramatist follows the course of events by which the Kingmaker achieved the agnomen which continues to define him as a symbol of medieval potency.

## **DEDICATION**

To my grandchildren

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis is concerned with the reputation and character of a single historical figure. My purpose is to advance the premise that recondite figures from history such as Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick (1428-1471) have been exposed and revitalised most enduringly through the dramatic language of Shakespeare, who through his linguistic arts in the *Henry VI* trilogy unravels a memorable version of the personality and character of Warwick. Shakespeare imprints on his audience the essence of the character through the poetic language of his drama.

In his elegiac theme on the instability of human glory, Daniel Defoe (1661-1731) contemplates its transient nature. He muses on the utilitarian fate of great men, whose bones are ploughed up in the process of husbandry and their converted remains possibly recycled to the meanest use:

All are vanished, and their very monuments are mouldered into earth, their dust is lost and their place knows them no more. They live only in the immortal writings of their historians and poets, the renowned flatterers of the age they lived in, and who have made us think of the persons, not as they really were, but as they were pleased to represent them.<sup>1</sup>

Defoe, in his impeccable style, has almost encapsulated my thesis. This debate is concerned with the legacy left by the personification of a specific historical character by a single dramatist. Shakespeare's poetic creativity, in his dramatisation of such an eclectic mix of robust characters from history, continues to hold our attention, establishing them in our collective consciousness and ensuring their durability as cultural icons.

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Defoe, 'The Instability of Human Glory' in *Selected English Essays*, ed. by W. Peacock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1903), pp. 52-53.

I will argue that, in the case of Richard Neville, his reputation has withstood the rigours of time because it has been closely nurtured by Shakespeare, through his dramatic interpretation of the varied sources available to him, with their roots in fifteenth century accounts and commentaries. Warwick's historical narrative, legend and mythology begin in the poetry, ballads and chronicles of late medieval times and continue in the chronicles and histories of the early modern period and their interpretation of the fifteenth century civil wars. They move through later centuries to the present, where they are examined in four distinct biographies, all notably bearing the same title.<sup>2</sup> In the most recent by A.J. Pollard, Warwick's familiar soubriquet 'kingmaker' is used as the main title, but is more explicit in its intentions with the addition of '*Politics, Power and Fame*'.<sup>3</sup>

Warwick retains a legendary status, but alongside his legend are also myths, which bulk up his reputation and make him an ideal subject for dramatic reconstruction. The modern historian Keith Dockray, who gives a detailed and informative résumé of the politics of the historiography of the Wars of the Roses and Shakespeare's role in them, considers the dramatist 'a curse' for the historians of the Wars of the Roses, but also 'a blessing'. The former because '...he immortalised Tudor spin on fifteenth century wars', and the latter because the plays open to wider view, beyond the universities and élite schools, the whole sweep of the dynastic struggles of the period.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Oman, *Warwick the Kingmaker* (London, 1891); Paul Murray Kendall, *Warwick the Kingmaker* (London, 1973); Michael Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> A.J. Pollard, *Warwick the Kingmaker: Politics, Power and Fame* (Hambledon Continuum, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Keith Dockray, *William Shakespeare, The Wars of the Roses and the Historians* (Tempus, 2002), p. 11.



Warwick's own dramatic narrative becomes part of what Michael Hattaway describes as 'the characteristics of Shakespeare's histories'. He suggests that:

Structurally, the plays are indeed various: the earliest, the plays about the reign of Henry VI, are chronicles of civil war, what Edward Hall called 'intestine division'. Dramatising the events of this reign involved not only making sense of, and giving dramatic shape to, the chroniclers' accounts of the Wars of the Roses between the Yorkists and Lancastrians, but relating the surges of national politics to the persistent conflict between England and France during the Hundred Years War.<sup>5</sup>

Shakespeare corporealised Warwick's chronicled historical provenance in a set of dramatic conditions based on such written reports. There are no portraits, memorials, artefacts which provide additional or alternative evidence to confirm or deny his legend. The Warwickshire antiquarian John Rous (c.1411-1491) provided one of the only few surviving images of Warwick, a rough drawing in the margin of *The Rous Roll* in which he is portrayed in full armour, giving little away about his true appearance.<sup>6</sup> However, the Victorian military historian Charles Oman concluded:

At most we may gather from vague phrases of the chroniclers and from his quaint armed figure in the Rous *Roll* that he was of great stature and breadth of limb.<sup>7</sup>

The dramatist mediates between the legendary and the mythical to put together a character which explicates Warwick's desire for renown: his manifest love of show, his seeking of popularity through largesse, and his maintenance of a martial reputation through physical feats of war. The soubriquet 'kingmaker' is a later accretion, and it is unverifiable whether it was known to Shakespeare in 1590; what is certain is that Warwick is unique in the *Who's Who* of history to bear such an

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Hattaway, 'The Shakespearean history play', in *Shakespeare's History Plays*, ed. by Michael Hattaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> John Rous, *The Rous Roll*, ed. by W.H. Courthope (London, 1859).

<sup>7</sup> Oman, p. 2.

agnomen. There are scenes in Shakespeare's *Henry VI* trilogy which are pivotal to the development of Warwick as a central character. Set out below, these scenes are both correlations with and confluences of historical events in which Warwick was involved:

Play	Scene	Shakespeare's Setting	Events in Warwick's narrative	Historical date
<i>1 Henry VI</i>	2.4	Temple Garden, Inns of Court, London 1425	Plucking of the red and white roses. Polarisation of politics.	Fictitious
<i>2 Henry VI</i>	2.2	Duke of York's garden	Duke's canvassing of the Nevilles' support	1452
<i>2 Henry VI</i>	3.2	Bury St. Edmunds. 1447	Death of Humphrey Duke of Gloucester.	23 <sup>rd</sup> February 1447
<i>3 Henry VI</i>	1.1	Westminster 1455	York proclaimed heir apparent.	24 <sup>th</sup> Oct 1460
<i>3 Henry VI</i>	2.1	Wakefield 1460	Warwick's return from second battle of St. Albans.	Wakefield 30 <sup>th</sup> Dec 1460; St. Albans 17 <sup>th</sup> Feb 1461
<i>3 Henry VI</i>	2.2	Towton 1461	Yorkist's defeat of Lancaster.	29 <sup>th</sup> March 1461
<i>3 Henry VI</i>	3.3	French Court, Anger	Warwick's volte face.	Bouleversement 1464 - 1470
<i>3 Henry VI</i>	4.6	Westminster	Henry's redeption.	15 <sup>th</sup> October 1470
<i>3 Henry VI</i>	5.2	Battle of Barnet	Warwick's death.	14 <sup>th</sup> April 1471

In some key scenes above there are marked differences between the Quarto, Octavo and Folio versions.<sup>8</sup> The fact that different texts of the plays survive, whether labelled 'good', 'bad' or 'suspect', requires their content to be taken into consideration. In the 1920s an original theory was postulated independently by Peter Alexander and Madeleine Doran that *The Contention* and *The True Tragedy*

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<sup>8</sup> The Folio edition: The second part of King Henry the Sixt, with the death of the Good Duke HVMFREY. The Quarto version: THE First part of the Contention betwixt the two famouse Houses of Yorke and Lancaster, with the death of the good Duke Humphrey: And the banishment and death of the Duke of *Suffolke*, and the Tragicall end of the proud Cardinall of *Winchester*, with the notable Rebellion of *Jacke Cade*: and the Duke of Yorkes first claime unto the Crowne; the Folio edition: The Third Part of King Henry VI. The Quarto version: The true Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorks, and the death of good king Henrie the Sixt, and the whole contention betweene the two Houses Lancaster and Yorke.

were both reconstructed from memory by touring actors who had played Warwick and Clifford in London.<sup>9</sup> This theory was taken up much later by Katherine Irace, in her study of *The Contention* as an abridged text. She supported the theory that the memorialist was the actor who played Warwick.<sup>10</sup> It is clear that there are additions and omissions in Warwick's text in all versions which, in some instances, are significant for interpretation, particularly so in the scene of Gloucester's murder (*Part 2*, 3.2.; Quarto, 1188) as I will show in Chapter 2. The theoretical demonstrations in these early publications, according to Barbara Kreps:

...established the terms of debate for succeeding editors and critics of the *Henry VI* plays: throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, the two principal questions were the authorship of the quartos (a list to which Thomas Nashe's name was added) and the possible interpretation of Greene's insult.<sup>11</sup>

In the latest Arden edition of *Henry VI Part 3*, Cox and Rasmussen analyse the Octavo text and, while questioning the memorial reconstruction hypothesis, conclude that:

The complex relationship between *The True Tragedy* and *3 Henry VI* has challenged the ingenuity of generations of readers, students and scholars. We hope the very inconclusiveness of our analysis will stimulate new ideas and fresh debate about these still enigmatic texts.<sup>12</sup>

This uncertainty is echoed in the same context by Ronald Knowles in his introduction to *Henry VI Part 2*:

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<sup>9</sup> Madeleine Doran, '*Henry VI, Parts II and III: Their Relation to the 'Contention' and 'The True Tragedy'*', University of Iowa Studies, 4 (University of Iowa, 1928), p. 81; Peter Alexander, *Shakespeare's 'Henry VI' and 'Richard III'* (Cambridge, 1929), p. 62.

<sup>10</sup> Kathleen Irace, *Reforming the 'Bad' Quartos: Performance and Provenance of Six Shakespearean First Editions* (Newark, 1994), p. 74.

<sup>11</sup> Barbara Kreps, 'Bad Memories of Margaret? Memorial Reconstruction versus Revision in *The First Part of the Contention* and *2 Henry VI*', *SQ*, 51, (2000), p. 156. The reference to 'Greene's insult' is from the playwright's posthumously published 'A Groat's Worth of Wit' (1592) in which he accuses Shakespeare of appropriation amounting to plagiarism.

<sup>12</sup> John D. Cox and Eric Rasmussen, *King Henry VI Part 3*, p. 176.

...we have to acknowledge that there can be no certainty in discriminating among the possible various agents who may stand between authorial manuscripts and the printed texts of Q and F.<sup>13</sup>

Alongside the authorial debate is the question over whether the trilogy is read as a three-part sequence. The Earl of Warwick appears in different plays, in both the first and second tetralogies. Richard Neville's father-in-law Richard Beauchamp (1382-1439) appears towards the end of *Henry V*, but is a clearly a different character from his son-in-law, who plays such a significant role in 2 and 3 *Henry VI*. If they are considered to have been written for sequential performance then, as Edward Burns points out:

...it make sense to assume that the figure is a conflation of father and son, though, as Hall and Barton point out, we would then have to acknowledge that *1 Henry VI* draws the character indistinctly. If this option is taken without emending *1 Henry VI*, then 'Warwick's' outburst in *2 Henry VI* (1.1.116-23) is a dramatically sudden change of temperament, triggered by anger at the deal with Reignier. His claim that he has won the [French] lands now given away suggests that *2 Henry VI* builds this aspect at least of the chronologically earlier figure into the later. If, on the other hand, we take *1 Henry VI* as a later, free-standing play, then the Warwick figure need be no more continuous with that of *2H6* and *3H6* than history and the sources would suggest...<sup>14</sup>

What is certain is the source material from which the plays are derived. Warwick is one of a series of historical names within them which share notoriety. Linda Charnes contends that '... famous historical figures function as exemplary icons whose names compress narratives of duty, adventure, empire, perversion, ambition and religious activity (Aeneas, Ulysses, Augustus Caesar, Caligula, Alexander, and Joan of Arc).'<sup>15</sup> Charnes argues that, in order for a figure to have notorious identity 'They would have to be displaced by a notoriety that subrogates figuration with

<sup>13</sup> Ronald Knowles, *King Henry VI Part 2*, p. 141.

<sup>14</sup> Edward Burns, *Henry VI Part 1*, p. 108.

<sup>15</sup> Linda Charnes, *Notorious Identity: Materializing the Subject in Shakespeare* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 2.

citation. A notorious name is the object of cultural desire, not for what it signifies but rather for *signification itself*.<sup>16</sup> In his book *The Frenzy of Renown*, Leo Braudy also considers fame as a moral paradigm and he concludes: 'No nature is original except in its creative connecting. What we call character, that which distinguishes us from each other, is less to be found in the stories themselves than in the way we have put them together.'<sup>17</sup> This model of fame may be applied to Warwick as a dramatic figure.

Alongside the notoriety of renown there is the semantic of *legend*, (*OED*: a person having a special place in popular opinion for their striking qualities or deeds, real and fictitious). The etymology of legend is *legere*, a story to be written and read. Within the legendary are political and historical qualitative values loaded onto the character, making them our '...vehicles of cultural memory and cohesion.'<sup>18</sup> Consistent in her argument, Charnes contends that, while legendary figures are necessary to consolidate the potency of particular interests, mythical figures may be taken to be a representation of historical events; their significance promulgated through transmission and application.<sup>19</sup> Myths and legends both synthesise fiction and history; but their differences reside in how that significance is encoded, transmitted, and applied. Unlike the myth, as Roland Barthes asserts, the legendary: '...is defined by the object of its message, and there are substantial political and social limits to what does and does not become legendary.'<sup>20</sup> Warwick's legendary

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<sup>16</sup> Charnes, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and its History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 598.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

<sup>20</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. by Annette Lavers (New York, 1972), p. 110.

qualities are relatively simplistic, both socially and politically: generosity, muscularity and the ability to persuade, and all open to mythologising.

Writers of verse have consistently used the medium to explore the legendary, coincidentally exposing issues of political, ecclesiastic and social interest. In so far as those issues were driven and influenced by individuals who held primacy in their societies, the poetry reflects specifically their qualities, characteristics and persona. Ballads which included reference to Warwick's involvement in York and Lancaster's 'long jars' were distributed in vigorous, if inelegant verse: *The Ship of State*, *The Bearward and the Bear*, *The Rose of England*, all contributed partisan interpretations of events. The civil wars were viewed poetically as power struggles which took the form of sporadic outbreaks of bitter violence between leading members of an irresponsible nobility and punctuated by long periods of comparative peace and stability.

Verse was consciously exploited by both sides to manipulate opinion. *The Bisson Leads the Blind* (1456) refers to the political situation in the year it was posted and is an indictment of abuses of the age, of the moral corruption and political instability of England in the 1450s. Towards the end of the poem the references become more specific, and the author fears a continuation of the civil divisions which started at the first battle of St. Albans in 1455:

Take heed how sin has chastised France  
 When he was in his fairest kind,  
 How that Flanders has mischanced  
 For cause the bisson [the purblind] leadeth the blind.  
 Perforce every lord odor [either] advances  
 And stiffly stand in each a stoure [battle]  
 Among you make no distance  
 But, lords, buskys [prepare] you out of boure [chamber],  
 For to hold up his lands honour.<sup>21</sup>

69-77

The English nobility are warned by the author of the dangers of civil war. The ramifications of destabilised government were significant in terms of incipient and widespread lawlessness.<sup>22</sup> This added to the difficulties resulting from the major shift in social and economic forces: the gradual break up of the old feudal system. Evolving bastard feudalism was regretted by some observers as destabilising social structure:

Little charity and fain to please,  
 Many gallants and penniless,  
 Great courtiers and small wages,  
 Many gentlemen and few pages.<sup>23</sup>

5-7

There was criticism for the lack of judgement shown by some of the nobility in their choice of advisers, who were described as deceitful flatterers rather than men of experience and probity.<sup>24</sup> This was a recurring theme explicitly expressed by Warwick in Shakespeare's trilogy.

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<sup>21</sup> R.H. Robbins, *Historical Poems of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (New York, 1959), p. 130.

<sup>22</sup> For a comprehensive review of the scale of the Wars of the Roses see A.J. Pollard, *The Wars of the Roses* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), Chapter 4.

<sup>23</sup> Robbins, 62, p. 149.

<sup>24</sup> V.S. Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1971), p. 311.

Events in England between 1455 and 1485 provided such themes which furnished English chroniclers with a significant body of material on which to work.<sup>25</sup> Historical figures appeared in narrative poetry such as John Hardyng's (1378-c.1465) *Chronicles* (Brutus-1464) with descriptions made understandable and memorable through their simple, rhythmic couplet form.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, early chronicles such as the *Brut* were well-described by E.K. Chambers as 'versified journalism', their form of narrative being easily transmissible through its insistent and regular seven-stressed rhythm.<sup>27</sup>

The process of the assimilation of morality, history and philosophy through the medium of historical and poetic narrative continued into the sixteenth century. Public presentations of narrative ballads still pulled in an eclectic mix of observers, who responded energetically to the universal appeal of their moral messages. Among them was the essayist Sir William Cornwallis (c.1579-1614) who admitted:

I have not been ashamed to adventure mine ears with a ballad-singer, and they have come home laden to my liking, doubly satisfied with profit and with recreation. The profit, to see earthlings satisfied with such coarse stuff, to hear vice rebuked, and to see the power of Virtue that pierces the head of such a base Historian, and vile Auditor. The recreation to see how thoroughly the standers by are affected, what strange gestures come from them, what strained stuff from their Poet...<sup>28</sup>

He loftily disparages the spectators as easily satisfied with simplistic, moral tales told in a captivating way, yet finds double enjoyment in the performances of both Poet and observers. Equally populist was *The Mirror for Magistrates* in which

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<sup>25</sup> Scattergood, p. 173.

<sup>26</sup> John Hardyng, *Chronicles*, with a continuation by Richard Grafton, ed. by Henry Ellis (London, 1812).

<sup>27</sup> E.K. Chambers, *English Literature at the Close of the Middle Age* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), p. 123.

<sup>28</sup> 'Of the observation of things', Essay 15 in *Essayes by Sir William Cornwallis the Younger*, ed. by Don Cameron Allen (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1946), p. 50.



Warwick's legendary narrative was included in a roll-call of 'unfortunate princes'. The work has been derided as of poor literary style, but it was an awful warning to aspiring and established councillors and others wielding power, and a pithy description of how to avoid pitfalls of government.<sup>29</sup> The author of Warwick's contribution recognises the extensive role played by the Earl in the civil wars of the previous century, when he concludes in his opening prose paragraphs:

I have recounted this much beforehand for the better opening of the story, which if it should have been spoken in his tragedy, would rather have made a volume than a pamphlet.<sup>30</sup>

This introduction of sixty lines is three times as long as those for all the other historical figures represented in the first edition of *The Mirror*. Its length is explained by the inclusion of chronological details of the final events in Warwick's life. The narrative focuses on the Warwick's involvement in Edward's forced abdication, Henry's readeption, and Edward's re-assumption of the crown. Emphases on these key events serve to substantiate Warwick's role as a setter-up and puller-down of kings. He articulates his position as a unique subject who undertook such extreme actions:

That placed and based his sovereigns so oft,  
By interchange, now low, and then aloft?  
78-84.

Popular ballads and narrative histories such as *The Mirror for Magistrates* demonstrate the diffusion of the vernacular of popular culture, both oral and literate

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<sup>29</sup> See C.S. Lewis's description in *Poetry and Prose in the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 240-1.

<sup>30</sup> *The Mirror for Magistrates*, ed. by Lily. B. Campbell (Cambridge: the author, 1938; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 204.

with historiography. Almost forty years after Shakespeare had produced the *Henry VI* trilogy, the poet Michael Drayton (1563-1631) wrote a series of historical poems among which was one that followed the events of the civil wars in the fifteenth century. Published in 1627, it contrasted the good fortune of the English in foreign wars with their ill-luck in civil combat.<sup>31</sup> As the title *The Miseries of Queen Margarite* suggests, Drayton writes from the perspective of Margaret of Anjou and Warwick takes his due place in the roll of characters. There are a few references to his well-documented characteristics, mostly pinpointing his popularity and restlessness; these are highlighted particularly in the context of events in the French court:

Furnish'd with all things well befitting War,  
By great King Lewes to Queen Margarite lent,  
Warwick (whose name Fame sounded had so far,  
That men with wonder viewe'd him as he went,  
Of all men living the most popular)  
Thought every hour to be but idly spent  
1737-42

His kingmaking activities are mentioned obliquely when he promises Margaret that, if she will trust him, he will take the crown from Edward:

Let but Queen Margarite cleave to Warwick's part,  
This hand that heav'd him up shall hew him down.  
1715-6

And at the Battle of Barnet there is a stronger inference of Warwick's ultimate power:

Puts for the Garland, which if now he lose,  
Warwick his crown at pleasure would dispose.  
1911-2

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<sup>31</sup>Michael Drayton, 'The Miseries of Queene Margarite', in *The Works of Michael Drayton*, ed. by J. William Hebel, 4 vols (Oxford, 1932), ii, 73-124.

Like Shakespeare earlier, Drayton follows the chronology of Hall's sources and also relies on popular narrative history such as *The Mirror for Magistrates*.

Alongside *The Mirror*, Shakespeare draws on the chroniclers Fabyan, Hardyng, Grafton, Stowe, Hall and Holinshed. I will argue that by using such a diffusion of sources, Shakespeare brings Warwick to life as a dramatically defined figure which can be viewed as not only individual but also representational. The impressionistic three-dimensional image as constructed for the stage allows a unique exploration of common perceptions of character negotiated by the audience itself.

In her book *Helen of Troy: From Homer to Hollywood*, Laurie Maguire considers how the reader or, in the case of the theatre, the audience will turn parts into wholes as they are presented with a selective historical narrative which is sometimes unconcerned with chronology. They will also bring their own pre-knowledge and recognition with them.

It is about the relationship between what is present in the text and what is absent from it, a relationship that is the responsibility of the reader to negotiate, providing continuity and connection (at the most basic level: of character), coordinating viewpoints, and bridging gaps.<sup>32</sup>

A modern audience has a varied range of pre-knowledge and recognition of Warwick, as a modern reader has of Helen of Troy. He emanates as an historical character, recorded, transmitted and enlarged through the language of the dramatist. The language functions by what Russ McDonald calls an instrument of 'symbolic register', one which evokes 'the conditions of the fictional world that the play represents – the conflicts, affinities, and charges occurring among the persons who

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<sup>32</sup> Laurie Maguire, *Helen of Troy: From Homer to Hollywood* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p.15.

inhabit it.’<sup>33</sup> The verbal signs, while contributing to characterisation, are also aided by the sounds and images which fill the mind. In the battle scenes Warwick’s martial characteristics are underscored through the regularity of the iambic beat, which serves as a rhythmic auditory symbol of the developing harmonies and conflicts. His characterisation is enhanced also by the deft employment of rhetorical imagery, and the dramatist’s mimetic flexibility, all giving weight to narrative and identity.

The structure of my thesis incorporates the key scenes as outlined above but, as a starting point, Chapter 1 is concerned with how Warwick’s reputation was established and its shaping by the chroniclers, antiquarians and others who made judgements about him during his era of influence. My aim in this chapter is to identify Warwick’s key qualities as identified in the sources available to Shakespeare and on which he bases his dramatic characterisation. I will move on to consider the dramatist’s impact on our approach to historiography. Finally, I will examine how Warwick’s reputation has evolved down the centuries since the trilogy was first performed.

Chapter 2: ‘Establishing Warwick in *1* and *2 Henry VI*’ will examine how Shakespeare begins to expand Warwick’s function and character, developing the themes of man of action, plain dealer and man of the people, as revealed in the documentary evidence in the first chapter. This chapter will first consider Warwick’s appearance in *1 Henry VI* in the key scene in the Temple garden (2.4).

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<sup>33</sup> Russ McDonald, *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 6.

By the end of the scene, the dramatist has provided him with a credible role to play as York's supporter; one which will roll out across the trilogy. The second section will show how Shakespeare consolidates Warwick's role in the scenes concerned with Gloucester's death, a crucial point in the subsequent development of his character. It provides a singular platform for the demonstration of those specific attributes identified in Warwick's historiography and which are consistently maintained throughout the trilogy.

Chapter Three is concerned with how Shakespeare makes coherent the issues of status relevant to Warwick, as it is defined by metaphor. In these plays, status is not only defined and signified, it is also fundamental in driving the action. Status is used to identify character traits, develop interaction and dramatise the history. Shakespeare codifies status in metaphor, particularly those from the natural world, and I contend that this rhetorical device adds significantly to Warwick's characterisation. Equally, aggressive verbal exchange is liberally employed as a challenge to the key preoccupations of nobility, particularly the questioning of paternity, which is linked to pedigree and family honour. Finally the scene portraying Warwick's death provides an opportunity to examine, from Warwick's perspective, his final evaluation of his achievements, with his allusion to the grave as the last territorial possession.

Chapter Four considers Warwick's soubriquet as it has affected his reputation and personality. Kingmaker is the peg on which we now have attached our perceptions of his role, relationships and influence. I will examine the origins of Warwick's by-

name and whether it is merely a consequence of his reputation, an enhancer or has become his *raison d'être*. Warwick's agnomen alerts us to the nature of kingship and the power of kings.

Chapter 5: Wind Changing Warwick, is concerned with Warwick's *bouleversement* or volte-face. The French Court scene in *3 Henry VI* (3.3) is, in my view, the visual *sine qua non* which is imprinted on our memory of Warwick by the end of the plays. Shakespeare's timing of events differs markedly from the historical narrative, even though his sources explicitly described a chronology of Warwick's political change of allegiance. In this scene, the dramatist provides stark evidence of an immediate about-face, not the bouleversement or long-drawn out change of mind described by the historians.

The final chapter will be taken up with performance and how different approaches to staging Warwick may alter the perceptions of the character, both for the players and the audience. I will examine how the role of Warwick is perceived by actors who have taken on the role of Warwick and my main source of evidence is based on analyses of interviews with them. I looked at their backgrounds and their attitudes to prior research. I asked them questions concerning memorable characteristics of Warwick, identification of scenes which they felt were crucial to the dramatic and narrative development, problems which arose and how they individualised the character. We have moved substantially in our knowledge and understanding of Shakespeare's early history plays, thanks to critical and focussed scholarship, coupled with imaginative and thought-provoking productions. The decision by the

BBC, for example, to digitally re-master all the plays from their ‘Complete Works’ project in the 1980s means that, not only are they now available to a world audience, but the plays can be revisited regularly and at leisure in our own homes. The latest saga-type production of all the chronicle history plays by the Royal Shakespeare Company, in their ‘Complete Works’ season (2006-7) offered a unique opportunity to take both a panoramic view of the whole chronology and a microscopic view of staging and character. The historicism within such a grandiose enterprise will clearly be open to as many interpretations as there are critics. Warwick’s role in these productions will be one of the yardsticks by which I can measure the strength of my thesis. The opportunity for dialogue with the actors involved significantly assists the process.

In seeking to understand the cultural impact of the representational figure of Warwick, I will draw a conclusion from the variation between the historical, two dimensional figure, as represented in the primary and secondary evidence, and the three dimensional dramatic character, corporealised, relatively swiftly for performance, from the narrower evidential base of chronicle sources. Placing Shakespeare’s dramatic text as an alembic of historiography, I will assess the impact of inconsistency, elision and dramatic imperative on the figuration of the character of Warwick. I will seek to establish how the Earl’s notoriety is reinforced or diminished by the identity ascribed to him in the dramas. My aim, through Shakespeare’s interpretation, is to uncover lateral aspects of a puzzling figure; one

who currently has limited exposure, which is at odds with his exalted soubriquet *regum creator*.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> John Major, *History of Greater Britain as well as England as Scotland. 1521*, trans. and ed. by Archibald Constable for The Scottish Historical Society (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1892), p. 391.



## CHAPTER 1

### ESTABLISHING THE REPUTATION

This chapter will consider the issue of Warwick's reputation as it reflected his key characteristics; how his legend was established in the contemporary and early modern reporting of his life, and how it evolved later in the post-early modern period. I will examine how the nature of the early source material, combined with commercial imperatives, underpinned Shakespeare's characterisation of Richard Neville and how, subsequent to Shakespeare's dramatisation of Warwick's historical narrative, post-early modern evaluations realign the Earl's reputation in the light of changes in our approach to historiography.

Warwick's emergence in historiography was as one of the major figures in the internecine politics and aggressive feuds which spasmodically occupied the latter two thirds of the fifteenth century. His power and energy forged a reputation penetrating beyond his own country, into the continent of Europe. In contemporary historiography, facets of Warwick's character were distilled to a few essential and durable elements, forming the basis of his reputation and remaining unchallenged until the eighteenth century and onwards.

Overall the majority of contemporary observations of Warwick's persona, during his life and in the immediate period after his death in 1471, provide a consistent profile: a restless and physical man, generous and loyal to his friends, open-handed to his followers, tough on his enemies, but a supporter and follower of the chivalric code. As a diplomat and politician he was a subtle manipulator with the ability to

sway those with whom he came into contact; one who could read political situations well and use them to his advantage by adapting a style to suit his ends, and particularly recognising the importance of the common touch. Less attractively he is defined as being stiff with pride, duplicitous, covetous for power through the acquisition of wealth, and with a resolute, overwhelming sense of territorial imperative. Toughness on his enemies was assessed by some as a well-developed predilection for cruelty; diplomacy as manipulation, and open-handedness as self-interested expediency. There are also questions as to his abilities as a strategist: his withdrawal tactics on the battlefield were interpreted as pragmatism by his admirers and cowardice by his enemies. These reported characteristics were dynamically in tune with his chronicled reputation.

The earliest written accounts of Richard Neville's historical narrative are found in the most popular vernacular chronicles of the fifteenth century, the anonymously compiled *Brute* and the *London Chronicles*, which were London-based and tended to support Yorkist politics. For example, in a version of the *London Chronicles* compiled in 1461-71, which chronicled Yorkist successes during the early years of the reign of Edward IV, the London judge Robert Bale eulogised Warwick as: 'The most courageous and manliest knight living'.<sup>1</sup> It was these sources that provided significant evidence of Warwick's reputation and which Vergil and Hall presented in their early modern accounts, facets of which Shakespeare explores and illuminates in the *Henry VI* trilogy.

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<sup>1</sup> Ralph Flenley, *Six town chronicles of England* (Oxford, 1911), p. 146. See C.L. Kingsford, *English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century*, p. 95, for the authorship of this chronicle.

Warwick's contemporary reputation was also established through the more immediate and accessible form of ballads and poetry, most of which were anonymous. The Earl's legend was initially promulgated through dialogue and oral accounts from observers of the events as they happened and were taken up and entered into manuscripts, or pinned on church doors as newsletters. Many such handbills, pinned on church doors, market crosses and bridges, also found their way into the chroniclers' accounts. These sources were themselves subjective and selection from them referenced the partialities of the writers. A new development, which made a major contribution to the transmission of Warwick's reputation, was the use of vernacular English; the political importance of this was well understood by the Lancastrians and the Yorkists. There is solid evidence that both sides seized every opportunity to press their cause through the medium of the national language.

By the mid-fifteenth century, Warwick's name began to appear in ballads which were making partisan political points. One of the earliest, in which he was given some prominence, was a Lancastrian reconciliation ballad which appeared in response to the set-piece political manoeuvre of the Loveday in 1458. During the politically uneasy period between the first battle of St Albans (22<sup>nd</sup> May, 1455) and the Yorkists' open commitment to seizure of the crown in 1460, there was a highly orchestrated reconciliation between Henry VI, with his Lancastrian supporters, and the Yorkists. Their brief amnesty was dignified and blessed at a service in St. Paul's Cathedral in March and the balladist reported how Warwick attended with his father, supporting the spirit of amity sought by the king:

In Warwick also is love and charity,  
 In Salisbury eke [in addition], and in Northumberland,  
 That every man may rejoice in concord & unity.<sup>2</sup>  
 24-26

In the same year, a poem entitled *Take Good Heed* presciently issued a warning to the Yorkist faction to beware of treachery:

Awake, lords, awake and take good heed!  
 For some that speak full fair, they would your evil speed;<sup>3</sup>  
 1-2

The poet's prediction was fulfilled ten months later at Westminster, when Warwick allegedly sustained a serious physical assault by members of the Duke of Somerset's retinue, from which he barely managed to escape. This incident was fully reported in the *London Chronicles*.<sup>4</sup>

In the following year poems and ballads began to reflect open support for the Duke of York and the Nevilles, correlating with the Yorkists' military successes between the years 1460-61. Warwick's legendary narrative began to develop more specifically, and references alerted the readers to those qualities which would contribute to his subsequent reputation. The Yorkist heroes, coupled with their qualities, were listed in a handbill set on the gates of Canterbury in June 1460:<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Robbins, 79, p. 194.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 87, p. 206.

<sup>4</sup> There are several similar accounts of this story. *The Great Chronicle of London* contains an account close to the source used later by Edward Hall. *The Great Chronicle of London*, ed. by A.H. Thomas and I.D. Thornley (London, 1938), p. 190.

<sup>5</sup> See Robbins, p. 369. The handbill was designed to raise the men of Kent in support of the Earl of March and Warwick's invasion from Calais prior to the battle of Northampton (10<sup>th</sup> July 1460). The manuscript was included in the pro-Yorkist *Brut* chronicle once owned by Stow, who drew on it for his *Annales*.

Edward Earl of March, whose fame the earth shall spread,  
 Richard Earl of Salisbury, named prudence,  
 With that noble knight and flower of manhood  
 Richard, Earl of Warwick, shield of our defence,  
 Also little Falconbridge, a knight of great reverence.<sup>6</sup>  
 65-69

Unambiguously, in this poetical list of desired qualities Warwick is recognised as a symbol of protection, one who springs from prudential stock. But the accolades of martial ability had been dubiously earned. Following a skirmish at Ludford Bridge (13<sup>th</sup> October, 1459) the Yorkists were routed and fled abroad. It was not until their return in 1460, and later successes at Mortimer's Cross (2<sup>nd</sup> February 1461) and Towton (29<sup>th</sup> March) that Edward, now Duke of York, secured the throne. From this point on, the Yorkists were in a very secure position to control opinion and the views expressed through poetry became transparently partisan.<sup>7</sup> Celebratory verses on Edward's coronation expressed relief and anticipation that stability was forthcoming. In *Twelve Letters to Save England* (1462) the poet expounds the significance of a series of letters, which includes the initials of the name, title and badges of the four Yorkist heroes:

The arris [3Rs] for three Richard that be of noble fames,  
 That for the rest of England have suffered much woe –  
 York, Salisbury, and Warwick, these be the lords names  
 That all England is beholden to.

21-4

W for Warwick, good with shield and other defence,  
 The boldest under banner in battle to abide;  
 For the right of England he doth his diligence,  
 Both by land and water, god be his guide!

41-4

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<sup>6</sup> Robbins, 88, p. 207.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 222.

R for the ragged staff that no man may skapen [escape],  
 From Scotland to Calais there – of men stand in awe;  
 In all christen lands is none so fell a weeping  
 To correct such caytiffes [wretches] as do against the law.<sup>8</sup>  
 57-60

There is a repeat of the allusion to Warwick's defensive skills, and his propensity for swift and decisive action as a counter to the anarchy previously endured. The poet acknowledges Warwick's maritime role as warden of the Cinque Ports and captain of Calais, and identifies the Earl's military skills against the Scots and Percies after Towton. A later carol: *Willikin's Return* (1470) which reflected the reversal of political circumstances, anticipates Warwick's return from France to restore Henry VI to the throne. It relies heavily on the familiar allegory of the ship of state:

Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell!  
 & Christ save merry England & speed it well!  
 Till home shall Willikin [Warwick], his holy gentle ship,  
 All to our comely king Harry his cnat [knot] his knight;  
 Therefore let us all sing nowell.<sup>9</sup>

1-5

The carol proceeds with naval allusions and aligns Warwick's dependable qualities with the essential elements required for safe sailing: mast, sails and the North Star. Chronologically these attributions to Warwick's martial abilities and maritime skills preceded those of his personal characteristics of open-handedness, which Shakespeare will later explicitly highlight in the trilogy.

Warwick's reputation for generosity was most probably first established anecdotally, transmitted orally by grateful recipients of his hospitality. The esteem with which the Earl was held was certainly enlarged by those in his household and

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<sup>8</sup> Robbins, 91, p. 219-20.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 82, p. 198.

extensive affinity. It took on a permanence and authority in manuscript form when first recorded in the *London Chronicle* report for the years 1467-8:

The which Earl was ever had in great favour of the commons of this land, by reason of the exceeding household which he daily kept in all countries where ever he sojourned or lay; and when he came to London he held such a house that vi oxen were eaten at a breakfast, and every tavern was full of his meat, for who had any acquaintance in that house, he should have had as much sodden [boiled meat] & roast as he might carry upon a long dagger....<sup>10</sup>

It was also confirmed by commentators who had first hand knowledge of him. For the Warwickshire antiquary John Rous, writing in his *Rolls*, Warwick was:

A famous knight and excellent greatly spoken of through the most part of Christendom...He had all England at his leading and was dread and dowhyted [feared] through many lands. And though forward fortune him deceived at his end yet his knightly acts had been so excellent that his noble and famous name could never be put out of laudable memory.<sup>11</sup>

Undoubtedly, as chaplain to the earls of Warwick Rous was not without bias in his comments, but *The Rolls* can be included in the accumulation of manuscript reports of the Earl as a key figure of his age.

These reports illuminate how, from 1461, Warwick's reputation extended beyond England to the Continent, where he was highly rated as King Edward's mentor and close advisor. By the end of his life he had successfully cultivated such notables as King Lewis XI of France, the Duke of Milan and the Papal Legate, Francesco de Coppini. Scrutiny and analysis of Warwick's power and status was undertaken by foreign observers like the Milanese ambassador Prospero di Camulio, Philippe de Commynes, secretary to Louis XI and Jean de Waurin.

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<sup>10</sup> *The Great Chronicle of London*, p. 207.

<sup>11</sup> Rous, nos. 56, 57.

Jean de Waurin (1394-c1472) a Flemish chamberlain and councillor to the Duke of Burgundy, spent time and had meetings with the Earl. His six volume chronicle *Receuil des Chroniques et anchiennes istories de la Grant Bretagne, a present nomme Engleterre*, included descriptions of significant events as they took place and estimations of Warwick's involvement. In spite of this tendency to *prosopopoeia*, a common practice among chroniclers, Angela Gransden points out that Waurin's historiography contained '...an increasing amount of material independent of all known chronicles.'<sup>12</sup> An energetic researcher, Waurin was hoping to obtain material from Warwick for his account of events in the period 1461-71. He confirmed Warwick's legendary hospitality during two visits to Calais in 1469, where the Earl was captain of the garrison. Waurin made a second visit to Calais because Warwick had promised to introduce him to someone who could help his research:

So I went to visit him [Warwick], and he entertained me for nine days with good cheer and much honour; but I obtained very little of the information I sought, though he promised me that if I came back at the end of two months he would supply me with part of what I wanted; and on my taking leave of him, he paid all my expenses and gave me a fine saddle horse. I saw plainly that he was busy with other important matters.<sup>13</sup>

Although Warwick was less open-handed with his confidences, there is confirmation of the Earl's material generosity in Waurin's report. Writing to Burgundy in 1467, contemporaneous with the account in the *London Chronicles*, Waurin also extolled Warwick's charm and his ability to sway the ordinary people with a common touch, not only through his persuasive delivery, but by what he promised them:

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<sup>12</sup> Gransden, p. 292.

<sup>13</sup> J. de Waurin, *Receuil des Chroniques et anchiennes istories de la Grant Bretagne*, ed. by W. & E. Hardy, 5 vols (1864-91), v, 578-9.



This earl of Warwick had in great measure the voice of the people, because he knew how to persuade them with beautiful soft speeches; he was conversable and talked familiarly with them – subtle as it were, in order to gain his own ends. He gave them to understand that he would promote the prosperity of the kingdom and defend the interests of the people with all his powers, and that as long as he lived he would never do otherwise. Thus he achieved the goodwill of the people to such an extent that he was the prince whom they held in the highest esteem, and on whom they placed the greatest faith and reliance.<sup>14</sup>

This positive estimation did not materialise out of nowhere. It can be assumed that, by the time Waurin was contributing to Warwick's historical narrative, the Earl's reputation for strength and probity, through his actions on and off the battle field, had been skilfully advanced through all the mechanisms of political manipulation available to the Yorkists. These were not only subtle, as in the official presentation of their case through petitions, letters and representation in council, but also military: forceful and immediate through their various victories in battle. Underpinning this political opportunism was the mutualism of bastard feudalism, whereby the liveried retinues in noble affinities vigorously supported their lords in return for material security. As Francis Bacon (1561-1626) later observed, 'Discreet followers and servants help much to a reputation.'<sup>15</sup>

The general pro-Yorkist bias in the early chronicles impacted positively on Warwick's reputation, until his *bouleversement* in 1470. After 1471 the triumphant Edward IV took immediate steps to provide versions of events which sought to destroy Warwick's reputation and popularity for ever.<sup>16</sup> Two histories were commissioned by the government, to persuade and inform: The *Chronicle of the*

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<sup>14</sup> Waurin, p. 319.

<sup>15</sup> Francis Bacon, 'Of Honour and Reputation', *Essays* (Everyman Library, 1906), p. 160.

<sup>16</sup> *The Chronicle of the Rebellion in Lincolnshire, 1470*, ed. by J.G. Nichols (Camden Miscellany, 1847) and the *Historie of the Arrivall of Edward IV in England and the finall Recoverie of his Kingdomes from Henry VI, A.D. 1471*, ed. by John Bruce (Camden Society, original series, 1838).

*Rebellion* served to discredit both Clarence and Warwick as instigators of a revolt in Lincolnshire in 1470. The *Historie of the Arrivall* was an official record of Edward IV's readeption and sought to expose Warwick as an over-proud, headstrong fool and his noble qualities as a sham:

..he was proud, a trickster and a coward who was a hero in his own thoughts and a child in his actions; a poor idiot whose hands were unable to hold all that he tried to grasp; a fool and a traitor rushing towards his end; and as a crowning insult he is made to say of himself that we must not regard him as one of the Nine Worthies, but rather as a character from Boccaccio, a conceited but helpless victim of Fortune's wheel.... Warwick's fall... was another instance of how men and cities, through their own excessive pride, could not but come to grief in the end, and serve as a warning to others.<sup>17</sup>

For the first time Warwick's repeatedly asserted qualities of courage and chivalry were challenged, but also uniquely it was in an official account written by the victor as part of Edward's reassertion of his right to the crown.

Within the ideological and moral arguments laid out in political tracts such as the *Historie of the Arrivall* were issues articulated in Shakespeare's sources, which he raises in the trilogy and with which Warwick was directly concerned. The convictions expressed were infused with the egocentric views of both sides. The Lancastrians, with less representation in the chronicles, but with the advantage of regal possession, asserted that they held the crown not only by right of tenure, but also by longevity. The latter argument was contested by the Yorkists as a weak proposition; the Lancastrians had only possessed the throne since Henry IV's coronation in 1399. The moral question of the usurpation in 1399 had been answered by Henry of Lancaster prior to his seizure of the crown. He advanced the same argument that the Duke of York would use later, when he made war on Henry

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<sup>17</sup> L. Visser-Fuchs, 'Edward IV's *Memoir on Paper* to Charles, Duke of Burgundy: The so-called "Short Version of the *Arrivall*"', Nottingham Medieval Studies, xxxvi (1992), p. 170.

VI: a weak king was a danger to the commonwealth, leaving the country in thrall to the greedy opportunists and self-seekers surrounding the monarch, thereby putting the security of the kingdom at extreme risk. This default position was also used much later by Warwick himself, when he changed sides in 1469. According to the Lancastrian view, their successful strength in arms and purpose, as established by both Henry IV and Henry V, incontestably legitimised them as heirs. Initially, the Yorkists took their stance from what they perceived as long-established genealogical supremacy. Later, as the Lancastrians weakened, they also added the 'might is right' vindication.

The pedigrees flaunted and vaunted by powerful men in legal challenges were recognised as the most substantial and legitimate basis on which claims to landed interests could be supported. In his case, York aspired to the ultimate in territorial imperative: the kingdom itself. Fifteenth century chroniclers were well-versed in the intricacies of royal and noble genealogies; they had access to the information from great landed families, who took steps to maintain and publicise their lineages. Warwick himself was '...pre-occupied with the family's royal decent and noble in-laws'.<sup>18</sup> Concerned with the promulgation of the self-image of the Montague and Neville families, he commissioned the Salisbury Roll of Arms in or about 1463, which traced the Montague side of his family back well beyond the twelfth century.

Richard Duke of York traced a line to the throne from Edward III from both sides of his family. His strongest regal claim came from that of his mother, Anne Mortimer, as great granddaughter of Lionel Duke of Clarence, third son of Edward

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<sup>18</sup> Hicks, p. 10.

III. But his line also extended from the fifth son, Edmund Langley, Duke of York, who was Richard's grandfather. Finally, the fact that Anne Mortimer had married Richard Earl of Cambridge, Edmund Langley's second son, tidily and incontrovertibly plaited the lines together. While waving his pedigree with assurance, York was also guilty of politically exploiting the weaknesses inherent in a regal minority. Those of Henry VI's close family, charged with governing the country, were quarrelling amongst themselves, leaving the way clear for the institutional factionalism which was to follow.

These major issues of lineage and legitimacy of title to kingship through longevity are fundamental to Shakespeare's development of the dramatic narrative as it involves the civil war generally, and Warwick in particular. But there are secondary issues within both the contemporary and modern historiography of the fifteenth century civil wars which impact on the way Warwick is assessed. These are matters of causation and timing; what was the catalyst for the beginning of the wars – and when did they actually start? Warwick's historical involvement and Shakespeare's later dramatic mimesis of his character spring directly from the answers. In his posthumously published *Memoirs* (1525) the Fleming councillor and early humanist writer Philippe de Commynes (1445-1509) gave a very short and somewhat muddled résumé of these English civil wars. The vaguely worded second sentence offers no opinion as to a definitive date at which they began, or any specific event which might have sparked them off:

His [Henry V] foolish son was crowned king of England and France in Paris. Thereupon the other men of degree in England began moving and division came among them... Whether those of the house of York usurped the kingdom, or obtained it justly I do not know, because in such matters the distribution is made in Heaven.<sup>19</sup>

Commynes' estimation of Henry was stark. He was strongly convinced of the necessity for the intervention of God in the affairs of princes like Henry who, when they are ineffective in controlling their nobility, need the supporting hand of the Almighty. Commynes was unhelpfully ambiguous in his assessment of the legitimacy of the Yorkists' claim, preferring to leave such a judgement to providence. Consistently vague, he went on to suggest a set of circumstances which were a likely catalyst for dissension:

There was not enough wealth in the kingdom to satisfy everyone. War broke out among them to obtain authority; they lasted for many years, and King Henry VI, who had been crowned king of France and England in Paris, was imprisoned in the castle of London and declared a traitor and criminal of lésé majesty.<sup>20</sup>

He attributed the wars to this more prosaic cause: the avariciousness of feuding nobles and their struggle for territorial dominance, which overcame their sworn loyalty to an anointed, yet weak king. Commynes did not have to look far in his research for home-spun gloomy comment and evaluation of the fragility of the state, caused by the uncontrolled and protracted disputes among those who should have known better. The decline in the ability of Henry and his council to govern effectively was explicitly laid out in Jack Cade's second manifesto in 1450:

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<sup>19</sup> *The Memoirs of Philippe de Commines*, ed. Samuel Kinser, trans. by Isabella Cadeaux, 2 vols (Columbia 1965), i, 106.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

[The king] hath had false counsel, for his land is lost, his merchandise is lost, his commons destroyed, the sea is lost, France is lost, himself so poor that he may not pay for his meat nor drink; he owes more than ever did king in England, and that daily his traitors that been about him waiteth wherever thing should come to him by his law, and they ask it from him.<sup>21</sup>

Where Commynes hesitated in articulating a definitive starting point, the majority of sixteenth century writers were unequivocal in locating the *causa sine qua non* as the deposition and murder of Richard II, and the immediate usurpation of the crown by Henry Duke of Lancaster in 1399. The Tudor chroniclers agreed that the fracturing of a long-established regal hierarchy by an act of violence was the cause of England's woes. Such perceptions of the causes and timescale of the Wars of the Roses are significant in any characterisation of Warwick. If, as the majority of contemporary and early modern chroniclers and historians believed, the seeds of the civil wars were sewn in the deposition of Richard II in 1399, then they assumed both a retributive and deterministic guise. In such an interpretation, Warwick becomes a crucial link in a chain of causation.

But in the mid-twentieth century, a revision of this long-maintained opinion occurred. Cooler and more rational investigation led to the conclusion that the fundamental cause was not the 'overmighty' subject but the 'undermighty' king and his feeble government, closer to Commynes view.<sup>22</sup> A few modern observers such as A.L. Rowse (1903-97) writing in 1966, still held to the view that the dynastic drama of 1399 was the starting point for the struggles between Lancaster and

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<sup>21</sup> Ralph Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry VI: The Exercise of Royal Authority, 1422-1461* (London, 1981), p. 636.

<sup>22</sup> K.B. McFarlane, 'The Wars of the Roses', in *England in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by G.L. Harriss (London, 1981), p. 234.

York.<sup>23</sup> But modern historians place the start of the Wars of the Roses mid-century, either at the onset of Cade's rebellion in 1450 and York's challenge to Henry at Dartford later the same year, or the first battle of St. Albans. These options are predicated on York's political ambition, which originated in his belief in the superiority of his lineal descent. It is at this point also that Warwick comes of age and makes his first appearance in the chronicles.

If the modern view is correct and the wars started mid-century, as a political gambit by an over-ambitious magnate, then the Earl is simply a calculating supportive figure, with an opportunistic eye and over-inflated sense of territorial imperative. If, as they assert, the first shot fired at St. Albans was the starting-point, an action ascribed directly to Warwick, then the adoption of the policy 'might is right' in order to remove a weak king, takes on a different political complexion.<sup>24</sup> It raises the issues of what constitutes a weak king; when is it legitimate to remove one, and who and what confirms the legitimacy of the replacement?

All these are considerations which Shakespeare explores in both tetralogies. This is not to say that these legal and moral questions are not mutually applicable to both possible determinants. The usurpation of Richard II was clearly a questionable act and, as Andrew Hadfield points out: 'Richard is the only monarch represented in the cycle of eight plays ... who actually has a strong claim to be king of England.'<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Dockray, p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> For an account of the start of the battle see *The Paston Letters 1422-1509 AD*, ed. by James Gairdner, 4 vols (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1910), i, 327-33. See also Shakespeare's source in Edward Hall, *The Union of the two noble families of Lancaster and York, 1550*, 1 vol. (London: the author, 1550; repr. England: Scolar Press, 1970), 1455, sig. LXXXVI.

<sup>25</sup> Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Renaissance Politics* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2004), p. 36.

Poor governance by King Richard set in motion the events of 1399, which were replicated by Henry VI in the mid-fifteenth century. Both Richard II and Henry VI were inexperienced and immature men surrounded by cabals of older, shrewder and politically ambitious contemporaries. Both were in the shadows of fathers who were bywords for martial prowess and success.<sup>26</sup>

These contextual disagreements are not pedantic insignificancies, argued esoterically by professional historians for the sole purpose of establishing a tidy and convenient date. The shift of focus from 1399 to mid-century has implications, both politically and philosophically, for how the wars are evaluated overall and Warwick's place in them as a key figure. The imprinting of Warwick's persona as an exemplar of an aggressive medieval knight, permeated with retributive and martial energy, survives in our national consciousness. Shakespeare's early modern sources set Warwick as a major character on the wheel of fortune, one of a group who sought revenge for a perceived wrong which took place three decades before his birth. Eliminate altogether the early modern issues of God's will and divine retribution, as applied through Tudor mythology, and the Earl's status is changed to become a member of a politically ambitious cadre of fractious nobility, some of whose greed, obsession with revenge, and thirst for power were *causa causans* for the ensuing civil disruption. Whether Warwick is evaluated today as following a just cause in a just war, or as a self-seeking opportunist, the sharp focus in modern times is on his agnomen 'kingmaker' as his *raison-d'être*. This has left his roles as admiral, pirate, ambassador, soldier, statesman, politician and landowner under-

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<sup>26</sup> Richard II's father was Edward the Black Prince, hero of the battles of Crécy (24<sup>th</sup> August, 1346) and Poitiers (19<sup>th</sup> September, 1355) in the Hundred Years War against France.



represented in subsequent historiography, with the exceptions of the four most modern biographies. Warwick's maritime career was a central element of his historical narrative, yet sixteenth century chroniclers – and consequently Shakespeare – gave it scant exposure.

Warwick's historical narrative, bound in as it was with the most significant events of the mid-fifteenth century, was opened up to wider scrutiny in the early modern period with the advent of printing. G.R. Elton asserts that one of the two most important events which propelled historiography into new spheres was the invention of the printing press.<sup>27</sup> He maintains that: 'In supplying the new reading public, the popular historians tried to abstract and transmit the work of their medieval predecessors, as well as to continue it into their own time.'<sup>28</sup> An expanded audience than that of the academic, antiquarian and rising humanist nobility was introduced to a systematised account of the past for the first time.

According to Elton, the other important event in the development of early modern historiography was the arrival of the humanist Polydore Vergil (c.1470-c.1555) in England in 1502. Dominique Goy-Blanquet hails Vergil as a genuine, rational historian. He sees him as: '...the first to use critical judgment, compare sources and check the veracity of facts.'<sup>29</sup> The theme of his work, according to J.R. Lander: '...soon became the exemplar for all the accomplished historians writing in Tudor

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<sup>27</sup> G.R. Elton, *England 1200 – 1640: The Sources of History* (London, 1969), p. 18.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Dominique Goy-Blanquet, 'Elizabethan historiography and Shakespeare's sources', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's History Plays*, ed. by Michael Hattaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 62.

England.<sup>30</sup> Encouraged by Henry VII, Vergil collected material for a history of England, completing his first draft of the *Anglica Historica* in Latin in 1513. In Vergil's design of the world, echoing the convictions of Commynes, the institutional framework of the realm was created by the personalities of individual kings who determined its fate under God's watchful presence. This could only be achieved if the sanctity of an anointed king was upheld, and the immutable principle of inheritance was sustained. The exclusion of an heir from his lawful rights was regarded as one of the worst of crimes by all the landowning class. Within this framework, great nobles like Warwick were inextricably linked to these moral and political concerns. But, even though Vergil was less concerned with the recent partisan quarrels than his English colleagues, he set the model for Tudor chroniclers like Edward Hall.

Hall (c.1499-1547) was an ardent patriot, writing full-blooded prose in praise of the English in general and the House of Tudor in particular. He regarded history as a store house of moral examples and for him it was: 'The key to honesty, godliness, and virtue of all sort.'<sup>31</sup> Published in 1548, his chronicle contained a wordy translation of Vergil's elegant Latin, spiced with the author's own moral commentaries, along with a substantial list of his fifteenth century sources.<sup>32</sup> The chronicle has a literary and thematic unity and an unambiguously secular and constitutional title: *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York*. Developing fully the embryonic historiographical structure begun by

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<sup>30</sup> J.R. Lander, *The Wars of the Roses* (Gloucester, 1990), p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> Hall, Dedication to King Edward VI.

<sup>32</sup> Hall separates his Latin, French and English sources, which are listed at the front of the book.

Vergil and completed about 1532, Hall confined his account of events to those of the previous century, arranging his work in strict chronological order and incorporating a rational explanation for the onset of the civil war. In contrast with Commynes's exclusively providential view, he emphasised the influence of secular power. *The Union* opens with the deposing of Richard II, setting the start of the civil war firmly in 1399, with the hostile actions of the Lancastrians. Hall considered the primary reason for the wars remained with God, but set out a comprehensive list of secondary causes: the loss of France, which left openings for the activity and exercise for the minds of princes, the usurpation of the crown in 1399 by Henry Bolingbroke, the overweening pride of the Duke of York, the antipathy of the people to the Duke of Somerset and the weakness of Henry VI who: '...was a man neither of wit nor stomach, neither meet to be king or to govern a commonwealth.'<sup>33</sup>

In Hall's *schema* Warwick is entered into an alphabetical Table of persons and places, inserted at the end of the account of Henry VI's reign, as: 'Richard son to Richard Beauchamp made earl of Warwick and captain of Calais'.<sup>34</sup> Warwick's narrative is fully laid out as one of the main protagonists of the civil wars, the last major battle fought only fourteen years before Hall was born.<sup>35</sup> Hall's first reference to the Earl is in 1452, when both Warwick and his father were courted by the Duke of York. This was before either had aligned themselves politically with the Duke, although they had strong familial connections:

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<sup>33</sup> Hall, 1454, sig. LXXXV.

<sup>34</sup> Hall, 'The Table into the history of King Henry the Syxt'. The term 'son', loosely used in the early modern period, is confusingly substituted for son-in-law.

<sup>35</sup> Battle of Bosworth (22<sup>nd</sup> August, 1485).

[York] returned out of Ireland, and came to London in the parliament time, where he deliberately consulted with his special friends as John Duke of Norfolk, Richard Earl of Salisbury, and Lord Richard his son, which after was Earl of Warwick...<sup>36</sup>

Hall soon establishes some key facets of Warwick's fifteenth century reputation. He produces several anecdotes in support of Warwick's characteristics of generosity, persuasiveness, unlimited energy and single-mindedness. References to Warwick's reputation for open-handedness follow immediately after his first appearance; Hall places them earlier in his chronology than their inclusion in the *London Chronicle* from which they were taken.<sup>37</sup> Omitting the gourmet references, Hall is most expansive on Warwick's political skills:

This Richard was not only a man of marvellous qualities and facundious [eloquent] fashions, but also from his youth, by a certain practice or natural inclination, so set them forward, with witty and gentle demeanour, to all persons of high and low degree, that among all sorts of people, he obtained great love, much favour, and more credence: which things daily more increased by his abundant liberality, and plentiful house keeping, than by his riches, authority, or high parentage: By reasons of which doings, he was in such favour and estimation, amongst the common people, that they judged him able to do all things and that without him, nothing to be well done.<sup>38</sup>

Warwick's qualities of single-mindedness and energy are summarised in Hall's description of the incident at Ferrybridge in 1461, in which Warwick's brother Montague was killed:

When the earl of Warwick was informed of this feat, he like a man desperate, mounted on his hackney, and came blowing to king Edward saying: 'Sir, I pray God have mercy of their souls, which in the beginning of your enterprise have lost their lives, and because I see no succours of the world but in God, I remit the vengeance and punishment to God our creator and redeemer, and with that he lighted down and slew his horse with his sword saying: let him fly that will, for surely I will tarry with him that tarry with me, and kissed the cross of his sword.'<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Hall, 1452, sig. LXXX<sup>v</sup>. Hall conflates events: York returned from Ireland in September 1450.

<sup>37</sup> See above p. 25.

<sup>38</sup> Hall, 1454, sig. LXXXV<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 1461, sig. CII. The same story had previously been circulated by Jean de Waurin. See Waurin, 294.

Hall perceived Warwick's characteristics as matching his reputation – a typical nobleman but with the common touch. It is particularly important in the consequent view of Warwick as a mimetic dramatic figure, with clearly delineated qualities which become signifiers of his reputation. These anecdotes also confirm Hall's particular style of early modern historiography, designed as it was to preserve and enhance the deeds and consequent fame of the great men of the past.

Early modern chroniclers and observers like Hall were interested in personalities, motive and behaviours of such 'great men', which they saw as crucial determinants of the course of history. As F. Smith Fussner asserts:

Whether or not such history was true to the evidence, it had to be true to the literary purposes of the author, that is true to his moral or patriotic theme, or simply poetically universal in Aristotle's sense – history like poetry would then be concerned with what a man of a certain sort will say or do, either probably or inevitably.<sup>40</sup>

Smith Fussner also reminds us that the simplified biographies of key figures, as portrayed in the early modern period, reduced the model of history to simple cause and effect. The popularisation of history at that time depended on the popularity of biography: '...individuals were simply more interesting to the general reader than movements.'<sup>41</sup> The most obvious example was *The Mirror for Magistrates* which first appeared in 1559 and, initially with nineteen tragedies by various authors, was a useful introduction to the register of the main participants in the political maelstrom of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The list of further entries, accumulated in later editions between 1563-87, adds to the majority of famous names from the late medieval period and is reminiscent of Shakespeare's cast list in

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<sup>40</sup> F. Smith Fussner, *The Historical Revolution* (London, 1962), p. 46.

<sup>41</sup> F. Smith Fussner, *Tudor History and the Historians* (New York, 1970), p. 267.

his history plays: Henry Hotspur, Humphrey Duke of Gloucester, Clarence and the Earl of Warwick.

*The Mirror* was primarily exercised with political doctrines, disguised within a poetic narrative. Its underlying concern was with the instruction of the prince or magistrate through examples from the past. Its chief importance lay in the fact that it assembled so many current political ideas and gave them new animation by putting them into unpolished yet poetical structure. *The Mirror* copied and enlarged the process of moralising history by that close tracing of cause and effect begun by Polydore Vergil, later developed by Hall. Its authors fully approved of the powerfully didactic, as against the factual or anecdotal practice of history. They were most emphatic in its ideas about history repeating itself, firm about the importance of obedience to the king and the wickedness and misery of civil war.

In the preamble to Warwick's narrative, the author estimates that the Earl's story is deeply predicated on acquisition and loss of material prosperity. Early in his poetic account Warwick shows himself to have had a clear strategy predicated on 'God-given fortune' and rooted in fair-dealing and persuasion:

In all attempts my purpose I attained,  
Though King and Queen & most Lords of the land  
With all their power did often me withstand,  
For God gave Fortune, and my good behaviour,  
Did from their prince steal me the peoples favour.<sup>42</sup>  
17-21

He withstood the enmity of kings and his peers and, with fortune and his own *virtus*, achieved his prime objective: to win the people's trust. Next follows a

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<sup>42</sup> All quotations which follow are from Warwick's account in *The Mirror for Magistrates*, pp. 205-210.

résumé of Warwick's historical narrative and the events leading to his death at Barnet. By giving Warwick direct speech the author allows the reader to understand and believe how this narrative came about and the methods by which he achieved his aims:

Perchance thou thinkest my doings were not such  
As I and other do affirm they were.  
And in thy mind I see thou muses much  
What means I used, that should me so prefer:  
Wherein because I will thou shalt not err,

In the event that the reader might not find credibility in the story which he unfolds, Warwick assures us that:

The truth of all I will at large recite,  
The short is this: I was no hypocrite.

Then, attempting to explain his motivations and actions, he lays out in one verse the attributes first noted in the *London Chronicles* and then paraphrased in Hall:

I never did nor said, save what I meant,  
The common wealth was still my chiefest care,  
To private gain or glory I was not bent,  
I never passed upon delicious fare.  
Of needful food my board was never bare.  
No creditor did curse me day by day.  
I used plain, ever pitch and pay.

85-98

Warwick upholds his own reputation for fairness by emphasising the importance of financial probity in a prince's dealings; debts should always be quickly repaid, whether in cash or kind. The consequences of reneging on a contract, however basic, can be extreme:

I heard old soldiers, and poor workmen whine  
Because their duties were not duly paid.  
Again I saw how people did repine,

As those through whom their payments were delayed:  
 And proof did oft assure (as scriptures said)  
 That God doth wreak the wretched people's griefs,  
 I saw the polls cut off from polling [plundering] thieves.  
 99-105

In his own evaluation, his reputation as a plain dealer enables Warwick to empathise with the frustrations felt by ordinary soldiers and labourers, who were often not fairly rewarded, or had payment delayed. In this guise, he makes a tacit reference to Edward's lack of appreciation and sense of fair play. Warwick understands and appreciates that plain dealing is repaid by loyalty, to the death if necessary:

This made me always justly for to deal.  
 Which when the people plainly understood,  
 Because they saw me mind the common wealth  
 They still endeavoured how to do me good,  
 Ready to spend their substance, life and blood,  
 In any cause whereto I did them move  
 For sure they were it was for their behove.  
 106-12

It is his emphasis on the protection of the common good which is most striking in this account, not the people alone, but the state itself. He defends his actions as those of one who values effective kingship, good governance and firm rule; the topos which Shakespeare elaborates so fully in both tetralogies. In *The Mirror* Warwick says:

And so it was. For when the realm decayed,  
 By such as good king Henry sore abused,  
 To mend the state I gave his enemies aid:  
 And when king Edward sinful pranks still used,  
 And would not mend, I likewise him refused:  
 And helped up Henry the better of the twain,  
 And in his quarrel (just I think) was slain.  
 113-19



Justification for his actions is based on his perception of a just cause. His final evaluation is that Henry was ‘...the better of the twain’, but in his declaration Warwick fails to clarify what Henry’s better qualities were. There is an inference in ‘sinful pranks’ that the King’s private behaviour was more exemplary, in comparison with Edward’s licentious proclivities, and consequently Henry held the moral high ground.

In his final exhortation, Warwick returns to his theme of honest dealing as one of the necessary prerequisites for a stable state. There are simple precepts to be upheld and followed by a straight-talking, plain-dealing soldier and statesman:

And therefore Baldwin teach by proof of me,  
That such as covet people’s love to get,  
Must see their works and words in all agree:  
Live liberally, and keep them out of debt,  
On common wealth let all their care be set,  
For upright dealing, debts paid, poor sustained,  
Is mean whereby all hearts are thoroughly gained.  
120-6

This reiteration and almost obsessive allusion to repayment of debts reinforces Warwick’s perception of Edward’s ingratitude towards him. In these few lines the writer, albeit in Warwick’s name, iterates succinctly those qualities which are taken up by Shakespeare to underpin his characterisation of Warwick. The theme of probity, particularly in deeds, recurs throughout Warwick’s historical and dramatic narratives. Shakespeare’s portrayal of Warwick’s ultimate volte-face therefore becomes all the more shocking in its impact.

*The Mirror* was one of the sixteenth century printed sources from which Shakespeare took his material and brought Warwick to life in the medium of

performance. Between 1590 and 1599, the dramatist wrote and had performed a sequence of eight plays based on the regal history of England in the fifteenth century. This was almost one play a year, indicating a speed of composition and writing which required a serious imperative. Commercial considerations must have been a priority, suggesting that these early history plays were financial successes; their popularity with the audiences reliably filling seats for the theatre owners. Later events in the century covered in the dramas were not long outside the living memory of some of his audience. It is likely that a proportion of them would have been aware of Shakespeare's licence with the placing of events, and the anomalies in the text he furnished for his characters. Within the specifically militaristic theme of the trilogy, some of Hall's anecdotes, which support the chronicled accounts of Warwick's specific characteristics of generosity, persuasiveness, unlimited energy and single-mindedness, are taken up and incorporated in key scenes of the *Henry VI* trilogy.

The capacity to invigorate characters through drama and to stimulate audiences with historical signifiers was recognised by Shakespeare's contemporaries. The playwright Thomas Nashe (1567-1601) who may have collaborated in the writing of *Henry VI Part I*, felt that history plays not only revived long-forgotten heroes and heroic deeds, but also fulfilled a present moral purpose:<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See Burns, p. 74.

Nay, what if I prove plays to be no extreme: but a rare exercise of virtue? For the subject of them (for the most part) it is borrowed from our English Chronicles, wherein our forefathers valiant acts (that have lain long buried in rusty brass and worm eaten books) are revived, and they themselves raised from the grave of oblivion, and brought to plead their aged honours in open presence. What can be a sharper reproof to these degenerate effeminate days of ours.<sup>44</sup>

He went further, seeing play-going as a displacement activity for war and also diverting the populace from riot and rebellion: ‘...which comes from times of idleness, especially in the afternoons.’<sup>45</sup>

On a similar theme Thomas Heywood (c.1574-1641) in an *Apology for Actors* (1612) praised players and authors alike for the beneficial results of dramatised English history. Such productions: ‘...made the ignorant more apprehensive, taught the unlearned the knowledge of many famous histories, instructed such as cannot read in the discovery of our English Chronicles.’ He also perceived a moral imperative within them, contending that the aim of the history plays is: ‘...to teach due obedience to the king’ and to reveal, by example, the ‘untimely ends’ of the wicked and the ‘flourishing estate’ of the virtuous: ‘exhorting them to allegiance, dehorting [counsel against] them from all traitorous and felonious stratagems.’<sup>46</sup>

These unambiguous opinions as to what the purpose of history is, and where Shakespeare stands in that context continues to be debated. Twentieth century critics agree with Heywood that Shakespeare’s history plays are the fount of much of our interest in the past. The evidence is in the continuity, if not always the regularity of performances of the individual dramas across the centuries. In his

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<sup>44</sup> Thomas Nashe, *Piers Penniless, his supplication to the Divell, 1592*, ed. by G.B. Harrison (London: The Bodley Head Quartos, 1924), p. 86.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Heywood, *Apology for Actors*, 3 vols (London: The Shakespeare Society, 1841), iii, sig. 3<sup>v</sup>.

introduction to *Shakespeare: The Histories*, Graham Holderness considers contemporary opinions of what the history plays represent and how they were conceived. Firstly, that they may have formed:

...from the outset a unified, cohesive, organic totality of dramatic and historical writing (though the individual plays have often been disaggregated in criticism and theatrical practice, for particular local reasons).<sup>47</sup>

This view is expressed by Nicholas Grene, who unequivocally argues that the history plays constituted a serialisation of the chronicles and were designed for sequential performance. He admits that this theory is not without problems:

One of the difficulties in convincing those who resist such a concept of master design for the history play series is that it is without precedent, so unparalleled in the theatre of the time.<sup>48</sup>

But he goes on to assert that the source materials for the first tetralogy were:

‘...planned as a series, planned indeed for serial production.’<sup>49</sup>

Graham Holderness examines also the alternative view that the plays are:

...a diversified, fragmentary series of historico-dramatic explorations, each individually and independently shaped by contemporary cultural pressures (though the individual plays have often been integrated in criticism and theatrical practice for general ideological reasons).<sup>50</sup>

The cyclical question is also revisited by Dominique Guy de Blanquet. He gives a resume of diverse opinions, bringing them up to date but offering no finality to the debate:

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<sup>47</sup> Graham Holderness, *Shakespeare: The Histories* (Macmillan, 2000), p. 8.

<sup>48</sup> Nicholas Grene, *Shakespeare's Serial History Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 18.

<sup>49</sup> Grene, p. 19.

<sup>50</sup> Holderness, p. 8.

Cairncross in Arden 2 had opted for the order of the Folio, the date 1590 for Part 1, and the notion that the four plays form an epic cycle. The Oxford editors reopened the whole quarrel by relegating *1 Henry VI* after Parts 2 and 3, adopting the Q titles, plus a number of passages and readings usually excluded from edited texts, and again querying Shakespeare's sole authorship. Michael Hattaway summed up the argument over *1 Henry VI* exhaustively without bringing it nearer to a solution. I cannot hope to improve matters and so do not mean to try.<sup>51</sup>

By 1599, regardless of the order of writing, these plays were constituted in such a way that they can be performed in their entirety, beginning with the reign of Richard II, through an unbroken chronology ending with *Richard III*. The opportunity for serial performance entices repeat visits to the theatre, even by those with no particular interest in or knowledge of English history. The chronology is an attraction, since each play, like history itself, is open-ended, leaving the audience in anticipation of the next episode. These stories of temporal order are enduring and lay out the narratives of characters like Warwick in ways which stimulate and perpetuate interest. Peter Saccio considers that:

Far more than any professional historian, and despite the fact that the professionals have improved upon him in historical accuracy, Shakespeare is responsible for whatever notions most of us possess about the period and its political leaders. It is he who has etched upon the common memory the graceful fecklessness of Richard II, the exuberant heroism of Henry V, the dazzling villainy of Richard III.<sup>52</sup>

This notion of a collective memory, formed from common, repeated experience is fundamental to the view that Shakespeare's cultural reproduction of British medieval history is more compelling through its characterisation than analytical versions of history. According to Robert Shaughnessy: '...the characteristics of Shakespearean drama are absorbed into our consciousness of what history is.' He

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<sup>51</sup> Dominique Goy-Blanquet, *Shakespeare's Early History Plays: From Chronicle to Stage* (Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 14.

<sup>52</sup> Peter Saccio, *Shakespeare's English Kings: History, Chronicle and Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 4.

goes on to define further those characteristics as: 'heroic-individualist, male-dominated, cyclical; driven by an essential, transcendent notion of human character.'<sup>53</sup>

Larry Champion claims that the *Henry VI* plays form part of a general movement towards what amounts to a new mode of historical inquiry:

The new historiography which developed in English intellectual life between 1580 and 1640 moves between the Ciceronian platitudes about history's moral utility, beyond the services of didacticism though a reflection of a providential view of human events, beyond history as a response to a tide of patriotism surrounding the defeat of the Armada, beyond history as a tool of the Tudor establishment.<sup>54</sup>

He goes on to assert:

The chronicle plays fulfil the complex demands of their contemporary public. They offer little definitive guidance or shaping of events in such a manner as to delimit the meaning or significance of history, and the spectator is forced individually to come to terms with a welter of contradictions and conflicting ironies.<sup>55</sup>

Michael Hattaway also points out that there is a problem with the consistency of historicism as it is interpreted on the stage:

Readers of history may be encouraged to reflect on recurrent patterns of the past, but theatre audiences watch history being made: the immediacy of the experience concentrates the minds upon the contingent, the secular, and on psychological deliberation. Given that each production is going to create particular emphases and highlight individual concerns, and therefore differing explanations for dramatised events, historicism may be impossible in the theatre.<sup>56</sup>

The question is whose historicism? Any hypothesis, interpretation and, even to some degree, evidence-based conclusion must be subject to the moderating hand of the thinker, the director or the writer. Original sources are themselves reports

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<sup>53</sup> Robert Shaughnessy, *Representing Shakespeare: England, History and the RSC* (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), p. 4.

<sup>54</sup> Larry S. Champion, *The Noise of Threatening Drum: Dramatic Strategy and Political Ideology in Shakespeare and the English Chronicle Plays* (London, 1990), p. 130.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Hattaway, p. 11.

pervaded with some degree of partiality, as the early chronicles show in their bias towards the Yorkists. The role of Warwick as an essentially straightforward figure lends itself particularly to such a subjective interpretation. We may warm to his blunt, uncomplicated style as a refreshing example of straight-talking self-assuredness, or be antagonised by his seemingly simplistic and over-expedient stratagems. The more clearly defined a character is portrayed, the more unequivocally it can be evaluated. Since Shakespeare bypasses many of the roles played out in Warwick's historical narrative, while enlarging those of an ambitious, military nobleman, there are fewer facets of his character in his dramatic persona for the audience to assess. Whether the audience view him as an impetuous war-monger, or as a man of loyalty and honour, he is a clearly identified character with a distinct role to play. Compare the audience's collective memory of those characters in the plays which, although allotted crucial roles historically, are muted and ambiguous in the drama, for example Exeter, Oxford and Buckingham.

The dramatisation of history, encapsulating events and issues which lend themselves ideally to subjective evaluation, is liberated from the necessary constraints of empirical analysis. Drama is free to base its narrative on real characters and events, in real time, either with respect for the facts of historiography or to utilise poetic licence, through which historical facts are mutated to fit an ideological construct, or to simplify a confused mass of data. In terms of strict chronology and characterisation, Shakespeare adopts the reality in his history plays, but with poetic modification. His version transcends the complexity of modern historiography with its emphasis on accurate and well-documented research.

Michael Hattaway considers that, as far as the history plays are concerned, no play stands or falls by its historical accuracy:

Although writers of history in our own age are aware that the past they map out is coloured by ideological positioning and fashioned by the kind of narratives they are creating, all modern historians critique their sources and write discourses that are evidence-based. We assume that behind modern histories are ‘facts’, deduced from written or material documents, witnesses to events, or from statistical analysis. Any deviation from this kind of ‘truth’, would, in our own period, be unacceptable.<sup>57</sup>

He goes on to point out: ‘The action presented is of universal validity, a demonstration of political paradigms and not necessarily an accurate account of the deeds of one set of great women and men.’<sup>58</sup> For example, there are several themes closely identified with existing feudal structures, particularly bastard feudalism, which unify the diverse actions of Warwick and others of the nobility portrayed in the early plays. These are referenced in the *Henry VI* plays in meetings of councils and parliament, the administration of justice and preparations for war. In this context, the regular assertion of pedigree in the justification for challenge to the constitutional status quo becomes an insistent topos throughout the trilogy. Shakespeare’s political and historical paradigm of national disorder, as a consequence of the overweening ambition of mighty subjects who hold such pedigrees, the consequential horrors of civil unrest, and the dangers to the constitution from weak kingship, all provide a reading of the plays with which the viewer can connect. The constitutional concerns expressed in the plays are as active and recognisable to us as they were to the Tudor audience.

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<sup>57</sup> Hattaway, p. 11.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 12.



The audience's overall experience of Shakespeare's dramatic histories are individual and subjective, often, but not always, educative. We may or may not leave the theatre with an understanding of Warwick's overall political intentions. But the plays do incorporate and reify those elements in our national history which can hold an audience's collective interest. In this regard, there are acute similarities with the way in which some modern historians use the visual opportunities afforded by television, to process information into an appetising and easily-digested form. This is not to denigrate such historians or their producers, any more than Shakespeare and his theatre managers' own commercial instincts can be criticised. Both are seeking to hold the audience for similar reasons; primarily for commercial success without which they risk their continued survival. Within that imperative there are clear priorities, which must be included in the historical dramatist's ratiocination and which impact on the creation of characters such as Warwick. These are: for profit (to fill the theatre, entertain and encourage return); to educate and demythologise (to re-tell well-known historical tales utilising some authoritative base); to create new legends and mythologies (by animating and immortalising historical characters through the medium of drama); for political manipulation (stimulating audience awareness of diverse political dogma). There is a raft of immediate outcomes of this ratiocination: employment and profit for creators, audience appreciation or disapprobation of the dramatists' art, audience pleasure at or disappointment in production, audience identification with character and historicity, audience increased understanding of the moral weight or political

substance of the subject matter, and the dramatist's increased or deflated confidence in their own creative ability.

The long-term outcomes from the dramaturgy of history and character, as exemplified by Shakespeare, can be specified as the establishment of a text in national (and international) consciousness. Drama enlivens and immortalises historical figures, demystifying and demythologising their political status through a staged reality: the re-mythologising of characters into stereotypical villains, heroes, comedians and tragedians. For some in the audience, the outcome need not be simply a passive experience; it is not unusual for the genesis of an interest in medieval history to spring from Shakespeare's two tetralogies.<sup>59</sup> The first Duke of Marlborough, John Churchill (1650-1722) writing as neither an historian nor a dramatist, but an educated and privileged man, allegedly stated that he knew no other English history but what he had learned from Shakespeare. There is no modern book on the Wars of the Roses of which I am aware, scholarly or populist, which does not somewhere quote or refer to Shakespeare's history plays.

Historiography has evolved in the modern period, as the study of history becomes a means of explanation of the origins and nature of the past. Modern historians view past events holistically and cumulatively; that is to say, while national circumstances may be manipulated and changed by a single powerful individual (Alexander, Napoleon, Stalin and Hitler) their actions are driven by universal antecedents: territorial imperative, war, revolution, and economic collapse. In this context, Warwick reacted to political circumstances current in his time: the

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<sup>59</sup> See Dockray's Acknowledgments. Also Nicholas Grene, p. 1.

combination of the loss of foreign territory acquired over a period of a century, and the long protectorate for a king who was a minor. Both situations fostered disunity, jealousy and chaos. As a rich and powerful earl, with a proven pedigree of nobility behind him, Warwick could and did manipulate these conditions as he wished. Without them his role as a setter-up and puller-down of kings would have been unattainable.

Warwick's historiography, and consequently his reputation, has undergone the revision necessitated by the new sense of the need for professional historiography, which emphasises a study of society rather than the old customs and institutions which it had created. A notion of the discontinuity between ages develops as a consequence, together with scientific tests of evaluation, critical assessments of sources and academic rigour. Historians have moved the Earl's narrative along a continuum, from the distinctively feudal magnate as portrayed in the medieval chronicles, to a more ambiguous, multifaceted figure five centuries later.

The positive elements of Warwick's reputation were maintained through the seventeenth century. In Warwick's earliest biography, Thomas Gainford's *Unmatchable Life and death of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick in his tyme the darling and favourite of kings* (1618-24) the author added comeliness of gesture and gracefulness of person to his list of attributes. In his *General History of England until 1654*, Thomas Carte (1686-1754) considered Warwick the greatest subject in England for power and estate. The French Huguenot Paul de Rapin (1661-1725) considered pride an ennobling characteristic. In his *Histoire d'Angleterre* (1724) he

describes Warwick as having the characteristics of personal courage and as ‘the proudest of lords.’<sup>60</sup>

There was a sea-change with onset of the eighteenth century Enlightenment when, as A.J. Pollard observes: ‘There ceased to be innate virtue by birth into the aristocracy. True glory no longer existed in the exercise of power’.<sup>61</sup> The scholar and historian Sharon Turner (1768-1847) adopting a process of empirical enquiry into a range of original sources, re-evaluated Warwick’s reputation for martial energy. Echoing Edward IV in the *Historie of the Arrivall*, he was severe:

[Warwick] was a poor general, irascible and splenetic, ambitious and restless....too powerful to be a peaceful subject to any sovereign, yet compelled always to remain one.’<sup>62</sup>

The last adverbial clause is ambiguous; it could be taken to mean that Warwick’s rash disposition and ambition went beyond the realm of subject. But it had never been suggested that Warwick ever harboured any ambition for the crown itself. This possibility is ignored in the chronicles and never hinted at by Shakespeare. In like manner, Warwick’s reputation was scrutinised by the philosopher David Hume (1711-76) who fundamentally disagreed with earlier assessments, although acknowledging the Earl’s reputation for extreme power. He criticised Warwick as: ‘The greatest as well as the last of those mighty barons that formerly overawed the crown and rendered the people incapable of any regular system of government.’<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Pollard, p. 193.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>62</sup> Sharon Turner, *History of England during the Middle Ages*, 3 vols (1823), iii, 290, 337.

<sup>63</sup> David Hume, *The History of England*, 6 vols (London: Alexander Murray, 1871), iii, pp. 160-1.

In Victorian times historians such as William Stubbs (1825-1901) concurred with Hume that the Earl made no contribution to progress; neither did he discover any glories in Warwick. Stubbs dismissed him as one who ‘Comes hardly within the ken of constitutional history.’<sup>64</sup> The Scottish archivist John Gairdner (1828-1912) was also uncompromisingly scathing:

He was the last great feudal nobleman who ever made himself dangerous to the reigning king. His policy throughout seems to have been selfish and treacherous and his removal was an unquestionable blessing to his country.<sup>65</sup>

Now Warwick had become a self-seeker, fused with those other magnates of the age of which he himself was most critical. His plea to the commons that he only ever acted in their interests, was viewed by Gairdner as disingenuous; his death came as a relief for the commonwealth.

By the early twentieth century these views were modified in the first full biography of Warwick, written by Sir Charles Oman (1860-1946). In his first chapter he acknowledged that, although Warwick remained a recognisable historical figure in the public consciousness, his persona was yet to be discovered:

Everyone, it is true, knows his [Warwick’s] name, but his personal identity is quite ungrasped. Nine persons out of ten if asked to sketch his character would find, to their own surprise, that they were falling back for their information to Lord Lytton’s [1803-73] *Last of the Barons* [1843] or Shakespeare’s *Henry VI*.<sup>66</sup>

Oman was first and foremost a military historian, which may explain his appreciation of Warwick more as a soldier, in contrast with other Victorian historians who focussed on Warwick’s politics, which they regarded with

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<sup>64</sup> William Stubbs, *Constitutional History of England in the Middle Ages*, 3 vols (Oxford, 1878), iii, 212.

<sup>65</sup> J. Gairdner, *The Houses of Lancaster and York* (London, 1874), p. 186.

<sup>66</sup> Oman, p. 1. Oman cites the novel by E.G.E.L. Bulwer-Lytton, *The Last of the Barons*, 2 vols (Estes and Lauriat: Boston, 1892).

antipathy.<sup>67</sup> He published his biography *Warwick the Kingmaker* in 1891 and within it he re-identified two of the distinct and prominent characteristics of Warwick's personality recognised by the Earl's contemporaries and which he considered made him a leader of men:

The first was an inordinate love of business; the second a courtesy and affability which made him the friend of all men save the class he could not brook – the “made lords”, the parvenu nobility which Edward the Fourth delighted to foster.<sup>68</sup>

Oman's assessment of Warwick's qualities accorded with early conclusions: he saw the Earl as having a passionate energy through which he controlled and managed everything himself, with supreme attention to detail, and the indefinable quality of engendering loyalty. His final evaluation remained upbeat and positive:

...if [Richard Neville] had been born in a happier generation, his industry and perseverance, his courage and courtesy, his liberal hand and generous heart, might have made him not only the idol of his followers but the bulwark of the commonwealth.<sup>69</sup>

Warwick's third biographer Paul Murray Kendall was, as Keith Dockray points out:

...a conscientious researcher who, despite an occasional penchant for purple prose and a tiresome tendency towards imaginative reconstruction in the face of inadequate evidence, often managed to beat the professionals at their own game.<sup>70</sup>

Murray Kendall was a professor of English, who wrote in a florid, novelistic style, but, unlike his predecessor Charles Oman, he did provide evidence of his sources. He resurrected the fifteenth century and early modern assessment of Warwick, and

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<sup>67</sup> Oman's two-volume work *A History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages* (Blackwell, 1885) has been regarded as a classic of military history.

<sup>68</sup> Oman, *Warwick the Kingmaker*, p. 237. Writing to the Duke of Milan in 1470, his ambassador at the French court, Sforza de Bettini, described the events of the accord negotiated by Lewis between Margaret and Warwick and how the Earl wanted to absent himself while negotiations were going on but: 'That done, Warwick will return here to give the finishing touches to everything...' *Calendar of State papers and Manuscripts existing in the Archives and Collections of Milan*, ed. by Allen B. Hinds (London: HMSO, 1912), p. 139.

<sup>69</sup> Oman, p. 243.

<sup>70</sup> Dockray, p. 189.

interpreted him as a super-magnate; one who acted out his own legend in his lifetime. His biography was also pinpoints Warwick's signifier in the book's title: *Warwick the Kingmaker*. The evaluation of the Earl's mercurial trajectory on the English scene is typical of the biographer's style:

Warwick's generation took him for granted, like many other manifestations of God's unfathomable Providence. The chroniclers note his fiery passage across their scene with much the same acceptance they accord to the appearances of *stella comata*. He was simply *there*.<sup>71</sup>

Unlike Oman, Murray Kendall retained a perception of Warwick's personal identity from his actions. He made his approach to the writing of Warwick's historical biography clear:

I believe there is sufficient information about the man to discern the essential pattern of his character. I have not invented any scenes, incidents, or conversations. To create a portrait, I have occasionally extended points of fact into lines, but I have intruded no points of my own.<sup>72</sup>

His final assessment was that Warwick was one who ultimately failed because he believed his own publicity, a view that would be confirmed by later professional historians:

Warwick left no enduring print upon the English state. He was an adventurer – a surcharged moment of human experience. It was men's imaginations that he stamped. By the passing of time, he paid the price of becoming a legend by almost ceasing to be a man.<sup>73</sup>

Warwick's legendary status was scrutinised by other twentieth century historiographers of the Wars of the Roses. E.F. Jacob considered Warwick as one who overreached himself and acted out an internalised image of his character, as he would wish it to be.

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<sup>71</sup> Murray Kendall, p. 17.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 324.

[Warwick] had the pride and some of the reserve of the Neville's, their love of great state and magnificence, and, peculiar to himself, the tendency to build up and realise in action an image, a projection of what he thought to be his own fundamental nature. This imaginative portrait seems to have grown upon him and to have haunted him increasingly in his later days.<sup>74</sup>

The phrase 'peculiar to himself' disentangled him from the Neville clan, isolating him as unique in fulfilling his words through his actions, but ultimately self-deluded. The distinguished historian Charles Ross assumed a moralistic tone to describe the Earl:

Warwick, on whom later generations were to bestow the sobriquet of 'the Kingmaker', had energy, dash and courage. A skilful propagandist, he had great success in rousing the common people to his cause and was well known for his open-handed generosity. Yet he was self-interested and arrogant, and like the rest of the Neville family, acquisitive and unscrupulous to a degree; he was to prove himself unusually ruthless in his treatment of defeated enemies.<sup>75</sup>

Ross revisited the received view of Warwick's contemporaries, but with the caveat that these traits were based in self-interest rather than altruism.

The most damning and unequivocal assessment came from the medievalist J.R. Lander, who attacked Warwick for his '*insaciable covetise*'.<sup>76</sup> He also considered that:

For the earl high morality was a stick with which to beat opponents rather than the guiding light for his own conduct. His sense of reality (1467-69) had, at last, completely failed, if indeed in the higher reaches of politics, he had ever acquired a sense of reality strong enough to distinguish rational considerations of policy from his own dominating ambitions.<sup>77</sup>

He was in tune with Jacob in his view that Warwick believed in and followed his own sense of reality. He observed Warwick's lack of self-perception, and his manipulation of his followers, based on a misguided sense of the righteousness of

<sup>74</sup> E.F. Jacobs, *The Fifteenth Century 1399-1485* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 537.

<sup>75</sup> Charles Ross, *The Wars of the Roses: A Concise History* (London, 1976), p. 31.

<sup>76</sup> J.R. Lander, *Government and Community: England 1450 – 1509* (London, 1980), p. 221.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.



his cause. Lander ascribed a Thesaurian selection of derogatory descriptors to Warwick: he was ‘a man of overwhelming pride and avarice’; his political sense was ‘rash and defective’; he imposed his will ‘by violent means’; he reacted ‘emotionally’ rather than wisely and:

His deep personal rancour, bred on excessive greed and lust for power, proved too narrow an emotion to unite even his own family circle behind him in a career of active treason, still less the mass of the nobility.<sup>78</sup>

This is a reversal of most of the earlier more positive assessments. Lander’s evaluation of Warwick’s ‘pride and avarice’ replaces Hall’s ‘abundant liberality’; ‘politically rash and defective’ contrasts with Waurin’s observation of the earl’s ‘conversable and subtle’ qualities; ‘violent and emotional’ is oppositional to the estimation of the *London Chronicles*: ‘courageous and manliest knight’.

A recent evaluation, for the third time emphatically underlining Warwick’s soubriquet, highlights those aspects of his personality beloved by his contemporaries, but in a cooler, more considered fashion. Unlike Murray Kendall, Michael Hicks does not romanticise Warwick’s narrative, but provides a carefully structured analysis based on documented evidence. In an authoritative and minutely researched biography, he is objective in his search for the essence of Warwick’s character. He makes few assumptions, the strength of his evaluation embedded in his meticulous assemblage and organisation of primary and secondary sources. He immediately identifies Warwick’s capacity for boundless energy, which he considers was motivated by service to his country:

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<sup>78</sup> Lander, *The Wars of the Roses*, p. 119.

His relentless attention to business demanded an extraordinary energy that we can only marvel at. His ceaseless journeys over unmade-up roads, on horseback and sailing ships, and in English weather conditions. He was apparently never ill and never flagged. His is the model rather of the medieval nobility of service and of the all-encompassing chief minister of the future. Pragmatism and ruthlessness went hand in hand with honour.<sup>79</sup>

His military capacities were multi-faceted:

He was a daring subaltern, the boldest and most brilliant of strategists, a consummate logistician, and a pioneer in the tactical use of sea power, combined operations and field artillery; flawed solely (but fatally) as a battle field tactician.<sup>80</sup>

Michael Hicks also comments on Warwick's popularity abroad, observing how: 'King Lewis came to regard Warwick as the key pawn in his chess game; he cultivated him when he could and fêted his subordinates when he could not'.<sup>81</sup> He provides a valedictory for Warwick's character and personality, which I consider captures the essence of the majority of Warwick's contemporary commentators:

There was nothing Warwick would not attempt and no obstacle that he would not overcome. He was indomitable, never surrendered, never failed to recover until the very end. For twenty years he shaped events, his own career, and indeed history itself. An underlying strength of will and determination and an intolerance of opposition and viciousness towards opponents needs to be set against the charm that cajoled, persuaded and won over men of whatever standing. It was this indefinable popularity that made him so much more than the greatest of subjects.<sup>82</sup>

But I believe that Hicks's use of 'indefinable' in reference to Warwick's popularity is problematic. I would argue that Warwick's popularity can be defined. Those he sought to persuade, from kings to copyholders, were dazzled by the strength and transparency of his implacable ambition, and its juxtaposition with the social qualities he employed to achieve it. The combination of an aura of self-belief, material generosity and superabundant energy was irresistible to those within its

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<sup>79</sup> Hicks, p. 6.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

orbit. He could hardly fail to attract a following with such extreme levels of what we would interpret today as charisma.

In the twenty first century a fourth biography bears the same title, providing continuity for Warwick's perceived legendary status. The historian A.J. Pollard mediates between the oppositional views of Warwick as either an exemplar of true nobility who defied the centralising tendencies of the crown, or a man who hindered the development of the modern state. In his introduction, Pollard points out that this latter perspective has dominated historical writing on Warwick for the last two and a half centuries:

Warwick was, thus, not just a troublesome individual: he has also come to be perceived to be symptomatic of a structural weakness in the realm that threatened the power and authority of the crown in the fifteenth century.<sup>83</sup>

But he concludes that:

The bouleversement at the end of his career was a logical culmination of it. By the same token, his defeat by Edward IV in 1471 allowed the crown to reassert and strengthen its grip on exclusive political authority in England and opened the way for the further extension of the centralised state. This is why he soon became a hero for those in the following centuries who...resisted the centralising and autocratic tendencies of the crown...<sup>84</sup>

His final objective assessment encapsulates familiar estimations:

We do not know much about his personality, but his hold on the contemporary imagination suggests that he had what today are called charisma and leadership qualities. He also cultivated celebrity...He had the temerity to put himself on a par with kings and to outshine them. For doing so he was at first greatly admired and later roundly condemned by posterity.<sup>85</sup>

The chroniclers and historians are consistent over five centuries in their reiteration of the key themes in Warwick's legend: ruthlessly manipulative, socially skilful,

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<sup>83</sup> Pollard, pp. 2-3.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

plain dealing and physically vigorous. The interpretation of how these qualities impacted on his actions and their outcomes have re-formed over time. His historical narrative has withstood subjection to various historical pressures of political conformity, subjectivity, obsession, academic fashion and personal bias. But Warwick's well-defined qualities, reputation and distinctive role, as Shakespeare vivifies them, are well-situated in his dramatic narrative to withstand such influences. As a man who recognises the value of words, but only when backed up by action, the stage provides Warwick with the ideal setting. My next chapter will consider how, through his text, Shakespeare most subtly and analytically begins to open up and extend the character, extrapolating Warwick's characteristics and qualities so far identified, and distilling them into a dramatic persona: moving Warwick from supporting player in the Temple garden in *1 Henry VI*, to a central figure in the scene at Bury St. Edmonds in *Part 2*.

## CHAPTER 2

### ESTABLISHING WARWICK IN *1* AND *2 HENRY VI*

In their overall assessment of the Earl of Warwick's qualities, contemporary observers, both at home and abroad, showed a consistency of agreement. He was noted for a trio of powerful characteristics: physical and emotional energy, generosity, social and political acuity. In this chapter, I want to explore how Shakespeare begins to dramatise Richard Neville's historical narrative and to consider the ways in which the attributes, discussed in the previous chapter, are used to accelerate the character's status in the drama. I will show how the Warwick role is significantly developed by Shakespeare, from the Earl's inclusion in The Temple garden scene in *1 Henry VI*, where he appears as a very young and inexperienced nobleman, to the events surrounding the death of Gloucester in *Part 2* (3.2) in which Warwick is commissioned by Henry VI to establish the truth of an event which becomes a cornerstone of *Parts 2* and *3*. In terms of authorship this scene:

...is generally considered the most ripely Shakespearean of all, though this is due rather to the ease and vividness of the dialogue than to any poetic virtues... It is a quarrel scene, yet not a full-dress quarrel before the court like so many of the other English scenes or between established leaders. Rather between comparatively young and untried men, and that might be enough to explain the more natural, less hyperbolic tone.<sup>1</sup>

This view is also put forward by Nicholas Grene, who sees the scene as a means of introducing the key players:

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<sup>1</sup> M. Mincoff, 'The Composition of Henry VI, Part 1', in *SQ*, 16 (1965), p. 283.

This is clearest in what one could call the seeding of characters early on in the sequence who are going to be essential later in the narrative. The Temple Garden scene is a case in point, one of the parts of the play which nobody seems to doubt is by Shakespeare.<sup>2</sup>

Set in a garden of the Temple Hall, therefore metaphorically outside the confines of the law, the scene is an imagined device of the dramatist and has no known historical source. It is the first of a sequel of dramatic situations where Warwick's role is developed and in which he plays a significant part. Here the audience is not only prepared for the Wars of the Roses, which break out fully towards the end of 2 *Henry VI*, but also introduced to some of its main protagonists. The stage direction reads: 'Enter Richard Plantagenet, Warwick, Somerset, [Suffolk, Vernon *and a Lawyer*]' (2.4). The first four of these are key figures in the civil strife to come. Shakespeare imagines his characters as much of an age; intemperate students quarrelling at the Inns of Court in the Temple. The matter of their dispute is unclear, but that they are all high-spirited noblemen, more prone to self-assertive passion than to reasonable self-command, leads them from an abstract debate to practical matters of lineal status relevant to themselves. They are four wealthy and noble young men, privileged by birth to attend a prestigious academy. The expectation is that, as students attending the centre of English law, they will show at least the beginnings of a competent and well-informed level of legal argument. Even though the origin of the disputants' wrangling is left unexplained, Shakespeare's powerfully symbolic text is the reference point for the action to follow. Here is the first evidence of a motif which will run through the trilogy: the struggle between law and war and the issues of birth, nobility and status, all aggressively pursued.

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<sup>2</sup> Grene, p. 19.

The underlying concern of the scene is the contention between Richard Plantagenet's dynastic ambitions for the throne and Somerset and Suffolk's determination to thwart him, by maintaining their influence over an established and anointed king. It is in this scene that Warwick is first fictionally connected with these three central characters and Shakespeare develops the individual characteristics by which they all become consistently identified. Plantagenet is obstinate and violent in his ambition, pursuing his desire for the throne from the beginning with a dogged persistence. Somerset and Suffolk are equally determined, both in their own pursuit of dominance of the court and their aggressive opposition to Richard. At the beginning, Warwick is more indeterminately portrayed as one who has not yet made up his mind. He enters the Temple garden reluctant to commit himself, as he explains, for reasons of ignorance not conviction. Having made his choice over the unexplained issue, Warwick shows his full commitment to Richard's cause by plucking York's white rose (2.4.36). So far he is only concerned with the natural justice of his kinsman's claim to his Dukedom, not his latent regal ambitions. Warwick is dramatised as entering the garden with an incurious and uncommitted mind on the issue introduced by Plantagenet. This is possibly the first indication which Shakespeare shows of the Earl's perceived quality of straightforwardness, or plain dealing, whereby he will wait to hear the evidence, weigh it in his mind and make a judgement.

The scene, which opens with York's reference to 'a case of truth', is so devised by Shakespeare as to allow the various protagonists to establish their loyalties. Suffolk brings the dispute between Somerset and Plantagenet into the garden from the

Temple Hall, where they had become ‘too loud’.<sup>3</sup> Richard is seeking confirmation of, or counter argument against, a precept he has made. He gets straight to the point, directing his first question to Suffolk:

Then say at once if I maintained the truth;  
Or else was wrangling Somerset in th’error?  
2.4.5-6

At his first appearance, Suffolk is exposed by Shakespeare as diplomatic but unscrupulous; disingenuously pleading his negligence as a student, with a casual attitude towards his studies and a duplicitous approach to the law:

Faith, I have been a truant in the law  
And never yet could frame my will to it,  
And therefore frame the law unto my will.  
2.4.7-9

Suffolk openly asserts his view of the priority of the will, a precept which will be acknowledged by Warwick at the end of the scene. Now Shakespeare brings in Warwick, through Somerset’s request that the Earl mediates between the three nobles:

Judge you, my Lord of Warwick, then, between us.  
2.4.10

In his introductory lines, Shakespeare moves Warwick’s rhetoric away from the formal ground of legalistic argument, to a pastoral *schema*. Prevaricating, as if to show his ignorance of the law and his shallow grasp of dialectic, the Earl falls back on an area with which he is much more familiar: hunting, fighting, horsemanship and women. None of these have any relevance to the philosophical question of truth

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<sup>3</sup> For a contemporary view on students attending the Inns of Court see S.B. Chrimes, *Sir John Fortescue, de Laudibus Legum Anglie* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1942), pp. 116-20.



posed by York. Shakespeare's use of a rhythmic, repetitive pattern for Warwick's lines supports the simplistic content of his response:

Between two hawks, which flies the higher pitch,  
 Between two dogs, which hath the deeper mouth,  
 Between two blades, which bears the better temper,  
 Between two horses, which doth bear him best,  
 Between two girls, which hath the merriest eye,  
 I have perhaps some shallow spirit of judgement:  
2.4.11-16

At this point Shakespeare begins to reveal the physical aspects attributed to Warwick in the chronicles, pithily encapsulating his epitaph in *The Mirror for Magistrates*: 'But god be with him and send his soul rest, for sure his body never had any.'<sup>4</sup> This is a portrayal of a young nobleman who spends most of his time in competitive pursuit of the animal and the human. The use of the anaphoric element in these rhetorical questions is ascribed by the dramatist solely to Warwick here and later in the trilogy. In *3 Henry VI* (3.3.188-10) in the French court scene, he will express his resentment of Edward's behaviour in a series of similarly patterned questions; also in a bitter exchange between the Earl and King Edward (4.3.36-40). This mode of repetitive questioning fits with Warwick's perceived characteristic of straight talking. The message becomes more clearly understood through its insistency. The grammatical inversion of 'Between two' offers up immediate opportunities for comparison, reinforcing his own perceptions of his ability to make fine judgements in areas of commonplace activity. Warwick admits he has no faith in his understanding of the minutiae of the law, but feels confident to expose his lack of learning, viewing it almost as a prerequisite for proper manhood. Shakespeare applies an ornithological comparison of Warwick with the jackdaw,

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<sup>4</sup> *The Mirror for Magistrates*, p. 211.

(*Corvus monedula*) a bird renowned (unfairly) not only for its proverbial stupidity, but also for its propensity for picking up glittering trifles.<sup>5</sup>

But in these nice sharp quillets of the law,  
Good faith, I am no wiser than a daw.

2.4.17-18

The Earl is displacing a serious moral and philosophical precept with a set of conditions with which he is more comfortable and knowledgeable. Whilst both Warwick and Suffolk are admitting ignorance of the law, there is a difference in their responses. The latter admits he will bend the law to suit his purpose when he disagrees with it, leaving the perception that he grasps the legal implications, but chooses to ignore them. Warwick will puzzle over them briefly, but accept them and move on. Underlying Warwick's rueful openness, there is also a tacit admission of youthful inexperience, which is not unhistorical.<sup>6</sup> Robert Jones interprets both Suffolk and Warwick's responses as indicating: an arrogant and aristocratic distaste 'for such "inkhorn" scholarship.'<sup>7</sup> Shakespeare uses Warwick's words to show an honest admission of ignorance; the dramatist is reinforcing one of the explicit qualities remarked upon in the chronicles.

With masculine derision, Plantagenet admonishes Warwick for 'mannerly' behaviour which precludes him from committing himself either way for fear of offending. Here the word mannerly is used with its accepted meaning of 'showing

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<sup>5</sup> For the social habits of corvids, especially jackdaws, see the *Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa: Birds of the Western Palearctic*, ed. Stanley Cramp et al, 8 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), iv, 121; Franklin Coombs, *The Crows* (London 1978), pp. 111-28.

<sup>6</sup> See Ralph Griffiths, *King and Country: England and Wales in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1991), p. 318.

<sup>7</sup> Robert C. Jones, *These Valiant Dead: Reviewing the Past in Shakespeare's Histories* (University of Iowa: Iowa, 1991), p. 10.

good manners'. Elsewhere in Shakespeare the word occurs twice as an adjective. In *A Winter's Tale* it is applied in a masculine context: [Leontes to Hermione] 'And mannerly distinguishment leave out/Betwixt the prince and beggar:' (2.1.104). In *Romeo and Juliet* the meaning is feminised by Juliet as 'seemly, decent and modest': [Juliet to Romeo] 'You do wrong your hand too much/Which mannerly devotion shows in this', (1.5.97). As he adopts the word, Plantagenet is clearly anxious to goad an opinion, however hesitantly given, and seizes on a practical solution. If none will express their choice aloud, they can indicate their preference in silence by the selection of a 'dumb significant', a material symbol. Astutely, Plantagenet recognises that a verbal justification must naturally follow this physical act of choice; his original requirement for a public declaration will have been achieved. He selects what is closest to hand:

Since you are tongue-tied and so loath to speak,  
In dumb significants proclaim your thoughts.  
Let him that is a true-born gentleman  
And stands upon the honour of his birth,  
If he suppose that I have pleaded truth,  
From off this briar pluck a white rose with me.

2.4.25-30

Unlike the tossing of a coin, where the outcome rests on chance alone, the protagonists are forced to make a commitment through an unequivocal physical action which allows no dissembling; initially actions not words will deliver the solution, but words must reinforce the choice. Somerset responds with an aggressively oppositional action:

Let him that is no coward nor no flatterer;  
But dare maintain the party of the truth,  
Pluck a red rose from off this thorn with me.

2.4.31-3

Shakespeare's choice of 'party' and 'maintain' exposes the divisions amongst the nobility. The dramatist has already demonstrated this very theatrically in the scenes of disputes between Gloucester and Winchester. These culminate in a brawl between the followers of these most senior members of the nobility, at the gates of the Tower (1.3). They draw our attention to the perilous outcomes from the actions of uncontrolled retained and liveried affinities, which will go on to wreak havoc in the years to come. In this context, the use of 'maintain' also implies a more sinister meaning relating to maintenance, the illegal activity of outside interference in law suits, rife in the fifteenth century. Suffolk has already admitted that he will '...frame the law unto my will' (2.4.9).

In response to Somerset, Shakespeare moves Warwick off the fence almost as swiftly as he will later have the Earl change sides in a single line in *3 Henry VI* (3.3.184). At this early point of Warwick's dramatic narrative he is characterised as a young man who is easily persuaded. Shakespeare has given Somerset the marginal modal 'dare', a word which can be counted on as a stimulant to young men. Disavowing any identity with cowardice himself, Somerset pricks Warwick into action. But there is a change in Warwick's response; he moves from an earlier, casual lack of interest in legalistic argument, to the beginnings of political awareness:

I love no colours: and without all colour  
Of base insinuating flattery,  
I pluck this white rose with Plantagenet.

2.4.34-36

Richard Plantagenet's totemic act, coupled with Somerset's irresistible challenge, has brought Warwick into the contention. He picks up the reference to flattery,

extending it to mean a stratagem of the ignoble, by which they may foist themselves on those above whom they seek to impress. This will later become a recurring theme in Warwick's bitter disapprobation of parvenus like the Rivers family.<sup>8</sup> Shakespeare also alerts us to the plainness of the white rose, which correlates well with Warwick's historical reputation for candidness, the etymology of which is found in *candidus*; appropriate to one who is recognised for his openness and ability to communicate at all levels. The Earl eschews insinuation by ostentation and flattery. Shakespeare will later confirm this position in *Part 2*, when Warwick's father explains his son's relationship with the commons (1.1.186-90). Following Warwick's decision, Suffolk, similarly decisive, takes 'young' Somerset's side by plucking a red rose. At this point, red and white roses have been selected equally.

Now a theatrical balance is struck between law and war. Significantly there is no sense at the scene's beginning of any contentious legal or political issues which might lead to disagreement between these men; rather, they are a group of quarrelsome students, with little else to do but wrangle over moot points. However, they quickly become politicised, truculent and partisan. Shakespeare develops the action so that attitudes are adopted, signifiers selected and commitments confirmed. The inclusion in the scene of the doubtful historical figure of Vernon, as a legal mediator, retains the action within words not deeds, for a time.<sup>9</sup> He calls an armistice for the negotiation of a simple solution:

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<sup>8</sup> For an example of Warwick's antipathy to parvenus see *The Paston Letters AD 1422-1509*, ii, 506.

<sup>9</sup> See Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry VI*, p. 78 for details of Sir Richard Vernon. Edward Hall references two Vernons: Sir Richard Vernon, a captain under Salisbury in 1422, sig. II; Sir John Vernon is included in the account of the fall of Castillon: 1453, sig. LXXXII.

Stay, lords and pluck no more  
 Till you conclude that he upon whose side  
 The fewest roses are cropped from the tree  
 Shall yield the other in the right opinion.

2.4.39-42

‘Cropped’ implies a harvest, which is an apt verb for the protagonists who will gather in supporters as the characters garner the blooms. The stalemate reached means numbers are now crucial; Vernon proposes that the selection process be seen as a vote between York and Somerset. Both noblemen can only agree that the suggestion is ‘well objected’, and that they will ‘subscribe’ to the outcome ‘in silence’, precluding any further dispute. The deadlock is broken by the two who have not yet voted; Vernon and an unnamed lawyer select white roses, both reflecting that Plantagenet has the argument according to their study of the point of law. Vernon’s verdict is that he must support York’s ‘...truth and plainness of the case,’ (2.4.46). It is the lawyer who has the casting vote and selects the white rose:

Unless my study and my books be false,  
 The argument you held was wrong in you;  
 In sign whereof I pluck a white rose too.

2.4.56-8

Literary fact has the ascendancy and can provide the truth, according to the lawyer. Four to two wins the contest and Plantagenet manipulates Somerset into a response with an emphatic challenge:

Now, Somerset, where is your argument?

2.4.59

At this point, Shakespeare’s scene identifies the incompatible nature of the legal and the martial. Although there is an initial agreement to abide by the outcome of the legitimate argument, consensus is swept aside by violent reaction when that outcome is seen as unsatisfactory to the losing side. Somerset has no cogent reply to

Plantagenet's question and reneges on his assurances that he will 'subscribe' in 'silence', taking an aggressive stance and making the first physical threat:

Here in my scabbard, meditating that  
Shall dye your white rose in a bloody red.  
2.4.60-61

Discourse, legal argument and even plain exchange of views are all dismissed for immediate gratification by physical assault. The exchanges escalate in their level of anger and insult until the point is reached where birth and status become the central issues. This is one of the key themes of the trilogy and this scene is pivotal in establishing it as a core motif. At every turn, Shakespeare uses the question of status as a weapon wielded by the combatants. Richard Plantagenet makes his estimation of Somerset clear:

Now, by this maiden blossom in my hand,  
I scorn thee and thy fashion, peevish boy.  
2.4.75-6

Suffolk has already referred to Somerset as 'young Somerset' (2.4.37) possibly in an avuncular tone by which a more experienced man may patronise a younger; but 'scorn' and 'peevish' are words which are explicit and barbed; Plantagenet means to belittle. Suffolk immediately lunges in Somerset's defence, but is himself riposted by Richard:

Suffolk	Turn not thy scorns this way, Plantagenet.
Richard	Proud Poole, I will, and scorn both him and thee.
	2.4.77-8

Plantagenet will not dignify Suffolk with a courtesy title. The alliteration is chosen to mock and undermine an already questionable lineage. The Suffolk family had risen from the merchant class under the name of Poole, later Gallicised to 'de la

Pole', nominally raising their status to Norman descendency. Suffolk's response is visceral; he will stuff Richard's words from whence they came:

I'll turn my part thereof into thy throat.  
2.4.79

The brief exchanges, which Shakespeare uses to heighten the tension between the protagonists, are brought to an end by Somerset who intervenes with a sideswipe at Richard. This will have the most significant repercussions:

Away, away, good William de la Pole –  
We grace the yeoman by conversing with him.  
2.4.80-1

This is no throw-away line: Shakespeare's choice of 'yeoman' opens up an issue which becomes one of the central elements of this scene, the play and the trilogy.

Warwick has played no part in these exchanges since he made his overt commitment and plucked York's rose. By maintaining his silence as the rhetoric flies, Shakespeare confirms the young Earl's lack of skills in dialectic, to which he has already admitted (2.4.11-18). But now it is Warwick who responds to Somerset's insult, in his first intervention in forty lines:

Now, by God's will, thou wrong'st him Somerset:  
His grandfather was Lionel, Duke of Clarence,  
Third son to the third Edward, King of England;  
Spring crestless yeomen from so deep a root?  
2.4.82-5

The dramatic use of 'yeoman' as a calumny allows Warwick to intervene on an issue he views as crucial.<sup>10</sup> Shakespeare has not referred at any time to Plantagenet's pedigree; Warwick's lineal reference may be the trigger which sends the Duke to his uncle Mortimer for confirmation of his genealogy in the next scene.

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<sup>10</sup> See Hicks, pp. 229-234.



Shakespeare has turned the thrust of the scene from its first focus, which lines up the protagonists, to the political core of the trilogy: the lineal right of the Yorkists to claim the crown. Warwick becomes the instrument – as Henry himself will acknowledge in *Part 3* (4.6.17) – and his words are important as the first salvo in his campaign as a ‘kingmaker’. Shakespeare’s highlighting of yeoman status, within the accepted hierarchy of both medieval and early modern social structures, cleverly reinforces the leitmotif of birth and lineage. Yeomen were by default ignoble and Somerset’s gibe, that by even talking to ‘the yeoman’ they were dignifying him, is the precursor for heated exchanges between Suffolk, Richard and Somerset, which would have ended in a fight had they not been in the precincts of the Temple, where the use of weapons is forbidden. Richard sees Somerset as taking advantage of a privileged place, one in which he cannot physically respond to a perceived serious insult. Somerset uses historical knowledge as a weapon to hurl at Plantagenet, rather than as a means to resolve the rights and wrongs of the case. He has much to say concerning Richard’s father, the Earl of Cambridge (c.1385-1415) and his treason in 1415, for which he was executed. According to Somerset, Cambridge was attainted and, as a consequence unable to transmit his property or titles to his son. This deprived Richard of his landed inheritance, technically reducing him to the level of yeoman.

When Somerset leaves with Suffolk his parting words reflect his understanding of Plantagenet’s intent:

Have with thee, Pole. Farewell, ambitious Richard.  
2.4.114

Plantagenet turns to Warwick, bitterly complaining:

How I am braved, and must perforce endure it.  
2.4.115

Through these exchanges, Shakespeare exposes the root of the contentions to follow. The cut and thrust of insult must finally break out in physical reaction. At this early stage in the trilogy, Plantagenet is manipulating Warwick, goading him to a physical commitment. Richard has admitted that he has been challenged, but is powerless to respond without support. Shakespeare has again given Warwick no dialogue for thirty lines, but now breaks the Earl's silence. Warwick delivers a strategy for deeds not words:

This blot that they object against your house  
Shall be whipped out in the next parliament,  
Called for the truce of Winchester and Gloucester:  
2.4.116-8

At the forthcoming parliament, their newly formed faction must vigorously pursue Plantagenet's claim to his father's estate and establish him as Duke of York. Warwick's coda is deterministic:

And if thou be not then created York,  
I will not live to be accounted Warwick.  
2.4.119-20

Dramatically this can be interpreted as Warwick either offering straightforward military support to the death, or that he is confident that Richard is as likely not to gain his title as Warwick is to lose his. As fundamentally a man of action rather than words, bearing in mind the visceral and aggressive tone of the previous exchanges, it is most likely that Warwick is offering his sword and thereby his life

in Plantagenet's service. In doing so he recognises that he may never live to enjoy his own title. This full-blooded commitment is also borne out by his promise:

Meantime, in signal of my love to thee,  
Against proud Somerset and William Poole  
Will I upon thy party wear this rose.

2.4.121-23

Shakespeare shows that Warwick's decision is not based entirely on the Earl's support for Richard, but encompasses his antipathy to Somerset and Suffolk. The confirmation that he will wear the white rose follows on from Somerset's openly-stated intention:

Well, I'll find friends to wear my bleeding roses  
That shall maintain what I have said is true,

2.4.72-3

Factions are formed from the symbolism of both statement and act and Warwick is first to connect the red rose and the white in contention. He makes a prophesy:

And here I prophesy: this brawl today,  
Grown in this faction in the Temple Garden,  
Shall send between the red rose and the white  
A thousand souls to death and deadly night.

2.4.124-7

Warwick's recourse to prediction reinforces the increasing self-confidence of his dramatic persona. The dramatist is developing this character into one who understands action and consequences, essential qualities for one who will later hold the unique soubriquet 'kingmaker'. Through him, Shakespeare takes us into an unpromising future for all concerned.

It is in this scene that Shakespeare increases the semantic opportunities within the symbolism of the garden. The red rose and the white are subverted by Plantagenet and Somerset to signifiers of complex enmity, division, and emblems of war. The

scene is singular, because it implies to the audience that this is where the Wars of the Roses begin. As yet there is no reference to the Tudor notion of the original sin of the deposition of Richard II and the usurpation of Henry Bolingbroke. The contention with which Warwick has now fully committed himself remains one of perceived affront to dignity and status. Shakespeare is creating a specific discourse on family and loyalty; within this context the scene is used as the springboard for future action: Plantagenet immediately goes off to receive confirmation of the rightness of his claim from his dying uncle Mortimer. Warwick keeps his word and plays a major role in the Bedford parliament, where Plantagenet is restored to his title. On a simple level, events dramatised in the Temple garden arrange the major players into clearly delineated opposing factions. More profoundly, it begins to focus the trilogy on the main issue of legitimacy through lineal descent, which later feeds into the fundamental question of quality of kingship. Warwick's role is to support one side of the genealogical and historical proposition, not with points of legality for which he self-admittedly makes a poor student, but those of familial memory. Recall of pedigree is used by both sides, not heroically or even legalistically, but crushingly.

Shakespeare dramatises the four main protagonists: Plantagenet, Warwick, Suffolk and Somerset, memorably for theatrical and historical imperatives. Their dramatic narratives not only require a momentum in time and space, but must also reflect a semblance of historiographical detail which can be understood by the audience. In this context the exchanges in the Temple garden, both verbal and symbolic, present a problem. The scene initiates a mythology, one which has embedded itself into

collective consciousness and become the semblance of an historical truth. This historiographical embellishment has also been compounded in art and literature, where the symbolism of the white and red roses has been widely and wildly romanticised.<sup>11</sup> Warwick becomes part of this mythic account, as a central protagonist in a scene which opens his gambit as the setter-up and puller-down of kings. Although it deflects momentarily from his historical narrative, ultimately it reinforces this role, offering opportunities for a transparent explanation of his motivation, which is absent in the chronicles.

The chronology of this scene is also problematic, even as a fictitious representation. While Shakespeare positions the events in the Temple garden immediately before the death of Mortimer in 1425, he also sets it after the fall of Orleans in 1428, and before the parliament at Leicester in 1433. Warwick's own chronology is also confused, since in *Part 1* his character is conflated with his father-in-law Richard Beauchamp. Richard Neville was only four in 1433.<sup>12</sup> Richard Beauchamp (1382-1439) was a man approaching his fifties at this time. Richard Plantagenet (1411-60) John Beaufort (1403-44) and William de la Pole (1396-1450) belong historically to an older generation than Warwick.

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<sup>11</sup> The phrase *Wars of the Roses* is ascribed as an invention of Sir Walter Scott. See *Anne of Geierstein or The Maiden of the Mist* (London, 1901; repr. [n.d.]), p. 92. Henry A. Payne's *Choosing the Red and White Roses* (1908) was a mural commissioned for the Palace of Westminster and depicted the events as dramatised by Shakespeare. [http://shakespeare.emory.edu/illustrated\\_showimage.cfm?imageid=182](http://shakespeare.emory.edu/illustrated_showimage.cfm?imageid=182) [accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2008].

<sup>12</sup> Bedford's parliament at Westminster was summoned on 8<sup>th</sup> July 1433, four months before Warwick's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. J.S. Roskell, *The Commons and their Speakers in English Parliaments, 1376-1523* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1965), p. 206.

A brief résumé of Warwick's historical relationship with the three protagonists in this scene is useful and helps put into context the dramatic relationships which Shakespeare develops between them. Somerset, for example, is a character whose persona is made complex, both in the chronicles and by Shakespeare.<sup>13</sup> John Beaufort was accepted as the true author of the failure in France. He was succeeded by his younger brother Edmund (1406-55) and the Beaufort in this scene, which is placed before 1444, is clearly John, created first Duke of Somerset with precedence over all other magnates apart from Gloucester and York. The consistent historical fact which binds the various Beaufort family members is that they were all Lancastrian supporters and therefore natural enemies of Warwick.<sup>14</sup> Historically John Beaufort was already dead when Richard Neville was still in his teens, but as Earl of Warwick the latter would later fight against his brother Edmund at the first battle of St. Albans.

Suffolk's dramatic narrative in this scene is more chronologically in tune with historical events than the other central figures. Shakespeare charts de la Pole's ascendancy and downfall in close replication of the chronicle accounts. Historically, Richard Neville's contact with Suffolk was fleeting. Coming of age in 1449, Warwick attended his first parliament in January 1450, at which Suffolk, in the face of general hostility, presented his *Apologia*. In February, Warwick attended the session when the formal petition of indictment against the Duke was presented by the Commons, the chief articles of which was that, not only did he commit treason

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<sup>13</sup> Hall confuses the sons of Edmund: Henry (1436-64) and Edmund (1438-71) and in 3 *Henry VI* Shakespeare conflates them as a composite 'Duke of Somerset'.

<sup>14</sup> See Hicks, pp. 31-48.

by conspiring with the French to invade England, at the same time promising them the delivery of Anjou and Maine, but he also compounded this crime with misappropriation of taxes, embezzlement and the perversion of justice. Suffolk was held responsible, with others, for the death of Gloucester. Warwick was also present on 17<sup>th</sup> March when Suffolk was banished for five years by Henry. Shakespeare's imaginary scene in the Temple garden provides the first dramatic contact between the two Earls. Their growing antipathy prefigures the major confrontations between them in *2 Henry VI* and the events surrounding the murder of the good Duke.

The developmental nature of the Temple garden scene moves Warwick from ambivalence to overt support for Richard Plantagenet against Somerset and Suffolk. Warwick is Richard's nephew and their kinship is pivotal, although unspoken – at no time does the Earl call Richard 'uncle'. Watching the antagonism building between Somerset and Suffolk against Plantagenet, Warwick concludes that his uncle requires reaffirmation of his ducal status as a protection against the augmentation of Lancastrian power. Historically, at the time the scene is set, Plantagenet had already inherited the title Duke of York, after the death of Henry V's brother in 1415. The title included considerable lands and the additional rank of Earl of March, inherited from Plantagenet's uncle Edmund Mortimer, who died childless in 1425. In the Temple garden, Somerset is historically correct in his analysis of events: Richard's father's title, with most of the modest estates attached, were declared forfeit in 1415.<sup>15</sup> By the end of the scene, Warwick promises his uncle public backing in the parliament, but limits his support of Plantagenet to

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<sup>15</sup> Richard Earl of Cambridge was executed for treason as one of the group of nobles involved in the Southampton plot on the eve of Henry V's embarkation for France in August 1415.

assistance in establishing his title. The dramatist is developing Warwick's position from the periphery to key player; at this point he is a duke-maker only.

Shakespeare has established Warwick dramatically as a central figure in the action to come. His qualities of generosity and political acuity are, so far, underdeveloped, but we have glimpsed the plain-dealing character of the chronicles; a good example of the gnomic: 'Talkers are no good doers', (*Richard III* 1.3.351). His reputed unceasing energy, muted by the confinement of the setting, is nonetheless hinted at in the vigorous tone of certainty in his final prophesy: that the verbal arguments and skirmishes circumscribed by the garden will escalate to a state of war in the national arena. The expectation of the audience is that this open-ended scene requires closure at some point, but that much has to be resolved before this can occur.

The next stage of Shakespeare's development of Warwick's dramatic persona takes place in *2 Henry VI* (3.2) in one of the crucial scenes of the play and the trilogy. The dramatisation of the death of Gloucester is made complex by the existence of two versions which require different staging of events.<sup>16</sup> The Folio version (1623) begins the scene with the murderers entering fresh from their crime, which has taken place off-stage. The Quarto or *Contention* (1594) provides an alternative, with the murder actually portrayed in dumb show to the audience. In her paper on the staging, which contributes to the debate over memorial and reported versions of the text, Claire Saunders considers that: '...there is no firmly established textual

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<sup>16</sup> The Folio edition: The second part of Henry the Sixt, with the death of the Good Duke HVMFREY. The Quarto edition: THE First part of the Contention betwixt the two famouse Houses of Yorke and Lancaster, with the death of the good Duke Humphrey: And the banishment and death of the Duke of *Suffolke*, and the Tragicall end of the proud Cardinall of *Winchester*, with the notable Rebellion of *Jacke Cade: and the Duke of Yorkes first claime unto the Crowne*.



orthodoxy' for this scene, '...for neither version of the murder, on stage or off, has actually been proved "the authentic Shakespeare"'.<sup>17</sup> She sees it as a matter of controversy how much Shakespeare intended the audience to know, suggesting that the scene is presented as a tableau: 'Invested with the King's commission, Warwick will now become a stage "presenter"' and his description of the corpse acts: '...as a sort of camera close-up.'<sup>18</sup> He becomes again the instrument, this time one through which the truth will be established. My approach here is to assess the impact of the scene through both the Quarto and the Folio versions, which give different perspectives of Warwick's role. Where they have a relationship, it is in their significant similarity in respect of Warwick as a neutral, choric figure.

In *Perspectives in Shakespeare's Histories*, Larry Champion suggests that Gloucester's demise is portrayed as:

A contained unit of action of major significance to the individual play and the limited time-span it represents; a telescoping of the years from Henry's marriage in 1445 to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battle of St. Albans 1455.<sup>19</sup>

The scene is certainly a half-way point in the trilogy, centrally important to the development of plot and character, but as much a symbol as an event.<sup>20</sup> The audience, whether historically informed or not, is prepared by the enticing incorporation of *The death of Good duke Humphrey* as it appears in the titles of both *The second Part of Henry the Sixt* and *The Contention of the two famous houses, of York and Lancaster*. As to the actual details of his death, Holinshed puts

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<sup>17</sup> Claire Saunders, "'Dead in his bed": Shakespeare's Staging of the Death of the Duke of Gloucester in *2 Henry VI*, *RES*, 36 (1985), p. 19.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* p. 29.

<sup>19</sup> Larry S. Champion, *Perspectives in Shakespeare's Histories* (Georgia, 1980), p. 132.

<sup>20</sup> Saunders, p. 27.

forward an almost word for word account taken from Hall, one which is worth quoting in full, since it points the way to possibilities of natural and unnatural causes:

The Duke, the night after he was thus committed to prison, being the four and twentieth of February, was found dead in his bed, and his body showed to the lords and commons, as though he had died of a palsy, or of an impostume [abscess]. But all indifferent persons (as said *Hall*) might well understand that he died of some violent death. Some judged him to be *strangled*, some affirm that an hot spit was put in at his fundament, other write that he was smouldered [smothered] between two feather-beds; and some have affirmed that he died of very grief, for that he might not come openly to his answer.<sup>21</sup>

‘Indifference’ in the observers, that is those outside the King’s coterie, was viewed by the chronicler Hall as a crucial component of the investigation. The rumours surrounding Gloucester’s mysterious death were seized on politically by the Yorkists to implicate the ambitious Suffolk. In the investigation of the cause of Duke Humphrey’s death, Shakespeare provides Warwick with text bearing a close resemblance to Hall’s account of the conclusions of those outside the court circle.

Beginning with the murder and ending with Suffolk’s exile, this is the longest scene in the trilogy, with 412 lines in the Folio and 249 in the Quarto. Shakespeare sets it immediately after Gloucester’s elimination has been plotted and the delivery of York’s soliloquy, in which he lays out his intention to seize the throne (3.1). Earlier, in 2.2, sporting the white rose, Warwick has agreed that York’s exposition of his claim to the crown is correct. But, for the present, Shakespeare faithfully follows Warwick’s historical narrative. The Earl is not yet implicated in any overt plots to

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<sup>21</sup>*Holinshed’s Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland in six volumes* (London: the author, 1577; repr. London, 1807), iii, 211.

overthrow the Lancastrian regime. Dramatically he remains loyal to the anointed King.

Shakespeare has also previously confirmed Warwick's probity and popularity with the commons. Through Warwick's father Salisbury, the dramatist links Warwick to Gloucester by his most positive features and highlights their relative popularity:

Warwick, my son, the comfort of my age,  
Thy deeds, thy plainness and thy housekeeping  
Hath won thee greatest favour of the commons,  
Excepting none but good Duke Humphrey.  
1.1.187-90

The coupling of Warwick's reputation with that of Gloucester's occurs only in Shakespeare, in both the Quarto and Folio versions. There are no direct comparisons between the two men in the chronicle sources, although both are ascribed similar characteristics. Holinshed sums up Gloucester's character:

He was an upright and politic governor, bending all his endeavours to the advancement of the common-wealth, very loving to the poor commons, and so beloved of them again; learned, wise, full of courtesy; void of pride and ambition: (a virtue rare in personages of such high estate, but, where it is, most commendable).<sup>22</sup>

The emphasis is on the esteem in which he is held by the populace. Gloucester (1391-1447) is described as the 'good Duke' very shortly after his death, certainly as early as 1450, when Suffolk was impeached and implicated in the Duke's possible murder. In a poem written after the Yorkist triumph at Towton in 1462, in which Warwick is described as a 'lodestar', the author cites Humphrey's murder among the mischief of Henry's reign:

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<sup>22</sup> *Holinshed*, p. 211.

The good duke of Gloucester in the season  
 Of the parliament at Bury being,  
 Was put to death; and ay since great mourning  
 Hath been in England, with many a sharp schoure [battle],  
 Falsehood, mischief, secret sin upholding,  
 Which hath caused in England endless languor.<sup>23</sup>  
 35-40

The mythology surrounding Gloucester's death developed along with the speculations that his sudden demise had been planned and brought about by the King's servants. In the dramatical context, we must be convinced that this was an unnatural death. Through his actions and words, Warwick substantiates the myth.

The historically mysterious circumstances surrounding the death of Duke Humphrey are, in their dramatic reconstruction, unequivocally laid out before the audience. Shakespeare provides the essential requirements for the successful outcome of a criminal investigation: establishing motive, method and opportunity. In this case, the audience has the added frisson of knowing who the perpetrators are. Warwick's exposition of the facts steers our responses to ineluctable conclusions, as his plain-speaking has done in the Temple garden. This colours our view of his characterisation and of those around him. Warwick's narrative is linked with that of Gloucester's fall and mythopoeic rehabilitation and, for the first time in the play, the Earl has a presence centre stage, bringing him to our attention in a unique setting, while raising expectations of his future contributions. Shakespeare dramatises Warwick's narrative in a particular way; in a quasi-official role of investigator, he becomes the mouthpiece for substantiation of the facts as we know them.

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<sup>23</sup> Robbins, 93, p. 223.

Shakespeare draws directly from contemporary chroniclers for an explanation for Gloucester's death in this scene. There were those chroniclers, like the writers of the fifteenth century *Brut*, who were hostile to Suffolk. They supported the continuation of the war with France, having high praise for Gloucester's bullish stance in that regard. According to the historian Ralph Griffiths, they had no evidence that Gloucester was murdered, but made connections with their knowledge of previous royal murders:

*Brut* [continuation to 1461] whose speculations drew on rumours relating to other royal deaths, namely by smothering between two feather-beds, which was associated with the earl of Gloucester's murder in 1397, or by a spit in his 'fundament', which was commonly believed to be Edward II's fate; and also *The Great Chronicle of London* [1207-1465] which adds drowning in wine, a fate reserved for Clarence in 1478.<sup>24</sup>

To this list we can add the murder of Richard II in 1400. The method of his dispatch remains unknown, but his body was exhibited to the populace, elaborately embalmed, wrapped in fine linen and laid in a lead coffin. His face, from the bottom of his forehead to the throat, was exposed for recognition.<sup>25</sup> The presentation of a body to allay suspicion of murder was a ritual, performed by those in charge wishing to confirm not only the finality of the life of their enemy, but also to allay doubts where there was suspicion of unnatural causes. Gloucester's body was in perfect shape to be exhibited, as the eponymous Duke described himself in *The Mirror for Magistrates*:

Dead was I found, by such as best did know,  
The manner how the same was brought to pass,  
And that my corps, was set out for show,  
By view whereof, nothing perceived was.<sup>26</sup>  
442-5

<sup>24</sup> Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry VI*, p. 538.

<sup>25</sup> Marie Louise Bruce, *The Usurper King: Henry of Bolingbroke 1366-99* (London, n.d.), p. 245.

<sup>26</sup> *The Mirror for Magistrates*, pp. 458-9.

At the end of his life, Warwick became part of this political ritual: his body was exhibited alongside his brother's in St. Paul's after the battle of Barnet (1471) for the people to view, confirm and broadcast his end.

Those with opposing political views, or who were unwilling to accept that a noble cabal surrounding a saintly King could be responsible for such a heinous act, proposed that Gloucester had died 'for a hevynes', in his bed, a condition medically described in the early modern period as the palsy or apoplexy. In his book *Knowledge and Practice in English Medicine, 1550-1680*, Andrew Wear explains that these conditions were identified as diseases of the head and disorders of 'the marrow of the back bone' which, from the time of Galen, was believed to be the origins of the nerves.<sup>27</sup> In a book on medical theory published in Antwerp in 1579, where paralysis was described as a common feature of palsy, the writer noted: 'Sometimes it happens, that neither sense nor motion is quite taken away, but only waxeth dull and is benum'd.'<sup>28</sup> As a diagnostic feature, this is more applicable to Gloucester's own reiteration in *The Mirror* of the rumour put about, that he died of natural causes, possibly a stroke brought on by stress and deep depression:

A Palsy (they said) my vital spirits oppressed,  
Bred by excess of melancholy black,  
This for excuse to lay, them seemed best,  
Least my true friends the cause might further rack,

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<sup>27</sup> Andrew Wear, *Knowledge and Practice in English Medicine, 1550-1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 118.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. Andrew Wear takes the quotation from Gualterus Bruele, *Praxix medicinae, Or the Physicians Practice Wherein Are Contained All Inward Diseases From the Head to the Foot* (London, 1632), pp. 12-1, which is a translation of the *Praxis Medicinae Theorica et Empirica Familiarissima* (Antwerp, 1579).

And so perhaps discover the whole pack,  
Of the conspirers, whom they might well suspect,  
For causes great, which after took effect.<sup>29</sup>

435-41

Warwick's noble status, coupled with the respect with which he is held by the commons, makes him apt for the enquirer's role into a suspicious death, as it is constructed in this scene. Historically, he was well qualified to join the panels of investigators selected from the baronetcy or gentry, who were consulted when an expert decision on medical matters was officially required.<sup>30</sup> Later, in his dramatic context, Warwick parts company from modern forensic investigators and professionals when he is ready to identify possible culprits. Shakespeare's shaping of Warwick's forensic diagnosis of murder and his consequent accusations make a focussed, dramatic impact, providing a narrative for much of the future action in the drama. In this pivotal scene, the audience are witness to, or are made aware of, all the events which lead to Warwick's conclusion. Henry's retributive action, when he banishes Suffolk, brings the scene to a satisfactory denouement.

In his book on murderers and assassins, Martin Wiggins charts the rise in the early modern period of the fascination of Elizabethan and Jacobean audiences with murder. For drama, this development was important because it produced a public consciousness, one in which political assassination and murder by proxy loomed large.<sup>31</sup> Before Shakespeare's *2 Henry VI*, there was a precedent for staging such a

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<sup>29</sup> *The Mirror for Magistrates*, p. 459.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Roger Forbes, *Surgeons at the Bailey: English Forensic Medicine to 1878* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 43.

<sup>31</sup> Martin Wiggins, *Journeyman In Murder: The Assassin in English Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 3.

graphic scene. First performed in 1588, George Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar* presented a similarly staged murder as a dumb show:

*Enter the Moor and two murderers bringing in his uncle Abdelmunen, then they draw the curtains and smother the young princes in the bed. Which done, in sight of the uncle they strangle him in his chair, and then go forth.*<sup>32</sup>

35-8

The reconstruction of a well-staged smothering, strangulation or precise application of a hot spit was clearly popular with audiences. Two plays immediately following the first productions of *2 Henry VI*: Marlowe's *Edward II* (1591) and the anonymous *Thomas of Woodstock* in the same year, dramatised one or other of these grisly modes of assassination.<sup>33</sup> As an historically-based event, Gloucester's death was well-chronicled and reported on. With specific regard to the murder scene in *2 Henry VI*, Martin Wiggins observes that Hall provides a singular lack of historical detail useful for dramatisation; simply that the Duke was found 'dead in his bed'.<sup>34</sup> The unhistorical, dramatised element is the modus which provides confirmation, albeit fictitious, that this was a murder.

In the preceding scene there is provision in the text of both versions for Gloucester's death to be plotted on stage, as a murderous conspiracy between Cardinal Beaufort, Suffolk, Queen Margaret and the Duke of York. However, Shakespeare's construction of the method is presented in each version in starkly different ways. In the Quarto, it is executed on stage and physically represented to the audience in dumb show. The stage directions make this clear:

<sup>32</sup> George Peele, *The Battle of Alcazar*, Malone Society reprint (Chiswick Press, 1907), A2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> Edward II is dispatched by such a precise placement of a red-hot poker. In *Thomas of Woodstock*, the eponymous Thomas Duke of Gloucester is murdered by two assassins who strangle him with a towel. *Thomas of Woodstock*, ed. by George Parfitt and Simon Shepherd (Nottingham Drama Texts, 1977), p. 67.

<sup>34</sup> Wiggins. p. 45.



*Then the curtains being drawn, Duke Humphrey is discovered in his bed, and two men lying on his breast, and smothering him in his bed. And then enter the Duke of Suffolk to them.*

The audience witnesses Gloucester's murder, leaving no doubt as to the identity of the assassins and that they have smothered him. Immediately the instigator Suffolk enters and enquires:

How now sirs, what have you dispatched him?  
TLN 1192

As Martin Wiggins notes, the assassin plays a secondary role in English drama. As bit-parts they are tiny, as in *2 Henry VI*.<sup>35</sup> In the Quarto they have just two lines of dialogue with Suffolk, in which they assure him that the Duke is dead and the bed laid out as required. This is extended to seven explicit lines in the Folio, where the interchanges between Suffolk and the assassins make clear to the audience events which have taken place out of sight. In the Quarto, deed and culprits are visually and audibly linked. The murderers are given detailed instructions by the Duke to manipulate the scene to make it appear as a natural death, with a promise of reward to be collected off-stage. The bed, now arranged as ordered, remains on the stage, but with curtains drawn as the next sequence commences. It is an obscured but looming presence, as the contending factions begin to circulate in front of it. The stage direction is entirely different in the Folio, Act 3 Scene 2:

*Enter two or three [Murderers] running over the stage from the murder of Duke Humphrey.*

As befits an investigator, Warwick has no knowledge of the method, and the audience is also left in the dark, although Shakespeare will immediately make clear

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<sup>35</sup> Wiggins, p. 63.

what has happened off-stage and who the culprits are. The deed is confirmed by the murderers themselves, as they run over the stage. They lay the blame squarely at the door of Suffolk, with one already repenting of his involvement:

1 Murderer	Run to my Lord of Suffolk; let him know We have dispatched the Duke as he commanded.
2 Murderer	O that it were to do! What have we done? Didst ever hear a man so penitent?

3.2.1-4

Shakespeare's theme of immediate remorse by a hired assassin is echoed in *Richard III*, by the second murderer in the scene which dramatises the drowning of Clarence:

A bloody deed, and desperately dispatch'd.  
How fain, like Pilate, would I wash my hands  
Of this most grievous murder.

1.4.261-3

Exton expresses similar emotions in *Richard II*, following his assassination of the King:

...O, would the deed were good!  
For now the devil that told me I did well  
Says that this deed is chronicled in hell!

5.5.114-6

Both Clarence and King Richard, sensing what is to come, attempt to make their peace with God. These invocations to heaven resonate with the assassins, as they are reminded of the ultimate penalty for murder they will face in the hereafter. Afterwards, the murderers also verbally dissociate themselves from their contractor, in their expressions of regret for their complicity. Their reaction to Gloucester's murder in the Folio isolates Suffolk with his guilt. However, in the Quarto the assassins express no remorse. Indeed, the assurances they give to Suffolk that his commission has been successfully fulfilled, coupled with their attention to detail in

covering up the crime, provide the Duke with comfort and support from equally guilty co-conspirators. The Quarto shows how Suffolk is meticulous in his requirements:

Then see the clothes laid smooth about him still,  
That when the king comes, he may perceive  
No other, but that he died of his own accord.  
TLN 1194-6

In the Folio he simply asks them:

Have you laid fair the bed? Is all things well,  
According as I gave directions?  
3.2.11-12

The Folio version makes clear that, earlier off-stage, Suffolk has given the assassins precise instructions and the audience itself can establish what these requirements are. In the Quarto, Shakespeare provides the audience with the conspirators' defence: this is to appear as a death from natural causes. The implications are much more explicit in the Quarto. The assassins must tidy-up and arrange the murder scene to represent a natural death by the hand of God. Shakespeare, through Suffolk's commands, has ordered a rearrangement of the crime-scene to represent such a death. Theatrically, the dramatist has situated the Duke in a position to manipulate the psychological reactions of those soon to be present who are dissociated from the plot, including Warwick and his father.

Henry commands that Gloucester be sent for to answer the charges laid against him.

Suffolk volunteers himself, exits and returns immediately, apparently shocked:

Henry	How now? Why look'st thou pale? Why tremblest thou? Where is our uncle? What's the matter, Suffolk?
Suffolk	Dead in his bed, my lord; Gloucester is dead. 3.2.27-9

‘Dead in his bed’ is a pre-emptive implication of natural causes, which would be unsurprising for a man of fifty six. The scene turns to explanations and Suffolk seeks to channel the thoughts of the assembly away from any idea of an unnatural death. Cardinal Beaufort, complicit in the crime, introduces the thought that Gloucester may have had a stroke:

God’s secret judgement. I did dream tonight  
The Duke was dumb and could not speak a word.  
3.2.31-32

These revelations are too much for the King, who faints and is brought round by Suffolk. But even the artless Henry knows, or at least suspects, that the Duke is implicated in a murder. The Queen springs to Suffolk’s defence by hinting that Gloucester made enemies, including herself and Suffolk. Homicide has been adumbrated when Shakespeare moves Henry to talk of Suffolk’s ‘murderous tyranny’ in his dismissal of Suffolk, but Margaret takes up the theme of culpability and the care which must be taken before anyone starts jumping to conclusions:

What know I how the world may deem of me?  
For it is known we were but hollow friends.  
3.2.65-6

The King makes no direct reference to Gloucester as having been executed, but the Queen ‘protests too much’ when she says:

It may be judged I made the Duke away.  
So shall my name with slander’s tongue be wounded,  
And princes’ courts be filled with my reproach.  
3.2.67-9

Shakespeare moves Margaret quickly into a long and distracting speech, effectively displacing the focus from Gloucester’s death to Henry’s perceived lack of love and support for her.

The death has already been rumoured abroad as murder, and the culprits identified. In both the Folio and Quarto, Warwick has been absent, but now Shakespeare expands the action and Warwick enters with his father:

*Noise within. Enter WARWICK, [SALISBURY]  
and many commons.*

This entry establishes son and father as spokesmen for the commons, charged with reporting the dangerous rumours of treason which are already circulating, together with accusations as to who is responsible. The two Earls appear at the head of a noisy, insistent group and confront the King and peers:

It is reported, mighty sovereign,  
That good Duke Humphrey traitorously is murdered  
By Suffolk and the Cardinal Beaufort's means.

3.2.122-4

For the third time, Shakespeare uses the descriptor 'good Duke Humphrey'; Gloucester's posthumous apotheosis has begun. At the same time, Warwick's own reputation with the commons, as described in 1.1.88-90, is reinforced in a substantive way. Warwick's '...greatest favours of the commons' is expressed in the play through their expectation that the Earl will report their suspicions, which are so strong that the culprits are publicly identified. Warwick's objectivity and honesty are qualities they can trust, and they look to him to find the truth. If Suffolk and Beaufort hope the assembled peers will accept their word that Gloucester's death was natural and investigate no further, they are to be disappointed.

Further differences in the two texts are significant here. In the Quarto, Warwick does not leave the stage after his entrance from the commons with his father. The closed-curtained bed also remains and it is Warwick who initiates the viewing,

inviting the King to enter Gloucester's chamber by drawing back the curtains for the whole company to view:

Enter his privy chamber my Lord, and view the body.  
TLN 1243

*Warwick* draws the curtains and shows  
*Duke Humphrey* in his bed.

The wistful King provides a simple valediction for his uncle's soul before Warwick embarks on his interpretation of the signs of unnatural death in Gloucester's face and body:

Ah uncle Gloucester, heaven receive thy soul.  
Farewell poor Henry's joy, now thou art gone.  
TLN 1248-9

In the Folio it is Henry who is proactive, ordering Warwick to investigate and report:

Enter his chamber, view his breathless corpse,  
And comment then upon his sudden death.  
3.2.132-3

Shakespeare moves Warwick from representative to commander, even of his own father Salisbury, to whom the Earl delegates the responsibility of controlling the 'rude multitude' outside until his return. While Warwick is off-stage, the King has thirteen lines of speech, approximately a minute. He anticipates that Gloucester has been murdered, showing his characteristic inability to face the facts by appealing to the Almighty to restrain his suspicions. Finally, his goodness and naiveté are overcome by a rare epiphany of realism:

O thou that judgest all things, stay my thoughts:  
My thoughts that labour to persuade my soul  
Some violent hands were laid on Humphrey's life.  
3.2.136-8

For the first time the bed appears and is moved onto the stage; Warwick re-enters to report, having reached his conclusion in the minute he has left the stage to view the body and returned. He directs Henry to look at the corpse himself:

Come hither, gracious sovereign, view this body.  
3.2.149  
*[Draws the curtains, and shows Gloucester in his bed]*

Henry can only conjecture his own probable unnatural demise, now that Gloucester, his long-time Protector, is dead:

That is to see how deep my grave is made,  
 For with his soul fled all my worldly solace;  
 For seeing him, I see my life in death.  
3.2.150-2

In both versions, Shakespeare dramatises Warwick as assertive, confident of his abilities to take the initiative in controlling the commons and managing Henry. Surrounded by the onlookers, he is ready for his deliberation on Humphrey's death, with an exposition of the means, the motive and identification of the instigator.

His description of the corpse in both versions has obvious similarities, but he has eighteen lines in the Folio, eight in the Quarto. However, in the latter we have already been provided with the modus; there is no need for an explicit description of the corpse. In the Folio staging, we have not been furnished with such details. In both versions, but with some dissimilarity, Warwick is prepared to swear a holy oath that an act of violent homicide has taken place. He confirms the previous key predictions of the King:

As surely as my soul intends to live  
 With that dread King that took our state upon Him  
 To free us from his Father's wrathful curse,  
 I do believe that violent hands were laid  
 Upon the life of this thrice-famed duke.

3.2.153-7

The Quarto has it:

Now by his soul that took our shape upon him,  
 To free us from his fathers dreadful curse,  
 I am resolv'd that violent hands were laid,  
 Upon the life of this thrice famous Duke.

TLN 1250-3

In the Folio, Warwick's oath is more than a conventional elaboration. It is substantially personalised and augmented by the line, which is a hostage to fortune, 'As surely as my soul intends to live/With that dread king...'. His assertion of a *credo*, as written in the Folio, with the meaning 'convinced', is also more rigorous than 'I am resolved' or firm in purpose. He quotes the curse as delivered by God in Genesis 3.17.14-19, and 'dreadful', or 'producing great awe' is revised with the more trenchant 'wrathful' or 'full of anger'.

In both versions, Warwick describes Gloucester with a conventional superlative found elsewhere in Shakespeare.<sup>36</sup> The adverb 'thrice' is used as an intensifier, indicating very, greatly, extremely. A similar agnomen has previously been used by the Queen (2 *Henry VI* 3.2.266): 'Thrice-noble Suffolk, 'tis resolutely spoke', as she supports his view that Humphrey should die for what he might yet do. Used by Warwick, 'thrice-famed duke' underscores the flagitiousness of the murder of one who was the son, brother and uncle of kings and next in line to the throne. Disingenuously, Suffolk seeks evidence from Warwick:

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<sup>36</sup> In *Troilus and Cressida* for example: Ulysses describes Ajax as, firstly: 'This thrice worthy and right valiant lord', (2.3.160) and then as 'Thrice-famed beyond, beyond all erudition:' (2.3.240).



A dreadful oath, sworn with a solemn tongue!  
 What instance gives Lord Warwick for his vow?  
 3.2.158-9

It is at this point that the two versions are again significantly different, although reaching an identical conclusion. In the shorter version Warwick speedily defines the act as one of force coupled with surprise:

Oft have I seen a timely parted ghost,  
 Of ashie semblance, pale and bloodless,  
 But lo the blood is settled in his face,  
 More better coloured than when he live'd,  
 His well proportioned beard made rough and stern,  
 His fingers spread abroad as one that grasped for life,  
 Yet was by strength surprised, the least of these are probable,  
 It cannot choose but he was murdered.

TLN 1256-63

The theatrical basis for this truncated version arises from the fact that the audience has witnessed Gloucester's murder on stage, which was achieved by smothering according to the stage directions. A long explanation would therefore be obsolete. The vital signs are crisply articulated: the colour in the face, evidence of use of force and corresponding struggle by the victim, who had clearly been taken unawares. There is no reference in this version to either smothering or strangulation.

In the Folio, where the audience has no such prior knowledge, Shakespeare leads us step by step through Warwick's investigation to reach the same conclusion: that Gloucester's death resulted from a violent act. Warwick proceeds to expatiate through a bed-side narrative, fully detailed with empirical evidence and based on his own experience of bodies post-mortem. His opening observation directs the surrounding viewers to the Duke's physiognomy:

See how the blood is settled in his face.

3.2.160

Warwick immediately moves to comparisons with signifiers of a natural end, which he describes from previous experience as contradicting Gloucester's rubicund appearance:

Oft have I seen a timely-parted ghost  
Of ashy semblance, meagre, pale and bloodless,  
Being all descended to the labouring heart  
Who, in the conflict that it holds with death,  
Attracts the same for aidance 'gainst the enemy,  
Which with the heart there cools and ne're returneth  
To blush and beautify the cheek again.

3.2.161-7

Shakespeare's rhetoric is designed to stimulate the imagination of the audience in the absence of a clear view. Warwick paints a picture of the accepted image of those dying through natural means as 'pale and bloodless'. Samuel Johnson noted this observation. He would have had the first of these two lines as: 'Oft have I seen a timely parted *coarse*', reasoning that: 'All that is true of the *body* of a dead man is said here by *Warwick* of the soul.' He poses the question how or why Warwick is made to change one noun for the other and goes on to provide an explanation:

I believe the transcriber thought that the epithet *timely-parted* could not be used of the body, but that, as in Hamlet there is mention of *peace-parted souls*, [Priest to Laertes, of Ophelia, *and such rest to her/As peace-parted souls* V.i.230-1] so here *timely-parted* must have the same substantive. He removed one imaginary difficulty and many real. If the soul is parted from the body, the body is likewise parted from the soul.<sup>37</sup>

In the context of Warwick as an observer of a newly-dead body, Johnson accurately unpicks the sentence, discarding the use of 'ghost' and concluding that Warwick must be speaking of a substantial corpse.

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<sup>37</sup> *Johnson on Shakespeare: Essays and Notes Selected and Set Forth with an Introduction by Walter Raleigh* (London: Henry Frowde, 1908), p. 137.

Having established a picture of the symptoms of a natural death, Warwick moves to a forensic examination of the questionable signs clearly visible to all on stage. Shakespeare uses Warwick's rhetoric, not only to underscore the key features evident in the Duke's face, but also to provide a picture for the audience who, from their vantage point, cannot see the fine detail. The first significant feature is the colour in the face: 'black and dark with blood', starkly contrasted, as he has already observed, with one whose soul has left its body in natural and peaceful circumstances:

But see, his face is black and full of blood,  
His eyeballs further out than when he lived,  
Staring full ghastly like a strangled man;  
3.2.168-70

Warwick's conclusion is that no peaceful death produces the signs of coagulation as represented here; a heart labouring against disease produces a natural pallor as the blood drains from the extremities, not a livid remnant of circulation cut off. His second observation is the horrible protuberance of Gloucester's eyeballs. Struck by these immediate and obvious aspects, Warwick comes to a swift conclusion that Duke Humphrey was strangled.

In the Folio the rhetoric expands, as Warwick seeks further evidence to confirm his assertion of an act which no-one has witnessed. He draws attention to what is possibly the most compelling piece of evidence, signs of force:

His hair upreared, his nostrils stretched with struggling;  
His hands abroad displayed, as one that grasped  
And tugged for life and was by strength subdued.  
3.2.71-3

Unless Gloucester had some form of convulsion immediately prior to expiry, the physical outcomes of a final struggle for breath, exhibited as ‘grasping and tugging’ as his own strength is literally stifled, can only suggest a murderous act. Then, before he delivers his final forensic assessment, Warwick diverts our attention momentarily from convulsion and colour, to consider Gloucester’s beard, which has clearly been a carefully-tended feature:

His well-proportioned beard made rough and rugged,  
Like to the summer’s corn by tempest lodged.  
3.2.175-6

The tempest, which has ‘beaten flat’ the summer’s corn, is the disarrangement of Gloucester’s beard from its customary neatness by the violence played upon it. Warwick’s description suggests the use of a pillow or blanket held against his face, while his arms and hands are restrained. This coincides with the chronicle sources, which includes dispatch by ‘smouldering between two feather beds’.

Warwick’s forensic speech is Aristotelian in its rhetoric. Dominique Goy-Blanquet remarks that ‘Aristotle reminds us that the dramatic uses of rhetoric are many: to prove or disprove, to arouse emotion, or to exaggerate or belittle things.’<sup>38</sup> Or as Paul Ricœur has it:

Set between its two exterior limits – logic and violence - rhetoric oscillates between its two constitutive poles, proof and persuasion. When persuasion frees itself from the concerns of proof, it is carried away by the desire to seduce and to please; and style itself ceases to be the ‘face’ [*figure*] that expresses and reveals the body, and becomes an ornament, in the ‘cosmetic sense of the word.’<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Dominique Goy-Blanquet, *Shakespeare’s Early History Plays: From Chronicle to Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 183.

<sup>39</sup> Paul Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. R. Czerny et al. (London, 1986), p. 32.

The exterior limit of violence has already been reached in Gloucester's murder. Further violence against the perpetrator will come after the proofs are accepted. Through Warwick's rhetoric, Shakespeare is concerned with the limit of proof in the dramatic context: that is the reliance only on what is seen. The persuasion inherent in the observations is a requirement to bolster proof, but not free of its constraints. The key observations of physical appearance underpin the pole of persuasion. Certainly the dramatist does not designate Warwick's role as cosmetic. The Earl, as an objective player, is required 'to seduce and please', but must provide 'a case of truth', an echo of York's challenge in the Temple garden. The consequence of evidentially-based visual proof of violence, coupled with the act itself, moves the rhetoric to the violent pole at this point and in the drama to come.

The deductive inferences in these lines are also unambiguously Aristotelian. As a syllogism or discourse, in which things have been stated, something else follows of necessity from their being so. Warwick demonstrates a set of truths, represented as a sequence of consequences drawn from a few basic principles. His speech identifies the classic pathology of asphyxia, where insufficient oxygen has reached the brain and essential organs, with resulting death. By the end of his account, Warwick shows that he views the circumstances in forensic terms, as a suspicious death which needs investigating:

It cannot be but he was murdered here;  
The least of all these signs were probable.

3.2.177-8

The mode of delivery of Warwick's observations has much in common with the bedside narrative of disease which was practised in the early modern period. It sits easily with the abilities of many literate lay people who were able to identify and explain signs and symptoms of illness and death. Learned physicians created and mapped an orderly system of disease within the body, presenting as stories how the different organs were affected, and producing an account for a disease. Andrew Wear demonstrates the porosity of the boundaries of medical knowledge between professionals and lay people, contending that lay judgements on cause and effect of disease, signs and symptoms, were superficially understood by the majority, who by and large treated themselves with a range of remedies passed down through folklore and custom. Shakespeare would undoubtedly have understood and been familiar with the bedside narrative of disease as it affected himself and his family.<sup>40</sup>

In terms of Warwick's dramatic narrative of cause and effect, the chronicles provided Shakespeare with strong evidence that Warwick had enough experience of violent and unnatural death for the dramatist to propel him forward to make such clinical observations. The certainty of his final judgement, coupled with his perceived objectivity and propensity for plain speaking, establishes him as the key figure in this scene. While Henry reverts to religious introspection and Suffolk and the Queen dissemble, he is the single character who literally speaks as he finds.

Decisively closing the curtains, Warwick denies any further examination of the corpse. Following the Earl's assertion that foul play is probable, Suffolk is again pre-emptive, protesting that neither he nor the Cardinal can be considered as

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<sup>40</sup> Wear, pp. 113-6.

murderers, rather protectors of the Duke, lodged as he was in Beaufort's apartments. Shakespeare makes a thematic shift at this point. Whereas Warwick has earlier reported the general conclusion that the Duke and Cardinal are guilty, Suffolk now tries to instil doubt into Warwick's certainty:

Why, Warwick, who should do the Duke to death?  
Myself and Beaufort had him in protection,  
And we, I hope, sir, are no murders.

3.2.179-81

It is true that Gloucester was lodged in his uncle's rooms for his own safety, but for a Duke and a senior churchman to plan and execute the murder of the King's uncle is inconceivable. Shakespeare moves Warwick's rhetoric into an area outside the brief of investigator, to one of interrogator. There is no room for doubt; not only was Humphrey's death unnatural, but the perpetrators are at hand and identifiable. Undaunted by Suffolk's 'tickle points', Warwick uses what he considers reason and the evidence of common knowledge and common sense. However, neither hearsay nor circumstantial evidence is legally admissible:

But both of you were vowed Duke Humphrey's foes,  
And you, forsooth, had the good Duke to keep.  
'Tis like you would not feast him like a friend,

3.2.182-4

He substantiates his conclusion with a stark accusation:

And 'tis well seen he found an enemy.

3.2.185

When the Queen asks on what grounds Warwick suspects these noblemen, he again adopts metaphors from the natural world. In his exposition of the modus, Shakespeare constructs Warwick's words with clarity overall, although admittedly embellishing some features for heightened effect: the colour of the Duke's face, his

eyeballs and his beard. Moving to an accusatory role, the rhetoric becomes figurative. Warwick is no longer dealing with appearances as they have been materially presented; they required only a little embellishment for understanding. Now he is putting forward suppositions better explained through the familiar domestic imagery from the natural world. He poses two rhetorical questions. The first echoes the figurative language used by the King earlier, when trying ineffectually to resist the gathering of Humphrey's enemies about him, and which introduces the trope of organised butchery:

And as the butcher takes away the calf  
And binds the wretch and beats it when it strains,  
Bearing it to the bloody slaughterhouse,  
Even so remorseless have they borne him hence;  
3.1.210-13

Presciently, Henry is likening his court to the butchers' shambles or abattoirs which occupy the narrow back streets of medieval towns. Soon the slaughter will spill out from the confines of the court, to encompass his kingdom. Warwick puts two swift rhetorical questions to Suffolk. The first takes up the butchering figure:

Who finds the heifer dead and bleeding fresh  
And sees fast by a butcher with an axe,  
But will suspect 'twas he that made the slaughter?  
3.2.188-90

The juxtaposition of a freshly bleeding carcass with an axe-wielding butcher requires no deep consideration for Warwick. The second question moves the imagery away from the shambles of the town to the natural environment of the open countryside:

Who finds the partridge in the puttock's nest  
But may imagine how the bird was dead,  
Although the kite soar with unbloodied beak?  
3.2.191-3



Here Warwick is making a second sophisticated point, but using simple and well-understood field-craft observation.<sup>41</sup> Through this allusion, Warwick is asserting that Gloucester's death in Winchester's nest may not have been physically executed by either Suffolk or the Cardinal, but politically they will both feed and fatten on the metaphysical carrion of his vanished influence.

The bed is withdrawn and the protagonists face each other. Shakespeare manipulates the mood, which descends quickly to heated exchanges over familial and familiar issues of status and pedigree, with Warwick and Suffolk wallowing in questions of each other's paternity. The forensic examination is over; there will be no move for Gloucester to the chill cabinet in the mortuary, no clinical post-mortem. Ironically, the bed will reappear in the next scene as the Cardinal's own death-bed.

Shakespeare confirms in this scene that, although Warwick is partisan and a Yorkist kinsman, already persuaded emotionally by York of his legitimate right to the throne, the Earl is not yet involved in any move to overthrow the established regime. From his point of entry, he has been shown as a commons' man, well liked and respected by 'all persons of high and low degree', as Holinshed puts it. In consequence, he is trusted to make disinterested observations on a shattering and perplexing event. Warwick is able to describe, through a succinct and simply expressed bedside narrative, how he has come to his conclusions. He is

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<sup>41</sup> The kite (*Milvus milvus*) is an opportunistic bird, not strictly a hunting bird of prey but a scavenger which seeks and eats carrion. See *Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa: Birds of the Western Palearctic: Hawks to Bustards*, ii, 39.

unequivocal, prescient and frank; an approach which grates on those responsible for the murder, who do their best to diminish him later in the scene. The King himself is now convinced that Warwick is right (referring to the Biblical ‘breastplate of righteousness’) and that his accusations against Suffolk are justified: <sup>42</sup>

What stronger breastplate than a heart untainted?  
Thrice is he armed that has his quarrel just,  
And he but naked, though locked up in steel,  
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted.  
3.2.232-5

Shakespeare has Warwick do for Gloucester what Hamlet requires of Horatio: ‘Report me and my cause aright to the unsatisfied.’ *Hamlet* (5.2.344).

The chronicled circumstances of Gloucester’s death remain unverifiable but fascinating. The dramatisation of the events exposes the political ambitions of all the major participators; the partisan affiliations fostered in *Part I* in the Temple garden are now consolidated. Shakespeare’s choice of Warwick as the level-headed, plain-speaker, transparently relaying what he sees and reaching a common-sense conclusion, sets the Earl on his way with enhanced prestige. As the lay forensic investigator, we would view Warwick’s own style of post-mortem as unsophisticated and certainly unscientific. However, Shakespeare provides the audience, as a quasi-inquest jury, with a mass of circumstantial but compelling physical evidence; although what clinches it is that they have been eavesdroppers on the conspiracy, and, if watching the Quarto version, witnesses to the homicide itself. Either way, we know this was a murderous act and that Warwick’s findings are, overall, correct. The audience leaving the theatre has the ‘good Duke

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<sup>42</sup> Ephesians 6. 14.

Humphrey' myth rigorously confirmed, absorbing Warwick's dramatically developing reputation as he moves from bystander to a central role. Equally, Suffolk, Margaret and Beaufort are firmly established as Machiavellian arch-villains, who put to death 'a good old man' for reasons of power-politics, jealousy and vindictiveness. Fault lines have been exposed and weaknesses appear, enabling Warwick and Salisbury resolutely to take up York's cause as he expounded it in 2.2. The play has been skilfully poised by Shakespeare to dramatise the forthcoming descent into civil war and chaos.

### CHAPTER 3

#### STATUS THROUGH METAPHOR

As discussed in the previous chapter, the process of Warwick's characterisation begins in the Temple garden, *1 Henry VI* (2.4) and is developed in *Part 2* in the scene at Bury (3.2). In this chapter I want to consider issues of the use and perceptions of status in the trilogy, as it specifically pertains to Warwick in three areas. Firstly, how Shakespeare interweaves the leitmotif of status and pedigree to identify characters and place them as partisans in the contention. Secondly, how the dramatist uses metaphor from the natural and classical worlds in this context and its significance in the verbal challenges to status. Thirdly, how Shakespeare brings the issues of Warwick's status to a conclusion in his presentation of the Earl's dying moments, with the figurative theme of the grave as his ultimate possession.

There are numerous references to status in the trilogy, which are used as dramatic signifiers and move the action along. Many are included as simple courtesy titles of rank or office: Warwick is referred to as 'Great Lord of Warwick' by Richard Duke of Gloucester (2.1.96) and 'My lord ambassador', during his embassy to France in *3 Henry VI* (3.3.163). But titles are often used ironically as a subtext of innuendo, or as a direct insult. In his exchanges with Warwick, following the murder of Gloucester, Suffolk may or may not dignify Warwick with the title 'Lord of Warwickshire'; this is the only occurrence in the trilogy where the full comital title is applied to him. If played facetiously, Warwick becomes demeaned as the rustic

bumpkin who uses country pursuits as analogies for legal argument and allegations of murder.

In the dramatic narrative lineages are scattered through the text as necessary aide-memoirs to the audience, in a trilogy where the matching of titles to character can be confusing to the most attentive mind. Whether it is used as a verbal tool or weapon, status is the origin of much of the violence, employed across the whole spectrum of rank. The English monarchy itself is legitimised by heredity, as are the nobility; their social status is formalised to prove and perpetuate the legality of a regal or territorial claim. At the other end of the social hierarchy, the dramatic status of the peasants is underscored through issues of their restricted land tenure. For example, Shakespeare highlights their position in the petition scene in *2 Henry VI*, where the second petitioner brings a complaint against Suffolk for illegal enclosure of common land (1.3.20).

In the trilogy, Shakespeare also brings to the fore the nature/nurture debate with reference to nobility. Are virtue and honour naturally derived from a well-established lineage, or is it the acquisition of specific behaviours which elevate a man from the rest? The question is never answered. None of the nobility, with the exception of the iconic Talbot, behaves in an overtly honourable way, including Warwick. Even the saintly King is egregiously dishonourable towards his son, when he signs away Prince Edward's inheritance in *3 Henry VI* (1.1). Warwick's father, singling out his son's personal characteristic of generosity in *Part 2*, would show it to be more an attribute of learned behaviour than an intrinsic genetic characteristic;

he includes it with Warwick's 'deeds' (1.1.188). Neither does Warwick affirm his own pedigree to support his actions. But there are very few other noble characters in the plays that do not use their ancestry or patrimony for that purpose. York is clearly the prime example.

In the context of this factious medieval court, aspiration can only be met through the competitive route of birth and pedigree. Shakespeare dramatises the determinism of lineage as a key motivator for central characters like York in three key scenes. Firstly, as discussed in Chapter 2 in *1 Henry VI* in the Temple garden; secondly in the scene immediately following, where Richard Plantagenet is assured by his uncle Edmund Mortimer that he has an incontestable claim to the throne. Here, Mortimer not only confirms Plantagenet's pedigree, but also introduces the issue of the usurpation of the throne by Henry Bolingbroke, one which is fundamental in the contention between York and Lancaster. Thirdly, the most comprehensive exposition of York's claim occurs in *2 Henry VI* (2.2), where the Duke lays out his pedigree to Warwick and Salisbury in a laboured and mind-numbing exposition.

There is no room in Shakespeare's dramatic narrative for ambiguities in understanding the importance of precedence in the social order. In the organisation of medieval and early modern society, hierarchy was instrumental in controlling atavistic urges at all levels. Adherence to an embedded, conventional social organisation eliminated uncertainties about place within such a structure. Through his dramaturgy, Shakespeare also shows how power is implicit in status, which

itself comes with labels: titles which make plain, from king to churl, an individual's place. Such social ordering provided an effective hierarchy of power, easily understood by the critical mass, in a society often poorly informed through unreliable sources and the rumour mill. Convention was also confused with morality; there was a generalised expectation, at all levels, that rank and title automatically conveyed not only privilege, but natural moral superiority: God was above the king, the king above the nobility; all three were above the rest. Therefore divine goodness permeated the system, diluting as it flowed, until dissipated into the lowest level of society.

Shakespeare singles out Gloucester and Warwick as having credibility and authority with those at that base level. In the petitioners' scene in *Part 2*, Gloucester is canvassed because '...he's a good man' (1.3.4-5). Even his greatest enemy Cardinal Beaufort, sardonically acknowledges Gloucester's status with the commons:

What though the common people favour him,  
 Calling him 'Humphrey, the good Duke of Gloucester',  
 Clapping their hands and crying with loud voice,  
 'Jesu maintain your royal excellence!'  
 With 'God preserve the good Duke Humphrey!'  
 1.1.155-9

In *3 Henry VI*, Warwick is certain of loyal local support in his home county because his affinity is made up of:

...true-hearted friends  
 Not mutinous in peace, yet bold in war.  
 4.8.9-10

But this strict pecking-order of power, while superficially perpetuating an enduring social structure, is depicted by Shakespeare as leaving a moral vacuum, which

ambition, polarity and self-interest quickly fill. This is ultimately destructive of the very social contract the acquisition of status seeks to perpetuate.

The dramatic consequence of the mutability of status also underpins the plays, on many levels. The changing status of England and France are clearly charted; the effect of the diminishing status of a weak king becomes a cornerstone of the trilogy; the seeking of increased status by the protagonists at any cost becomes a central theme. The possession of authenticated status leads to its acknowledgement, or questioning, by others. Acknowledgement leads to the assumption of power over others, domination increases self-regard, self regard underpins the authenticity of status and authenticity is acknowledged. Questioning quickly descends to violence, success of violence leads to acknowledgement; acknowledgement may lead to questioning. The circle is broken only by defeat of the state, or death of the individual.

Shakespeare first alerts us to the status and regard with which Warwick is acknowledged early in *Part 2*. His father Salisbury has already compared his popularity and standing with the commons with that of the Duke of Gloucester (1.1.90). Warwick is endowed with a set of attributes which Shakespeare takes directly from Hall.<sup>1</sup> They are crisply itemised by Salisbury: Warwick is a good son to his father, acquitting himself well in action, although here he does not elaborate whether these deeds are martial, civil or both.

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<sup>1</sup> See above p. 38; Hall, 1454, sig. LXXXV<sup>v</sup>.



Elsewhere, Warwick's emotional reaction to the loss of Anjou and Maine indicates that his military successes have been universally recognised and it is on these grounds that his reputation has grown (*2 Henry VI* 1.1). He is credited with straightforwardness in his dealings with 'all persons of high and low degree', thus by inference earning universal trust and respect.<sup>2</sup> Finally, his generosity has made him a favourite of the commons, next only to the 'good' Duke of Gloucester. In this one reinforcing line (1.1.188) Shakespeare faithfully dramatises the essence of Warwick's reputation and status, as reported in the chronicles. We retain a clear impression of certain positive characteristics for which confirmation can be sought as the plays progress.

Some groundwork must first be completed. After the Queen and Suffolk have brusquely seen off the petitioners, she lays out her complaints to the Duke against the cabal surrounding her pious but ineffective husband. She sees the control exercised over Henry as demeaning to her:

What, shall King Henry be a pupil still  
Under the surly Gloucester's governance?  
Am I a queen in title and in style  
And must be made a subject to a duke?

1.3.47-50

Shakespeare lifts these views from Hall, but out of chronology and context. In the chronicles, her antipathy to the protectorship refers not to Gloucester in 1447, but York in 1455.<sup>3</sup> Now, in response to Suffolk's promise '...to work your grace's full content'(1.3.68) Margaret identifies those she considers as most dangerous.

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<sup>2</sup> Hall, 1454, sig. LXXXV<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 1456, sig. LXXXVII.

Glossing over Somerset and Buckingham who are potential allies, she singles out three for specific attention: high-handed Gloucester, proud Beaufort and threatening York:

Beside the haughty Protector we have Beaufort,  
The imperious churchman, Somerset and Buckingham  
And grumbling York; not least of these  
But can do more in England than the king.

1.3.69-72

Immediately she is reminded by Suffolk that she should not overlook or underestimate the Nevilles:

And he of these that can do most of all  
Cannot do more in England than the Nevilles:  
Salisbury and Warwick are no simple peers.

1.3.73-75

The adjective 'simple' is used here as meaning ordinary, unremarkable and of little influence. Suffolk is very specific in counselling Margaret to be wary of both peers. He expresses the view that their status and influence is significant, if not supreme. Apart from the scene in the Temple garden when they wrangle together, there has been no previous dialogue between Warwick and Suffolk. Warwick has been an almost silent witness to the proceedings in 1.1, when Henry is united with his new Queen. Suffolk leaves the stage with the royal couple, not present to witness Warwick's outburst when he hears of the territorial terms of the royal marriage. Warwick has adopted the Yorkist symbol in the Temple garden in Suffolk's presence and now it seems that the latter regards the Nevilles as a formidable pair. Suffolk's informed estimation, that the popularity of the two Earls across the country cannot be dismissed, is not followed up by the Queen, who is more

concerned with the arrogance of Eleanor Cobham. The warning is left hanging, but is a marker for the Nevilles' future roles.

Following these exchanges, Warwick enters with the King and the rest of the court. He quickly becomes embroiled in a sharp, verbal status-dispute with the Cardinal and Buckingham, over who should be the new Regent of France: Somerset or York. Warwick's words are characteristically blunt when he supports York as the better candidate:

Whether your grace be worthy, yea or no,  
Dispute not that; York is the worthier.

1.3.108-09

In his verbal conflicts with the peers antagonistic to York, Warwick's brusque idiolect is unappreciated and his opinion ignored. The Earl's status as a nobleman is continually questioned, but in the process he is also more firmly embedded as a dramatic character. Within four lines Warwick's name is spoken three times: by Beaufort, Buckingham and Warwick himself. The Earl's persona becomes etched in the memory of the audience through a simple subliminal device: each time he is challenged by his antagonists, they use his name. The development of his role is confirmed by such identification, setting him out as an increasingly memorable character. It is the Cardinal who first attempts to diminish Warwick, introducing the possibility that the Earl has aspirations of his own, although not elaborating. Beaufort also emphasises Warwick's name in these exchanges:

Ambitious Warwick, let thy betters speak.

1.3.110

The Cardinal's goading of Warwick, with the assertion that the Earl's status is less than the rest of the assembled peers, is another example of Shakespeare's use of

verbal assault on dignity and standing, which can quickly spill over into physical aggression. Warwick replies:

The Cardinal's not my better in the field.

1.3.111

Although Beaufort is belligerent, a quality made clear in his verbal battles with Gloucester in *1 Henry VI* (3.1) he is a prelate not a soldier. On that occasion Warwick had tried to rein in both Duke Humphrey and the Cardinal, intervening even-handedly in the skirmishing between their followers. Now Beaufort is determined to maintain his position as a senior counsellor to the King and council. Within Warwick's response to this gibe, Shakespeare pins the Earl's status on a single attribute: his military success. This response is open to a variety of dramatic interpretations. He may be petulant, childishly seizing on a fact obvious to all, which is of no direct relevance in the current discussion of delegation of office. The line may be delivered with overt aggression, as a personal threat from a man with martial experience to one who lacks it. Alternatively, Warwick may speak with quietly-controlled confidence, implying that the experience of a professional soldier provides an accumulation of skills and a full understanding of the requirements for military command. A truculent interpretation would lead to a misunderstanding of Warwick's temperament which, up to this point has been characterised as rational, but with aspects of sentimentality. The second delivery would simply reflect his martial energy. The final option conforms to the plain-dealing Warwick and is, I would suggest, the most appropriate to the prefiguring of his later role as a setter-up of kings. Buckingham is unimpressed and intervenes, but with a contradiction of

Suffolk's previous assessment in the same scene. The whole court being present, Buckingham deems Warwick the least among them:

All in this presence are thy betters, Warwick.  
1.3.112

Warwick replies with lines relating to his historical narrative, as expressed in Hall. The chronicler described the consequences of Warwick's developing status:

For which causes his authority shortly so fast increased, that which way he bowed, that way ran the stream, and that part he advanced, that side got the superiority.<sup>4</sup>

Shakespeare constructs a customary blunt final line for Warwick, who predicts to Buckingham that his status will rise to overcome everyone present:

Warwick may live to be the best of all.  
1.3.113

Warwick's rhetoric here may seem like the triumph of ambition over rationality, but it serves a twofold purpose. Firstly, as an anticipatory device; secondly as a confirmatory expedient through which Warwick commits himself.

As Warwick delivers this prediction, Salisbury intervenes to halt any likelihood of the two-pronged attack by Beaufort and Buckingham riling Warwick to a physical response. The centre of attention moves from these quarrelling peers to a verbal attack on the Duke of Gloucester, which is led by the Queen and Suffolk and in which Warwick is an observer only. As the scene continues, Warwick's forbearance is overcome, as he witnesses a heated exchange between Suffolk and York. This again concerns the smouldering question of Somerset or York's suitability for the office of Regent in France, reignited by Gloucester's entry and his immediate support of York for the regency. York's mention of the loss of Paris, with the wider

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<sup>4</sup> Hall, 1454, sig. LXXXV<sup>v</sup>.

ramifications of the mismanagement of the whole French campaign, galvanises Warwick into highly emotive language, reminiscent of his response to the loss of Anjou and Maine. Following York's accusations of Somerset's ineptitude, Warwick supports his uncle's charges:

York:	Last time I danced attendance on his will Till Paris was besieged, famished and lost.
Warwick	That can I witness, and a fouler fact Did never traitor in the land commit.

1.3.172-5

Shakespeare accelerates the pace of the scene as plain-speaking Warwick, seeing the issues presented as black and white, rounds off his observation with this swingeing accusation. Suffolk intervenes, drawing attention to Warwick's lack of control of his emotions. He speaks as an older man might to correct the behaviour of a younger, impetuous one. He also calls him by name:

Suffolk	Peace, headstrong Warwick!
Warwick	Image of pride, why should I hold my peace?

1. 3.176-7

The verbal attacks on Warwick by the other peers have been resolutely designed to undermine him. Now, through the Earl's responses, Shakespeare questions the right of those who have lost a kingdom to demean a soldier who contributed so much to achieve it. The issue of Warwick's standing is never followed up, as the theme of the scene shifts to Gloucester's interplay with the petitioners and the Earl reverts to the role of onlooker in the hearing of Horner and Peter (1.3). He is disconnected from the light relief of the petitioners' actions and remains off-stage during the rancorous exchanges between Beaufort and Gloucester, and the dramatic conjuring tricks presented to the Duke's wife.

In the next scene (2.2) Shakespeare takes Warwick's blunt speaking and subsumes it into the rhetoric of repetition and prediction. York has invited the Nevilles to supper and, out of earshot in a closed walk in his garden, he makes a bid for their support. The dramatist has laid the groundwork for the Nevilles' involvement with the Duke in 1.1, when York shares with the audience his aspiration to the crown.

Shakespeare makes clear York's strategy and expectations in his soliloquy:

A day will come when York shall claim his own;  
And therefore I will take the Nevilles' parts  
And make a show of love to proud Duke Humphrey,  
And when I spy advantage, claim the crown,  
For that's the golden mark I seek to hit.

1.1.236-40

Substantiating Warwick and Salisbury's expressions of dismay at the loss of French provinces, York indicates that he will draw in the Earls by feigning support for Gloucester. Shakespeare places these events just before Suffolk's death and Cade's rebellion, which both occur in 1450. He manipulates Warwick's historical narrative between the years 1450-55, setting up a series of actions which culminates in the first battle of St. Albans. In the dramaturgy, Warwick's status with the commons has been specifically articulated. For York, the combination of support from a popular peer and the people will be irresistible for his stated aims.

Dramatically, Warwick and Salisbury are not only used as sounding boards by York in his exposition of his title to the crown, but also as interpreters of its legal basis. In the post-supper scene, the theme of acquisition of kingship through lineal descent is minutely explored. York pins all his regal aspirations on his line from the sons of Edward III: Lionel Duke of Clarence and Edmund Langley; a lengthy pedigree which, when reeled off in full, requires deep concentration by his audience on-stage

and off. Shakespeare's choice of Salisbury and his son as the arbiters of York's claim is a logical one; the dramatist has already revealed that Warwick has an indelible knowledge of York's pedigree. In *Part I* (2.4.83-4) raising the matter almost out of context, he accurately cites Lionel Duke of Clarence as Edward III's third son, when often he is mistakenly noted as the second.<sup>5</sup> This same detailed understanding of the royal pedigree is now backed up by Salisbury who, in the course of York's exposition, interposes with an often-overlooked fact:

York	For Richard, the first son's heir being dead, The issue of the next son should have reigned.
Salisbury	But William of Hatfield died without an heir.
York	The third son, Duke of Clarence, from whose line I claim the crown...

2.2.31-35

Through the dramaturgy, father and son are able to reinforce not only York's right to the throne, but also to dignify his claim with their genealogical knowledge. They will go on to uphold the claim, not only through York's lineage, but as legal heir of the deposed and assassinated Richard II. Warwick and his father must follow eleven lines of genealogy concerning Edward III's seven sons, with references to two Edwards, two Williams, a Lionel, John, Edmund and Thomas. Finally York crystallises his argument with the inclusion of the usurpation by Henry of Lancaster and the murder of Richard II, which Warwick seizes on and upholds:

York	Crowned by the name of Henry the Fourth, Seized on the realm, deposed the rightful king, Sent his poor queen to France, from whence she came, And him to Pomphret; where, as all you know, Harmless Richard was murdered traitorously.
Warwick	Father, the Duke of York hath told the truth; Thus got the house of Lancaster the crown.

2.2.23-29

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<sup>5</sup> The second-born son of Edward, William of Hatfield, died in infancy (1336) and is sometimes discounted.



There is no closure following this observation. York begins again, this time further elucidating with an unremitting explanation of the intricacies and complexities of his mother's lineage. Warwick responds with a typically blunt rhetorical question, which never fails to raise a smile among the audience, who may themselves have become bemused by this complex historiography. It is clear that he has maintained his attention, since he is able to précis correctly, in three lines, the twenty six relevant lines in York's clarification. Warwick's version provides everyone with a quick and useful summary:

What plain proceeding is more plain than this?  
Henry doth claim the crown from John of Gaunt,  
The fourth son; York claims it from the third.  
Till Lionel's issue fails, Gaunt's should not reign;  
2.2.53-6

All issues having been transparently explained in his condensed version, Warwick and his father end the scene by kneeling to make a pledge of allegiance to York as the country's rightful king. The dramatic implication is clear: by this means Warwick's own status is confirmed as York's closest supporter. He is now bound to the Yorkist cause and for the two Earls the issue of pedigree is resolved. They base their commitment entirely on York's genealogical status, secured by the usurping act of Henry Bolingbroke. Two significant references to kingmaking bring the scene to a close, one from York and the other from Warwick himself:

Warwick	My heart assures me that the Earl of Warwick Shall one day make the Duke of York a king.
York	And, Neville, this I do assure myself: Richard shall live to make the Earl of Warwick The greatest man in England but the king. 2.2.78-82

Warwick is correct in his literal prediction, although it will not be Richard who he makes a king, but his son Edward. York is incorrect in his prophesy, since he dies before he can elevate Warwick to second in the kingdom.

Having gained the Nevilles' support for his genealogical argument, in another dramatic soliloquy York shares with us his ambitions and his strategies to achieve them (3.1.330-82). His peers have given him an army with which to subdue the Irish kerns; he has employed the rebel Jack Cade: 'To make a commotion, as full well he can,' (3.1.357). The dramatic consequences of the ensuing riots will provide the signal for York to return from Ireland to a welcome from the commons. It is clear that he is most anxious to achieve the support, not only of the Nevilles, but also from the people:

By this I shall perceive the commons' mind,  
How they affect the house and claim of York.  
3.1.373-4

Shakespeare's conflation of historical events propels the dramatic impetus of Warwick's narrative and the embedding of his status. This is achieved through markers which serve to elaborate two of the key characteristics already identified: firstly, his status and popularity as perceived by the commons; secondly, his characteristically blunt speech by which he acknowledges York's lineal claim to the throne.

Discourse on genealogical materiality, such as occurs between York and the Nevilles, is a key factor in the dramatisation of status and its consequent contribution to characterisation. This process is underpinned by figurative images, which are used as tropes threading their way through the dramatic narrative.

Examples are taken from the bird, animal, insect, reptile and floral kingdoms, and also the bestiary.<sup>6</sup> There are multiple examples of Warwick's use of such metaphors, overwhelmingly from the natural world. Warwick adopts them eight times and on fourteen occasions he is the subject. It has already been noted how the Earl falls back on these references in the Temple garden and how, using similar rhetoric, he later reinforces his assumption of Suffolk and Beaufort's collusion and guilt in the murder of Gloucester.

All the protagonists use natural metaphors to convey triumph, frustration or insult. Hunting and baiting references colour the text and illuminate the animalistic world the drama has entered. Hunter and hunted, trapper and trapped are regularly paired together: ravening wolves stalk sucking lambs, sharp-taloned falcons chase elegant doves and grinning curs goad pinching bears. Warwick is closely identified in the text with three specific vehicles: the bees, the cedar and the bear. The apian figure is used by him to sustain and elaborate events which are taking place off-stage. He assumes the arboreal trope to substantiate his *sui generis* as the protector of the kingdom. Historically and dramatically the ursine figure is cross-referenced through allusion to his armorial device in both the chronicles and the text.

Elsewhere, Shakespeare uses heraldic imagery in his dramatic rhetoric to match with and reinforce specific characteristics. In *Part 3*, Henry says of his nobles that they are lions which '...war and battle for their dens' (2.5.74). In the same play,

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<sup>6</sup> Across the three plays there are 116 uses of descriptors from nature: 9 in *Part 1*, 35 in *Part 2* and 72 in *Part 3*.

Richard of Gloucester spurring on his brother Edward, characterises their father as aquiline:

Nay, if thou be that princely eagle's bird,  
Show thy descent by gazing 'gainst the sun;  
2.1.91-2

Young Clifford, wounded at Towton, bemoans the fact that the commons have defected to the triumphant Yorkists, moving as one to the most advantageous spot:

The common people swarm like summer flies,  
And whither fly the gnats but to the sun?  
2.6.8-9

In his figurative language, Shakespeare covers the extremes of the social spectrum, from the dominant lions and eagles to the insects, singly weak, but as Clifford acknowledges, sustaining their power through strength in numbers.

Clifford may casually dismiss the commons as inconstant as gnats, but Warwick uses the insect world more specifically. He notes the industrious nature of the bee and the effectiveness of its social organisation. The collective power of the beehive, which Shakespeare introduces in *Part 2*, is used by Warwick as a warning against an underestimation of the commons' response to Gloucester's death:

The commons, like an angry hive of bees  
That want their leader, scatter up and down  
3.2.125-6

He demonstrates a clear-sighted understanding of the dynamics and danger of mob-mentality when it is not contained and channelled by good leadership. He invokes the well understood concept that it is the presence of the leader in the hive which maintains colony cohesion and stability.<sup>7</sup> Warwick warns that without Gloucester, like leaderless bees, the commons will by-pass the processes reliant on ingrained

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<sup>7</sup> See Ronald Brown, *Honey Bees: A Guide to Management* (Wiltshire, 1990), p. 24.

obedience, turning to their own indiscriminate means of vengeance if not satisfied. In this context, the leader of the hive is not a queen, but specifically male and noble; the bees are not stingless drones; they are workers who will attack indiscriminately.<sup>8</sup> He anticipates the consequent danger to the stability of the state:

And care not who they sting in his revenge.  
Myself have calmed their spleenful mutiny,  
Until they hear the order of his death.

3.2.127-9

This colony is in turmoil because it lacks leadership but, in empathy with the commons, Warwick has stepped in temporarily to fill the void. He focuses on the bees' ability to co-operate, finding their strength through unity, and also identifies their need for a leader. A similar circumstance occurs in the text of Shakespeare's contribution to *Sir Thomas Moore*, where a leaderless mob of London apprentices has taken to the streets against a perceived economic threat to their livelihoods from foreigners. They are threatening to massacre all 'strangers' until the mayor, Sir Thomas Moore, takes control. Like Warwick, he uses a series of persuasive arguments to diffuse their anger; chiefly that their actions are counter-productive to their demands. Finally gaining their trust, he commands them to:

Submit you to these noble gentlemen, [Surrey and Shrewsbury]  
Entreat their mediation to the king,  
Give up yourselves to form, obey the magistrate,  
And there's no doubt that mercy may be found,  
If you so seek it.<sup>9</sup>

165-9

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<sup>8</sup> For the medieval account of the hive see *Bestiary*, Facsimile of the Bodleian Library MS 764 (Folio Society, 1992), pp. 177-8.

<sup>9</sup> *William Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Basingstoke: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 2007), p. 2470.

Shakespeare elaborates on the industry of bees in *Henry V*, when the Archbishop of Canterbury advises Henry on the legitimacy of his French campaign. In his analogy, the bees are held up as models of single-mindedness to a fixed universal aim. Canterbury is confident that the King may safely take some of his forces into France, because England now has all the attributes of a successful hive. The various requirements of governance can be safely divided out, as in the exemplary organisation of a well-lead colony of bees. The state's survival has the same requirement as the hive: instinctive understanding of, obedience and commitment to, predetermined functions. Henry's good kingship has laid the foundations for these to flourish and he can safely leave such a well-ordered state:

... Therefore doth heaven divide  
The state of man in divers functions,  
Setting endeavour in continual motion,  
To which is fixed, as an aim or butt,  
Obedience. For so work the honey-bees,  
Creatures that by a rule in nature teach  
The act of order to a peopled kingdom.

1.2.183-9

Shakespeare provides an underlying irony in this notion of obedience to the status quo, where every man must function in his own estate, as referenced by the ordered world of the bee. Canterbury's motivation is not objective; rather, it springs from his need to protect church lands and money under threat from the crown. The Archbishop's analogy can only be applied to a well-organised, undisturbed state.

In 2 *Henry VI*, Warwick warns of the results to the realm that will occur when such an organisation breaks down. The commons under good leadership will be obedient, ordered and industrious; but unheeding, anarchic and unproductive without it. The perception he has of his own ability to rein in and manipulate the populace is made

clear later in *3 Henry VI*, when he alludes to the insect metaphor again, this time to describe their support for him against Edward:

Trust me, my lord, all hitherto goes well.  
The common people by numbers swarm to us.  
4.2.1-2

Astutely, Warwick understands that the ‘common people’ are not to be underestimated, while the Duke of Suffolk, lacking the Earl’s insight, sees all outside his rank as lazy and parasitical. In *Part 2* Suffolk also takes up the apian figure, but twists it negatively, likening the drones of the hive to his captors:

Drones suck not eagles’ blood, but rob beehives.  
It is impossible that I should die  
By such a lowly vassal as thyself.  
4.1.109-11

These drones which feed off their own kind are unworthy to act as his executioners. The contrasting perceptions held by the two nobles highlight the divergence in their dramatic narratives. Suffolk is ultimately destroyed by those he despises as his social inferiors; Warwick is brought down by those of the nobility he views as his equals. The dramatist has made clear how Warwick’s popularity emanates from his perceived empathy with the commons. Warwick’s ‘good housekeeping’ is used, not only to retain his existing followers, but to draw new ones in. It is an oppositional strategy to Suffolk’s portrayal of arrogance towards the commons. As it accelerates, so does their hatred of the Duke increase, propelling him to his downfall. Where Warwick views the commons as a well-organised body to be treated with some circumspection, not least because of their propensity to sting indiscriminately, Suffolk underestimates them as ‘...rude unpolished hinds,’ (3.2.271) a myopic view which will have severe personal consequences for him later.

In the dramatic episode, where the Queen, Beaufort, Suffolk and York plot the destruction of Gloucester, Shakespeare combines the vulpine and the ovine metaphor in Suffolk's search of artistic proof.<sup>10</sup> Arguing the case for murder, the Duke is stimulated to think laterally and, using sophistry, he attempts to persuade the peers present that potential murder and treason are as punishable offences as their fulfilment. The notorious fox, although unsuccessful in an attempted kill, is as guilty through intent as though he had slaughtered the sheep:

...and were't not madness then  
To make the fox surveyor of the fold,  
Who being accused a crafty murderer,  
His guilt should be but idly posted over  
Because his purpose is not executed?  
No – let him die in that he is a fox,  
By nature proved an enemy to the flock,  
3.1.252-8

The last two lines are ironically self-propheying. In a pro-Yorkist ballad, written in the middle of popular unrest over a series of calamities attributed to Suffolk, including the King's marriage and the loss of France, his unpopularity is affirmed. He is derisively referred to as the cornered fox:

Now is the fox driven to hole! Hoo to him, hoo, hoo!  
And he creep out, he will you all undo.<sup>11</sup>  
1-2

Figurative language employed to align with characteristics such as describe the crafty Suffolk is used by Shakespeare to affirm Warwick's own burgeoning status. In his short speech in the Temple garden (2.4.85) the Earl describes Edward III as the deep root of a regal genealogical tree and begins an arboreal trope, with particular reference to the cedar as the vehicle for the tenor of status. In *2 Henry VI*,

<sup>10</sup> See Ronald Knowles in *2 Henry VI*, p. 246n.

<sup>11</sup> Robbins, 72, p. 186.



at the first battle of St. Albans, goaded by old Clifford, Warwick forms the connection between this coniferous species, distinctively raised above all other trees on the mountain top, and his own helmet:

This day I'll wear aloft my burgonet,  
As on a mountain top the cedar shows  
That keeps his leaves in spite of any storm,  
Even to affright thee with the view thereof.  
5.1.204-7

The permanent and exalted status of this species of conifer, which retains its leaves in spite of any weather, is an apt figure for one who has pledged himself to maintain a cause to its conclusion. As the cedar dominates the mountain summit, so will his mounted crest on any battle field. During his death scene speech in *Part 3* he returns to this theme, assuming the identity of the cedar itself; its branches as metaphorical arms. They have encircled and protected York, then provided shade and comfort to the lions of England: Edward IV and Henry VI. Warwick goes further; as the cedar, he grows higher than the noblest of English trees: 'Jove's spreading tree', the oak. He delivers himself and his reputation as protector of the common man from the blasts of political manoeuvring and inconstant government:

Thus yields the cedar to the axe's edge  
Whose arms gave shelter to the princely eagle,  
Under whose shade the ramping lion slept,  
Whose top branch overpeered Jove's spreading tree  
And kept low shrubs from winter's powerful wind.  
5.2.11-15

The Machiavel himself, Richard III, uses the metaphor in the same vein as Warwick: a vehicle for the tenor of status:

...But I was born so high:  
Our aery buildeth on the cedar's top,  
And dallies with the wind, and scorns the sun.  
*Richard III* 1.3.263-65

Within his rhetoric, Shakespeare employs a figure which aligns the Kingmaker with dependability and strength. Biblical text provides the template for these qualities:

King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon.  
Song of Solomon 3.9

In Ezekiel the protective qualities of the cedar of Lebanon are explicitly described in seven verses of Chapter 31. In verse 6 the text is prelude of Warwick's thought:

All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches  
did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young and under his shadow dwelt  
all mighty nations.  
Ezekiel 31.6

Shakespeare is not alone in adopting the cedar as a metaphor for durability and domination. There are other references in early modern literature that emphasise its capacity as a fundamental support. For example, John Lyly (c.1554-1606) in *Eupheus, The Anatomie of Wyt* (1579) shows how the tree withstands natural attack:

For although the worm entereth almost into every wood, yet he eateth not the  
cedar tree.<sup>12</sup>

In the trilogy, the cedar is the only metaphor used by Warwick abstractly; others are from his own material world: owls, heifers, kites and partridge. Neither Shakespeare nor Warwick would have seen a living cedar. In the context of Warwick's experience, the vehicle works through imagination and internalised pictures of its form gathered from text.<sup>13</sup> While the metaphor of the cedar is poetically enhanced by biblical and medieval mystery, it is not ultimately dependent upon either. The vehicle of the intangible tenor loses none of its potency, even

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<sup>12</sup> John Lyly, *Euphues: The Anatomie of Wyt; Euphues & His England*, ed. by M. W. Croll and H. Clemons (London, 1916), p. 58.

<sup>13</sup> For historical references to the introduction of the Lebanon cedar in England see Alan Mitchell, *The Complete Guide to the Trees of Britain and Northern Europe* (Surrey, 1985), p. 154.

when it later materialises. In Warwick's figurative language, where the cedar as vehicle exists outside his experience, then the rhetorical figure becomes its own metaphor: its spreadness becomes its overarching essence. Now that the tree has been manifest since the seventeenth century as a work of nature, we can understand the earlier perceptions of its dominating quality and the appropriateness of its use allusively.<sup>14</sup> In his rhetoric, Warwick associates himself with a living tree he has never seen, but which has a regal provenance. It has been used as a staple foundation of power in the building of ancient temples and ships, protected by and for kings. In consideration of the role he plays in the unfolding of the civil wars, this choice of metaphor is entirely appropriate.

The third figure from the natural world associated with Warwick's status is the bear. Shakespeare uses it in two distinct ways: firstly, as an abstract and qualitative reference to Warwick's bravery and strength; secondly, as a device on the heraldic arms of his comital house. In his description of York's canvassing of the Nevilles and their consequent actions, Shakespeare takes his rhetoric directly from Hall:

...he chiefly entertained two Richards, and both Nevilles, the one of Salisbury, the other of Warwick being earl, the first the father the second the son. When the Duke of York had fastened his chain between these two strong and robust pillars, he with his friends, so seriously wrought and so politically handled his business, that the Duke of Somerset was arrested in the Queen's great chamber and sent to the Tower of London, where he without great solemnity kept a doleful Christmas.<sup>15</sup>

Shakespeare uses the ursine vehicle extensively throughout his works.<sup>16</sup> In the trilogy it is first introduced in *2 Henry VI*, in the scene following York's return from

<sup>14</sup> See *The New Illustrated Gardening Encyclopaedia*, ed. Richard Sudell (London, 1945), p. 154.

<sup>15</sup> Hall, 1454, sig. LXXXV.

<sup>16</sup> I estimate over 200 references under *bear* and *bear-baiting* across both plays and poems, according to Bartlett's Concordance. John Bartlett, *A Complete Concordance of the Dramatic Works and Poems of Shakespeare* (London: Macmillan, 1894).

Ireland (5.1) where the surge of verbal thrust and counterthrust provides a sustained note of insult; he couples it with Hall's chain reference. Early in the scene, Shakespeare makes clear York's intentions in the Duke's first public declaration to the court. Goaded by the sight of the newly released Somerset, who he believes is confined in the Tower, York rounds on the King and accuses him of having 'broken faith', weakness and poor governance. Then he makes his ambitions plain:

That head of thine doth not become a crown;  
Thy hand is made to grasp a palmer's staff  
And not to grace an awful princely sceptre.  
That gold must round engirt these brows of mine,  
Whose smile and frown, like to Achilles' spear,  
Is able with the change to kill and cure.

5.1.96-101

The response of the court is predictable: Somerset and the Queen demand York's arrest for treason; Old Clifford and the King want him confined in Bedlam as a madman. York is on the point of arrest, even with the presence of his two sons Edward and Richard, who have been called in to stand bail for him. Now he turns on his accusers with his ursine allusions, calling directly for the Nevilles who, as Suffolk has already identified: '...are no simple peers.' (1.3.75):

Call hither to the stake my two brave bears,  
That with the very shaking of their chains  
They may astonish these fell-lurking curs.  
Bid Salisbury and Warwick come to me.

5.1.144-7

The only other play where Shakespeare uses the stake of the baiting-place as a vehicle of metaphor is in the final scene in *Macbeth*, where the cornered King exclaims:

They have tied me to a stake: I cannot fly,  
But bear-like I must fight the course.

5.7.1-2

In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare reverses the use of the stake from a control point to a point of entrapment.

The scene continues and the Nevilles enter, but Clifford continues with his taunts:

Are these thy bears? We'll bait thy bears to death  
And manacle the bearherd in their chains,  
If thou dar'st bring them to the baiting place.  
5.1.148-50

This image of bear-baiting, prevalent also in Elizabethan times, is fused with Warwick's famous badge of the rough staff with the rampant bear.<sup>17</sup> This oblique reference to heraldic devices adds legitimacy to arbitration. Shakespeare also alludes to the heraldic endorsement of a legal agreement in *Hamlet*:

...in which our valiant Hamlet  
(For so this side of our known world esteem'd him)  
Did slay this Fortinbras, who by seal'd compact  
Well ratified by law and heraldry  
Did forfeit, with his life, all those his lands  
Which he stood seiz'd of to the conqueror;  
1.1.87-92

The Beauchamp heraldic devices of the silver bear, with a red muzzle and the ragged staff, were used both separately and in combination by Warwick. The coat of arms of the Earls of Warwick shows a muzzled but unchained animal. Clifford infers that York is the Nevilles' handler; it is his chains which control them. Men will act like beasts when goaded by their bearherd. Joseph Candido makes the point that:

This mingling of the family crest with elemental savagery is not without thematic point, for the rapidly shifting fortunes of the nobility in the trilogy, portrays the

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<sup>17</sup> For details of Warwick's heraldic devices from Beauchamp, see Warwickshire County Record Office web site:  
<http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/web/corporate/pages.nsf/Links/2AA8F837EFE001B> [accessed 19th January 2007].

flower of English gentility as so many staked bears and lurking curs, endlessly exchanging the animalistic roles of baiter and baited.<sup>18</sup>

The element of taunting explicit in the action of baiting is a recurring theme among the nobility. The verbal interchanges between York and Old Clifford set in motion a process which makes impotent the civilising standards of chivalry and superficial politesse expected in the court. Warwick and Salisbury are the ‘two brave bears’ and York has only to shake their chains to ‘astonish’ Clifford and the rest.

The ursine analogy is clear: in conditions of mutual cooperation bear and bearherd enjoy a symbiotic relationship. As the bear, Warwick becomes the large, looming creature which, when well-treated and effectively controlled, will provide good sport and earn its keep. But if the bear is badly treated, or its chains inadvertently loosened, the animal is likely to go native and attack its handler. Warwick is quintessentially loyal and vigorous in support of the York family’s ambition, but, as soon as they cease to acknowledge his indispensability, the restraining chains of loyalty and kinship will loosen and he will show his claws. In the events leading up to his final battle at Barnet, Warwick metaphorically wanders round the stake, trapped by the chains of his own frustration and ambition. These references to bear-baiting in *2 Henry VI* (5.1.) will resonate with an audience familiar with the activity. After all, it co-existed as a public entertainment in Elizabethan theatres alongside their use as venues for drama. At the end of *2 Henry VI*, using the language of the bear-pit, Shakespeare brings the full complement of Lancastrians and Yorkists together for the first time, laying the foundation for the degeneration of the action into the first battle of St. Albans.

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<sup>18</sup> Joseph Candido, ‘Getting Loose in the *Henry VI* Plays’, *SQ*, 35, (1984), p. 401.

The three examples above show how Shakespeare embeds the status and character of Warwick through his use of figurative language. Firstly, as one who recognises the collective strength in a united body, the beehive becomes an appropriate vehicle for the commons who support him. Secondly, his use of the cedar as a metaphor for himself and through which he elaborates his status as one who has set up kings. Finally, as well as confirming his reputation for physical stamina and energy, the ursine reference also establishes him as a force susceptible to change; a key characteristic for the most significant event in his dramatic narrative, his volte-face at the end of the trilogy.

It is not until Warwick's final scenes in *Part 3* that Shakespeare turns to the use of classical allusion in the Earl's dramatic text, a device adopted at earlier stages by other protagonists. Shakespeare utilises an eclectic roll-call of the ancients to characterise these dissident noblemen and women. In *Part 2*, Margaret styles herself Dido to Suffolk's 'Ascanius' (3.2.116-7). Suffolk places his death alongside that of the murders of Tully by 'vile Bezonians', and Caesar by Pompey's 'bastard hand' (4.1.136-9). Young Clifford will act as fiercely in revenge as Medea; he will bear his father as Aeneas did Anchises (5.2.58-65). Such allusive fertility is used in a similar context in *Part 3* (4.8.25) when Henry sends Warwick off as his 'Hector, and his Troy's true hope.' Warwick uses classical references twice in two speeches, both when he is laying out his military strategy after he has broken with Edward. The first occurs at a defining point in the play, as he plots to take Edward captive (4.2). Warwick's later capture of the King is described fully in Hall:

All the king's doings were by espials declared to the Earl of Warwick, which like a wise and politic captain intending not to let so great an advantage to him given, but trusting to bring all his purposes to a final end and determination, by only obtaining this enterprise: in the dead of night, with an elect company of men of war as secretly as possible, set on the king's field, killing them that kept the watch ... at a place called Wolney, four miles from Warwick, he was taken prisoner and brought to the castle of Warwick, and there to be kept under the custody of the Archbishop of York, his brother, and others his true friends which, entertained the king like his estate and served him like a prince.<sup>19</sup>

Shakespeare takes the essentials from this account, but burnishes them with classical polish. In the dramatic narrative, Warwick welcomes Clarence to his camp in the town of Warwick and explains his strategy:

And now what rests but in night's coverture,  
Thy brother being carelessly encamped,  
His soldiers lurking in the towns about,  
And but attended by a simple guard,  
We may surprise and take him at our pleasure?  
Our scouts have found the adventure very easy;  
That as Ulysses and stout Diomed  
With sleight and manhood stole to Rhesus' tents  
And brought from thence the Thracian fatal steeds,  
So we, well covered with the night's black mantle,  
At unawares may beat down Edward's guard  
And seize himself. I say not 'slaughter him',  
For I intend only to surprise him.

4.2.13-25

Warwick assigns himself the part of Diomedes, with Clarence as Ulysses. In Homer's *Iliad* these two Greek heroes volunteer for a mission ordered by Nestor, to seek out Trojan stragglers at night for information. In the process, they raid the camp of King Rhesus, the Thracian ally of Priam entrenched outside the walls of Troy, kill him and twelve of his men and steal his renowned white horses.<sup>20</sup> Homer's story is a relevant metaphor for Warwick's covert seizure of a great prize, but Edward must be captured not killed.

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<sup>19</sup> Hall, 1469, sig. XIII<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. by E.V. Rieu (London: Penguin, 1989), pp. 181-196.



The rhetorical change from pastoral to classical allusion is not coincidental. Shakespeare introduces it at a point where Warwick is required to invigorate his supporters for a very dubious adventure. The Earl must sustain their attention; consequently he adopts a style which resounds with classical allusion, rather than the simpler rhetoric applied when making his accusations of murder against Suffolk and Beaufort for example. These elaborate models from the classical world will serve much better to inspire his supporters.

Classical figuration re-occurs later in the Bishop's palace (4.8), when Warwick is preparing his defence against the newly-landed Edward. Addressing Henry, he arranges for the King to remain protected in London, where he is among friends:

My sovereign, with the loving citizens,  
Like to his island girt in with the ocean  
Or modest Dian circled with her nymphs,  
Shall rest in London till we come to him.  
4.8.19-22

The contrast in status contained within the two speeches is stark. Shakespeare spells out the fundamental qualities of what it means to be a man, in Homeric analogies. Warwick is the ultimate, main-stream, adventuring Greek hero, recognised as such by Henry himself in *Part 3* (4.8.25). In contrast, the passive, saintly King is feminised through Warwick's comparison of him with a goddess, not only of chastity and the moon, but also of marginalised women and slaves.<sup>21</sup> These classical allusions only occur in the Folio, the Octavo omits them and only Henry's reference to Warwick as his 'Hector and Troy's true hope' is included. I can only

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<sup>21</sup> Originally an Italian moon goddess, in Roman times she became largely a goddess of women and childbirth. She is mentioned in this context by Ovid in his *Fasti* [Calendars] 3.268-9. See also *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. by Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth, 3<sup>rd</sup> rev. edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 463.

speculate that the embellishment of the language in the Folio imbues Warwick's lines with literary gravitas, leaving a perception that the quality of Warwick's allusiveness rises proportionally with his status. These are measured and thoughtful statements, a significant move away from the rapid reportage style of his speech explaining the defeat at the second battle of St. Albans in *3 Henry VI* (2.1.104-140).

While Warwick's status can be shown to have been enhanced through his actions and the development of his figurative language in the text, Shakespeare incorporates a leitmotif throughout *Parts 2* and *3* which attempts the reverse: the demeaning of Warwick's reputation by factions opposed to him. It begins with the death of Gloucester, in the scene where Warwick has taken centre stage. Margaret sets a verbal conflict in motion; there is a scoffing disparagement in her exchanges with the Earl, which will be picked up later by Suffolk and elsewhere in the trilogy. She accuses Warwick of aiming beyond himself, because his background and status are insufficient for the power he would wish to wield. Her rhetoric is barbed, modelled on those in the court who, from her introduction as the new queen, have maligned her with similar obloquy. As Gloucester has pointed out to 'the brave peers of England', she is the daughter of a beggared king, whose:

...large style  
Agrees not with the leanness of his purse.  
1.1.108-9

In her confrontation with Warwick, she does not spit venom and bile as she is wont to do later in *Richard III*, but derides him. For example, following Warwick's inferences that Suffolk may be guilty of Gloucester's murder, Margaret springs to

the Duke's defence, taking up the same verb of challenge. Suffolk has already warned her of the power vested in the Neville unit, and here she acknowledges its potential for the first time:

He dares not calm his contumelious spirit,  
Nor cease to be an arrogant controller,  
Though Suffolk dare him twenty thousand times.  
3.2.204-6

Possibly 'controller' is used facetiously, to reduce Warwick to the level of household manager, as in Jonathan Bate's interpretation of 'Saucy controller of my private steps!' in *Titus Andronicus* (2.3.60). In *Twelfth Night*, Sir Toby Belch similarly disparages Malvolio, when the knight demands: 'Art anymore than a steward?' (2.3.60). Suffolk has instigated Margaret's outburst when he challenges Warwick's accusation:

Say, if thou dar'st, proud Lord of Warwickshire,  
That I am faulty in Duke Humphrey's death.  
3.2.201-2

Warwick responds:

What dares not Warwick if false Suffolk dare him?  
3.2.203

Through the textual inversion of the interrogative in Warwick's line, Shakespeare confirms the Earl's perceived precedence of his own virtue and plain-dealing over a perjured murderer: Suffolk's status has become so degraded that any challenge he makes is of no account. Margaret inflicts a cutting insult to Warwick's nobility; the accusation of insolence is reminiscent of the way she has previously treated Eleanor Cobham, when she called Gloucester's wife 'a minion' (1.3.139-40). The Queen appears ultra-sensitive about her own position, aggravated by those around her who do not treat her with the respect she feels she deserves. There is predictive irony in

the insult ‘arrogant controller’; Warwick will indeed become a controller, so controlling he will be making and breaking kings, as she will later have to acknowledge in *Part 3* (3.3.157).

An equally egregious slur levelled by one party at another, is the questioning of sexual morality and its deeply rooted link with legitimacy of paternity and familial status. The conflation of the Beauchamp and Neville historical narrative in *1 Henry VI* integrates Shakespeare’s interpretation of the Earl’s attitude to adultery and bastardy, with the humanistic qualities universally perceived in Richard Beauchamp, Warwick’s father-in-law. This is most clearly articulated in the scene of the burning of Joan Puzel (5.2) where Shakespeare has severely manipulated the chronology.<sup>22</sup> In Shakespeare’s rendering, it is Warwick and York who are assigned to carry out her immolation. Warwick is initially moved to pity:

And hark ye, sirs: because she is a maid,  
Spare for no faggots, let there be enough.  
Place barrels of pitch upon the fatal stake  
That so her torture may be shortened.

5.3.55-8

He has a change of attitude after the maid confesses she is pregnant and, according to York, has been ‘ingling’ with Charles the Dolphin.<sup>23</sup> Warwick quickly exchanges his humanitarian sentiments for a moralistic stance:

Well, go to, we’ll have no bastards live;  
Especially since Charles must father it.

5.3.65-70

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<sup>22</sup> Joan’s execution took place in 1431, eight years before Richard Beauchamp died and three years after the birth of Richard Neville. As Regent of France it was the Duke of Bedford who was ultimately responsible for the overseeing of her execution.

<sup>23</sup> The OED defines ‘ingling’ as *to fondle with*. According to Edward Burns in this context ‘ingling’ is a direct sexual reference with homosexual overtones relevant to Joan’s sexual ambiguity, *King Henry VI Part 1*, p. 275n.

Subsequently it becomes unclear as to the precise identity of the father. Perhaps it is even Reignier, King of Naples. Warwick becomes even more judgemental:

Warwick	A married man, that's most intolerable.
York	Why, here's a girl! I think she knows not well –
	There were so many – whom she may accuse.
Warwick	It's a sign she has been liberal and free.

5.3.79-82

There is a whiff of hypocrisy here since historically Richard Neville's own marital faithfulness was questionable.<sup>24</sup>

Shakespeare's masculine pronouncements, as articulated by Warwick and York, consign the peasant Joan to moral oblivion; her child, if there is one, to illegitimacy. But nobles could apply such canting judgements to each other. The moral behaviour of nobility, as it impacts on status, is used by Shakespeare in two contexts. It is adopted as a weapon of political manipulation of reputation; Warwick uses it himself when he challenges Edward's behaviour in *3 Henry VI* (4.3) and which will be discussed fully in a later chapter. It is also used antagonistically to demean and discredit. In *Part 2* (3.2) Warwick and Suffolk try to undermine each other, wallowing particularly in questions of paternity. In a bruising verbal exchange, Suffolk takes up the adjective 'stern', which has been chosen by Warwick in the Quarto to describe the roughness of Gloucester's beard. The Duke demeans Warwick with the assertion that the Earl is the consequence of casual, organic congress, between pure and ancient stock and a cutting from a rough hedgerow species:

Thy mother took into her blameful bed

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<sup>24</sup> For Warwick's own adultery and the arrangements he made for his natural daughter Margaret see Hicks, p. 234.

Some stern untutored churl, and noble stock  
Was graft with crab-tree slip...

3.2.212-4

Suffolk chooses his words carefully; the word *bastard* is never articulated by him, but Warwick as the plain speaker is less restrained:

And say it was thy mother that thou meant'st,  
That thou thyself was born in bastardy;

3.2.222-3

The explosive use of the adverb provides a certain oral satisfaction for the speaker. As a vocative, 'bastard!' can also be used as a powerful expletive to release tension, or as a single strike verbally, to cut an opponent down to size. As a noun it is used to wound, striking at the very essence of identity.<sup>25</sup> Shakespeare's use of *bastardy* in this context is as a fundamental value judgement. It is applied by Warwick and other protagonists as a moral stick with which to beat opponents. In *Part 2*, at the point where York first publicly announces to all the peers his intention to take the crown, Somerset accuses him of treason and demands his arrest; York calls for his sons to stand his bail; Margaret's response is to goad him further:

Call hither, Clifford; bid him come amain,  
To say if that the bastard boys of York  
Shall be the surety for their traitor father.

5.1.114-6

Thus Shakespeare conjoins illegitimacy and treason as the ultimate defamation.

In the final section of this Chapter I want to examine Shakespeare's use of metaphor with regard to Warwick's death. The figurative language of the natural and classical worlds is used by and of Warwick as a signifier of his status, also as a colourful supplement to the essence of verbal challenges. But vehicles of metaphor

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<sup>25</sup> The detailed etymology of 'bastardy' shows its universal application to perceptions of status. Legitimacy confirms legality of hereditary rights, bastardy excludes from such rights, *OED*.

are also adopted by him exclusively in *Part 3*, in his final speech after Barnet as he lies alone and dying. The peaks and troughs of Warwick's historical narrative are analysed through Shakespeare's dramatised exploration of the transience of power and material achievement, in the face of the inevitability of death. The Earl's historical record can be summed up thus: his success in his primary aim of establishing the Yorkists on the throne; his elevation as second only in power and prestige to King Edward; his disappointment with the Yorkist regime and his consequent change of sides; his defeat and death in his final battle with Edward.

On Easter morning, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1471, Warwick was killed fighting Edward at Barnet. The historical facts of Warwick's death were well-recorded by the chroniclers. Hall reported the antecedents to the battle, as well as providing a full account of the action which lasted all day. Towards the afternoon, King Edward, wishing to see an end, brought up fresh troops held back for the purpose. Warwick attempted to rouse his men, as he had done at St. Albans, in the face of this fresh onslaught:

[Warwick] comforted his men being very sharply quickening and earnestly desiring them with heart and stomachs, to bear out this last and final brunt of the battle, and that the field was even at an end. But when his soldiers being sore wounded, wearied with so long a conflict did give little regard to his words, he being a man of mind invincible, rushed into the midst of his enemies, where as he adventured too far from his own company, to kill and slay his adversaries, that he could not be rescued, was in the midst of his enemies stricken down and slain.<sup>26</sup>

Holinshed has a variation on this account:

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<sup>26</sup> Hall, 1471, sig. XXIX.

Some write that this battle was so driven to the uttermost point, that King Edward was constrained to fight in his own person, and that the Earl of Warwick, which was wont ever to ride on horse from place to place and from rank to rank, comforting his men, was now advised by the Marquis his brother, to leave his horse and try the extremity by handstrokes.<sup>27</sup>

The dramatic interpretation moves the action immediately from the walls of Coventry (5.1) where the protagonists verbally square up to each other, to the physical climax of the battle: the overcoming of Warwick. Warwick's death is, like that of Gloucester, presented differently in the two versions of the play. The shortened Octavo has: '*Alarms, and then enter Warwick wounded.*' (TLN 2799). In the Folio version, the stage direction has '*Alarum and excursions. Enter [King] Edward bringing forth Warwick wounded.*' (5.2) and they are brought together for the last time. The two men, who have been through so much to achieve what were common ends, now face each other as antagonists. Both versions make some concession to the chronicles and, as Holinshed reported, Warwick has dismounted and evidently has been fighting hand to hand. But the Folio makes clear in its stage directions that it is Edward himself who despatches him. Dragging the body on stage, the King comments on Warwick's capacity to induce fear in others:

So lie thou there. Die thou and die our fear,  
For Warwick was a bug that feared us all.

5.2.1-2

The King's words encapsulate the breakdown in relationship between the two men. Edward expresses no regret or sorrow for the loss of his cousin; instead, he is grateful that Warwick's death will send to oblivion the fear which his presence

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<sup>27</sup> Holinshed, p. 314.



engenders. With the Earl's demise, the corollary is that Edward, now unshackled, is fully in the ascendant. Metaphorically, Shakespeare reduces Warwick's final status, as perceived by his enemy, to that of a goblin, the proverbial 'bugbear'. This is a savage metaphor for a man who took on the role *in loco parentis* after the death of Edward's father. In Edward's eyes, Warwick has moved from mentor to an object of childhood terror, which is thwarted only by its death. Now he no longer poses a material threat, instead he has become the equivalent of a supernatural figure from childhood mythology, one with which mothers frighten their children. Edward's view of Warwick as his crutch, as he describes him after Wakefield, is abandoned:

Lord Warwick, on thy shoulder will I lean;  
And when thou fail'st, as God forbid the hour,  
Must Edward fall, which peril heaven forbend!  
2.1.188-190

This change in relationship between Edward and Warwick echoes Hall and his explanation for Warwick's *bouleversement*, which will be discussed in a later chapter.

In this death scene, Shakespeare provides Warwick with one of his three soliloquies (5.2) rare moments of interiority in his dramatic role. He has no recriminations; instead, alone on stage, he muses on his mortality. Half-conscious, with dimming eyesight and squinting through the mist, he is unsure whether or not he is alone, but more importantly, who has the victory. Both the Octavo and the Folio correspond from this point for ten lines:

Ah, who is nigh? Come to me, friend or foe,  
And tell me who is victor, York or Warwick?  
5.2.5-6

With no-one to reply, he gives his own answers to the first of his rhetorical questions, as he becomes increasingly aware of his impending death:

Why ask I that? My mangled body shows –  
My blood, my want of strength, my sick heart shows –  
That I must yield my body to the earth  
And, by my fall, the conquest to my foe.

5.2.7-10

Shakespeare has already shown us, in the discourse over Gloucester's corpse, that Warwick is well acquainted with the semiotics of mortality. The Earl cannot deny that there is finality in the physical evidence as he feels and sees it: his loss of blood, lack of strength and above all the fatal wounds in a 'mangled' body. He must acknowledge that the struggle is over and submit to the grave. His supremacy as protector in the hierarchical chain of power, as he perceives it, has been overtaken. No longer will he provide a canopy of shelter, as the cedar does for the topmost in the chain of being. Following this figurative encapsulation of his role as supreme protector, he moves on to a final assessment of his potency:

These eyes, that now are dimmed with death's black veil,  
Have been as piercing as the midday sun  
To search the secret treasons of the world.  
The wrinkles in my brows, now filled with blood,  
Were likened oft to kingly sepulchres,  
For who durst smile when Warwick bent his brow?

5.2.16-21

The self-evaluation Shakespeare encapsulates in these lines shows Warwick as still adroit in understanding and assessing the political motivations and actions of those with whom he has contested for power. His 'piercing eyes' could penetrate with assurance the innermost workings of his opponents and his friends. They uncovered the mystery of Gloucester's death and searched out Suffolk's treason. His power has rested on his ability to influence those he supported and to prefigure the

intentions of those who opposed him. He estimates his influence as uncontested: a smile or a wrinkled frown could raise a protégé or break an opponent. In 1818, Shelley (1792-1822) would replicate such an image in *Ozymandias*.<sup>28</sup>

In the final six lines of the soliloquy, Warwick reifies the theme of transience, which has resonances with King Edward's account of himself in *The Mirror for Magistrates*:

I sleep now in mould as is natural  
As earth unto earth has his reversion  
...  
What is it to trust on mutability?  
Since in this world nothing may endure?  
...  
Where is my riches, and royal array?  
...  
As vanity to nought all is withered away:  
Where be my castles and buildings royal?  
But Windsor alone now I have no more.  
And of Eton the prayers perpetual,  
*Et ecce nunc in pulvere dormio.*<sup>29</sup>

13-60

Edward's entry questions the value of a physical legacy and describes how, whatever the perception of status and reputation, we are all finally reduced *nunc in pulvere dormio*. Warwick's dying words are also full of the traditional commonplaces associated with degree. He is expounding on a trope which Shakespeare will revisit later in *Richard II* in the eponymous King's 'hollow crown' speech:

Let's chose executors and talk of wills.  
And yet not so, for what can we bequeath  
Save out deposed bodies to the ground?

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<sup>28</sup> 'Near them, on the sand,/Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,/And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,/Tell that its sculptor well these passions read/Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things.' Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Ozymandias', in *The New Oxford Book of English Verse: 1250-1950*, ed. by Helen Gardner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 580.

<sup>29</sup> *The Mirror for Magistrates*, p. 238.

Our lands, our lives and all are Bolingbroke's,  
 And nothing can we call our own but death  
 And that small model of the barren earth  
 Which serves as paste and cover to our bones.

3.2.148-54

In the same terms as Edward and Richard, Warwick's words signify the levelling resolution of death, materially and spiritually:

Lo, now my glory smeared in dust and blood.  
 My parks, my walks, my manors that I had  
 Even now forsake me, and of all my lands  
 Is nothing left me but my body's length.  
 Why, what is pomp, rule, reign but earth and dust?  
 And live we how we can, yet die we must.

5.2.23-8

Having framed his ideas philosophically, Warwick appropriates for himself a simple rhyming maxim for closure – fitting to one who is identified with the characteristic of simple speech. In the first tetralogy, Warwick is the only character who provides his own expansive valedictory. Within this self-examination (twenty four lines in the Folio, eighteen in the Octavo) Shakespeare lays out some material truths about power, its trappings and its transience. Warwick's final audit of his achievements starts with a practical question and ends with a rhetorical one. With no bystanders he must provide his own explanations. He has moved from the reticent, uncomprehending student in *Part 1* to a philosophical but tired and world-weary adult; one who has replaced the ignorance of youth with twenty years of hard, practical experiences, which he now articulates to the air. He recognises the inevitability of death, but as yet makes no predictions as to an afterlife.

Warwick's musings are broken by the entry of Oxford and Somerset. His passing is as dramatically unclear in the two available texts as the accounts in the chronicles.

But in the Folio, a realistic Somerset recognises that Warwick is beyond helping them:

Both versions confirm Warwick's steadfastness, by repeating almost word for word his line at Towton, when he is resting from the battle and Richard seeks him out:

In the Folio, his refusal to fly at Barnet is followed by his call to his brother;  
answered by Somerset with bad news:

Somerset            Ah, Warwick, Montague has breathed his last,  
                        And to the last gasp cried out for Warwick  
                        And said, ‘Commend me to my valiant brother.’  

5.2.33-42

Warwick makes little reference to his brother in the Octavo, even when he is told that he is dead. Instead, Shakespeare reproduces the lines from Towton, when the Earl has withdrawn to rest:

For strokes received, and many blows repaid,  
Hath robbed my strong knit sinews of their strength,  
And force perforce needs must I rest myself.  
TLN 1059-61

At Barnet, as Warwick lies dying, he repeats them almost word for word:

For many wounds received, and many more repaid,  
Hath robbed my strong knit sinews of their strength,  
And spite of spites needs must I yield to death.  
TLN 2825-7

The Folio makes no mention of wounds or strokes, only a puzzling reference to the gluing of his lips with ‘cold, congealed blood’; there is no indication of its bodily source. ‘A mouth full of blood’, would be a striking metaphor for one who has used his persuasive tongue for manipulating warfare.<sup>30</sup> Alternatively this sanguine reference could describe an accumulation of blood from ‘strokes received’ in honourable combat. But Warwick’s thoughts, contained by the hindrance to his speech, move away from prosaic descriptions of injury to emotive considerations of family bonding, and his need for comfort from his brother Montague. Here is evidence of Warwick’s fundamental and consistent appreciation of the supreme reliability of kinship. The mutual loyalty within familial relationships must override ambition and accumulation of power, because it is immutable. The dramatic

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<sup>30</sup> See Park Honan’s description of Marlowe’s reaction to Bradley’s death, in Park Honan, *Christopher Marlowe: Poet and Spy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 229.

narrative in this context is fully harmonised with the historical accounts of Warwick's total reliance on those closest to him.<sup>31</sup>

His final two lines are identical in both versions:

Sweet rest his soul. Fly lords and save yourselves,  
For Warwick bids you all farewell to meet in Heaven.  
TLN 2837-8

The last line in both texts is set as an alexandrine: 'dragging its slow length' in a manner appropriate to the last breath of a dying man.<sup>32</sup> Within these ponderous last words is an expression of a characteristic optimism, as well a rare confirmation of his faith: Warwick retains a supreme confidence that they will all be reunited in heaven. Historically he has been judged as 'able to do all things, and that without him, nothing to be well done.' Warwick's optimism, springing from an uncomplicated understanding of the world, is a characteristic which endures and is essential in sustaining him in his role as setter-up and puller-down of kings.

In the preceding chapter, I examined Warwick's beginnings in the trilogy; in this one his end. The next chapter will consider the historical roots of his soubriquet 'kingmaker'; how the essence of that soubriquet is sustained by Shakespeare in the text, and the impact of this dramatic reification on our perceptions of the character now.

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<sup>31</sup> See the account of Montague's own death at Barnet in Hall, 1471, sig. XXIX. Accounts also in *The Paston Letters*, i, 346, of Warwick and his father in Calais. See also the account of the family banquet for his brother the Archbishop of York, in R.B. Dobson, 'Richard III and the Church of York', in R.A. Griffiths & J. Sherborne, *Kings & Nobles in the Later Middle Ages* (Gloucester, 1986), p. 133.

<sup>32</sup> See Alexander Pope, *Essay on Criticism*, ed. by John Churton Collins (London, 1896), p. 11.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **KINGMAKING**

In the previous chapter, I examined how Warwick's status and reputation are embedded in the trilogy through Shakespeare's choice and application of metaphorical language. In this chapter I will consider the historical origins of Warwick's single allusive figure of 'kingmaker'. While never explicitly using the formalised soubriquet, Shakespeare scatters references to Warwick's kingmaking as markers laid down to establish and remind us of the character's central purpose.

Significant identifiers of key personalities are common in global history. Essentially, they imprint the character instantly in the mind through a speedily-retrieved label. They may provide qualitative descriptions of personal attributes: Ivan the Terrible, Charles the Bold, Harry Hotspur among many. Warwick's soubriquet differs in that it is unequivocally political, predicated on a deed and its consequences. It describes not his qualities of energy, diplomacy or generosity, but rather his policy, actions and their outcomes, which rely on those qualities for their impact. The agnomen 'kingmaker' is also problematic because it is both confusing and contradictory. It is descriptive of a politically powerful personality, with the supreme authority to make or break a supreme authority.

The overthrow of kings requires a deep-seated conviction that sovereigns can be displaced if kingship and governance are so degraded that there is no alternative. The catalyst for such an action may spring from an explicit political requirement, such as the removal of a weak king for the common good, or be based on a set of



perceived grievances resulting from tyrannical or inconsistent governance. Both may promulgate an impetus for change. In Shakespeare's interpretation, Warwick's role in the overthrow of Henry supports such catalysts and his appearance is coincidental with a set of pre-conditions prompting the need for such a change. These are: an ineffective king surrounded by a cabal of ambitious noblemen, the country's unsuccessful invasion of another, discontented commons and a contender to the throne with a fervent belief that his dynastic claim overrules all others.

Warwick's reputed qualities of energy, focus and persuasiveness suit these imperatives. The existence of a variety of sources, some very contemporaneous with him, which identify his propensity for making a king, must confirm for the historians, and Shakespeare, that the soubriquet is well applied. Its operative tenor sits well with the reputation of the Earl as a man of action. Shakespeare provides no hint as to Warwick's personal motives; he appears to take on his role because he has been persuaded that it is a just cause and the times are favourable. Later historians have considered him greedy, and it is clear that historically he benefited well from Edward's gratitude.<sup>1</sup> But Shakespeare ignores this assessment of his historical narrative. Warwick's role, in keeping with his dramatic persona, moves at such a pace there is little time for reflection of his political motivations. Only once in the trilogy in *Part 3* (4.3.32-40) does Warwick offer a view of what kingship should be; at no other time does he attempt to mould or influence either kings' style. He is a facilitator, a broker for kings, not only providing the means whereby they can be set

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<sup>1</sup> Lander, *Government and Community: England 1450 – 1509*, p. 221; Charles Ross, *Edward IV* (London, 1974), p. 71.

up, but also able to bring them down, as Shakespeare correctly interprets the biblical text.

A manuscript source from the fifteenth century, one not available to Shakespeare, has possibly the earliest reference to Warwick making a king. Francesco Coppini, Bishop of Terni and Papal Legate (fl.1459-61) in a letter to Francesco Sforza the Duke of Milan and written immediately after Edward had been acclaimed king on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1461, commented:

Just now, although matters in England have undergone several fluctuations, yet in the end my lord of Warwick has made a new king of the son of York, the Earl of March.<sup>2</sup>

This was a partisan view expressed after the battle of Towton and overlooked the contribution made by Edward himself. However, it may provide the genesis of the legend of Warwick, not just as a power broker but the creator of regal power.

Coppini's allusion to Warwick making a new king had a biblical connotation. The Old Testament book of the Prophet Daniel provides the source. The Prophet is called upon to give an interpretation of a dream troubling King Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel calls on God for a revelation:

Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times and the seasons: he taketh away kings: he setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and understanding to those that understand.<sup>3</sup>

Daniel can reassure Nebuchadnezzar that he is above all other kings because God has made him so. God is the original 'kingmaker':

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<sup>2</sup> *Calendar of Milanese State Papers and Manuscripts*, i. 69.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel 2. 21.

O king, thou art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power and strength, and glory.<sup>4</sup>

This power of God, to remove and set up kings, is itemised alongside other creative powers; those which can change time and the seasons, as well as His beneficent facility for allocating wisdom and knowledge. But according to the Prophet, God also directs who our leaders are to be. He takes a political stand, although the basis on which the decision is made is not revealed. Within this ancient text is embedded a philosophy of opportunism, whereby either an *éminence grise*, or an overt mover and shaker, may argue a proxy divine status through which they arrogate authority to themselves to install or remove a head of state.

In Shakespeare's time, as previously, the highest pinnacle of earthly status and political power was that of kingship; the titles of all his history plays makes this clear. From the biblical standpoint, even higher in status than the king is He who makes the king. Shakespeare extracts events from Warwick's historical narrative which reinforce his dramatic characteristics and status, making him as one who was fit 'to removeth kings, and setteth up kings.'<sup>5</sup>

The first printed reference to Warwick's soubriquet comes from an early modern Scottish scholar, theologian and historian, John Major (1470-1550) in his *History of Greater Britain*, a work in Latin first published in Paris in 1521. It was he who first applied a variation of Daniel to Warwick, in his account of the Earl's *bouleversement*:

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel 2. 37.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 2. 21.

Oh the marvellous fickleness of that race! They [Warwick and Clarence] set Henry the Sixth at liberty, taking him from the Tower of London and restored him to his kingdom, while Warwick took up the reigns of government. The same man who drove out Henry and made Edward king, now recrowns Henry who had been deposed. Of him, it was said that he made kings and at his pleasure cast them down.<sup>6</sup>

A few paragraphs later he applied, for the first time, the soubriquet *regum creator* to Warwick, in his description of the battle of Barnet:

In that battle the Prince of Wales lost his life, Henry the Sixth was taken prisoner, and Warwick the kingmaker perished whence men may learn that no trust is to be placed in fortune.<sup>7</sup>

Major dedicated his *History* to James V, declaring that he wrote his work:

... in the manner almost of the theologians (*theologico ferme stylo*), for it belongs to a theologian most of all to lay down definite statements in regard to matters of faith and religion and morals.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, with his historian's eye and a theologian's explicit understanding of the scriptures, Major made the first connection between Daniel's text and Warwick's actions. But it is inconceivable, as a biblical scholar, that he would compare Warwick's actions with those of God's; the application of the text to the man was surely underpinned with irony. But once the signifier had been created, it became secured as an accurate encapsulation of the outcome of Warwick's narrative.

Four years after John Major published his *Histories*, so too were the *Memoirs* of the Burgundian Philippe de Commines (1447-1511). He distinguished Warwick as the chief nobleman and leading supporter of the House of York, who governed King Edward in his youth and directed his affairs. He also assigned to Warwick kingmaking and kingbreaking achievements, claiming that:

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<sup>6</sup> Major, p. 390.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 391

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., editor's preface, xixi.

[He] could almost call himself the father of King Edward IV owing to all the service he had done him, including the supervision of his education. Indeed, to speak the truth, he made him king and was responsible for deposing King Henry.<sup>9</sup>

Although the *Memoirs* were not published until 1525, they were written at least two decades earlier, in which case they may have preceded Major's work and thereby contain the first early modern reference to Warwick as having made Edward IV king. How far the soubriquet had been disseminated by this time is impossible to gauge. The explicit uses of kingmaking references in the trilogy may have triggered recognition in the collective memories of the audience, but this was a matter of degree rather than extent, as Nicholas Grene considers:

In some cases it was the business of Shakespeare to render on stage the historical reputations that his audience already knew. So, for example, Warwick the Kingmaker may not have been widely known by that specific soubriquet in Shakespeare's time, but his kingmaking capacity was well-established as the measure of his greatness.<sup>10</sup>

Shakespeare's sources, Grafton, Hall and Holinshed, resisted the application of a pithy, single descriptor for Warwick; none made reference to the business of setting up and plucking down. Grafton came close, in a long passage of *prosopopoeia* in which the chronicler described how Warwick sets out his grievances against Edward, vaunting his own reputation among the kings of Europe:

...and therefore, even now of late when I [Warwick] went ambassador to France, I was had in no regard, whereby the estimation which all kings have conceived of us, partly gotten by our ancestors, and partly by our own travails and pains, shall now be extinguished utterly and nothing set by.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Commynes, p. 211.

<sup>10</sup> Grene, p. 98.

<sup>11</sup> Hardyng, p. 440.

Besides these reports from the chronicles, *The Mirror for Magistrates* provided a more florid account of Warwick's narrative. He comes close to acknowledging the role fate played in marking him out for posterity when he says:

In all attempts my purpose I attained,  
Though King and Queen & most Lords of the land  
With all their power did often me withstand,  
For god gave Fortune, and my good behaviour,  
Did from their prince steal me the peoples favour.<sup>12</sup>  
17-21

In the first three verses of his narrative, Warwick ascribes to fortune the power of a controlling force, one which he could not command, but on whose wheel he was moved by fate to an achievement of his political ambitions. He goes on to describe how he manipulated his political power to elevate or debase his sovereigns. This is as close in his account as he comes to describing himself as the 'kingmaker':

Now tell me Baldwin hast thou heard or read,  
Of any man that did as I have done?  
That in his time so many armies led,  
And victory at every voyage won?  
Hast thou ever heard of subject under sun,  
That placed and based his sovereigns so oft,  
By interchange, now low, and than aloft?<sup>13</sup>  
78-84

In these sources, kingmaking is contextualised through two different planes of movement. In Hall, Warwick used his strength and political influence to push his protégés forward or pull them back, as the current in a stream. In *The Mirror* he acts as a puppet-master, manipulating his models up and down; placing them exactly where he wants them, more aligned with the biblical references.

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<sup>12</sup> *The Mirror for Magistrates*, p. 206.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208.

There are thirty nine oblique and explicit references to Warwick's capacity for making and breaking kings scattered throughout the trilogy; Shakespeare appropriates the essence of the soubriquet. Kingmaking and breaking require the very qualities which the dramatist attributes to Warwick in *Part 2* (1.1.188): deeds (energy and vigour) plainness (intelligibility) and housekeeping (largesse). Energy is required for the physical force which is needed to back his ambition; intelligibility to persuade those he seeks to support him; largesse to maintain that support. Warwick's characterisation is predicated on the kingmaking topos from the outset and these three essential qualities are developed specifically to substantiate the theme. The dynamics of Warwick's own rise and fall moves with the rhythm of the plays, which themselves are sustained by the same dynamic of three central characters vying for the throne: Richard Duke of York, Edward Earl of March, and Henry Lancaster. There is the hint of a fourth towards the end of the trilogy (Clarence, *Part 3*, 4.6.56-7) which does not materialise, as Warwick's influence and reputation plummet.

The antecedents to Warwick's first kingmaking occur in *2 Henry VI*. (2.2) when the Duke of York has invited the Earl and his father Salisbury to supper to lay out his title to the crown in the process of legitimising his claim to the throne.<sup>14</sup> The Duke seeks their advice as kinsmen and supporters:

...give me leave  
In this close walk to satisfy myself  
In craving your opinion of my title,  
Which is infallible, to England's crown.

2.2.2-5

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<sup>14</sup> See above pp. 121-4

The Quarto is subtly different:

Let me reveal unto your honours here,  
The right and title of the House of York,  
To England's crown by lineal descent.

TLN 737-9

In both versions it is apparent that York has already made up his mind. The Quarto text demonstrates that he wishes to 'reveal' by persuasion his certainty of his right to the crown. But in the Folio he seeks an 'opinion' which he hopes will support his own certainty. In both versions, Warwick agrees that Neville support will be forthcoming, but only if sufficient proofs can be provided:

Sweet York, begin; an if thy claim be good,  
The Nevilles are thy subjects to command.

2.2.7-8

In two concise lines, Shakespeare demonstrates how father and son are willing to suspend any disbelief in York's cause, if he can demonstrate a substantial legal case. They will become more than kinsmen to a duke, rather take on the role of 'subjects' to a king. Following York's extensive exposition of his pedigree, Warwick makes the first reference in the trilogy to kingmaking. He predicts:

My heart assures me that the Earl of Warwick  
Shall one day make the Duke of York a king.

2.2.78-9

Not the Nevilles, but the 'Earl of Warwick' will make the Duke a king. In the Folio, before Warwick makes this commitment, York has a speech of ten lines in which he advises father and son to act with 'advice and silent secrecy', especially with regard to the contest between Beaufort and Gloucester. In the Quarto, this cautionary advice is replaced with a simple caveat from York:



I thank you both. But Lords I am not your king, until this sword be  
sheathed even in the heart blood of the House of Lancaster.

TLN 785-6

Shakespeare's text moves from the prose style, adopted by York in the exposition of his family tree, to the original, contained rhetoric of blank verse. In an extended speech of confirmation of his support for York, as opposed to the two lines in the Folio, Warwick pledges himself and his men to aid the Duke in his rightful claim, ending with an emphatic alexandrine:

Then York, advise thy self and take thy time,  
Claim thou the Crown, and set thy standard up,  
And in the same advance the milk-white Rose,  
And then to guard it, will I rouse the Bear,  
Environ'd with ten thousand Ragged-staves,  
To aide and help thee for to win thy right,  
Maugre [ill-will to]the proudest Lord of Henries blood,  
That dares deny the right and claim of York,  
For why my mind presages I shall live,  
To see the noble Duke of York to be a king.

TLN 787-96

While Warwick gives his wholehearted affirmation, in the Quarto he makes no pretensions to being the instrument for York's regal success. He simply promises to supply men and arms for a project to which he has become committed. But the Folio fundamentally alters the context, upgrading Warwick's status in the last line by exchanging 'see' with 'make'. Although there is no conjoining of 'make' with 'king', the inference is clear: Warwick will generate the necessary energy and propel York forward to supremacy; he alone will initiate the process. This is also evident to York, who swiftly reduces Warwick's assumption of leadership to one who will always occupy a secondary position:

And, Neville, this I do assure myself:  
 Richard shall live to make the Earl of Warwick  
 The greatest man in England but the king.  
 2.2.80-2

York gives no courtesy title as he does in the Quarto: 'Thanks, noble Warwick...' (TLN 797). In the Folio version there is a sub-text of warning from the Duke, indicating the need for Warwick to show some restraint. This is prescient counsel, prefiguring later events when the Earl becomes disillusioned by the perceived ingratitude of his young protégé Edward.

Having introduced the concept of kingmaking, Shakespeare leaves it aside and it is not pursued until after the first battle of St. Albans, the final scene in this play (5.3), where Warwick's capacity for energy and clear-sighted organisation is explored. In this scene, York seeks Warwick's advice on their immediate strategy:

What says Lord Warwick? Shall we after them?

Warwick, feverish to be off, robustly replies:

After them? Nay, before them if we can!  
 5.3.27-8

Through the accelerated action proposed by Warwick, Shakespeare reflects the chronicle sources' description of the battle, but in reverse. Historically, Warwick was reported by Hall as impatiently instigating this skirmish in the back streets and gardens of a small medieval town, thus prohibiting any further parley between the messengers from both sides:

While King Henry, more desirous of peace than of war, was sending further his orators, at the one end of the town: the earl of Warwick with the March men entered at the other end of the town, and fiercely set on the king's forward, and them shortly discomforted.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Hall, 1455, sig. LXXXVI.

Shakespeare places Warwick alone on stage at the beginning of the scene, calling for Clifford. But the text makes it clear that the battle has been joined for some time. York appears, to claim the fight with Old Clifford for himself, in revenge for the latter killing York's horse. As Clifford emerges, York restrains Warwick from attack:

Hold, Warwick, seek thee out some other chase,  
For I myself must hunt this deer to death.

Warwick concedes, leaving York with a single line of advice:

Then nobly, York; 'tis for a crown thou fight'st.  
5.2.14-6

Superficially Warwick's concern may be for the maintenance of chivalry in battle, but more importantly it is his first stated appreciation of the underlying requirements for good kingship. Shakespeare makes clear how the Earl understands that, if single-handed combat between York and Clifford is not carried out within the rules of chivalry, then York's credibility as a noble figure fit to inhabit the political body of the king will be significantly reduced.

Harnessing Warwick's quality of activist energy, Shakespeare begins the process which establishes Warwick as strategist for the Yorkists. Militarily, the Earl knows the importance of maintaining the initiative gained through victory. Further advantage will be achieved if they drive on to the capital and arrive before the Queen and her army:

Sound drums and trumpets, and to London all,  
And more such days as these to us befall!  
5.3.31-2

It is Warwick who concludes the debate, asserts the strategy, and ends the play with a rhyming couplet signifying a precise and tidy closure. It is he who opens *Part 3* – with a simple question:

I wonder how the king escaped our hands?  
1.1.1

Shakespeare's first scene in *3 Henry VI* takes place in the palace at Westminster and is, I would argue, the most important political scene in the trilogy. It is one in which Warwick is established as the broker in the kingmaking transactions. Henry's weakness becomes the catalyst for Warwick's support of York. York's claim, through a long and complex royal pedigree, has simply confirmed to Warwick that his decision is the right one; York has the legitimate claim and Henry must be removed. The issues surrounding the justification of kingship, its rights and responsibilities, the choice of king, the power of those to choose and the concern for the assent of the commons in the final choice, are raised by Shakespeare in the trilogy generally, but in this scene in particular. Warwick's role as a setter-up of kings hinges on the pulling-down of Henry.

The abstract notion of kingship, as demonstrated in the medieval and early modern appreciation of the king's two bodies, continues through the king's body politic, even though the body natural, in this case Henry's, will be substituted for York's.<sup>16</sup> The body natural can only be elevated to kingship through the external trappings of regality: the crown, the sceptre and most sacred of all, the oil of anointing. The political body cannot be removed since it encompasses the materiality of

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<sup>16</sup> For the elaboration of the definition of kingship in Edmund Plowden's *Reports*, see Ernst H Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957; repr. Princetown, 1997), pp. 7-23.

parliament, the council, and the offices of state. This concept is fundamental to Warwick's role; the removal of one anointed king and the replacement with another must entail no interruption to the process of kingship itself. There is also the justification of precedent. Like Henry Bolingbroke before them, York and Warwick argue the case that their actions are for the good of all: to remove the dangers posed to the commonwealth from a weak king ruled by sycophants. In the case of Richard II, these are self-interested schemers; for that of Henry VI, a foreign queen and her supporters who dominate the King.

Shakespeare moves Warwick's dramatic narrative from the physical to the political and back to the physical, as he takes York from the position of an aspirational king to a king-in-waiting. The start of the scene is suffused with energy derived from physical action: Warwick, the Duke of York, his two sons Edward and Richard, the Duke of Norfolk and Warwick's brother Montague, forcibly enter the royal palace of Westminster. This physical intensity gives way to dynamic rhetorical exchanges between the protagonists, initially containing the violence which is never far from breaking out into ignoble brawling.

Historically, the King was taken by York to the abbey of St. Albans after the battle. We learn from the dramatic narrative that Henry has slipped away, leaving the 'palace of the fearful King', with its throne empty and ready for occupation by the Duke. The theatrical setting of this key scene provides an apt backdrop for the process of kingmaking: the chamber of the highest office in the palace of Westminster and an empty throne; victorious, ambitious noblemen sporting

signifiers of allegiance, with soldiers in attendance. All that is missing is the crown itself. York's son Richard displays the head of Edmund Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, which he has lopped off after the battle and waves as a trophy. Symbolically grasping it by the hair, he expresses the wish to 'shake King Henry's head' in likewise manner. This provides an opening for Warwick to make his key undertaking to York:

And so do I. Victorious Prince of York,  
Before I see thee seated in that throne  
Which now the house of Lancaster usurps,  
I vow by heaven these eyes shall never close.  
1.1.21-4

Once again Shakespeare reminds us of the fundamental element of York's claim: the original usurpation by Henry Bolingbroke and Warwick's belief first expressed in *Part 2* that Gaunt's issue 'should not reign;' (2.2.56). He reaffirms his earlier-stated belief in York's cause:

This is the palace of the fearful King,  
And this the regal seat. Possess it, York,  
For this is thine and not King Henry's heirs'.  
1.1.25-7

Shakespeare underscores Warwick's role as a kingmaker through this public articulation of what the Earl perceives as a truth. He convinces himself of the rightness of his policy of deeds before words: force with honour in the attempted removal of a weak and unmanly king. Strategically, Warwick's demand for haste has borne fruit. Arriving at Westminster ahead of the Queen, he sees an uncontested opportunity. The empty palace and an unoccupied throne suggest a singular lack of care by its frightened possessor. The dramatist gives him the imperative: Warwick commands York to ascend, occupy and thereby possess the empty throne

legitimately; he is making a king. York agrees, but is concerned that they have broken in by force. Consequently, the Queen and her supporters are likely to respond in equal measure and the Duke looks to his friends to remain with him. Warwick has already set up his default position at St. Albans on the upholding of the chivalric code, with its ancient laws and customs, as a prerequisite for good kingship. He reinforces it now:

And when the king comes, offer him no violence,  
Unless he seek to thrust you out perforce.

1.1.33-4

Initially, Shakespeare underpins Warwick's concerns with protocols. The Earl will not countenance an unseemly scramble around the chair of state; it is counter-productive to behave as a rabble, undermining the legitimacy of their cause in the eyes of the as yet uncommitted nobility, not to mention the commons. Later in the scene, Henry reiterates this concern in his own desire not 'to make a shambles of the Parliament House.' (1.1.71). However, when York reminds Warwick that the Queen herself is due to hold her parliament, at which the Yorkists are likely to be attainted, the Earl changes his mind in an order which superimposes the policy of might is right:

The 'Bloody Parliament' shall this be called,  
Unless Plantagenet, Duke of York, be king,  
And bashful Henry deposed, whose cowardice  
Hath made us bywords to our enemies.

1.1.39-42

Dramatically, Warwick has become the mainstay of the Yorkist ambition: the status and ensuing power of kingship. But the aspirations of the Duke of York have so far only been articulated by the Yorkists as originating from a lineal right. Now Shakespeare, through Warwick, adds a motive other than those of genealogy,

one which may resonate more sympathetically with the commons and those, as yet, uncommitted noblemen. The Earl's intention is to raise York, with force if necessary and, in so doing, depose 'bashful Henry' by reason of his perceived cowardice, even though he is their anointed King. Henry's lack of regal spirit is not only inglorious, but his reputation abroad also leaves the nation politically vulnerable.

Warwick reinforces his commitment to the Yorkists with a rhetorical device which resonates with the rustic examples he has used on other occasions. According to hawking custom, 'the proudest bird' for a prince is the falcon.:

Neither the King, nor he that loves him best,  
The proudest bird that holds up Lancaster,  
Dares stir a wing if Warwick shake his bells.  
1.1.45-7

Shakespeare uses this figure in *The Rape of Lucrece* with the same meaning:

Harmless Lucretia, marking what he tells  
With trembling fear, as fowl hear falcons' bells.<sup>17</sup>  
510-1

In both instances, the falcons' bells may alarm its prey into an unguarded response.

Warwick moves to a similarly based metaphor, by punning on Plantagenet:

I'll plant Plantagenet; root him up who dares.  
Resolve thee, Richard; claim the English crown.  
1.1.48-9

Planting assumes control and the allusion to planting of nobility is taken up by

Shakespeare again in *Macbeth*, as Malcolm creates the first Scottish earls:

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<sup>17</sup> 'Rape of Lucrece' in Bate and Rasmussen, *William Shakespeare Complete Works*, p. 2418.



...My thanes and kinsmen,  
 Henceforth be earls, the first that Scotland  
 In such an honour named. What's more to do  
 Which would be planted newly with the time,  
 5.9.28-31

The imperatives in Warwick's rhetoric: root, resolve and claim, are re-enforcers of the certainty of his own power to motivate and achieve.

Arriving at the palace, Henry responds to York's occupation of his throne:

My lords, look where the sturdy rebel sits  
 Even in the chair of state. Belike he means,  
 Backed by the power of Warwick, that false peer,  
 To aspire unto the crown and reign as king.  
 1.1.50-3

In the last two lines, Shakespeare reminds us of Warwick's forthcoming role. Dramatically, Henry recognises that Warwick has deserted him since the time when Gloucester's murder drew them together. The scene develops into thrust and counterthrust of words; the nobles goad each other in a precursor of a downward spiral to violence that will take the place of dialogue. Clifford's impatience and desire for action corresponds with Warwick's vow to maintain York's claim through physical means. Both adopt aggressive stands, which are oppositional to Henry's desire for discourse. Shakespeare introduces a kingbreaking topos through Westmorland's fury at York's occupation of the throne:

What, shall we suffer this? Let's pluck him down.  
 1.1.59

In the ensuing arguments between the protagonists, Warwick revisits his original motive, reminding Exeter:

...thou art a traitor to the crown,  
 In following this usurping Henry.  
 1.1.80-1.

As a final justification for Yorkist actions, he reminds them of their victory on the battlefield:

And Warwick shall disprove it. You forget  
That we are those which chased you from the field  
And slew your fathers, and with colours spread  
Marched through the city to the palace gate.  
1.1.89-92

Setting aside his reputed attribute of diplomacy, Warwick reminds the Lancastrians of their loss, fuelling the leitmotiv of revenge which will permeate the forthcoming action.

In Shakespeare's ensuing verbal cut and thrust, young Richard Plantagenet precipitously urges his father simply to take the crown from Henry's head, as if such immediacy of physical possession will authenticate his claim. Here lies the essential difference between Richard's apprehension of what kingship is and Warwick's own. It is left to York's son to articulate, in the next scene, his view of the crown itself as the extrinsic symbol of intrinsic power:

...And, father, do but think  
How sweet a thing it is to wear a crown,  
Within whose circuit is Elysium  
And all that poets feign of bliss and joy.  
1.2.27-30

He anticipates the paradise on earth which will be achieved when the crown is worn, with shadowy references to *Part 1* of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*. In that play, Theridamas, while professing he can live without it, views kingship as a pleasure more glorious for a man than a god, identifying the richly ornate crown as the totem

of power. It is the circlet through which a king can command obedience and power of life or death:<sup>18</sup>

A god is not so glorious as a king.  
I think the pleasure they enjoy in heaven  
Cannot compare with kingly joys on earth:  
To wear a crown enchased with pearl and gold,  
Whose virtues carry with it life and death;  
To ask, and have; command, and be obeyed;  
When looks breed love, with looks to gain the prize,  
Such power attractive shines in princes' eyes.  
2.5.57-64

In this Marlovian contrast of heaven and earth, the authority vested in the earthly crown is sweeter and more blissful than anything which can be achieved by the gods in Elysium. The essence of kingly pleasure is absolute power over others, signified in the crown itself and binding the subject irrevocably to the prince. Likewise, the eponymous King in *Henry V* reflects that 'idol' ceremony is simply the means to hold others in fascination:

O ceremony, show me but thy worth!  
What is thy soul, O adoration?  
Art thou ought else but place, degree and form,  
Creating awe and fear in other men,  
Wherein thou art less happy, being feared,  
Than they in fearing?  
4.1.241-6

Henry goes on to specify the trappings of ceremony which, although used as accepted symbols of status, are nonetheless a cause of division between king and subject:

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<sup>18</sup> 'Tamburlaine the Great Part 1', in *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays*, ed. by Frank Romany and Robert Lindsey (Penguin Classics, 2003), p. 101.

'Tis not the balm, the sceptre and the ball,  
 The sword, the mace, the crown imperial,  
 The intertissued robe of gold and pearl,  
 The farced title running 'fore the king,  
 The throne he sits on, not the tide of pomp  
 That beats upon the high shore of this world,  
 4.1.257-62

Richard II extends this theme in his speech on the discarding of kings, when he articulates the risks attached to such a meaningless symbol when it becomes a talisman of mockery and death:

...For within the hollow crown  
 That rounds the mortal temples of a king  
 Keeps Death his court;  
 3.2.160-2

In Warwick's kingmaking, Shakespeare makes no concession to such semiotics, either as confirmation of regal status through divisive trappings or artefacts of doom. Unlike Richard, Warwick does not allude to signifiers of status, or the bulwarking of power with symbols. The legality of the claim is paramount and is fundamental to the sustaining of primacy. Shakespeare recognises the importance of balancing the argument centred on the usurpation of Henry Bolingbroke, with the genealogical evidence put forward by York.

In the Folio version of the exchanges between York and his sons and Henry Clifford and Northumberland, Warwick intervenes again and directs an order of precedence as to who should first justify their claim to the throne:

Plantagenet shall speak first; hear him lords,  
 And be you silent and attentive too,  
 For he that interrupts him shall not live.  
 1.1.121-3

Warwick demonstrates his status in his commands. Shakespeare is true to the chronicle account in this regard, as Hall reported:

For, by this practice, all the head and orders, of the Duke [York] and the Chancellor [Salisbury], and all the warlike affairs and business, rested principally in the Earl of Warwick.<sup>19</sup>

The Earl demands enough respect for the rest to take heed, but such is the volatility of the atmosphere his words require underlining with the threat of force. In the Octavo, it is left to Northumberland to take control:

Peace thou and give king Henry leave to speak.  
TLN 146

Henry is made to seem a puppet of the factions around him, or as a child who still needs a protector to ensure he gets a fair hearing, the antithesis of how a king should command.

In both versions, Shakespeare maintains Warwick's kingmaking role when the Earl offers Henry the chance to keep his throne, if he can provide the evidence for his claim:

Prove it, Henry, and thou shalt be king.  
1.1.131

In perverse reaction, Henry does not fall back on the most solid ground of right through inheritance. Instead, he cites the conquest of Richard II by his grandfather, as the legitimate basis for his title. York considers this as traitorous rebellion, not a fair contest. Henry acknowledges in an aside the weakness of his position, but clearly has thought of an alternative, which he expounds through a question of constitutional legality:

I know not what to say. My title's weak. –  
Tell me, may not a king adopt an heir?  
1.1.134-5

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<sup>19</sup> Hall, 1455, sig. LXXXVI<sup>v</sup>.

In Henry's view, Richard II freely relinquished his crown to the Duke of Lancaster. Henry, as the direct descendant of Henry IV, must therefore legitimately be king. York asserts that this is untenable because Lancaster took the crown by force. Warwick teases out these crucial, opposing interpretations. He has advanced considerably in his understanding of the law when he asks:

Suppose, my lords, he did it unconstrained,  
Think you 'twere prejudicial to his crown?  
1.1.143-4

In these few pointed exchanges, Shakespeare proceeds to expose the heart of the contention between York and Lancaster. Henry's argument that Richard plucked-down himself, voluntarily abdicating in favour of Bolingbroke, is followed up in Warwick's question. This is sharply focussed on the central issue and fundamental to the rights of succession: can Richard II's self-generated action preclude his heirs from succeeding? Warwick already knows the answer; custom decrees that no king can legally forfeit the inheritance of his successors through a voluntary action of abdication. Alternatively, if Bolingbroke had taken the crown by force and unseated the anointed king, his actions were illegitimate and consequently his heirs precluded from future claims. In this scene, Shakespeare devotes fifteen lines of closely argued dialectic, which may be considered proportionate to the importance which an early modern audience might have attached to such matters, in consideration of the issues surrounding the inheritance of the English throne after Queen Elizabeth's death. Warwick's legal questioning successfully convinces Exeter of the truth; the Duke understands the constitutional implications and is persuaded:

No, for he could not so resign his crown,  
 But that the next heir should succeed and reign.  
 1.1.145-6

Exeter, ostensibly a Lancastrian, confirms his new-found opinion twice more:

His is the right, and therefore pardon me.  
 1.1.148  
 My conscience tells me he is lawful king.  
 1.1.150

Warwick has successfully moved to un-make a king by unpacking another 'case of truth'. When Northumberland challenges the findings and vows to support Henry, Warwick confirms his intentions:

Deposed he shall be, in despite of all.  
 1.1.154

Northumberland responds:

Thou art deceived. 'Tis not thy southern power  
 Of Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk nor of Kent,  
 Which makes thee thus presumptuous and proud,  
 Can set the Duke up in despite of me.  
 1.1.155-8

Clifford quickly follows, making it known that, regardless of legal argument, he will be fighting for Henry, primarily to revenge his father. York makes one last effort to gain a peaceful transition of the crown, but with no success. Since legal submissions are losing their power to satisfy, Warwick turns to more visceral means of persuasion:

Do right unto this princely Duke of York,  
 Or I will fill the house with armed men  
 And over the chair of state where now he sits  
 Write up his title with usurping blood.  
*He stamps with his foot, and the Soldiers show themselves.*  
 1.1.166-9

Within the text of the two versions, Shakespeare provides different nuances, particularly for Henry's response. In both, Henry seeks to reign in peace and then abdicate in favour of York. In the Octavo he is less submissive and will act only if Warwick ceases to threaten force: 'Convey the soldiers hence, and then I will.' (TLN 196). There is no such request in the Folio, where the offer is immediately accepted by York and Warwick. Warwick insists on York and Lancaster embracing, after hailing Henry as king for the duration of his life. When the King sighs for the disservice he has done his son, Warwick ignores his admission that '...I unnaturally shall disinherit.' (1.1.194). Legal fundamentals of kingly inheritance, as previously expounded by Warwick, are overturned by the Yorkists in their acceptance of the arrangement. Prince Edward is illegally disinherited and there is a predictable outcry from the remaining Lancastrians.

Shakespeare places Warwick as the principal controller in this orchestrated, three-part scene, with its forcible entry, extended middle section with thematic development, and its final resolution. From his first speech as they enter the palace, to his last order: '...Plantagenet, embrace him [Henry].' (1.1.202) Shakespeare has guided the action to its conclusion through Warwick's characteristic directness. Henry has recognised the Earl's controlling role when the King makes his final appeal to Warwick, to be allowed to retain his throne for his lifetime, whilst disinheriting his son. York has been set-up as king-in-waiting through a combination of reiteration of promises already made, clever and well-thought out legal ratiocination and finally a reversion to the most effective persuader, the threat of force. At no point does Warwick waver, nor does his confidence diminish. He



persuades Exeter of York's right and causes Henry himself to question his title, finally admitting the weakness of his claim. A bargain has been struck: Henry will reign for his lifetime and York will be his heir. Warwick considers his work complete; Henry and York are reconciled in a pact, however dubious its legitimacy, and swear an oath to abide by their agreement. The nobility on both sides disperse in a grudging, fragile peace. But Clifford and Northumberland have already vowed to fight in revenge for fathers slain at St. Albans. The gulf between the two sides is unbridgeable.

Having given a taste of Warwick's persuasiveness and clear thinking, Shakespeare moves the drama swiftly on five years to an intense period of battle scenes in which those well-recorded elements of Warwick's physical prowess are highlighted, in contrast to his skills in legal argument. It begins with events which take place around the city of York and on the battle of Wakefield. York is persuaded by his son Richard's sophistry to break his oath (1.2) an action in which Warwick is not involved. Shakespeare's exclusion of Warwick at this point in the dramatic narration is historically accurate. After the first battle of St. Albans, Warwick took up his role as captain of Calais, spending much of his time in the garrison. Shakespeare provides no opportunity for Warwick to show approval or disapproval for the York family's perjury. The decision to claim the crown through open warfare is unanimously agreed between York and his sons Edward and Richard. In the same scene, a messenger reports that Margaret has pre-emptively gathered an army and has arrived to besiege them; both sides have broken faith. Three significant battles of the Wars of the Roses: Wakefield (30th December 1460)

Mortimer's Cross (2<sup>nd</sup> February, 1461) and the second battle of St. Albans (17<sup>th</sup> February, 1461) are dramatised in three scenes. Wakefield is given prominence in two scenes (1.2-3) but Shakespeare integrates Warwick's failure at St. Albans with Edward's crucial victory at Mortimer's Cross, in a single scene (2.1).

As a consequence of the Queen's action, Warwick is called upon to exercise his threat to maintain the agreement made at Westminster by force. Historically, Warwick's well-documented flight from the second battle of St. Albans left him wide open to criticism of his abilities as a military strategist, even allowing for his recognised man-management skills. His attributes as a soldier were called into question by both contemporary observers and later historians. The Burgundian commentator Philippe Commynes for example, hinted that it was at best a strategic withdrawal, at worst a swift, cowardly exit:

It was not the count of Warwick's habit to fight on foot. After sending his men into battle he was accustomed to mounting on horseback, and, if everything went well for his side, he would join in the fighting; however, if things went badly, he would get away early.<sup>20</sup>

Hall included a résumé of the fight at St. Albans but, echoing the chronicler Gregory, commented in only one terse sentence on Warwick's flight and crediting the Queen's success to Fortune:

Fortune that day favoured the Queen, that her part prevailed, and the duke [of Norfolk] and the earl were discomforted and fled.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Commynes, p. 224.

<sup>21</sup> Hall, 1461, sig. CI. Gregory's *Chronicle* has a full description of the battle, with particular emphasis on the weapons used, and the tactics of the mercenaries hired by Warwick, but is sparing in his account of Warwick's part, *The Historical Collections of a Citizen of London in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by James Gairdner, Camden Society, new series no. 17 (1876), p. 212.

Shakespeare's dramatic exposition of Warwick's military strategy at St. Albans is portrayed in 37 lines, his longest speech in the trilogy. It is effectively an apology for his defeat; a soldier's succinct and lucid report of a battle lost. Warwick's speech is arranged in three distinct sections. In the first seven lines, he frames his report to show how tidings were brought to him of the outcome at Wakefield. He begins by admitting how he wept for the death of York in sorrow, not in rage and frustration as he did for the loss of Anjou and Maine:

Ten days ago I drowned these news in tears,  
2.1.104

The next eight lines tell how in London he mustered men and arms and marched with the captured Henry towards St. Albans: 'to intercept the Queen,' (2.2.113) having been advised that she was advancing with considerable forces. Her intention, according to Warwick, was to break the oath of agreement for the succession made by Henry to York:

For by my scouts I was advertised  
That she was coming with a full intent  
To dash our late decree in Parliament  
Touching King Henry's oath and your succession.  
2.1.115-78

Shakespeare draws directly from Hall, who identified Margaret's frame of mind as she set forth on her vengeful quest from Wakefield:

The Queen still came forward with her northern people intending to subvert and defunct all conclusions and agreements, enacted and asserted to, in the last Parliament.<sup>22</sup>

The Octavo adds one line to the otherwise identical speech in the two versions, which serves to reinforce the level of Warwick's confidence of victory:

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<sup>22</sup> Hall, 1461, sig. C.

I, then in London, keeper of the King,  
 Mustered my soldiers, gathered flocks of friends,  
 And very well appointed as I thought,  
 Marched towards St. Albans to intercept the Queen.

TLN 770-3

The additional line ‘And very well appointed as I thought,’ adds poignancy to his disappointment at defeat.

Having formulated Warwick’s strategy, in the third section Shakespeare cuts straight to an account of the battle, as though, appropriate to a man more of deeds than words, the Earl has rambled too long:

Short tale to make, we at St. Albans met,  
 Our battles joined, and both sides fiercely fought.  
 2.1.119-20

Warwick takes up the chronicler’s report of the Earl’s cold, tired and disillusioned soldiers. Holinshed adds an explanation as to why Warwick’s men became reluctant to fight:

The Yorkist nobles that were about the king, perceiving how the game went, and withal saw no comfort in the king, but rather a good will and contrary part, withdrew leaving the king.<sup>23</sup>

In Shakespeare’s unembellished account, Warwick relates how his soldiers faltered, being so tired and fearful and his unsuccessful attempts to rally them. Consequently, the battle was lost and Warwick gives three possible reasons; all as he intimates, outside his control:

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<sup>23</sup> Holinshed, p. 270.

But whether 'twas the coldness of the King,  
 Who looked full gently on his warlike Queen,  
 That robbed my soldiers of their heated spleen,  
 Or whether 'twas report of her success,  
 Or more than common fear of Clifford's rigour,  
 Who thunders to his captives blood and death,  
 I cannot judge;

2.1.121-27

The combination of Margaret and Clifford's forcefulness, together with Henry's reassertion of his support for the Queen's party in the middle of the battle, assures the Lancastrians of military success.<sup>24</sup> Warwick's army succumbs to a vigorous counteraction by determined opponents; Warwick must admit that the enemy fought stronger and faster. Reaching the end of his report he falls back on the comfort of well-tried metaphors from nature:

...but to conclude with truth,  
 Their weapons like to lightening came and went;  
 Our soldiers', like the night owl's lazy flight,  
 Or like an idle thresher with a flail,  
 Fell gently down as if they struck their friends.

2.1.127-31

In the middle of this carnage, Shakespeare reverts to the use of polemic and persuasion in Warwick's attempt galvanise his army. The Earl's strategy is two-pronged: the first is a political reaffirmation to his troops of the legitimacy of the cause; the second a practical reminder of his reputation for open-handedness, which he will follow through, if only they can maintain their will to win:

I cheered them up with justice of our cause,  
 With promise of high pay and great rewards;

2.1.122-33

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<sup>24</sup> Gregory relates in his *Chronicles* that: 'In the midst of the battle King Harry went unto his queen and forsook all his lords, and trust better to her party than unto his own lords.' *The Historical Collections of a Citizen of London*, p. 213.

However, even promises backed with the security of his liberality fail to convince this time:

But all in vain, they had no heart to fight,  
And we, in them, no hope to win the day,  
So that we fled; The King unto the Queen,  
Lord George your brother, Norfolk, and myself,  
In haste, post-haste, are come to join with you,  
For in the marches here we heard you were,  
Making another head to fight again.

2.1.134-40

Within its thirty seven lines Shakespeare instils into the text those notable qualities specifically identified by Warwick's contemporaries: his popularity and largesse, with which he is able to recruit men quickly; his potency by which he can persuade them to fight, and his military skills. But for the first time these qualities have failed to achieve a victory. As York's son Richard cuttingly observes:

'Twas odds, belike, when valiant Warwick fled.  
Oft have I heard his praises in pursuit,  
But ne'er till now his scandal of retire.

2.1.147-9

Warwick responds robustly to this characteristically ironic gibe from Richard, reasserting his kingmaking role:

Nor now my scandal, Richard, dost thou hear;  
For thou shalt know this strong right hand of mine  
Can pluck the diadem from faint Henry's head  
And wring the awful sceptre from his fist,  
Were he as famous and as bold in war  
As he is famed for mildness, peace and prayer.

2.1.150-5

Warwick alludes briefly to the theme of regal power as represented by its material associations but, since its trappings can be easily wrested from a weak king they have little significance as objects of power, being transferable. This runs counter to Richard's topos on the crown, as a stabilising signifier of power.

Shakespeare moves the Earl swiftly and pragmatically from regret to strategy in his second major speech in the scene (2.1.165-184). Warwick proceeds to lay out a plan by which the Yorkists will defeat the Lancastrians, even with five thousand less men. Success will rely on courage not numbers and, making no excuses for himself and resisting Richard's goading, he personally makes a promise never again to retreat:

And once again bestride our foaming steeds,  
And once again cry 'Charge!' upon our foes,  
And never once again turn back and fly.

2.1.182-4

Shakespeare provides Warwick with a fustian style of rhetoric to divert York's boys from the grief of their father's death and galvanise them to victory. The reiterative pattern of 'once again' serves to demonstrate that they have previously shared success together and no doubt will again, if only they can muster resolution and initiative. York's boys are won over and Edward pledges to look only to Warwick as his mentor:

Lord Warwick, on thy shoulder will I lean;  
And when thou fail'st, as God forbid the hour,  
Must Edward fall, which peril heaven forbend!

2.1.188-90

This is a pledge which redounds with irony, since it will be Edward himself who causes his mentor's fall. For the present, Warwick promises a golden future for Edward who, in anticipation, has already adopted the symbol of three glorious suns. The Earl explains how Edward will legitimise his kingship across the country by affirmation; but those who do not show they are convinced will pay the ultimate penalty:

No longer Earl of March, but Duke of York;  
 The next degree is England's royal throne.  
 For King of England shalt thou be proclaimed  
 In every borough as we pass along;  
 And he that throws not up his cap for joy  
 Shall for the fault make forfeit of his head.  
 King Edward, valiant Richard, Montague,  
 Stay we no longer dreaming of renown,  
 But sound trumpets and set about our task.

2.1.191-9

Shakespeare makes no equivocation in this promise, but this time the mechanics to embed Edward as King must precede the ceremonial. Warwick will not assume that all will be well, as he did after York and Henry swore their pact. There must be agreement by the whole country, which will only be achieved through a proactive show of strength on the road to London. Meanwhile, the Queen has not been idle: it is immediately reported that she has gathered an army and is marching to meet them.

The ensuing battle at Towton in Yorkshire, which was the largest and bloodiest of the civil wars, takes up four scenes. Within them Shakespeare incorporates an apocryphal story from Hall, one which underpins Warwick's capacity for showmanship and his desire to lead from the front. This occurred at the skirmish at Ferrybridge (28<sup>th</sup> March) the day before the main battle:

When the earl of Warwick heard of the death of his brother, the bastard of Salisbury, he like a man desperate, mounted on his hackney, and came blowing to King Edward saying: 'Sire, I pray God have mercy on their souls, which in the beginning of your enterprise, have lost their lives, and because I see no succours of the world, I remit the vengeance and punishment to God our creator and redeemer'. And with that lighted down and slew his horse with his sword saying: 'let him fly that will, for surely I will tarry with him that will tarry with me' and kissed the cross of his sword.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Hall, 1461, sig. CII.



In the play, Warwick is temporarily exhausted and resting from the battle. His response to Richard's news of the death of the Bastard of Salisbury, and the young Plantagenet's second reproof, is in a dramatic interpretation of this historical anecdote:

Richard	Ah, Warwick, why hast thou withdrawn thyself? Thy brother's blood the thirsty earth hath drunk, 2.3.14-15
Warwick	Then let the earth be drunken with our blood. I'll kill my horse, because I will not fly. Why stand we like soft-hearted women here, Wailing our losses whiles the foe doth rage, And look upon, as if the tragedy Were played in jest by counterfeiting actors? Here on my knees I vow to God above: I'll never pause again, never stand still, Till either death hath closed these eyes of mine Or Fortune given me measure of revenge. 2.3.23-32

In this extended Folio version of his speech, Shakespeare takes from *The Mirror for Magistrates* the reference to Warwick's restlessness and unceasing travel.<sup>26</sup> In Shakespeare's text, with characteristic impatience, the Earl scorns both feminised and simulated action; deeds boosted by fortune must overtake words. The Octavo reflects Warwick's plain-speaking by omitting the theatrical rhetoric. Warwick also disregards the role of fortune, by taking on himself the full responsibility for avenging his brother's death:

Then let the earth be drunken with his blood,  
I'll kill my horse because I will not fly,  
And here to God of heaven I make a vow,  
Never to pass from forth this bloody field  
Till I am full revenged for his death.  
TLN 1085-9

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<sup>26</sup> *The Mirror for Magistrates*, p. 211.

Hall also recorded Edward's success at Towton (1461) and vaguely hinted of assistance from some quarter in: 'being encouraged and set up'. There was no allusion to Warwick's contribution:

Prosperous fortune and glorious victory happily succeeding to this young prince and courageous captain, in the mortal battle fought at Towton (as you have heard) he being encouraged and set up, partly because he had obtained a great conquest, and partly because he perceived as well as the nobles as the commons of the realm, began to draw to him and take his part, after the fashion and manner of a triumphant conqueror, and victorious champion, with great pomp returned to London.<sup>27</sup>

The inference here is that it is on the back of his success at Towton that Edward is accepted as king by the nobles and commons. At this point in the play, Shakespeare makes it very clear that Edward retains unqualified appreciation and admiration of Warwick. At the end of the battle, as Warwick prepares for his embassy to France, Edward reinforces his need for the Earl's support and commits himself to Warwick's advice:

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

The foundations of Edward's reign will be set upon Warwick's protection, strength and experience. Warwick's vibrant energy, coupled with the expression of his fervent belief, compels Edward to respond in similarly emotive terms and it is now that the first of the three biblical references to kingmaking in the play occurs. Edward kneels with Warwick and prays:

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<sup>27</sup> Hall, 1461, sig. I.

O Warwick, I do bend my knee with thine,  
 And in this vow do chain my soul to thine.  
 And, ere my knee rise from the earth's cold face,  
 I throw my hands, mine eyes, my heart to Thee,  
 Thou setter-up and plucker-down of kings,  
 Beseeching Thee, if with Thy will it stands  
 That to my foes this body must be prey,  
 Yet that Thy brazen gates of heaven may ope  
 And give sweet passage to my sinful soul.

2.3.33-41

The Octavo version of Edward's plea is shorter, but similarly confusing for the audience:

Lord Warwick, I do bend my knees with thine,  
 And in that vow now join my soul to thee,  
 Thou setter up and puller down of kings.  
 Vouchsafe a gentle victory to us,  
 And let us die before we loose the day.

TLN 1090-94

In both versions, the structure of this prayer shows there is an assumption by the dramatist that those taking part will have a good understanding of the scriptural sources within them. The printed versions both supply ambiguous punctuation, requiring meticulous interpretation on the basis of prior biblical knowledge. In modern editions, with the exception of Arden and Cambridge, all reference to God in this speech (thee, thou and thy) are given in lower case, which makes the distinction between God and Warwick less than transparent. The only direction, which ensures Warwick is distinguished from God, is that Edward takes a suppliant position alongside the Earl and must therefore be directing his words heavenward in prayer. The text requires close attention to catch the reference to: 'Thy brazen gates of heaven...' (2.3.40) which can only be attributable to the Almighty. On stage, a mis-reading of this passage might lead to confusion as to who is the *regum creator*. Those in a modern audience, lacking knowledge of the

context of this particular biblical quotation, might be led to think that it is Warwick who is ‘the setter-up and plucker-down of kings’, particularly as Shakespeare unambiguously applies this quotation to the Earl later in the French court scene. In that angry exchange, Margaret attempts to reduce Warwick’s status, with an ironic reference to kingmaking:

Peace, impudent and shameless Warwick,  
Proud setter-up and puller-down of kings!  
3.3.156-7

Warwick must be humbled since the ‘proud’ Earl has impudently and shamelessly set himself up on a par with God.

The battle of Towton is over and the Yorkist victory sees Warwick once again organising and directing. Shakespeare places him centrally, which correctly matches the role Warwick allotted for himself historically. In the immediate years following Edward’s success, as Michael Hicks says: ‘Warwick was everywhere and did everything’.<sup>28</sup> Such energy is reflected in Shakespeare’s text. After this major victory, Warwick becomes ‘the shoulder’ within which Edward can base his kingship. In customary haste to consolidate victory and initiate practical policy, the Earl sketches out his material priorities by which the throne and national peace will be secured:

And now to London with triumphant march,  
There to be crowned England’s royal king:  
From whence shall Warwick cut the sea to France  
And ask the Lady Bona for thy queen.  
So shalt thou sinew both these lands together;  
And having France thy friend thou shalt not dread

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<sup>28</sup> Hicks, p. 184.

The scattered foe that hopes to rise again,  
 For though they cannot greatly sting to hurt,  
 Yet look to have them buzz to offend thine ears.  
 First will I see the coronation;  
 Then to Brittany I'll cross the sea  
 To effect this marriage, so it please my lord.

2.6.87-98

Warwick refers fleetingly to the coronation, as though it is a simple, mechanistic process by which Edward's acceptance will be confirmed, in stark contrast with Richard's obsession with regal symbolism as a consolidator of power. In his next breath, Warwick moves to the most important element of his policies: peace with France. He is representing the big picture; the continuity of previous pledges through a judicial marriage to keep the nation secure. His military guise, no longer required, falls away to reveal the diplomat and statesman, an aspect of his persona which Shakespeare has not yet fully explored. Before the Earl departs, Shakespeare stamps Warwick's authority once more, this time in a contention which arises around the dispensing of titles. Edward has already promised to listen to Warwick's counsel and allow him a free hand, publicly agreeing with all his proposals. But the King's very first decision is met with opposition from his brother:

Richard, I will create you Duke of Gloucester,  
 And George, of Clarence. Warwick as ourself  
 Shall do and undo as him pleaseth best.

2.6.103-5

Edward's implication is that, as second in the kingdom, Warwick may select honours for himself. Richard is disconcerted:

Let me be Duke of Clarence, George of Gloucester;  
 For Gloucester's dukedom is too ominous.

2.6.105-7

The historical references here are likely to be understood by the early modern audience. Richard's apprehension concerning the spectre of ill-luck surrounding the

title Duke of Gloucester is based on the murderous fate of one earl in the fourteenth century and two dukes within fifty years of each other.<sup>29</sup> Hall makes passing reference to it, but Polydore Vergil is explicit:

But it seems that the title of Gloucester given unto the earls and dukes for honour sake has been fatal and forshewed the destruction of them who should enjoy it, for as much as before this Humphrey [Duke of Gloucester], Hugh Spenser<sup>30</sup>, and Thomas Woodstock son to Edward III, the one the earl, the other duke of Gloucester ended their lives by miserable violence...so that the title thereof may as well be applied proverbially unto unfortunate personages as sometimes was Sejanus horse.<sup>31</sup>

Playing the role of duke-maker Warwick quickly steps in, brushing Richard's objections aside:

Tut, that's a foolish observation.  
Richard, be Duke of Gloucester. Now to London,  
To see these honours in possession.  
2.6.108-10

Through this characteristically peremptory command Shakespeare moves the action on and away from a protracted argument between the three brothers. Warwick's snappy dialogue keeps up the momentum of his kingmaking. He recognises the strategic value of maintaining the initiative and is impatient to be away, on the move again.

Warwick has adopted the role of duke-maker much earlier in *1 Henry VI* when petitioning for the restoration of Richard Plantagenet's title of Duke of York:

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<sup>29</sup> Thomas Woodstock, uncle of Richard II was murdered in Calais in 1397, and Humphrey Plantagenet in 1447.

<sup>30</sup> See Chris Given-Wilson, *The English Nobility in the Middle Ages* (London, 1987), pp. 35-42. Both Vergil, and Marlowe in *Edward the Second* (19.56), were mistaken in identifying Hugh Despenser as an earl of Gloucester. Despenser was never the earl and the title was granted to Hugh Audley in 1337 in right of his wife as co-heiress of the earldom.

<sup>31</sup> *Three Books of Polydore Vergil*, ed. by Henry Ellis (Camden Soc., 1844; reprinted AMS Press, 1968), p. 73. Following the downfall and execution of Sejanus, his horse passed to two subsequent owners, both of whom perished violently, *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography & Mythology*, ed. by William Smith, 3 vols (1867), iii, 767.

Accept this scroll, most gracious sovereign,  
Which in the right of Richard Plantagenet  
We do exhibit to your majesty.

3.1.151-3

Shakespeare again identifies Warwick's sense of family and lineage:

Let Richard be restored to his blood:  
So shall his father's wrongs be recompensed.

3.1.162-3

In the first scene of *3 Henry VI*, Warwick demands that Henry reverts to his title of Duke of Lancaster. The vigorous command to Henry: 'Be Duke of Lancaster.' (1.1.86) will be identically repeated later in his command to Richard, both injunctions cutting through legal niceties. These are not petitions or requests, but attempts to manipulate status for political expediency. It is a matter of general understanding that as an earl, Warwick is in no position to dispense or dispose of dukedoms, which is a regal right only. Shakespeare replicates a similar situation in the fourth Act after Warwick has changed sides, when the Earl deliberately refers to Edward as 'The Duke' (4.3.29). The process of kingmaking is facilitated by Warwick's ability to manipulate expediently totems of power implicit in titles. Presenting the petition for Plantagenet's restoration to his rights in *1 Henry VI*, he includes the territorial and financial substance. Reorganising the status of both Henry and Edward is simply a matter of reassigning titles.

Shakespeare continues the king-breaking and duke-making topos with the capture of Edward and the readoption of Henry in 4.6. Having secured the King, Warwick brings him onstage in a chair and for the first time is able to confront Edward with the chief reason for his shift of allegiance and his immediate intentions:

When you disgraced me in my embassy,  
 Then I degraded you from being King  
 And now come to create you Duke of York.  
 4.3.32-4

Shakespeare accentuates Warwick's supreme confidence that it is within his gift to demote Edward's status as king. Warwick has no such power and his argument is as fatuous as his reasoning is untenable. No-one can legally unseat an anointed king; constitutional ground which Shakespeare has fully explored in the first act of the play. Edward is defiant in his response:

Edward will always bear himself as King.  
 Though Fortune's malice overthrow my state,  
 My mind exceeds the compass of her wheel.  
 4.3.45-7

He does not dignify Warwick's victory over him with any recognition; fortune alone has undermined him. Consequently, within his head at least, he is able to continue as king, a situation with which Warwick is acquiescent:

Then, for his mind, be Edward England's King,  
 4.3.48

At that precise moment Edward is still wearing his crown. While the King's brother Gloucester continually muses on the trappings of kingship, nowhere in the text are there references to Warwick coveting or even alluding to them. In the Folio, for the first and only time, he handles the crown as a material object. Following Warwick's ironic comment to Edward, Shakespeare gives the explicit stage direction, requiring that Warwick: 'Takes off the crown'. This is the only physical manifestation of Warwick as either a king-breaker or king-maker although, at this point, Henry is not present to receive the crown. The Octavo has no such direction, although one line in the text is a useful prompt for Warwick to take the crown from Edward's head,



when he says: 'But Henry now shall wear the English crown,' (TLN 2231) otherwise Edward remains inappropriately wearing the crown while he is forcibly led off stage.

In a short but informative few lines, characteristically business-like and practical, Warwick outlines his operational commands. In answer to Oxford's presumption that they will be marching to London to secure the throne, and taking the crown with them, Warwick agrees that this must be the priority:

Ay, that's the first thing that we have to do,  
To free King Henry from imprisonment  
And see him seated in the regal throne.

4.3.62-4

In this terse statement of intent, Warwick is firstly upholding his pledge to Margaret made in the French court, that he will assist her in returning her husband to the throne. Secondly, he reveals that he has a political strategy which he is fully confident can be achieved.

Shakespeare moves the action to Westminster and Henry's re-assumption of power. In this scene, the re-instated Henry makes a tacit reference to king-breaking and the achievement of his freedom, as an act of God with the King's own supporters:

Master Lieutenant, now that God and friends  
Have shaken Edward from the regal seat  
And turned my captive state to liberty,

4.6.1-3

Next he recognises the role Warwick has played:

But Warwick, after God thou set'st me free,  
And chiefly, therefore, I thank God and thee.  
He the author, thou the instrument.

4.6.16-18

Like the theologian John Major, Shakespeare shows a keen awareness of the subtleties of Old Testament scripture, but in his own text his interpretation eschews Major's irony. Henry gives to God his full due as the instigator of the readeption; then Warwick is portentously dignified as being commissioned by God to facilitate the king-making role and bring about His will. Now, reluctantly but obediently taking up again the role of the Lord's anointed, Henry recognises Warwick's abilities and his reputation built on past successes. The King prepares to abdicate the practicalities of government to the Earl, his 'political body', confident that Warwick's qualities will be sufficient to unite the realm:

Warwick, although my head still wear the crown,  
I here resign my government to thee,  
For thou art fortunate in all thy deeds.

4.6.23-25

In a short exchange between Warwick and Henry, Shakespeare shows both men as appearing to fall over themselves to be fair and equitable. Henry may be simply relieved that a man of action is available to take from him an onerous burden; Warwick appears to be anxious not to appear avaricious for power. Robustly he refuses the offer to become Protector, overruling Henry's choice of himself by advancing Clarence for the role. Henry, as always looking for a peaceful, third way, mediates by making them joint Protectors. Warwick concurs, but reluctantly:

Why then, though loath, yet must I be content.  
 We'll yoke together, like a double shadow  
 To Henry's body, and supply his place,  
 I mean, in bearing weight of government,  
 While he enjoys the honour and his ease.

4.6.48-52

This politically unworkable compromise reinforces Warwick's direct yet simplistic approach to solving highly complex problems. But the embedded notion of the king's two bodies, one physical the other legal, nullifies this arrangement: while the anointed king's physical body exists, so too does his legal body.<sup>32</sup>

The arrangement for sharing the responsibility of government having been agreed, Shakespeare moves the dramatic narrative on to Warwick's priority for the restoration of stability. The Earl moves swiftly away from Henry's philosophy of sovereignty, rooted as it is in vacillation and compromise, to his own realities of the secure maintenance of kingly power through immediate action, in this case, the practical and proven means of attainder and confiscation:

And Clarence, now then it is more than needful  
 Forthwith that Edward be pronounced a traitor  
 And all his lands and goods be confiscate.

4.6.53-5

There will be no forgiveness for enemies. A strong king and strong quasi-king must use all legal, political and physical means available to protect, not only the nation, but also themselves. Clarence agrees, but immediately reminds Warwick that the succession must be determined. It is at this point that Shakespeare brings Warwick back to his *raison d'être*, when he makes his allusion to the possibility of future kingmaking:

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<sup>32</sup> Kantorowicz, p. 13.

Ay, therein Clarence shall not want his part.  
4.6.57

As Shakespeare shows the fortunes of Warwick and Edward reversing, Warwick has one last opportunity to remind Edward and the audience of his catalytic role in the drama. As the protagonists face each other at Coventry, Edward offers him a pardon in return for submission. But Warwick will not be pulled down, and in the end applies the biblical quotation, used for the third time in the play, to himself when he asks Edward:

Confess who set thee up and plucked thee down?  
Call Warwick patron and be penitent,  
And thou shalt still remain the Duke of York.  
5.1.26-8

Gloucester ironically seizes on Warwick's allusion to his power of kingmaking:

I thought at least he would have said 'the King'.  
Or did he make the jest against his will?  
5.1.29-30

Shakespeare shows how Richard appreciates the significance of the role of kingmaker, taunting Warwick with the idea that the Earl is expediently demoting himself to that of simple duke-maker. But Gloucester's underlying point is that as an earl Warwick is outranked by both Edward and himself as Dukes. The arrogation of the supreme status of a setter-up of kings is therefore not only spurious but illegal. Gloucester's observation is deeply ironic, given his own kingmaking ambitions as unfolded in his soliloquies.

In the trilogy, proactive and deterministic characters like Warwick and York see their actions as precursors of future events. Unlike the uncertain and reactive Henry VI, they are certain success will be achieved because of the rightness of their claim,

backed by force. But success is only assured if they can persuade others of the legitimacy of that claim and the consequent right to use that force. While York is operating on the empirical solidity of his familial line, Warwick acts to produce an outcome from a set of circumstances which he has been persuaded make his actions legitimate. There is no suggestion by Shakespeare, or any other observer, that Warwick desires the pinnacle of power that is kingship. The power he will wield to make a king is greater than the power to be a king. The irony is that, at the precise point when he accomplishes his goal, he must lose his *raison d'être*. Only once in any of the plays does he call on fortune, providence or destiny. In *Part 3*, in his vow to fight to the death during the battle of Towton, he looks to fortune to give him 'measure of revenge'. (3.2.32). His primary source of power is his self-confidence, his implicit belief that inheritance through the firstborn is a fundamental principle of law and must be protected; the safety of the commonwealth justifies the usurpation of a weak, albeit anointed king. In the following chapter I will show how Shakespeare represents Warwick's disappointment with those he thought shared these views, and how the dramatist lays out the consequences of such disillusionment.

## CHAPTER 5

### ‘NO MORE MY KING’

Warwick's role as a setter-up of kings as drawn from Shakespeare's historical sources, is significantly enlarged and illuminated through the semiotics of his text. The dramatist's repeated references to 'setting up and pulling down' unambiguously confirm Warwick's right to his later soubriquet. The basis of Warwick's justification for kingmaking is also made clear in Shakespeare's dramatic narrative. Firstly, there is the fundamental principle of primogenitive inheritance; secondly, the preservation of the welfare of the commonwealth; thirdly, the protection of the nation from opportunistic foreign menace. Shakespeare confirms Warwick's single mindedness in his belief of the causes he supports, but presents his character as unconcerned with the external trappings of kingship and power, as they are coveted by Richard of Gloucester for example: totems of regality well-explored in these plays and others in the chronicle histories. Rather, it is the necessary mind set which promotes good kingship, to the advantage and welfare of the nation and Warwick himself. Underpinning this rationale is the cruder principle that might is right; once the negotiations have reached an impasse, brute force will confirm it.

Long-settled constitutional foundations for sovereignty, backed with the blunt instrument of force, bolster the imperatives by which Shakespeare interprets processes and defines the qualities of monarchy. From the early medieval period, as Ernst Kantorowicz points out:

...the king's true legitimation was dynastical, independent of approval or consecration on the part of the Church and independent also of election by the people. Once the choice of dynasty had been made by the people, election was in abeyance: the royal birth itself manifested the Prince's election to kingship, his election by God and divine providence.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the two tetralogies, Shakespeare iterates this medieval principle of the hereditary right of the eldest son, or nearest in blood-line to the crown, as an indefeasible right. The precept was universally recognised. For example, a propagandist poem written after the battle of Barnet incorporates this principle of genealogical descent, to bolster Edward IV's claim to the title through his lineage:

Gaudete justi in domino,  
 For now reigneth right wisely our sovereign,  
 True inheritor to the crown, his quarrel proveth so,  
 Edward the fourth, by grace to attain,  
 With the crown of England on us to reign,  
 By just title of his descending,  
 All mis-creatures to reconcile again.  
 Convertimini, ye commons, and dread your king.<sup>2</sup>  
 1-8

The close analysis of dynastic descent as right of sovereignty is found elsewhere in Shakespeare's plays. In *Troilus and Cressida* (1601) Ulysses makes a long speech in which he argues the need for society to maintain a strict hierarchical order, or 'degree', based on legal succession through heredity and prerogative. Within the text is the dramatist's only use of 'primogenitive':

...How could communities,  
 Degrees in schools and brotherhoods in cities,  
 Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,  
 The primogenitive and due of birth,  
 Prerogative of age, crowns sceptres, laurels,  
 But by degree, stand in authentic place?  
 Take but degree away, untune that string,  
 And hark what discord follows.  
 1.3.103-10

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<sup>1</sup> Kantorowicz, p. 330.

<sup>2</sup> Robbins, 94, p. 227.

This topos of legitimation through dynastic continuity is one with which Warwick himself is particularly exercised. It is a key tenet of his *raison d'être* as a setter-up of kings; used by him at the time of his volte-face as one of the justifications for his move to support Henry's readeption. His role in the process is as a facilitator for others, not a claimant.

Warwick's change of sides begins in the swiftly moving action following the battle of Towton in 3 *Henry VI* (2.6) where Shakespeare conflates eight years of history. Historically, the catalyst for the rift had been pinpointed as the precipitate marriage of Edward IV to Elizabeth Grey, but later evidence shows that there were other more pertinent and political reasons. The dramatist makes little attempt to incorporate the long and convoluted historical events between 1464-9, which led to Warwick's *bouleversement* or calculated change of heart. Instead, in the play, directly after the Yorkist success at Towton, Warwick announces his intention to sail for France to negotiate the marriage of Lewis's sister-in-law Bona to King Edward (2.6.89-95). Unknown to Warwick, Edward marries the Lady Grey in secret. Margaret also arrives in Lewis's court to plead her cause of reinstating her husband as the legal king of England. Warwick reaches the court to make his suit, receives the news from England of Edward's marriage and is humiliated in front of Lewis. He declares his intention to leave Edward, align with Margaret and reinstate Henry to the throne.

The historical narrative of these events, which Shakespeare conflates in two long scenes (3.2; 3.3) shows how Warwick's familial and mentoring relationship with



Edward deteriorated over approximately five years in real terms. Immediately Edward had secured the crown in 1461, Warwick became the chief minister in the King's council. He remained a key influence, continuing his role as Edward's chief advisor until 1465; up to that time he was the most powerful magnate in the kingdom. Warwick's status as an ambassador was also supreme; he had the ear of the leaders of the major nation states in Europe, particularly France and Burgundy.<sup>3</sup> Politically, his instincts favoured closer liaison and cooperation with France; he made his first visit to the French court in 1463, where he struck up a sustained liking of Lewis XI, who in turn expressed his admiration for Warwick. As far as Lewis was concerned Warwick was the most significant figure in the English establishment and the French King relied on him, esteemed him and supported him financially and politically.<sup>4</sup>

A growing disaffection with Edward's style of government culminated in Warwick's rebellion in 1469-71. Two major features, one of foreign policy, the other concerning the changing dynamics within the court as a consequence of Edward's marriage, were intrinsically intertwined, promoting a sea-change in Warwick's regard for the King. Edward's marriage in 1464 to the widow of Lord Grey, a Lancastrian killed at the second battle of St. Albans, was precipitately and secretly undertaken; the King consulted no one. Lady Grey had two sons and five ambitious brothers, most of whom expected profitable marriages from their sister's good fortune. Warwick became steadily disenchanted with the politics of the court,

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<sup>3</sup> For Warwick's involvement in diplomatic discussions between England and Burgundy in 1467 see Lander, *The Wars of the Roses*, p. 110.

<sup>4</sup> For a full account of Warwick's relationship with Lewis XI see Murray Kendal, especially pp. 124-39.

where the balance of power was significantly changing to his disadvantage. Starkly opposed to Edward's foreign policy, which favoured links with Burgundy rather than France, in disagreement with Edward's choice of wife and with a burgeoning dislike of her numerous relatives, Warwick was slowly excluded from the King's inner circle. But, as Hall reports, he dissembled his displeasure for five years before taking his first rebellious action in 1469:

The Earl of Warwick being thus moved, inflamed and set against the king, left in his fury, his purpose might be espied and brought to nought, determined himself, covertly, dissimulating, so long to suffer all such wrongs and injuries, as were to him done, till he might spy a time convenient and a world after his own appetite, for the setting forth of his enterprise, and accomplishing of his purpose.<sup>5</sup>

Shakespeare does not ignore the fact that historically there had been many events since Towton and Edward's occupation of the throne for eight years. Through Warwick, the dramatist presents a catalogue of Edward's misgovernment which propels the Earl's actions. As Shakespeare writes it, the change of sides comes about because Warwick's expectations of Edward's kingship are dashed. As perceived by the Earl, an accumulation of poor decisions and actions by the King is not consonant with the effective governance which Warwick has anticipated and worked for. In a few pithy lines, Shakespeare expresses what he considers to be Warwick's priorities for good government, which should emanate from sound sovereignty. In an imagined location where Warwick has captured the King, the Earl finally faces Edward in fury, with an anaphoric list of his shortcomings:

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<sup>5</sup> Hall, 1465, sig. VI<sup>v</sup>.

Alas, how should you govern any kingdom,  
 That know not how to use ambassadors,  
 Nor how to be contented with one wife,  
 Nor how to use your brothers brotherly,  
 Nor how to study for the people's welfare,  
 Nor how to shroud yourself from enemies?

4.3.35-40

Within this litany, Shakespeare sharply delineates Warwick's transparent expectation of good kingship. Rearranged from the negative to the positive, they present a manifesto for effective sovereignty as Warwick perceives it, incorporating not only policy but morality also. These are, according to the Earl, the necessary attributes for a good king, which have been corrupted by Edward's impetuosity and self-indulgence. For Warwick, good governance shows itself through a set of priorities: the first must be the position of ambassadors who are sent abroad to represent their kings and concomitantly the ideals of the commonwealth itself. If the king's agent is undermined as Warwick has been, the king himself is compromised and will be deemed untrustworthy to the wider world. Secondly, the king must be above reproach as the nation's moral role model. The third priority is the political and moral importance of family loyalty: without such cohesiveness the stability of individuals and the nation is put at risk. Shakespeare adds two clear political requirements at the end of this list: the internal and external well-being of the state. The dramatist's positioning of all these kingly attributes in Warwick's list may indicate something of Warwick's own priorities: the protection of status and property. Nevertheless, Edward has let Warwick down in all these essentials. Warwick's exposition swings the dramatic dynamic from what could be perceived as his precipitate act of treason in response to a public humiliation, to a justification for remedial action for a monarchy in jeopardy.

Shakespeare's textual presentation of Warwick's crisply articulated set of material, political and moral objectives is in contrast to Henry's view of the requirements for successful monarchy, which the dramatist later attributes to him. Advancing to meet Edward's forces, Warwick, Clarence and Oxford leave Henry in the palace of Westminster, alone with Exeter. In characteristically contemplative mood, Henry expresses confidence that the people will continue to rally behind him, in spite of the numbers of Edward's forces. When Exeter voices concern that the people may be swayed by Edward's seductive personality, Henry lists what he regards as his own regal qualities which can counter it:

That's not my fear. My meed [merit] hath got me fame.  
 I have not stopped mine ears to their demands,  
 Nor posted off their suits with slow delays.  
 My pity hath been balm to heal their wounds.  
 My mildness hath allayed their swelling griefs.  
 My mercy dried their water-flowing tears.  
 I have not been desirous of their wealth  
 Nor much oppressed them with great subsidies,  
 Nor forward of revenge, though they much erred.  
4.8.38-46

Within Henry's self-analysis of his approach to the responsibility demanded of a king, Shakespeare explores different requirements for good kingship. Earlier, in his 'She-wolf of France' speech at Wakefield, York has castigated Margaret for her lack of feminine qualities, as he appreciates them: mildness, pity and softness (1.4.141) the very attributes identified here by Henry as kingly virtues. The King does not correlate them directly with effective governance; he sees such humane actions as enablers by which wise government can be achieved. He explicates no specific policies, explaining himself with echoes of Warwick, through the actions he has taken to: 'study for the welfare of his people', as evidence of his

competency. Briefly, the personas of the two men are reversed; Warwick, normally the man of deeds not words, can only articulate an aspirational list of policies. He offers no practical means whereby they can be achieved. But Henry clearly sets out how his moral style imprints upon his sovereignty, not as a manifesto but as a record of his achievements. These are empathetic qualities, well suited in dealings with individuals and will be appreciated individually likewise. In our modern context, they are recognised and valued as high-level interpersonal skills; but laudable as they are, they are not viewed as overtly regal in this medieval world. A king must rule decisively, in consultation only with those he chooses to surround himself (or who are chosen for him). Henry's style of kingship is estimated as weak, even by those close to him; more applicable to one who would choose a life of self-sacrificial, monastic contemplation.

Shakespeare makes two allusions to Henry's legendary saintliness. Firstly, through Margaret, who from an early point in her marriage has been disappointed by Henry's lack of physical prowess, especially in comparison with those of Suffolk (2 *Henry VI* 1.52-3). She elaborates the King's regal and personal shortcomings derisively to the Duke in 2 *Henry VI*:

But all his [Henry's] mind is bent to holiness,  
To number Ave-Maries on his beads.  
His champions are the prophets and apostles,  
His weapons, holy saws of sacred writ;  
His study is his tilt-yard, and his loves  
Are brazen images of canonised saints.  
I would the college of the cardinals  
Would chose him Pope, and carry him to Rome  
And set the triple crown upon his head:  
That were a state fit for his Holiness.

1.3.56-65

Her feminised priorities for romantic kingship correlate, in part, with the received wisdom of her time for the chivalrous ideal of sovereignty: kings must be practised warriors and charismatic lovers. The Quarto version omits much of this passage; Margaret makes only a single reference to Henry's bookishness:

The commons loves unto that haughty Duke,  
That seeks to him more than to King Henry:  
Whose eyes are always pouring on his book  
And ne're regards the honour of his name,

TLN 345-8

In this truncated version, her concern is that the centre of power remains vested in Gloucester because Henry is still treated as a child; by default she is excluded. Gloucester appears to exhibit kingly qualities throughout, particularly in his application of decisive command when it is needed, and his ability to control the commons. Shakespeare illustrates this most transparently in the scene at St. Albans with Gloucester's treatment of Simcox (*2 Henry VI* 2.1). At this stage, as a young, inexperienced woman, even though Queen, she makes no mention of any understanding of the skills required for effective government. With time and experience she will be able to articulate some basic precepts for strong rule, as she does much later in the trilogy, at the French court.

Margaret may be naïve in her expectations of her husband, but she is not alone in her estimation of Henry. The second derisory references are made by the Duke of York in the same play, when he scorns the King's abilities to govern, regarding him as being most fit for the life of a pilgrim:

'King' did I call thee? No, thou art not a king,  
Not fit to govern and rule multitudes,  
Which dar'st not, no, nor canst not rule a traitor.  
That head of thine does not become a crown;

Thy hand is made to grasp a palmer's staff  
 And not to grace an awful princely sceptre.  
 That gold must round engirt these brows of mine,  
 Whose smile and frown, like to Achilles' spear,  
 Is able with the change to kill and cure.  
 Here is a hand to hold a sceptre up  
 And with the same to act controlling laws.

5.1.93-103

Shakespeare expresses through York the view that Henry does not deserve the crown because the qualities he possesses are inappropriate for a ruler. York separates 'govern' and 'rule', yet semantically they share a similar meaning: to control by authority. The context in which 'govern' is used by York can be construed as setting the priorities for regal policies and ensuring they are carried out; this requires wisdom, foresight, political acuity and self-belief. To achieve the objectives of government the multitude must be ruled. This requires commitment, focus, courage and a level of ruthlessness, which collectively will persuade and, if necessary, impel. Governing is represented by tactical words, ruling by controlling deeds. This distinction serves to highlight why Warwick is a facilitator and not a shaper of kings. Although he is recognised for his powers of persuasive articulation, his forte is action not policy. He will set up one whom he considers already exhibits these qualities for governance provided, in his estimation, their regal claims are indefeasibly legal.

The Quarto omits all references to palmers and signifiers. In this version the key problem for York is Somerset's continued presence at court:

Base fearful Henry that thus dishonour'st me,  
 By heaven, thou shalt not govern over me:  
 I cannot brook that traitor's [Somerset] presence here,  
 Nor will I subject be to such a king,  
 That knows not how to govern nor to rule.

TLN 2044-8

The text retains York's clear distinction between governing and ruling. He shares Warwick's perceptions of sovereignty: that a king should be first and foremost proactive in protecting his people and the country at large, from a foundation of concomitant political vigour and martial capacity.

In York's lines in the Folio, Shakespeare explores the value judgements inherent in the constructs of effective and impotent kingship. York unfairly ascribes Henry's ineptitude to religiosity; but Henry is unfortunate in coming to the throne so early in his life and Shakespeare plays up the young man's naïveté. This does not excuse the King's three fundamentally impolitic and ignoble decisions: firstly, to show partisanship to one faction at the expense of the other, by rejecting the white rose in favour of the red in *1 Henry VI* (4.1.152); secondly, to abandon so feebly his uncle Gloucester to his enemies in *2 Henry VI* (3.2); thirdly, to disinherit officially and publicly his only son in *3 Henry VI* (1.1).

Warwick is as clear in his mind as York, that to achieve strong kingship at least two basic practical political conditions must be in evidence for the protection of the state. Firstly, the king must make an unbreakable compact with his councillors in order to govern with a semblance of consent; secondly, he needs the acquiescence of the commons to rule over them. It is Exeter in *1 Henry VI*, alone on stage after the coronation of Henry in Paris, who prophesies the outcome of weak kingship. Congratulating the absent York on his forbearance, after Henry has made his prejudicial declaration in choosing the red rose over the white, the Duke foresees:



More rancorous spite, more furious raging broils,  
 Than yet can be imagined or supposed:  
 But howsoe'er, no simple man that sees  
 This jarring discord of nobility,  
 This shouldering of each other in the court,  
 This factious bandying of their favourites,  
 But that it does presage some ill event.  
 'Tis much when sceptres are in children's hands,  
 But more when envy breeds unkind division –  
 There comes the ruin, there begins confusion.  
 4.1.185-194

Exeter rues the inheritance of the throne by a child because it opens up the opportunities for faction and civil war. The topos throughout the history plays, of what Shakespeare describes as poor governance, is highlighted in this speech. Henry cannot control his court and the nobility are left free to jostle for supremacy. Exeter identifies the most significant motivation for factional coups: the desire of individuals to be closest to sovereign power; historically this was sought under different pretexts. For example, in 1450 on his return from Ireland, York presented himself as the champion of justice and cleanser of the realm from corruption, in other words the influence of Somerset.<sup>6</sup> But he was following a precedent. The original action of Bolingbroke's usurpation of the throne was masked in the idealistic intention to cleanse the court of the sycophants and self-seekers surrounding Richard II. Likewise, following Warwick's own coup in 1470, his official complaint against Edward was a repeat of that raised against Henry VI's regime: that the King was dominated by a clique of evil counsellors, arrivistes like

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<sup>6</sup> York's petition to the council in 1450 specifically takes up points made in the grievances presented by Cade three months before, highlighting the factionalism which was causing the unquiet times. See Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry VI*, p. 688.

the Woodvilles, to the exclusion of experienced and loyal advisors such as Warwick.<sup>7</sup>

Shakespeare explains Warwick's change of heart as reflecting not only the Earl's discontent with Edward's perceived partiality, but also his distaste for the King's licentiousness and superficiality. He sets those against Henry's universally acknowledged virtue and piety and the dramatist is true to the chronicle accounts, where Warwick is credited with such a reformed opinion. For example, Grafton imagined both Warwick's state of mind and his reassessment of Henry in 1468, before he made his first tactical moves against Edward. In his refuge at Warwick Castle, according to the chronicler, the plain-speaker shared his thoughts with two of his brothers: Montague and George Neville, the Archbishop of York:

Brethren, it is not of any lightness of mind, but of plain judgment that I am moved to speak of King Edward and King Henry. This Henry is a very godly man and loves them that be his faithful subjects, and does consider also who takes pains for him, which has a son born by nature to be of great worthiness, praise and free liberality, by whom every man may perceive much godliness which helps his father, now being in thralldom and captivity, as much as in him lies.<sup>8</sup>

According to Grafton, Warwick not only highlighted Henry's godliness and gratitude to his friends, but reinforced his own fundamental view of the importance of primogenitive inheritance. He alluded to Prince Edward's 'liberality' as a praiseworthy quality, one which was a strong feature of Warwick's own reputation. But Warwick makes no mention of any love by the commons for Henry; rather that Henry selects for his own regard those he considers loyal. While holding up Henry

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<sup>7</sup> Warwick and Clarence appealed for popular support before they invaded in 1470. Their manifesto promised action against 'such certain covetous and seditious persons...about the royal realm' who were out for their own benefit '...to the great hurt, impoverishment and utter destruction of you.' The country was also at threat from 'strangers and outward nations.' These latter were presumably the Woodvilles and their Burgundian allies. See Hicks, p. 298.

<sup>8</sup> Grafton, p. 439.

as a role model for all other fathers and sons, Warwick was conveniently forgetting that this was the king who had readily disinherited his son to save his own reign. Wind-changing Warwick affirmed that Henry had a son still living, ‘born by nature’ to rule after his father, a politically convenient fact as far as Warwick was concerned. The Earl had contracted a marriage between his younger daughter Anne and Prince Edward, and thereby placed himself in the prime position of father-in-law to the future king. Fortuitously, Warwick had also manipulated an identical position for himself, as the father of Isobel, wife of George Duke of Clarence; the Duke had been designated as the next king in default of Prince Edward’s death without an heir.

Shakespeare explores these chronicled circumstances in 4.6, when Henry is released from the Tower and immediately holds a parliament, at which the sovereignty of the country is settled. There are significant staging differences in the Octavo version of the scene, reflecting similar disparities between the two versions in 4.3.<sup>9</sup> The issue of the material and abstract crown is one. As Phyllis Rackin dryly observes:

Authority is effaced, power becomes an end in itself, and the crown becomes a commodity, tossed back and forth from one head to another at the whim of blind fortune and the Earl of Warwick.<sup>10</sup>

In *The King’s Two Bodies*, Kantorowicz quotes Baldus, who distinguishes the two crowns and their specific intrinsic and extrinsic functions, as well as the essential political element of continuity:

[With regard to the succession of the] son I do not consider an interval of time; for the *Crown* descends on him in continuity, albeit that the *exterior crown* demands an imposition of the hand and the solemnity of office.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> See above, pp. 195-8.

<sup>10</sup> Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History: Shakespeare’s English Chronicles* (New York, 1990), p. 63.

<sup>11</sup> Kantorowicz, p. 336.

In the Folio, Henry enters wearing the exterior crown as the symbol of his divinely anointed status, confirmed by the line: 'Warwick, although my head still wear the crown,' (4.6.23). Clearly, some time between Warwick's appropriation of the crown from Edward's head (4.3.48) and Henry's entry, Warwick has imposed his hand with the solemnity of office and, fulfilling the expectation explicit in his soubriquet, recreated Henry as king. This version is explicit in describing Warwick's kingmaking role, along with a more detailed account of the actual arrangements for joint-government.

The Octavo stage directions show Warwick and Clarence entering first, 'with the crown', and then King Henry, Oxford, Somerset and the young Earl of Richmond. There is no indication as to how the crown is carried or by whom, but clearly it is not worn by Henry. The first section of the scene is reduced to nine lines of explanation of how the means of sovereignty is to be organised, in contrast to the sixty four in the Folio. Henry elucidates:

Thus from the prison to this princely seat,  
By God's great mercies am I brought  
Again, Clarence and Warwick do you  
Keep the crown, and govern and protect  
My realm in peace, and I will spend the  
Remnant of my days, to sins rebuke  
And my Creator's praise.

TLN 2580-6

Clarence and Warwick will jointly form a government, but it is unclear from Henry's ambiguous instruction what is to become of the material crown itself. Even if he is speaking of the crown in abstract, there remains the problem of what to do with the physical object. Will he retain it for himself? It is inconceivable that Henry would delegate the wearing of such a totemic object of sovereignty to Warwick or

Clarence, neither of whom are anointed kings. Presumably, Henry sees this as an interim arrangement until his wife and son return from France and the political climate changes. Dramatically, he is less ambiguous in his delegation of the power of sovereignty itself. Unlike York, Henry views the outcome of policy-making inherent in government as the protection of the realm, not simply rule as a mechanism of control. His direction for a dual arrangement is immediately tested by Warwick:

What answers Clarence to his sovereign's will?

and confirmed by Clarence:

Clarence agrees to what king Henry likes.

TLN 2587-8

Besides the issue of the crown there are other significant differences of weight and priority in the two versions of this scene. The Octavo truncates the 102 lines of the Folio to just forty eight; priority is given to Warwick's strategic proposals to recapture Edward (TLN 2604-24) lines incorporated from 4.8 in the Folio. The arrangements for governance are treated briefly, as is the first appearance of the future King Henry VII.

Both versions also throw up subtle and important differences between them in the introduction of the young Earl of Richmond. In the Folio, Henry calls the boy forward:

Come hither, England's hope.

4.6.68

Resting his hand on Richmond's head, Henry talks over him to the assembled nobility, prophesising the young man's future role:

*Lays his hand on Richmond's head.*

If secret powers  
Suggest but truth to my divining thought,  
This pretty lad will prove our country's bliss.  
His looks are full of peaceful majesty,  
His head by nature framed to wear a crown,  
His hand to wield a sceptre, and himself  
Likely in time to bless a regal throne.  
Make much of him, my lords, for this is he  
Must help you more than you are hurt by me.  
4.6.68-76

Henry's text is formulated in aspirational terms, optimistically forecasting that this young man, with the physical presence of a king, will provide continuance and stability. There is no allusion by Henry to Richmond's lineage; the requirement of dynastic legitimation through primogeniture, a crucial concern for Warwick, is excluded. Neither is there any indication, in either the stage directions or text, of a reaction from Warwick or Clarence to Richmond's presence or Henry's words. They are onlookers, included in Henry's exhortation for them all to 'Make much of him [Richmond].'

In this reference to the 'Tudor myth', Shakespeare is insinuating that in order to assume sovereignty, it is first necessary to have the physical attributes to earn it. Regal looks will dignify and satisfy the assumption of power, particularly with the commons. This expression of the importance of presentation over substance is at odds with Henry's thoughts on his own approach to sovereignty, as he expounds it to Exeter later in 4.8.38-50. Shakespeare explores other distinctive perceptions of regality through physical presence in those expressed by Richard of Gloucester. This future king sees the basis of sovereignty through its external and material trappings. Kingship for him is defined and confirmed by outward show, which

provides the illusion of strength and power. Henry considers Richmond's physical attributes, framed in peaceful looks and attractive features, as a positive adjunct to the maintenance of power and thereby stability of the realm. Gloucester covets the symbolism of the crown, which he sees as the bedrock on which power is maintained (1.2.28-30). He, of course, is not 'a pretty lad' and, unable to meet Henry's criterion, must fulfil his regal ambitions by other means.

The differences in the Octavo are subtle but notable. Henry addresses Richmond directly:

Henry of Richmond. Come hither pretty lad.  
If heavenly powers do aim aright  
To my divining thoughts, thou pretty boy,  
Shall prove this country's bliss.  
Thy head is made to wear a princely crown,  
Thy looks are all replete with majesty,  
Make much of him my Lords,  
For this is he shall help you more,  
Than you are hurt by me.

TLN 2593-101

Here the same view is expressed, but with a different emphasis. The burden of achievement is placed on Henry Richmond himself and expectations are laid which will come to fruition at the end of *Richard III*, when Richmond will say:

Now civil wounds are stopp'd; peace lives again.  
That she may long live here, God say Amen.  
5.5.40-1

Henry has divined quietly to himself that Richmond will find his way with the help of providence. Shakespeare follows Hall's account:

This lord Henry [Richmond] was he ... whom we ought to believe to be sent from God, and of him only to be provided a king.....when the king [Henry] had a good space by himself, secretly beholden and marked, both [Richmond's] wit and his likely towardness, he said to such princes as were then with him: Lo surely this is he to who both we and our adversaries leaving the possession of all things, shall hereafter give room and place.<sup>12</sup>

The dramatist allocates to Henry VI foresight with which to predict outcomes, a quality for effective governance the King has lacked up to now. The security of the country's future will be guaranteed through Richmond, not Warwick, Clarence or even Henry's own son. The King has for a second time, but abstractly rather than purposefully, disinherited Prince Edward. Richmond will need no earthly facilitator like Warwick to broker him to the throne. As Hall reported, this young Earl's destiny had been marked out by God, the supreme *Regum Creator*.

In these scenes, which take place after Warwick's volte-face, Shakespeare maintains the Earl's political aspirations for effective sovereignty: the preservation of security of the commonwealth through a king's clear vision and strength of purpose, coupled with concomitant policies which are rigorously enforced. Warwick's belief in what constitutes true regality is unshaken. Dramatically, at the time of their rift, Warwick is shaken by Edward's behaviour, which the Earl perceives as risking the common good. There is also an issue of a personal attack on Warwick's honour. Echoing Henry, Warwick includes qualities of morality and loyalty to family and friends as essential features of competent kingship. From this broader manifesto, he is able to build a political case against Edward to justify his rebellion.

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<sup>12</sup> Hall, 1470, sig. XXII<sup>v</sup>.



The breakdown of the relationship between Warwick and Edward becomes the underlying element driving the action during the French court scene and beyond. Shakespeare takes from the chronicle sources explanations which give some credibility to the dramatic rapidity of Warwick's volte-face in the play. The chroniclers Grafton, Hall and Holinshed were inclined to focus equally on the relationship between Warwick and Edward and put forward details of the protagonists' reactions to events, as well as refining the events themselves. Hall in particular was explicit in trying to understand the motivations of the two men; he examined the humbling effect of obligation, which he concluded invariably leads to resentment by the recipient and raised expectations for the donor:

For after that King Edward had obtained his Kingdom (as it was thought) by the only help and means of the earl of Warwick he [Edward] began to suspect yea, and to doubt him, fearing lest he being in such authority and estimation of the people as he well might work him pleasure or displeasure, when he thereunto were minded, wherefore he thought it convenient a little and a little to pluck away and diminish the power and authority which he and his predecessors had given to the earl, to the intent that he might then do at his pleasure, both at home and in outward parties, without fear or dread, without check or taunt, whatsoever to his own mind seemed most content. By this a man may be that often it chanceth that friends for one good turn will not render another, nor yet remember a great gratitude and benefit in time of necessity, to the showed and exhibited: But for kindness they show unkindness, and for great benefits received with great displeasure they do recompense.<sup>13</sup>

The chronicler saw Edward's reaction to Warwick, after the crown had been achieved, as standard behaviour by one marking his territory; the younger man wished to shake off the controlling hand of his mentor. Shakespeare uses Hall's description of the antecedents of the quarrel in 4.1, where Edward is reminded by Clarence that the reaction of Lewis and Warwick to his marriage to the Lady Grey is likely to be hostile. The Duke's tone is suffused with Ciceronian irony:

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<sup>13</sup> Hall, 1465, sig. VI<sup>v</sup>.

As well as Lewis of France, or the Earl of Warwick,  
Which are so weak in judgement  
That they'll take no offence at our abuse.

His brother is robust in his response:

Suppose they take offence without a cause:  
They are but Lewis and Warwick; I am Edward,  
Your King and Warwick's, and must have my will.  
4.1.11-16

When Richard also points out that Warwick has been publicly humiliated in the French court, Edward, characteristically shallow, imagines both the King of France and the Earl can be mollified materially:

What if both Lewis and Warwick be appeased  
By such invention as I can devise?  
4.1.34-5

The reasoned voice of Montague reminds them all that an alliance with France, through a marriage between Edward and Lewis's sister-in-law, would strengthen England's position militarily. Hastings disagrees: 'England is safe, if true to itself.' (4.1.40). He bases his premise on faith in God and the island status of England, rather than any trust that can be put in the French. Edward is determined to have his own way:

Ay, what of that? It was my will and grant,  
And for this once my will shall stand for law.  
4.1.49-50

In his use of this key term, the dramatist exposes how, through the absolute will of kings, tyranny might take root if not restrained by even minimal mediation or compromise. The repeated use of 'will', especially when coupled with 'must have', strikes a serious note of warning about what Edward's view of sovereignty is becoming.

Unlike his father York, Edward makes no mention of a distinction between governing and ruling; he will combine them. Shakespeare shows how, through this dogged insistence on having his way, the King is moving to rule without consultation with his advisers, anathema to Warwick, as he will later explain when he is face to face with Edward (4.3.32-40). The King's qualifying: 'For this once', is too vague to be a guarantee that such unrestrained action, predicated on 'will', will not become addictive. Warwick has perceived this possibility and will later call his protégé: 'the tyrant'. Edward is dangerously misjudging both Lewis and Warwick in thinking that slights to their honour can be bought off. The implications in this scene may also resonate with the Tudor audience, perceiving similarities with Queen Elizabeth, who has also used her own will in prevaricating over the succession. They may feel, like Clarence and Montague, that she has also misjudged the strong concerns of the nation in this context.

The dramatic interpretation of Warwick's instantaneous change of mind may superficially rest on the immediate insult to his status, delivered literally from Edward by post in the presence of a powerful continental monarch. Theatrically the French court scene has been described as '...very funny, and the abruptness of the change is such that it appeared ridiculous.'<sup>14</sup> It also presents problems for the actor.<sup>15</sup> The character, constant in his support for the Yorkist cause throughout the trilogy, changes sides within the space of seconds, throwing in his lot with sworn enemies.

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<sup>14</sup> Homer Swander, 'The Rediscovery of Henry VI', *SQ*, 29 (1978), p. 150.

<sup>15</sup> See below pp. 266-8.

Shakespeare's set-piece, in which Warwick so swiftly makes his volte-face, incorporates the single line on which hinges Warwick's reputation as a weather-cock. The scene follows Edward's wooing and winning of the Lady Grey and the audience is therefore fully aware that Warwick's embassy to France is a fruitless one. At the French court, the Earl meets Margaret, who has also arrived in France as a supplicant for French aid against the Yorkists. In response to Lewis's enquiry as to Warwick's social rank, the Queen uses the pronoun 'our' Earl of Warwick ironically, given her views of the Earl expressed in *2 Henry VI* (3.2.204-5) as she replies to the King's question:

King	What's he approacheth boldly to our presence?
Margaret	Our Earl of Warwick, Edward's greatest friend.
	3.3.44-5

In the context of the drama, Lewis is immediately struck by Warwick's deportment and style, this physical display instantly marking him out as a significant figure; a precursor to Henry's later consideration of the power which emanates from kingly bearing and physical presence (4.6.68-76). Warwick's current status as first in the English King's favour is confirmed by Margaret. The Earl's continental reputation for courage has also preceded him. Lewis expresses it:

Welcome, brave Warwick. What brings thee to France?
3.3.46

Shakespeare confirms Warwick's status, as reported in Hall and Grafton, that he was welcomed and at home in foreign courts, especially France, where Lewis considered him both his friend and his confidante.<sup>16</sup> They saw in each other shared characteristics; they had common aspirations for their countries and interests for

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<sup>16</sup> See Hall, 1464, sig. V<sup>v</sup>.

themselves; they were both risk takers. French observers labelled them birds of a feather:

Le Roy avoit bien recontré  
En Warwic proppre compaignon;  
Eux deux, leur cas considéré,  
Furent d'une complexion.

The King [Lewis] has met indeed  
In Warwick his true kin;  
This pair – who runs may read –  
Were brothers under the skin.<sup>17</sup>

Later in the scene, Shakespeare uses this same observation of Warwick and Edward, when Margaret responds vehemently to Warwick's slight on her capacity to keep herself (3.3.153-5):

...I make King Lewis behold  
Thy sly conveyance and thy lord's [Edward] false love,  
For both of you are birds of selfsame feather.  
(3.3.159-61)

Now the Queen is wary and suspicious of 'long-tongued' Warwick's persuasive skills and careful of her words in Lewis's presence. She knows the weakness of her own position, which can only be further damaged by an alignment between Edward and Lewis:

Ay, now begins a second storm to rise,  
For this is he who moves both wind and tide.  
3.3.47-8

Margaret is ignored by both Warwick and Lewis, in a pointed rejection which she recognises as an indication of her powerlessness. Shakespeare's climatic observation through Margaret is an obvious but rare reference to Warwick's skills

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<sup>17</sup> Murray Kendal, p. 272. This ballad is part of one taken from *Chantes Historiques et Populaires du temp de Charles VII et Louis XI*, printed by A.J.C. le Roux de Lincy in Paris 1857, from manuscripts which have been lost.

of seamanship, which historically were well demonstrated throughout his term as captain of Calais and his international reputation for strategic piracy in the English Channel. If Warwick's naval skills are played down by Shakespeare, the Earl's powers of persuasion are not. Margaret is wise to be cautious and following Warwick's effusive greetings to Lewis, in which the marriage between Edward and Lady Bona is proposed, the Queen is quick to intervene. She has no trust in the Earl's words, estimating him as a deceiver driven by self-protection. She seeks to warn the King and his sister-in-law of Edward's equal duplicity:

King Lewis and Lady Bona, hear me speak  
Before you answer Warwick. His demand  
Springs not from Edward's well-meant honest love  
But from deceit, bred by necessity.

3.3.65-68

It is evident by now that Shakespeare has moved Margaret's expectation and understanding of the politics of sovereignty, from those of a naïve, romantic and inexperienced young princess in *Parts 1* and *2*, to an established and mature queen, one who has become well acquainted with the conditions necessary to secure and maintain a crown. Only in the Folio is Margaret explicit in ascribing tyranny to Edward's rule. Through Shakespeare's rhetoric, she elucidates the necessity for a despot to protect his absolute power internally through an effective foreign policy, one based on mutual agreements between neighbours:

For how can tyrants safely govern home  
Unless abroad they purchase great alliance?

3.3.69-70

Within the term 'tyrants' Shakespeare includes usurpers. The support of foreign kings and princes, whether tacit or overt, will provide aid and comfort to the

occupier of a stolen throne, as well as one who holds it by dynastic legitimization. Without such aid the usurper is vulnerable on all fronts. Margaret continues, with an echo of Warwick's own concerns with lineal descent as the cornerstone of any claim to kingship. This topos is again riposted between the protagonists. The nobility have lined up behind the two factions according to how they interpret the legality and strength of their respective pedigrees. Warwick was originally persuaded to support York as a direct consequence of the Duke's explanation of his lineage. Shakespeare finely frames these points, interlocking each one as Margaret proceeds:

To prove him tyrant, this reason may suffice:  
That Henry liveth still; but were he dead,  
Yet here Prince Edward stands, King Henry's son.  
Look, therefore, Lewis, that by this league and marriage  
Thou draw not on thy danger and dishonour,  
For though usurpers sway the rule awhile,  
Yet heavens are just, and Time suppresseth wrongs.  
3.3.71-7

Shakespeare nudges back into the mind the question of lineal rights in respect of the crown, revisiting the contention on which the trilogy is based for the fourth and final time. Theatrically, the stage settings are fitting for discussions of such a fundamental regal issue. In *Part 1* (2.5) York quizzes his uncle Mortimer about his pedigree in the Tower of London, an ancient royal building with a roll of regal occupants stretching back centuries. In *Part 2* (2.2) the conversation between the Nevilles and York takes place in a private walk, historically in the garden at York's London ducal seat of Baynard's Castle, originally built by William I. A third reiteration of legitimising pedigree occurs in *Part 3* (1.1) in the palace of Westminster when York physically occupies the throne. In the crucial scene in

which the values and expectations of kingship are expounded, particularly by Warwick, Shakespeare uses the majestic setting of the French court, reminding the audience again of the importance of these lineal preoccupations and the disruption to the state which occurs when an embedded process of regal inheritance is convulsed.

The Octavo shortens Margaret's speech to three lines from the thirteen in the Folio:

King Lewes and Lady Bona hear me speak,  
Before you answer Warwick or his words,  
For he it is hath done us all these wrongs.

TLN 1847-9

This singularly reduced account simply serves to blame Warwick for the current wretchedness of both the Lancastrians and the country. However, the Octavo is in concert with the Folio in the ensuing exchanges between Warwick, Prince Edward and Oxford, where the contentious question of the usurpation by Henry Lancaster is revisited. When Warwick accuses Margaret of insulting language – ‘injurious Margaret’ – the Prince of Wales questions why he has not used her royal title: ‘And why not Queen?’ (3.3.78). Warwick is characteristically blunt in response to this challenge, casting the Prince's father as a traitor/tyrant, and the Prince's own title as illegitimate:

Because thy father Henry did usurp,  
And thou no more art prince than she is queen.

3.3.79-80

Upholding the Lancastrian argument, Oxford takes them all back several decades to the root of the contention:



Then Warwick disannuls great John of Gaunt,  
 Which did subdue the greatest part of Spain;  
 And after John of Gaunt, Henry the Fourth,  
 Whose wisdom was a mirror to the wisest;  
 And after that wise prince, Henry the Fifth,  
 Who by his prowess conquered all France:  
 From these, our Henry lineally descends.

3.3.81-7

He accuses Warwick of forgetting Gaunt's princely status as Edward III's fourth son. This is a supreme irony, since Warwick is Gaunt's great-grandson through the Duke's third marriage to Katherine Swynford.<sup>18</sup> Through Oxford's rhetoric, Shakespeare moves the lineage topos from Old Gaunt's highly-praised foreign adventuring, through the wise reign of Henry IV and finally, with a lapse of diplomatic etiquette considering where they are, to Henry V's underpinning of his sovereignty by conquests in France. It is a smooth transition from the son of the hero-king Henry V to his grandson Edward. The assertion that character-forming martial activity makes a reliable basis for a regal line should resonate with Warwick. It is he that reminds Westmoreland how the Yorkists chased the Lancastrians from the field at the first battle of St. Albans, earning the right to the throne (1.1.90). However, now he chooses to ignore the proposition of might is right. Instead, he reminds the Earl how Henry V's son has lost all of France, at the same time drawing attention to Oxford's current lack of tact in the French court:

Oxford, how haps it in this smooth discourse  
 You told not how Henry the Sixth hath lost  
 All that which Henry the Fifth had gotten?  
 Methinks these peers of France should smile at that.

3.3.88-91

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<sup>18</sup> Warwick and Richmond (Henry VII) shared the same descent from John of Gaunt and Katherine Swynford. Warwick's grandmother was Joan Beaufort, Gaunt's daughter; Richmond's great-grandfather was John Beaufort Marquess of Somerset, Gaunt's son. Richmond was Gaunt's great-great-grandson.

Shakespeare adds a piquant twist when Warwick measures the worth of a pedigree through its longevity:

But, for the rest: you tell a pedigree  
Of threescore and two years, a silly time  
To make prescriptions for a kingdom's worth.  
3.3.92-4

According to Warwick, sixty two years is no time in which to establish a royal house, or even a noble one incontrovertibly.<sup>19</sup> Such a short span of years provides no dignity to the sovereignty of a country. 'Three score and two years' move the historical date to 1461 from 1399, the date of the usurpation by Henry IV. Edward IV was crowned in 1461 and therefore Shakespeare's chronology is historically accurate. Oxford counter-thrusts with another numerical reference, by reminding Warwick that, up to the present time, the Earl has been Henry's sworn subject for thirty six years, or in the Octavo, thirty eight. The Folio version is correct, since the scene is set immediately after Edward's marriage in 1464 and Warwick was born in 1428. Oxford is surprised that Warwick can ignore, unblinkingly, an oath made and kept so long:

Why, Warwick, canst thou speak against thy liege  
Whom thou obeyed'st six and thirty years  
And not bewray thy treason with a blush?  
3.3.95-7

Warwick's riposte is duplicitous:

Can Oxford, that did ever fence the right,  
Now buckler falsehood with a pedigree?  
3.3.98-9

Having consistently argued the rationale of pedigree to legitimise the Yorkist claim, he now accuses Oxford of using the same line of argument to subvert the truth. The

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<sup>19</sup> For the Nevilles' assertion of their ancient ancestry see Hicks, p. 12.

dramatic exchanges reach a stalemate as Oxford falls back on another leitmotiv: revenge for the murders of fathers and sons. Lewis, perceiving the cul de sac into which the discussion is disappearing, intervenes to take Warwick aside in order to make his own assessment. Shakespeare chooses an interesting rendering of Lewis's pre-condition for support:

Now Warwick, tell me, even upon thy conscience,  
Is Edward your true king? For I were loath  
To link with him that were not lawful chosen.

3.3.113-5

Chosen by whom? The legitimacy vested in the inheritance of the first-born precludes all possibilities of choice. Prince Edward's presence reminds Lewis that an anointed, if deposed, king still exists and has a son living who cannot be legally disinherited. The question of King Edward's legitimacy as sovereign is fundamental if Lewis is to make credible alliances with him. For the early modern audience, the ambiguity might again induce thoughts that, in the absence of a lineal heir and the naming by Elizabeth of her successor, a new sovereign will have to be identified, ideally before the old Queen dies. The question remains the same as that posed by Lewis: who will make the choice: government or Queen? Whatever the outcome, either in the dramatic or historic circumstances, the process must be seen to be legitimate.

Shakespeare provides Lewis with a second crucial question for Warwick:

But is he [Edward] gracious in the people's eye?

3.3.117

As far as Lewis is concerned, the choice of the sovereign must also have popular support, because the change from one sovereign to another, even in peaceful times,

is fraught with uncertainties. Acceptance by the commons obviates opportunity for division, at least in the early stages of a reign. Where the inheritance is straightforward through primogeniture, the motivations of the prospective occupant are yet to be tested, but the claimant's antecedents may provide clues as to what can be expected of their style of kingship. This is clearly not so in the case of Henry VI, who came to the throne as an infant. As he matures, he is perceived to be far removed from the personality, capability and ambition of his father and consequently a disappointment as a king.

Shakespeare will be aware that, in the same context, there are no certainties surrounding the quality of future sovereignty for the Tudors. Up to the end of the sixteenth century, the last foreign King of England was William I, who took the throne by force in 1066. Although some subsequent monarchs may have been born outside the kingdom, or spent most of their reign abroad (Richard I for example) they were all pre-destined to rule as the eldest progeny or nearest blood relatives of the existing king. For the Tudors, the confidence of the commonwealth rested initially in the knowledge of the legitimate continuity of this blood line. The precept was underpinned with the knowledge that a prospective incumbent was English, had been raised to occupy an English throne, was imbued with English political priorities and had a firm understanding of the legal limits of English sovereignty as developed over centuries. Shakespeare makes clear the view, through King Lewis's questioning, that an untried Duke, whose regal legitimacy is held to be dubious by some, must suffer a degree of political insecurity. It is left to Warwick to assure Lewis of Edward's inherent right to the throne and to seal his confirmation with a

pledge: ‘Thereon I pawn my credit and mine honour.’ (3.3.116). Later in the scene, when Edward’s perfidy is made clear, these words will hold Warwick’s credibility as a hostage to fortune.

In this scene, the value which Shakespeare puts on the use of words, particularly to wound, persuade or dissemble is acutely discernible. In frustration Margaret seeks to use them with truth, in order to persuade Lewis that Edward’s words, as articulated by Warwick, are full of shameless deceit. Lewis, confirming his subcutaneous similarities with Warwick, shows a preference for straight-talking and wants the discussion to move away from diplomatic niceties to a practical assurance:

Then further: all dissembling set aside,  
Tell me for truth the measure of his love  
Unto our sister Bona.

3.3.119-21

The dramatist provides Warwick with embellished rhetoric, as the proper and courtly means by which Edward’s sentiments of love for Bona should be expressed; thus confirming Jean Waurin’s assessment of Warwick’s ability to modify his skills of articulation to any situation.<sup>20</sup> Shakespeare neatly rounds off the Earl’s outpouring of proxy romantic aspiration, with an appropriate rhyming couplet:

Myself have often heard him say and swear  
That his love was an eternal plant  
Whereof the root was fixed in virtue’s ground,  
The eaves and fruit maintained with beauty’s sun,  
Exempt from envy, but not from disdain,  
Unless the Lady Bona quite his pain.

3.3.123-8

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<sup>20</sup> See above p. 27.

The irony of this declaration is exposed when the letters are opened after the Post arrives. The implication of love as an ‘eternal’ plant with a ‘fixed’ root indicates the certainty of a romantic perpetuity for the proposed marriage. Warwick may or may not believe what he is saying. The chances are he does, since he was off-stage in the preceding scene, where Shakespeare characterises Edward’s amorous proclivities through Richard’s graphic asides to Clarence (3.4).

Shakespeare moves the dramatic impetus to the formalising of the alliance, once Warwick’s warm words have won the day and Bona agrees to the marriage. The French King gives Warwick due dignity as Edward’s ambassador, proposing that articles for jointures and dowries should be drawn up between them; a dramatic contrast with the similar proxy arrangements Suffolk makes for Margaret’s dowerless wedding to Henry in *Part 1* (5.2). Margaret, who has been a silent witness to the agreements, now steps forward centre-stage. Fruitlessly, she accuses Warwick of undermining her relationship with Lewis. Having come to France to canvas support in arms and money to restore Henry to the throne, she now finds herself finessed by the Earl:

Deceitful Warwick, it was thy device  
By this alliance to make void my suit.  
Before thy coming, Lewis was Henry’s friend.  
3.3.141-3

Lewis is suitably soothing, but has been swayed by Warwick’s assurances. Shakespeare is giving due weight to Warwick’s continental reputation as it appears in the Earl’s historical narrative. The dramatist also illuminates Lewis’s pragmatism in recognising Edward’s material occupancy of the throne, through Margaret’s own reminder that the French King was once Henry’s ally. Lewis promises her physical

support for her immediate personal needs, but not what she has come for: an army to regain her husband's kingdom. In desperation she turns on Warwick, after he suggests she should return to her father for sustenance rather than becoming a drain on the coffers of France:

Peace, impudent and shameless Warwick,  
Proud setter-up and puller-down of kings!  
I will not hence till with my talk and tears,  
Both full of truth...

3.3.156-61

Throughout the scene, the dramatist continues the process of unpicking the threads of honourable and noble behaviour through words not deeds. Lewis equivocates with Margaret over the support she seeks; Edward lies to Bona through Warwick; Margaret misjudges Lewis's concentration level with a speech which is too long and involved to capture the essence of her needs (3.3.21-37); Warwick expediently abandons, for a short time, his customary bluntness, reverting to the safety of courtly language to achieve his stated aim – a treaty of alliance with France.

The final stitches detach when Lewis, Margaret and Warwick open their respective letters. Shakespeare sensationally dramatises Warwick's turn of face with an Aristotelian *anagnorisis*, coincidental with the Earl's *peripeteia* or change of fortune, which, through his own actions, begins to switch from prosperity to ruin. Like the scenes in the Temple garden and Gloucester's death, this is a turning point in the trilogy as it moves towards its conclusion. It is an ideal Aristotelian moment for Warwick, one when the truth is recognised. The timing of the volte-face coincides with the zenith of the Earl's achievements and power and is made all the more starkly effective by the speed and unambiguousness of his decision. Between

the opening of the letters and Warwick's response there are fourteen lines in which the protagonists express their reactions. Warwick's news leaves him '...full of sorrow and heart's discontent.' (3.3.173) the opposite of Margaret's: 'Mine such as fill my heart with unhop'd joys.' (3.3.172). He is forced to react immediately in defence of his honour:

King Lewis, I here protest, in sight of heaven  
And by the hopes I have of heavenly bliss,  
That I am clear from this misdeed of Edward's;

The decisive and theatrically difficult line is next:

No more my King, for he dishonours me –  
3.3.181-4

Dramatically the emphasis in this statement is important in the context of Warwick's meaning. '*No more my king*' is straightforward in the temporal sense of 'no longer'; 'No more *my king*' means he deposes Edward from the position he has created for him. Played with no emphases it becomes a bald, definitive affirmation of immediate separation. Whichever way it is delivered, Warwick is plain as to his reason:

...for he dishonours me –  
But most himself, if he could see his shame.  
3.3.184-5

In an honourable man, shame should result from self-reflection of one's dishonourable actions or thoughts. Edward, like Warwick, is a member of the noble Order of the Garter, whose motto: *honi soit qui mal y pense* translates as: 'The shame be his who thinks evil of it.' Warwick is doubtful whether Edward has the capacity for such introspection. Shakespeare emphasises Warwick's fundamental



belief in honour and honourable behaviour. The literary device of *anadiplosis* in his speech embeds Warwick's anger; his last line has an echo of the ancient Order:

And am I guerdoned at the last with shame?  
Shame on himself, for my desert is honour!  
3.3.191-2

The sixteenth century chronicles included much description of circumstances, with speculation, on the rationale behind Edward and Warwick's gradual disentanglement from each other. It is quite clear from Hall's version how Shakespeare was able to structure Warwick's volte-face so baldly. Hall closely linked Warwick's receipt of letters with his defection from Edward:

But when the Earl of Warwick had perfect knowledge by the letters of his trusty friend, that King Edward had gotten him a new wife, and that all he had done with King Lewis in his embassy for the conjoining of this new affinity, was both frustrate and vain, he was earnestly moved and sore chafed with the chance, and thought it necessary that King Edward should be deposed from his crown and total dignity, as an inconstant prince of such a kingly office.<sup>21</sup>

Hall also incorporates the responses of the French King and Queen to the slighting of Lewis's sister-in-law, the Lady Bona:

The French king and queen were not a little discontent (as I can not blame them) to have their sister first demanded, then granted, and in conclusion rejected and apparently mocked without any cause reasonable.<sup>22</sup>

Using *prosopopeia*, Hall articulates Warwick's grievances and justification for his proposed actions. These are perceived to be based on the dishonour Edward has brought to his own kingly status by his unwise marriage with Lady Grey and, more generally, his lack of gratitude for all that Warwick has done for him. Laying out his complaints to his brothers, Warwick says:

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<sup>21</sup> Hall, 1465, sig. VI.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

What worm is touched, and will not once turn again. What beast is stricken, that will not roar or sound. What innocent child is hurt that will not cry. If the poor and unreasonable beasts: if the silly babes that lack discretion, groan against harm to them proffered, how ought an honest man to be angry when things that touch his honesty be daily against him attempted. But if a mean person in that case be angered, how much more ought a noble man to fume and stir coals, when the high tip of his honour is touched, his fame in manner brought to infamy and his honour almost blemished and appalled, without his offence or desert. All this brethren you know to be to be true, the dishonour of one is the dishonour of us all, and the hurt of one is the hurt of all: wherefore rather than I will live unrevenged, or suffer him to reign which has sought my decay and dishonour, I will surely spend my life, land and goods in setting up that wise and good king Henry the sixth: and in deposing this untrue, unfaithful and unkind prince (by our only means) called King Edward the fourth.<sup>23</sup>

The dramatist catalogues Warwick's complaints with familial issues foremost:

Did I forget that by the house of York  
My father came to his untimely death?  
3.3.186-87

Shakespeare revisits the topos of the loss of noble fathers in the contention between the Houses of York and Lancaster. Here Warwick uses the same motive for revenge as the two northern lords expressed after the first battle of St. Albans (1.1.93-4; 1.1.160-2). The Earl, with selective memory, appears to forget that he was implicated in the deaths of other sons' fathers: Clifford and Northumberland have both suffered such bereavements in earlier battles.

Shakespeare moves on, alluding to a supposed attempt at a violation of Warwick's niece:

Did I let pass th'abuse done to my niece?  
3.3.88

The allegation is dropped in almost as an afterthought; there has been no previous reference to such an occurrence in any of the plays. Dramatically, the mention of the incident serves to substantiate Edward's licentious reputation and his singular

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<sup>23</sup> Hall, 1468, sig. X.

lack of appropriate kingly behaviour.<sup>24</sup> Shakespeare exhumes briefly the isolated report buried in the sixteenth century chronicles, which refers to a close female relative of Warwick as the victim of Edward's unwelcome attentions.<sup>25</sup> The original source for this story is unknown and there are no known references to it in existing fifteenth century documents. It was first aired by Polydore Vergil (1534):

..tentasse nescio quid in domo comitis, quo dab honestate omnino abesset.<sup>26</sup>

Hall was less circumspect in his account, but with a parenthetically-expressed doubt as to the identity of the victim:

And further it erred not from the truth that King Edward did attempt a thing in the Earl's [Warwick's] house which was much against the Earl's honesty (whether he would have deflowered his daughter or his niece, the certainties were not for both their honours openly known) for surely such a thing was attempted by King Edward which loved well both to look and to feel fair damsels.<sup>27</sup>

The incident is exacerbated by having been executed on Warwick's own private and domestic territory – his house in Grey Friars London. Therefore, this also becomes an act of violation of his personal space. The probability is that Shakespeare is correct and it was one of his numerous nieces who was assaulted by Edward, while the King was taking advantage of his cousin's open-house hospitality. Warwick

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<sup>24</sup> Dominic Mancini substantiated the view, writing in 1482 when he first visited England. His account is quoted in *The Usurpation of Richard III*, trans. by C.A.J. Armstrong, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Oxford, 1969), p. 67.

<sup>25</sup> The ages of the protagonists provide some clues as to who the damsel is *not*. Edward (b.1442) was nine years older than Isobel Neville (b.1451), and fourteen years senior to her sister Anne (b.1456). Anne was betrothed to Edward Prince of Wales in 1470 when she was 14; Isobel married George Duke of Clarence in 1469 when she was 18; Edward married Elizabeth Grey in 1464 when he was 22. It would seem improbable that Edward would make any attempt to assault his brother's wife, so the attack was likely to have occurred before 1469. Since Warwick appears to have forgiven what was an egregious insult to his family honour, it may have taken place in the 'honeymoon period' after Towton (1461) and before Edward married Lady Grey (1464). At this time, of his two daughters only Isabel was of an age at which an assault might have occurred, since her younger sister Anne was only eight in 1464. But overall it seems most unlikely that Warwick would have overlooked such an insult to his daughters at any time.

<sup>26</sup> Vergil, p. 514.

<sup>27</sup> Hall, 1465, sig. VI<sup>v</sup>.

refers to this aspect of Edward's character again, when he reveals through his correspondence the possibility of Clarence also changing sides:

And as for Clarence, as my letters tell me,  
He's very likely now to fall from him  
For matching more for wanton lust than honour,  
Or than for strength and safety of our country.  
3.3.208-11

Clarence will distance himself from his brother for the same reasons that Warwick will give: the King has failed to maintain standards expected of sovereigns. He has been reckless in abandoning the possibility of a treaty of alliance with a neighbour with whom the nation has for over a century been at war. His self-interested, lascivious behaviour poses a threat to the kingdom.<sup>28</sup>

Shakespeare moves Warwick away from moral and directly personal concerns to those of personal obligation. The Earl asks two pertinent rhetorical questions:

Did I impale him with the regal crown?  
Did I put Henry from his native right?  
3.3.189-90

These dual actions are the core of his contribution as maker and breaker of kings; to fulfil his role in setting Edward up, Warwick must in the process pull Henry down. In the telling phrase 'from his native right', Warwick now acknowledges Lancaster's legitimate claim to the throne and his own part in an act of illegality: Edward's usurpation. Swiftly he seeks to expiate this transgression with a remarkable gesture:

And, to repair my honour lost for him,  
I here renounce him and return to Henry.  
3.3.193-4

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<sup>28</sup> For Warwick's own approach to licentiousness, see his set of ordinances for Calais in 1466, in Hicks, p. 249.

Through Warwick's immediate actions, Shakespeare illuminates how the Earl's paramount concern is the restoration of his own honour. Warwick refers possessively to his honour three times in this scene: (116;192-3); an insistence highlighting his priority. No other character cites misuse of their reputations, although Margaret talks of the threat of 'dishonour' for the French King, in her angry response to Warwick's embassy to Lewis for Bona's marriage to Edward (3.3.75). Warwick's instant reaction to Edward's underhand behaviour is that he has been personally slighted as the King's representative and made to seem perfidious in the eyes of Lewis. The instant abandonment of Edward for Henry becomes a dishonourable act in real terms, but for Warwick it is paramount in redressing this specific insult. It is sufficient to make him turn about and proffer his service to a bitter adversary:

My noble Queen, let former grudges pass  
And henceforth I am thy true servitor.  
I will revenge his wrong to Lady Bona  
And replant Henry in his former state.

3.3.195-8

The irony of the last line is that Warwick has previously pledged to 'plant Plantagenet' in the first scene of the play (1.1.48). Dramatically at this point, there must be a hiatus, as Shakespeare requires Warwick literally to turn to Margaret from addressing Lewis. It is sometimes overlooked that Warwick is not the only inconstant character in this scene: Margaret also can raise a laugh with her lines of forgiveness:<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> David Daniell, 'Opening up the text: Shakespeare's *Henry VI* plays in performance', in *Themes in Drama I*, ed. by James Redmond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 270.

Warwick, these words have turned my hate to love,  
 And I forgive and quite forget old faults,  
 And joy that thou becom'st King Henry's friend.  
 3.3.199-201

This engenders a second moment of bemusement by the audience, who need to suspend their disbelief still further as they appreciate Margaret's response. I consider Margaret's dramatic volte-face is almost as incredible as that of Warwick's, and one which generally goes unremarked upon. I can find only a single comment on Margaret's action in the editorial notes of any modern texts. In *The Oxford Shakespeare, Henry VI Part Three*, the editor describes Margaret's reaction as: 'Another ironic and potentially comic moment' and goes on to cite performances in two productions: the 1983 BBC version with Julie Foster, who stood 'open-mouthed, needing a moment to quell her astonishment...', and Peggy Ashcroft in 1963-4 who 'paused for several seconds, frowning over Brewster Mason's (clearly reluctant) offer.'<sup>30</sup>

As a character, Shakespeare has developed Margaret's role from the young Queen, with romantic expectations, to a female warrior, ruthlessly committed to the protection of her son. At Wakefield, where she plunges to a nadir of brutality, her reputation is anatomised by York, for whom she is the 'She-wolf of France', like 'an Amazonian trull' and has a 'tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide'. Most tellingly, he considers she is 'stern, obdurate, flinty, rough, remorseless', in contrast with the feminine qualities of softness, mildness, pity and flexibility expected of a woman (1.4.111-42). In the context of her forgiveness of Warwick, it is exactly

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<sup>30</sup> *The Oxford Shakespeare, Henry VI Part Three*, ed. by Randall Martin (Oxford, 2001), n194, p. 255.

these four qualities which Margaret is displaying now. However, given her character as Shakespeare develops it, particularly in *Richard III*, her tolerant gesture hides a gross expediency coupled with cynicism.<sup>31</sup> This is more evident in the Octavo, where not only is she is markedly less fulsome, but also seeks conditions:

Yes Warwick, I do quite forget thy former  
Faults, if now thou wilt become king Henry's friend.  
TLN 1942-3

Shakespeare reminds the audience that Margaret has castigated Warwick previously for his 'contumelious' and 'arrogant' behaviour in *2 Henry VI* (3.2.204-5). In this version, there is brushing aside rather than forgiveness. Her position significantly strengthened, she attempts a bargain: the past will be overlooked, but only in return for material help in the future.

In both versions Shakespeare wastes no more time on courtesies; instead, he provides Warwick with a response characteristically energetic and martial. The Earl has clearly formulated a strategy in his mind while Margaret is in the act of forgiving him, and moves straight to the point:

...if King Lewis vouchsafe to furnish us  
With some few bands of chosen soldiers,  
I'll undertake to land them on our coast  
And force the tyrant from his seat by war.  
3.3.203-6

Within the space of seconds Warwick considers Edward to have forfeited his regal status and now become an illegal tyrant. But Warwick shows lukewarm commitment to Henry and the Earl's stratagems are rooted mostly in retribution for Edward's shaming him. Although Warwick claims he is returning to Henry, he

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<sup>31</sup> Margaret and Warwick took several months to create their alliance. For an expanded narrative see John Stowe's account as quoted in Lander, *The Wars of the Roses*, p. 126.

emphasises his intention of revenging the wrong done to Lady Bona by joining his quarrel with Edward to her need for redress.

Shakespeare moves the action along rapidly. Revolutionary decisions are made in seconds without prevarication; a new alliance is forged; stratagems are put forward and instantly accepted. By the conclusion of the scene, Lewis has agreed to provide all necessary means for Warwick's enterprise, including five thousand men and aid for Margaret. Warwick has promised his younger daughter in marriage to Prince Edward and anticipates Clarence's defection from Edward to their cause. The Post is sent with various scathing messages to the English King. The bustle ceases and Warwick is finally alone on stage, following a résumé of his expectations and final betrayal, he admits he is driven by the raw motivation of revenge:

I came from Edward as ambassador,  
But I return his sworn and mortal foe:  
Matter of marriage was the charge he gave me,  
But dreadful war shall answer his demand.  
Had he none else to make a stale but me?  
Then none but I shall turn his jest to sorrow.  
I was the chief that raised him to the crown,  
And I'll be the chief to bring him down again;  
Not that I pity Henry's misery,  
But seek revenge on Edward's mockery.

3.3.256-65

Underlying all this activity, Shakespeare now reveals the sense of expediency with which this scene is suffused. In one of his only three solo speeches in the trilogy, the dramatist allows Warwick a rare opportunity to express his innermost thoughts. He is unambiguously vengeful and, in a few lines, articulates the culmination of several historical years of frustration. If Edward's distaste for obligation leads him to distance himself from Warwick, then the Earl's perception of Edward's



demeaning him is as acute. In concert with Lewis, Warwick is pragmatic; it is clear from his final words that Henry's cause means little to him. It is simply a political means to a personal end.

Shakespeare shows within Warwick's dramatic narrative how the Earl's change of allegiance is firmly established and unlike Clarence, he will not revert. Edward's style of kingship has disappointed him; Warwick will support the King as long as he behaves like one. His idealised notion of the process of sovereignty, or the means whereby good governance is achieved, is one where a king, although the final arbiter listens to chosen advisers, recognises their worth and expresses gratitude through appropriate reward. In this regard, Henry's style is a closer match to Warwick's model than Edward's. Shakespeare reminds us vigorously how concerned Henry is for the overall common good, by his stated appreciation of the desolation which war brings. At every opportunity he is anxious to avoid conflict, whether between nation states or individuals. He is not oppressive, nor greedy in his demands. His failure is rooted in his choice of advisers and friends; once Gloucester has gone there is no-one left around him who is not self-seeking or belligerent. He is insufficiently robust in his personality to unite, or at least manage his coterie of ambitious noblemen, each of whom pursues their own priorities. Shakespeare shows, in the clearest and simplest manner, that Henry is not unaware of his failings and recognises that he must acquire more skills than he has. In *2 Henry VI* he says:

Come, wife, let's in, and learn to govern better;  
4.9.47

But, in spite of his ability to recognise his shortcomings, a quality he alone exhibits in the tetralogy, Henry lacks the necessary qualities of ambition to improve. Good

governance, as Warwick and the rest of the nobility understand it, must start from a position of strength. The commons must perceive the sovereign is confident, both in himself, his policy and his ability to achieve it. Edward has these abilities, but ironically he destroys Warwick's expectations of him, because he has the self-confidence to take major decisions in which the Earl has no hand. The Yorkist whelp shakes off the Neville chain to go his own way by acting independently of the bearherd.

The historical narrative incorporating Warwick's *bouleversement*, although severely truncated, has been faithfully reified into credible drama by Shakespeare from the chronicle sources. The breathtaking speed of the Earl's switch of allegiance enhances the perception of his acute disenchantment with Edward, focussing on his feelings of shame and dishonour: two paramount justifications for his rebellion. How the characteristics of kingmaking and wind-changing, as they are dramatised by Shakespeare in the trilogy, have been translated in performance will be the subject of the final chapter.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **STAGING WARWICK**

This final chapter attempts to bring out the connection between historical traditions, dramatic structure and the key scenes evidenced in the rest of my thesis. I will reveal the extent to which actors recreating the role of Warwick are, in effect, reworking similar territory to Shakespeare in trying to make sense of narrative and character in revivifying an historical character. Warwick's by-name brings with it an unequivocal identity and purpose; his reputation as far as the audience is concerned hinges primarily on this aspect of his historical persona. The job of the actor is to make a clear through line for their role and, in the case of an historical character like Warwick, tackling the problem of turning facts into art by exploring the distinction between character, role and persona. How does the actor approach this?

For illumination I will examine the responses from interviews I have conducted with three actors who have played the role at some time during the last ten years. Through these interviews, I hope to show how each actor views both the historical and dramatic context by which Warwick is presented, and how they set about the achievement of a psychological realism in performance of a real historical character. The actors have backgrounds and experience which are very different and their approaches to the role were equally diverse.

Don Carrier is a Canadian who played Warwick in 2002, under the direction of Leon Rubin at the Stratford Festival of Canada. Phil Corbitt is from Manchester and

was a member of the ensemble company Northern Broadsides, based at the West Yorkshire Playhouse. He appeared as Warwick in their touring production of *The Wars of the Roses* in 2007, which was adapted and directed by Barry Rutter. Patrice Naiambana, originally from Sierra Leon, played Warwick in Michael Boyd's RSC production of *The Histories* in 2006-8. Shakespeare's eight history plays were performed over a period of two and a half years, as part of the Company's 'Complete Works' project, in the order generally agreed that they were written. The productions culminated in the 'Glorious Moments' weekend, when all the chronicle plays were performed in regnal order.

Don Carrier has a background in classical theatre. By the time he came to play Warwick he had several major Shakespearean roles in his portfolio, including Hamlet. In 2002, as part of its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary season, the Stratford Festival of Canada performed a production of the three parts of *Henry VI* which was conflated to two: *Henry VI: Revenge in France* and *Henry VI: Revolt in England*. Carrier was offered the role of Warwick because:

I had been a Company Member at The Stratford Festival of Canada since 1999. Every year, one is made (or not) an offer to return. The year 2002 was Stratford's 50th anniversary season and I was offered the role of Warwick.<sup>1</sup>

Patrice Naiambana had no formal training in English theatre. His acting background is African theatre but, since arriving in the United Kingdom, he has developed and extended his repertoire with a variety of theatrical appearances. He wrote his own material for a one-man show and began sketching out a situation comedy about an

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<sup>1</sup> All quotes attributed to Don Carrier are from discussions via email in April, 2007.

ex-military African leader who was living in St. John's Wood. He had some previous experience of Shakespeare, playing in *Pericles* at the Globe and *Coriolanus* with the West Yorkshire Playhouse. Michael Boyd spotted him in the role of the military Don Andrea in *The Spanish Tragedy* and then in *Much Ado about Nothing* in 1998. I was fortunate to be able to interview him at length both before and after he had established himself in the role of Warwick.

The *Henry VI* trilogy had originally been produced by Michael Boyd in 2000-1 and the actors were invited to reprise their parts for *The Histories* in 2006-8. Geoffrey Francis, who had played Warwick in the earlier production, was unavailable and Naiambana replaced him for two and a half years of permanent, contracted work as a full member of the RSC's *Histories* repertory company. In the second tetralogy he maintained his role as Warwick in *Henry V* and as Warwick's ghost in *Richard III*.

He explained the background prior to his joining the Company:

My background is African theatre, physical theatre and building cultural bridges. Michael Boyd was thinking of an ensemble in 2000, but I was not offered a part so I went off to do *The Man Who Committed Thought*, my one man show about post-colonial power, people and how they wield power. Later I had a meeting with Michael about post-colonial framing and absence of that from mainstream theatre. Then I was offered Warwick over two years as part of the ensemble and appreciated that a good stint at the RSC, being surrounded and immersed with people who were formally trained, would bring me up to technical speed. I wasn't auditioned, I assume because of my previous roles. I trusted Michael Boyd's instinct because he inspires loyalty and I trust his judgement.<sup>2</sup>

The most practical and professional of these challenges was the text and speaking it properly:

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<sup>2</sup> Patrice Naiambana: First interview with Helen Maskew on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2006 at the Falcon Hotel, Stratford on Avon.

This was my first real engagement with Shakespearean verse. Because I was looking for Warwick through the text I needed to be good, fluent and fleet at it. In rehearsal we foreground the text – taking the clues that Shakespeare gives you. I gave myself over to the verse – excluding my normal anti-imperialist agenda and moving into received speech. I took out the African accent, which was limiting because I have not worked like that in real life. I felt that everyone else was brilliant at it because they had previous experience and were trained. Alison Bommer was very helpful as speech coach.

He felt he needed:

...educating into the understanding and playing of Shakespeare. I spent an inordinate amount of time trying to be technically proficient and was quite insecure about doing it. How the lines are spoken have vital effect on meaning – too angry – too much emphasis can undermine the meaning. I went to the senior member of the company, Richard Cordery with 38 years experience, for advice and he was very generous and helpful.

Phil Corbitt had previously appeared in four Shakespeare plays, but none from the histories. In interview after the performances he explained when and how he came to be selected for the part:

I was auditioned at the time when it was clear the director had a definite view of what he wanted; the plays had already been cut to suit his directorial requirements. I think I was chosen because I was a big bloke! It was made very clear how the project was to be carried out. As the four original plays were condensed into three and were to be performed over a single day, they had to be fast-moving and engaging.<sup>3</sup>

None were familiar with Richard Neville's historical narrative before being auditioned or selected for the part, although they had heard of the Wars of the Roses and the legendary 'kingmaker'. The actors understood the soubriquet to be a byword for facilitating a path to ultimate power. It would be the aspect of Warwick's persona which would most readily identify the character to the audience.

As Phil Corbitt put it:

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<sup>3</sup> All quotes attributed to Phil Corbitt, Northern Broadsides Theatre Company, are from a taped interview held at the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2006.

There would be few in the audience who hadn't heard the description previously, even if they were unaware of where it comes from, and what Warwick's story was. It is a very useful peg on which to hang a character since it gives him an immediate identity, although Shakespeare never actually uses it.

He acknowledged that there are clear markers in the plays by which such a description will come into the mind, like 'Proud setter-up and puller-down of kings!' (*Part 3*, 3.3.157).

All three actors expressed as their main aims the desire to make a coherent and distinctive character from the texts they were given. Only one actor researched Warwick's historical narrative through biographical sources. All expressed varying approaches to background research, which were driven by different directorial imperatives. Don Carrier, with time-constraints of production, was inclined to trust the text rather than explore Warwick's historical narrative too deeply, which he felt would deflect from his central purpose of identifying key traits which he could bring to his characterisation:

I feel, unlike many people, that the play is your map. Once an actor opens the door to actual historical research, his questions are not answered, but multiplied. Shakespeare does not write with real time lines but, like all great dramatists, uses what serves the play, not history. He does not purport to be accurate. It is drama not history. I have seen more time wasted in rehearsals with actors arguing with directors about historical facts or researched characteristics that are not germane to the play. For example, Richard of Gloucester in this play and in *Richard III* has no real resemblance to the historic Richard; he is a theatrical construct. Ultimately we are telling a story.

His emphasis on the role of Warwick and the dramatic element of his narrative was in line with his British director Leon Rubin's straightforward approach to his two-part distillation, renamed *Henry VI* and, according to the director designed: '...to

preserve Shakespeare's core concept and his language...and to clarify the action for modern audiences'.<sup>4</sup>

Neither did Phil Corbitt have the luxury of extended time for prior research into the full text, previous performances or Warwick's historical persona. Fortunately he did not feel it necessary:

I feel it is pointless to read the original when you are doing an adaptation. I don't go back to the play to see what has been cut out. I don't go in for background research because I am not a 'method actor'. There is lack of time for endless perambulations around the psychology of the character. I get the script, understand what's going on and assess what kind of a man he is. Fortunately my director agreed and encouraged characterisation 'off the page'.

By simply focussing on the main elements of Warwick's character as he perceived them, and which he discovered in the script presented to him, he felt he could adopt a straightforward and pragmatic approach to a part which he had to learn quickly. He assimilated some basic facts and views about the narrative of the character as the plays were in rehearsal:

I realised pretty quickly that Warwick becomes very rich and the most powerful of the nobility as the story progresses. I was in the hands of the director as to how I portrayed this, and given the constraints of the production I decided to concentrate on Warwick's physical presence to represent his power. It seems to me that Humphrey Duke of Gloucester is the noblest character and the least self-interested. Warwick is honourable too, but with an element of selfishness.

Helped by his size he concentrated on Warwick's physicality, alongside a representation of the simple moral pathway through Warwick's narrative; both would be in tune with the director's less cerebral approach to the plays.

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<sup>4</sup> Leon Rubin quoted by Lawrence B. Johnson in *Editing Henry VI for Performance: The Detroit News* (02.05.2002). <http://www.shaksper.net/archives/2002/1423.html> accessed 23.04.08.



Patrice Naiambana alone was gifted with the luxury of time before and during rehearsal. He also had the advantage of two and a half years of performances playing this single character, and was able to investigate more closely aspects of Warwick's history which he felt would add to his performance. He came to the part with preconceived ideas concerning English medieval nobility in general and Warwick in particular, echoing Phil Corbitt's perception that Warwick was 'a big bloke', but not just physically: this Earl had a 'big' presence. In the course of finding clues to Warwick's persona, Naiambana made some modern analogies:

Even without books I would have understood through my own African background how Warwick operated and the hierarchy he belonged to. I see Warwick as a cross between Bill Gates and a powerful tele-evangelist. Like them, he could command a huge following. Warwick would have enjoyed the media circus of today, but sometimes big guys are not easily seen, especially among similarly large characters like Gloucester, Somerset and Clifford.

He went to Warwick Castle to soak up the medieval atmosphere and climbed Guy's Tower to gain appreciation of power and a sense of Warwick's physicality. All three actors were aware of Shakespeare's marking of Warwick as physically powerful. The Earl talks of his 'strong-knit sinews' (*Part 3*, 2.3.4) when he is exhausted at Towton, also 'this strong right hand of mine' (2.1.151) in the same play, when he promises Richard that he will pluck the crown from Henry's head. In the French court scene Lewis is immediately struck by Warwick's style and deportment, which marks him out as a significant figure. (3.3.44).

Having established Warwick's unlimited energy as a key element of his reputation, Naiambana pursued his modern analogy and applied his political instincts to the project as a whole: 'I realised the connection between post-colonial Shakespeare and the histories.' He used Michael Hicks's biography of Warwick to gather a sense

of the Earl's reputation and his place in the politics of fifteenth century nobility, in order to enhance his own impact on stage:

I did enough research to have an understanding of the general politics of the period, but for Warwick, finding the status of the man was the key to finding the man himself. I found out that Warwick was a very rich man, as well as a naval captain, an admiral and a general.

While researching he was very specific in his requirements and aware of the expectation by his director that he would bring contributions to rehearsals as a result of research and prior reading of the plays:

What I needed to know was how someone so powerful would impact on others and their destinies and decisions. In other words, how did he use his power to inspire tribal loyalty? Every one is different in how they accomplish understanding and information. Like all great directors Michael Boyd takes it as a given that all artists would research their character in order to contribute at rehearsals. He sent me off to read the part which I read through once. I had no notes from previous performances and used Arden and Penguin, and watched all the televised versions from 1980 using the BBC booklet. The research was a daunting task as I needed to research all eight plays to contextualise the character. All I knew was the 'kingmaker'. I had heard of the Wars of the Roses but had not come across Warwick.

Naiambana was therefore previously aware of the soubriquet, but not to whom it was attached. For him it was initially a stand-alone phrase describing extreme power and manipulation. He combined the descriptor with the persona of Warwick as he became acquainted with the Earl's historical narrative. This opened up the character and clarified the role.

Such extensive and forensic research was not available to either Phil Corbitt or Don Carrier. The imperatives for both their directors were to provide coherent narratives and characters within a limited time-frame of production. The touring production of *The Wars of the Roses* was an adaptation by Northern Broadsides director Barry Rutter of the first tetralogy, which was severely cut to produce three three-hour plays. The production I saw (13<sup>th</sup> May 2006) was on the small stage of the Yvonne

Arnaud Theatre, Guildford. Much use was made of music and all the actors played instruments; Corbitt was a saxophonist. Percussion was used, literally, to drum up the battle scenes, which were stylised and non-contact. The Stratford Ontario production also cut and reshaped Shakespeare's text. Leon Rubin's justification was that:

The original plays include a number of what I call red-herring plots which go nowhere. Multiple battles at different places have been combined into a single battle and there are a few death speeches that can be quite happily lost.<sup>5</sup>

Carrier lost some material which he felt would have helped give the character more scope. Although he 'generally saw eye to eye with our director', some of the cuts became an issue for the actor:

Since the play was presented in two parts cuts were extensive and like many others, I lost some material which I felt would have helped give the character more scope. But when one is a professional in classical theatre, cuts are a given and one must learn to do without.

But, through the overall collaborative approach adopted by the director to the production, Carrier was able to negotiate the reinsertion of some material in the scene after Wakefield (*Part 3, 2.3*). His reasoning was that this would make Edward's later perverse behaviour more understandable, as an act of defiance against a controlling hand:

I remember in the scene with three of the sons of York was very cut and I explained why I needed some of the material back in order to assert his [Warwick's] authority over the three York boys. Leon understood and gave some back. My view was that, in our version at least, although Warwick was subordinate to York and Henry in the beginning, as he plays the kingmaker role later, so it puts him above Richard and Edward. They need him.

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<sup>5</sup> Leon Rubin quoted by Lawrence B. Johnson (02.05.2002).

Carrier identified the developmental nature of the part as it is rolled out through the tetralogy, and how Shakespeare introduces the concepts of kingmaking at key points in the text.

Naiambana considered Shakespeare's use of references to kingmaking in key scenes, which he understood as central to the role and consequently influenced his approach. Where Carrier had had to deal with heavy directorial cutting, Naiambana had more of a problem with what the dramatist himself cut out of the historical sources:

He has to have a few scenes where this king was made and unmade and that was the aspect of the history he had to tell. I was thinking 'kingmaker' and how I would identify this aspect of Warwick. The French court scene was key for this problem. It is almost like Shakespeare has had too many other strands to deal with and to make difficult editorial choices because he is dealing with a huge swathe of events.

Reading Hicks's biography, he realised that Shakespeare not only omitted Warwick's key maritime narrative, but also cut out other significant areas:

There were casualties in his [Warwick's] character portrayal. For example, he was a benefactor, a great presence in the Lords, and a great traveller. At Calais was able to compete with the richest of the French and Burgundian nobility. He was a great family person and I would have liked more family references, other than one brother. This was weird since he had so many.

He discovered from both his research into the history of the period and Shakespeare's text that, in *1 Henry VI*, Shakespeare has reshaped the historical narrative and combined two historically different Warwicks – Beauchamp and Neville. This is the point where the Beauchamp Warwick of *Henry V* conflates with the Neville Warwick, until *Part 2*. Naiambana argued that Shakespeare was pragmatic in his conflation, which allowed the actor to be equally pragmatic in his approach to a dual character:

Although in Shakespeare's conception Warwick lives for a very long time and provides some interesting continuity for the two historical figures, I see Warwick as the same throughout the trilogy. The dramatist uses his artistic genius to take a story from history which reflects both history and heritage. Shakespeare is also like a journalist, but doing what he always does – showing, exploring and uncovering the mystery of the human condition. This was the view that fuelled my performance. I played him as consistent throughout.

Following his initial research he found he was:

...a bit annoyed with Shakespeare because in *Part 1* Warwick does not come across on the stage as a dominant character. He has a presence, but no impact, apart from the scene in the rose garden. It is not until the death of Gloucester scene in *Part 2* that he begins to make that impact.

His explanation was that, in his reshaping of the chronicle sources, Shakespeare simply had to make priority choices, which is why Suffolk dominates in *Parts 1* and much of *Part 2*:

Shakespeare allows the audience to make a judgement about Suffolk, whereas [the audience] come out of that play without much of a judgement about Warwick. But when it matters Warwick is ultimately identifiable, particularly when he changes sides.

In circumstances where Warwick's lines were cut by his director's priority choices, Naiambana was pragmatic about it. This was particularly true of his lines spoken at the bed-side of Gloucester (*Part 2*, 3.2) which were severely reduced:

There was a dramaturgically necessary edit of this scene. Four descriptors of Gloucester's face and contortions were left in, but much of Warwick's speech was cut. It was left to the audience to see for themselves the livid colour of Gloucester's face. But Warwick was still centre stage.

All three actors had views as to how Warwick's historical persona impacts on the dramatic narrative. Their research threw up some of those memorable characteristics which the actors incorporated in their performances. In pre-rehearsal discussion, Don Carrier's view of Warwick as a character coincided with that of his director:

Leon Rubin is a very collaborative man whom I have subsequently worked with four times. Fortunately he saw Warwick as I did - in a role as kingmaker. He wanted a strong, unaffected portrayal, which I agreed with.

Carrier identified some of the key qualities ascribed to Warwick in contemporary and early modern chronicles, particularly the different concepts of his power. The actor was in agreement with Phil Corbitt in observing that these are ascribed to Warwick more readily than any other character in the trilogy, and that he shares them with Humphrey Duke of Gloucester:

Gloucester's is the power of reputation, single mindedness and persuasion, which Warwick also has. Henry is devoid of it; Margaret is frustrated that her brand of highly-charged feminine power is dismissed in an overtly patriarchal society. York's ambition subsumes his power, since it forces him into error. He listens to his sons rather than his own experience and breaks his oath to Henry, suffering the consequences at Wakefield.

His director agreed that those characteristics were centred in one of the key moments in the plays:

His radical about face shift to support Margaret and Henry is famous and encapsulates this man of pragmatism and pride. Warwick is a survivor, a tough realist who is willing to change course when the reality stares him in the eye. Yes, toughness and pride are integral attributes.

It was Warwick's visceral and chivalric qualities which made him memorable for Corbitt, and also his pride, which he saw as the Earl's nemesis:

Warwick's downfall is his pride and the fact that he can't get over how Edward screwed him. He had a chivalry and that is what is so odd about his instant change from white to red.

In consideration of Warwick's characteristics of openness, Naiambana predicated this attribute on an established and bulwarked power-base. Like Carrier, he also recognised Shakespeare's comparison of Gloucester with Warwick. Warwick's national status became clear to the actor in *2 Henry VI* (1.1.188-90) when Salisbury

is talking to his son after the loss of Anjou and Maine and makes the statement about Warwick's largesse:

With the line 'excepting none but good Duke Humphrey', I realised how mighty Warwick was historically and that Warwick's retinue was his power-base. The fact that he could call up men to his cause at any time is noted by Shakespeare in *3 Henry VI*: In Warwickshire I have true hearted friends,/Not mutinous in peace, yet bold in war./These will I muster up...(4.8.09-11).

Naiambana recognised how Warwick painstakingly builds up a body of loyalty, nourished by his open-handedness, a strategy fundamental to the medieval system of bastard feudalism:

I see this largesse as very African, replicating the open-house policy maintained by African chiefs. They spray money on the streets. This is how political power is achieved, grows and is maintained by the modern African leader.

From his research Naiambana confirmed his instincts for a correlation between the African tribal system and the medieval hierarchical structure in which Warwick operated and which Shakespeare explicates in his historical plays.<sup>6</sup> It was an irresistible comparison to equate tribalism with bastard feudalism:

Coming from the mineral-rich Sierra Leone, this fed my African instincts. These medieval nobles were like African multi-millionaires today. They may be rascals, but they understand the need to support their people's welfare and it is a serious issue for them. African peasants understand wealth, in spite of their own poverty and the huge gaps between them and their rulers.

This acceptance of economic differentials is not based on an aspirational model of social mobility, rather on expectations that those controlling the wealth have an obligation to maintain their people who have no such power. In return, the chiefs' status is supported and their interests safe-guarded. This replicates bastard feudalism, where the symbiosis of regionally-based inter-dependence between nobles and their affinities was the social adhesive holding the late-medieval state

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<sup>6</sup> See pp. 50.

together. Naiambana took the view that Shakespeare uses Warwick as a mouthpiece for the understanding of such mutualism, particularly the dependence by the commons on good governance, which allows them to thrive. Because of his previous high-status roles as dictators and African presidents, Naiambana had an instinct about how Warwick should be played:

I majored in African presidents! My instinct was drawn from my imagination to create the character, basing him on African chiefs and the politics of the feudal system of Africa which I see as directly resonating with medieval times.

As Naiambana looked to his African roots for points in common with the medieval period, Carrier also picked out analogous features of symbiosis in a balance of power, but highlighting the family as the source:

These relationships lent themselves to playing out on stage. There are so many references, and scenes concerning fathers and sons. Shakespeare emphasises this motif through repetition. I wanted the audience to understand the importance of family in this context. I saw in Warwick and the rest of the nobility similarities with popular television characters which make them memorable:

He recognised how Shakespeare uses the elements of family loyalty alongside the revenge motif, similar to characters in popular television:

From my perspective all the characters had a gang mentality, something like *The Sopranos* in the television series. This is the motif which we recognise. Watching the narrative of such shows and how it is structured enabled me to understand the father and son relationship, and its importance in how the balance of power is maintained through that relationship. There was the same family-based ruthlessness in the middle ages as portrayed in the TV drama. Warwick and Salisbury have subtle elements of self-interest but also believe in the realm and are loyal to the crown.

In terms of the actors' understandings of how Shakespeare unravels fundamental concerns of politics and kingship through the text in general and Warwick's dramatic narrative in particular, there were variations which reflected the levels of research prior to performance. Following his eschewing of other sources which



might have been available to him, Phil Corbitt came to his own conclusions about Warwick political ambitions through the adapted text with which he was presented:

The plays were cut to tell a story about the times Warwick lived. We did not have time to reflect heavily on all the political implications of the action. I can only imagine that father and son have a genuine belief in good governance and protection of the commonwealth.

But he came back to his original assessment, that it was not politics but Warwick's pride which stood in the way of his ultimate success:

Ultimately, Warwick's downfall is his pride and the fact that he cannot stomach how Edward humiliates him.

Although under similar directorial and production constraints, Don Carrier was more reflective. He considered that Shakespeare has subsumed in the action the bare politics of kingship as expressed at the time:

My reading of the text concluded that the intrinsic moral and political themes are exposed at varying levels, depending on the direction the plays are taken, and the interpretation given by the actor under such direction. Shakespeare roots Warwick's own dramatic narrative in the power structure of monarchy and nobility. These plays are about kingship and the retention of power, which becomes more explicit as Warwick's role develops. In the scenes concerning the Earl's change of allegiance for example, fundamental issues of the qualities required for leadership are raised as the Earl challenges Edward's own suitability for the role.

He saw these scenes as crucial to the audience's understanding of why Warwick took such a monumental step, and also felt it is the point in the play when Warwick becomes fully memorable – the volte-face is a signifier which becomes imprinted on the individual and collective memory.

Naiambana came to these questions of kingship and politics from both an African and a Christian perspective. He is interested in issues of human condition, power and history and, as a devout Christian, interprets them through such a context. Earlier in 1999 he had played Aslan in the RSC production of C.S. Lewis's *The*

*Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, and in review Richard Forest commented: 'Patrice Naiambana gives Aslan an African tribal slant and adds leonine passion to the redemptive ending.'<sup>7</sup> As rehearsals and performances developed, he discovered that Warwick's role clarified as it became more characteristically specific and the narrative more clearly defined. He elided Warwick's character, historical persona and role, playing him consistently throughout as a composite character of power and political influence, and with a strong element of Christian morality. The actor views the medieval code as an inextricable relationship between honour and faith, which he views as tenets of Christianity:

I see these as recurring themes in the roles I have been offered. Creative topography is marked by landmark thinkers and creative artists like Shakespeare and C.S. Lewis. I performed in *The Man Who Committed Thought*, a one-man show about post-colonial power and how power is wielded, which I felt was very relevant to the role of kingmaker. I see the plays as implicitly Christian in their allusions and references, and the explicit importance of the clear Christian value of keeping oaths and promises.

Analysis of the text shows that Shakespeare gives Warwick four moments of religiosity in all. His first is his holy oath to confirm his belief that Gloucester has been murdered (2 *Henry VI* 3.2.153-5). During the battle of Towton, he makes a second sacred vow, this time that he will fight unceasingly to the death (3 *Henry VI* 2.3.29). Thirdly, at the French court scene Warwick invokes heaven to confirm to Lewis his lack of complicity in Edward's marriage to Lady Grey (3 *Henry VI* 3.3.181). Finally, he calls on God, his friends and St. George, before his final confrontations with Edward in *Part 3* (4.2.29). Shakespeare's use of oaths, vows and invocations could be taken as pragmatically appropriated by Warwick during

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<sup>7</sup> What's on Stage, April 1999.  
<<http://www.whatsonstage.com/index.php?pg=207&story=E1927243496>> accessed 20<sup>th</sup> November 2008.

moments of high dramatic incident. These articulations are not intrinsically part of the Earl's lexicon as Shakespeare provides it; indeed his reputation is predicated on unembellished speech. Even at his expiration, Warwick makes no attempt to commit his soul to God, neither does he pray for pardon for his enemies, unlike Henry as he dies at Richard of Gloucester's hand (5.6.60).

Naiambana found Shakespeare's clearest definition of Warwick's Christian faith in the Earl's oath in 2 *Henry VI*, at the bedside of the murdered Duke of Gloucester:

As surely as my soul intends to live  
With that dread King that took our state upon Him  
To free us from his Father's wrathful curse,  
(3.2.153-5).

In this speech, Naiambana considers Shakespeare goes to the heart of what Christianity is about:

Shakespeare expresses the clearest definition of faith in Warwick's line: 'To free us from his father's curse'. This concerns redemption through Christ from God's curse in Genesis.<sup>8</sup> My understanding of the plays in this context is that they are essentially an examination of the complexity of making choices, the eschatology of decision-making based on a Christian morality. Everyone deviates from what they would like to be and that which they would profess. Shakespeare has incorporated a confirmation of human fallibility. Warwick is making decisions in this scene of Gloucester's death which are based on Christianity. In this speech Shakespeare goes to the heart of what Christianity is about. I think it must be part of the Elizabethan code. Warwick tries not to break agreements and promises, for example he makes a binding contract with Edward after Towton. Was he doing it for himself? No, Edward needed him at that point. I think Warwick was a spiritual man because he gave to monasteries. He uses Christianity when he speaks to his father – he must have had a deep faith.

The actor highlighted the tension between Warwick as a man of faith yet also a warrior. In this context he discussed how his own personal beliefs influenced his approach:

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<sup>8</sup> Genesis 3.17. Editors have cited St Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, 3.13-14 as the source for this reference. But as Ronald Knowles points out: 'The *curse* here is wider than the doctrinal divide between the law and faith in St. Paul's Epistle, and refers to the general 'curse' of Genesis 3.17.' *King Henry VI Part 2*, p. 265.

Through physical dialogue I also tried to convey the spiritual dimension of the man by taking a quiet isolated moment by myself to pray and reflect on the fact that Warwick is still alive and may be to ask forgiveness for the slaying he has taken part in.

This deeply theological reading of the text was in sharp contrast to Phil Corbitt's pragmatic dismissal of any intrinsic Christian theme. He considered that:

The closest the tetralogy comes to portraying a Christian doctrine is as a set of morality plays. Although the character of Warwick has a belief in God, it's of its time. Warwick's faith is closely tied into his commitment to chivalry and follows the accepted noble code: 'God and St. George'; Warwick is neither a great intellectual, nor overtly spiritual. Warwick's moral strength lies in the attributes of a straight-talking, powerful and visceral man. This charismatic type of morality, as appreciated by the commons, allows him to capitalise on their loyalty when he needs it.

Corbitt returns to those key elements of Warwick's reputation which are sustained in Shakespeare's text and which, according to him, provide all the evidence required for the actor to 'get under the skin' of the character.

The three actors were in accord in viewing Warwick's characteristics of physicality, power and plain-dealing, coupled with chivalry, as providing a central theme for the construction of character. They understood that these qualities would become signifiers for the audience, viewers who might display gradations of historical knowledge, political acuity and intellectual curiosity. Alongside Warwick's key characteristics, they defined key scenes, which drive the action and lay out Warwick's narrative, equally helpful to the audience. Some they found difficult to play, others were relished. Corbitt identified scenes in which he felt he could develop his role in line with Warwick's qualities as he perceived them, and given the constraints of direction and adaptation. He was alone in citing the burning of

Joan of Arc in *Part I* (5.3) as a scene which, in his view, pointed to Warwick's chivalry, but over which he had a disagreement with the director:

I saw Warwick's demand for the faggots to be piled high as a compassionate action, while the director read it that the Earl wanted the execution done quickly for political expediency. I was never comfortable about the way we portrayed that particular scene.

This part of the scene was accomplished very quickly with heavy cutting. There was little opportunity for a nuanced reading by the actor.

The scene in the Temple garden (*1 Henry VI*, 2.4) was cited by the three actors as memorable because it initiates the intensity of the action to come. They interpreted the scene as Shakespeare's introduction to the audience of the warring factions; its significance in setting up the subsequent convoluted alliances and re-alliances. The symbolism is therefore most important, the roses particularly acting as signifiers of faction. According to Don Carrier, these events, as imagined by Shakespeare, place Warwick firmly among the contenders as one of a group of young, quarrelsome men and this:

...was fundamental in setting up the entire situation of alliances and fitted well with the general youthfulness of the cast. Also the repetition of names in the scene was an aide-memoir for the audience, to help them gather who was who. Obviously the rose-plucking polarised each character and identified them in later scenes.

Patrice Naiambana also saw this scene as the starting point for Warwick's dramatic narrative, essential to its later development:

This was my first opportunity within the story to find out what Warwick's ultimate objectives and mini-objectives were. I saw him as a mover and shaker, beginning in *Part I* in the Temple garden scene when he prophesises the death of ten thousand souls. He makes a decision to back York completely because I'm sure he believes York's claims are right.

There was agreement between the actors that Shakespeare's history plays can present as particularly puzzling for a modern audience, not least because of the ebb and flow of the internecine power struggles and intermittent changes of allegiance. The scenes which lay out York's pedigree (*Part 1*, 2.5) and (*Part 2*, 2.2) with their multiplicity of matching names, titles and fathers and sons, can lead to confusion early on and continue even to the dénouement. The roll-call of fifteenth century English kings and nobility is not helped by the nominative limitation of fore-names, particularly 'Edward' and 'Richard', which is later most conspicuously demonstrated by Shakespeare in the dialogue between Margaret of Anjou, Queen Elizabeth and the Duchess of York in *Richard III*, in which their respective sons and husbands, bearing the same names are chimed across nine lines. The most convoluted line is Margaret's repetitive references to the Duchess of York's son and grandson, as well as her own son:

Thy Edward he is dead, that kill'd my Edward;  
 Thy other Edward dead, to quit my Edward;  
4.4.63-4

In the RSC version, the exposition of lineage in York's garden (*Part 2*, 2.2) is accomplished through the practical use of stones of different sizes; these are laid out on the stage by York to demonstrate the hierarchy of his pedigree. Patrice Naiambana viewed this scene as important for his own understanding of Warwick, because it enabled him to develop further his appreciation of the Earl's ultimate objectives which he first perceived in the Temple garden scene. The director's role in positioning the actors was crucial. According to the actor:

In the stones scene, Shakespeare shows how far Warwick and Salisbury have moved in supporting York. Warwick is already convinced, but our positions on stage show that Warwick and York still have to persuade Salisbury to take the ultimate step to depose Henry and replace him with Richard. In this scene self-interest, rightness and honour come together to influence decision making and action. Warwick's swift summing up of York's position characterises his ability to get straight to the point.

Intricate dialogue such as occurs in this scene requires close attention by those wishing to place individuals correctly, but is theatrically distracting to those whose knowledge of the period is limited, drawing their minds away from the continuity of the drama to decipher an historical register of nobility. Corbitt felt the convoluted explanation given by York, although obfuscated, provides the audience at least an impression of the legitimacy of the Duke's claim. He also cited Warwick's précis of York's pedigree as an aid to the audience:

The audience may become blinded with detail and remain ignorant of the intricacies of the Plantagenet line, but they will feel that York is making a strong case for something, which is robustly supported by Warwick. Shakespeare uses Warwick's pithy lines at the end of York's speech as a useful reference for the audience.

To clarify characters, his director Barry Rutter used a simple expedient to differentiate between the two sides in the Northern Broadsides production. Corbitt explained:

We used Lancastrian and Yorkshire dialects. There are a lot of opportunities for confusion, especially with names and titles, so Barry wanted clarity for the audience. He had used the Yorkshire dialect in the role as Richard III in his own production in 1992, on the basis that Richard was born and raised in Middleham Castle, North Yorkshire and would have had a local accent.

Don Carrier devised his own solution to the problem of Warwick being subsumed and lost in this roll-call:

There were many changes in perception based on reading and re-reading the script before rehearsals began. In the history plays, very often people become interchangeable but I attempted to present Warwick as a major player as the scenes unfolded. I tried to make him more specific in terms of his characteristics. This was a matter of my presence on stage.

Patrice Naiambana also considered the problem of uniqueness:

I asked myself: How can Warwick be shown as different from the rest of the nobility. The first idea came in the two bears scene (*Part 2*, 5.1.144). This had to be a concept from which something should happen. I thought that the most active statement would be to carry two swords as substitute for words. I studied medieval warfare to show how two swords could represent his prowess, both as a fighter and to show his wealth that he could afford them. This became a clear statement of dominance in action which I maintained throughout all performances. The fight director was very helpful because it needed slightly different choreography. Michael Boyd was very happy to go along with the idea.

Gloucester's death-bed scene provides Warwick with central staging for the first time. Naiambana interprets this as Shakespeare not only indicating Warwick's quality, but also moving the Earl to a pivotal role:

Clearly he was in charge of proceedings, and highly influential with the commons. Shakespeare is manoeuvring characters all the time; dramatically, Warwick and his father were around at the time of the murder of Gloucester, but not implicated. Shakespeare makes the scene a means to an end for Warwick and his father. Suffolk's guilt prompts them to even greater support for York.

Corbitt approached the heavily-cut scene with the view that:

Warwick is sympathetic to Gloucester, appreciating him as the most noble and least self-interested among all the characters in the court. I had to make this clear to the audience and how Gloucester died, because his murder had taken place off-stage. I only had a few lines of text to deliver my verdict.

The text, briskly delivered, was a much conflated version of the Folio, with only the most obvious features of Gloucester's appearance included in Warwick's lines:

The key aspects of strangulation and physical struggle were prioritised in the text to highlight to the audience that Gloucester's death was a homicide.



Only one actor highlighted the Bloody Parliament scene (*Part 3*, 1.1) as integral to the full understanding of how much Warwick was involved in the politics of this drama. Naiambana explained:

By the end of *Part 2* I asked the question: Was Warwick's move to York in reaction to Henry's style of kingship? And found the answer in *Part 3* in the first scene where Warwick exposes Henry's weakness by using the word 'bashful.' Henry's cowardice: 'Hath made us bywords to our enemies.' (1.1.42). Warwick was a patriot, In *Part 2* Shakespeare had already given him the lines: 'So God help Warwick,/As he loves the land and common profit of his country!' (1.1.202-3). He followed the noble code: Nothing should conflict with the people's welfare.

This became much clearer for the actor in the later scenes in *Part 3*:

He was like royalty himself. When Warwick deposes Edward, in his text 'Alas, how should you govern any kingdom,/ That know not how to use ambassadors?' (4.3.35-40) he shows how he understands statecraft and how to govern properly. People depend on this.

All agreed that the French court scene was the most difficult to play because the narrative moves so abruptly. During their performances, the actors were aware of a variety of reactions from the audience. On occasions there were gasps of disbelief at both Warwick and Margaret's about-face. Sometimes there was a laugh, which reflected a feeling of awkwardness, a reaction noted in reviews of other past performances. For example, in his review of a production at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in 1977, Alan Dessen assessed it as the weakest moment in the production and one which 'elicited embarrassed laughter from the audience'.<sup>9</sup> In his review of Terry Hands's production of the trilogy in 1977, Homer Swander records the scene:

It appears funny, and the abruptness of the change was such that it appeared ridiculous. Instead it is grotesque. Hands plays it for laughs, as opposed to the *Wars of the Roses* [Barton and Hall] where it appears naturalistic.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Alan Dessen, 'Oregon Shakespearean Festival', *SQ*, 29 (1978), p. 284.

<sup>10</sup> Homer Swander, 'The Rediscovery of *Henry VI*', *SQ*, 29 (1978), p. 150.

Don Carrier and Phil Corbitt both had difficulty with a realistic portrayal, seeing the text as a stumbling block. But they both felt that it is through this scene that audiences will remember Warwick as an historical character and identify where his wind-changing reputation comes from. Phil Corbitt had great problems with the scene, highlighting the skill needed by an actor to prevent it seeming incredible:

There is no doubt that this is the sequence which most of the audience remember about Warwick, and Shakespeare has been very clever in leaving it to the skill of the actor to avoid it seeming ridiculous. I was really worried about Warwick's credibility. The letter incident raised a laugh of amusement not embarrassment, fortunately. I actively encouraged this when I offered my services to Margaret later in the scene. This is a very awkward moment for Warwick – key to his future credibility.

Corbitt was satisfied if the audience was amused rather than embarrassed. He read the line 'No more my king!' emphatically and without emphasis. Unequivocally, he withdraws himself from service to Edward, and denies their friendship. The audience took the line at face value, but in the later dialogue with Margaret there was a moment of incredulity in response to the lines:

I here renounce him and return to Henry.  
My noble Queen, let former grudges pass  
And henceforth I am thy true servitor.

3.3.194-6

The scene also posed an issue of credibility for Don Carrier, who expressed anxiety as to how the pivotal line: 'No more my king!' should be delivered, and where the emphasis on the words should be placed. He alone identified these considerations as crucial because they would set the tone for what was to follow:

I asked myself how should I actually emphasise: 'No more my king!'? I thought I would do it with a mixture of anger and despair. It has to be believable above all, otherwise everything Warwick does later has a reduced impact – he becomes simply self-seeking, although he does admit in his last speech in the scene that his actions are fuelled by revenge.

The question as to whether Warwick is fuelled by self-serving revenge, or a higher ideal to save the commonwealth is answered, according to Carrier, by the way the line is delivered. The line becomes the *raison d'être* for the character, but late in the trilogy. The 'kingmaking' topos previously threaded through the plays changes to one of 'pulling-down'. This is now linked to Warwick's need for personal revenge.

In my interview with Patrice Naiambana, when the plays were still in rehearsal, his view of the French court scene was again from an African perspective. The central issue for the actor was the lack of respect shown by the young man for his older cousin. He considered Shakespeare was realistic in his portrayal of the volte-face:

From an African point of view Edward is a boy who should show more respect. Therefore Warwick shows righteous anger at Edward's actions. Shakespeare is right – people do change their minds, and sometimes on the spot.

This was a credible action which should be taken at face value by the audience. But when it came to delivering the text, he was very aware that it could come out comically, therefore his priority with the line was to make it credible and avoid a humorous response:

Speaking the words is very difficult to master. I have to show that the man was upset, but I am aware that it could all come out comically. I am anxious that the audience should not laugh with relaxed abandon at Warwick's sudden realignment with Margaret.

By the time of our second discussion, Naiambana had played the role for almost two and half years and the experience had provided him with deeper and somewhat modified approach:

Initially the key lines were played as an angry outburst followed by a charming smile to Margaret. Now the smile is not easy and sometimes non-existent. I am now playing with a balance between angst and strategy. I feel I have done a good job of the turn around if there is not a great big guffaw but a gentle, ironic one. After all it is Edward that is wind-changing. It is not right to double cross your friends.

His understanding of the scene remained as before, that Warwick renounces Edward as King because it is the honourable thing to do and he must avenge Lady Bona and himself:

Warwick might be called wind-changing, but the protection of his integrity is the most natural thing in the world: 'What else is he supposed to do?' Shakespeare makes clear that Warwick's actions do not stem from pity of Henry's circumstance, rather they avenge a disgrace.

Naiambana considers that Edward has wounded Warwick deeply and the tones of pain, outrage, bitterness and self-disgust at having lavished so much trust and affection on his cousin infect the French court scene much more. He was moving to the position held by Carrier in his appreciation of the crucial nature of individual lines in the scene.

All the actors cited Warwick's death as a significant and personal piece of theatricality. In the plays, Warwick's public worth is the value put upon him by the state, in other words his followers and the peers in King Henry's council and parliament. Naiambana felt this would only be apparent to the audience in the Earl's final speech, and was given a strong directorial prompt to include them:

I wanted the audience to consider how this once great and powerful man has been dishonoured by neglect and belittling. There is an explicit message in Warwick's words, particularly 'Why, what is pomp, rule, reign but earth and dust?' (5.4.46). This is a resonating line which might lead us to consider how we live our lives. I was given a directorial note do this straight at the audience.

He also recognised that he had to make a choice about how Warwick accepts death:

In the end, I decided to portray the Earl as protecting and isolating himself in the foetal position. At this point the text is all about yielding; Warwick accepts death without fear; reality chases away terror as his life-force ebbs.

Naiambana wanted the audience to take away with them a memory of Warwick's ratiocination against materialism, as expressed in his dying moments. According to the actor, this rite of passage provides the Earl's only opportunity for self-reflection.

Overall, Shakespeare gives Warwick little opportunity for interiority by which he can explain his doctrine of the lesser evil, or means to an end, as a path toward peace, justice and order against the anarchy issuing from lack of rule. Moments of shared thoughts with the audience are comparatively rare for the Earl. In the trilogy he has just three soliloquies: five lines during Towton (2.3.1-5) ten lines at the end of the French court scene (3.3.256-65) and his twenty four-line reflection on evanescence in his death scene (5.2.5-28). In comparison, Henry has ten soliloquies and Richard of Gloucester two, albeit of seventy one (3.2.124-95) and thirty two lines (5.6.61-93) respectively. Shakespeare provides Warwick with no collusive asides to the audience. The dramatist applies this theatrical tactic as confirmation of the counterfeit intentions of disingenuous characters like Beaufort, Gloucester and 'perjured' Clarence. Warwick's characteristic of openness is not conducive to such exclusiveness; he shares his strategic plans openly with other characters, until he is forced into desperation by Edward's frustrating actions (3.3.256-65).

Don Carrier elaborated on the key point of Warwick's self-reflection and how a lack of opportunity for such interiority presented difficulties:

I had to strike a balance between presenting his power as an intrinsic component of his personality, while not over-dominating physically or vocally. This was difficult because Shakespeare gives Warwick few lines of self-reflection. The audience rarely sees him expressing his thoughts. He is always interacting with others.

He regretted that Warwick's final end in the battle had not been more focused. He argued that the Earl should have had his full moment of isolated reflection, rather than being subsumed into the staging of the battle:

The battle produced great quantities of smoke and the action was set quite far upstage. Although the stage configuration was a three sided one, the setting was not as intimate as I wished it could have been,

Other productions, by their very settings, provide room for interiority. In the BBC/Time-Life version, the intimacy of the setting allows the camera lens to capture in close-up the actor Mark Wing-Davey clearly struggling to speak Warwick's lines:

Thy tears would wash this cold congealed blood  
That glues my lips and will not let me speak.  
5.2.37-8

Concerns such as the problems of intimacy for a character perceived as predominately physical were among several problematic issues identified by the actors. The most outstanding was that of age and appearance. Patrice Naiambana came closest to Warwick's historical age. Don Carrier felt he was too young and Phil Corbitt was considerably older than the Warwick of history. Although Carrier had not deeply researched Warwick's historical persona, he assessed him as a man who could maintain a presence on the stage:

I tried to play a lot with stillness, to show a large man of power who did not have to move around a lot or yell and scream. I wanted someone who was direct.

But this approach presented him with a specific problem:

I wished I had been older and able to manifest this stillness and quiet power with more finesse. I wish I had the weight that an older person lends to a role which requires a quiet determination. I was much younger than the traditional Warwick. I had been used to playing many juvenile roles past the time that most people do, due to my looks and manner I suppose. So this was a very challenging role to begin with, to access a more in-charge, dominant force. I had to work to get the kind of emotional weight required.

Carrier is right in his assessment, that the cerebral, as opposed to the physical, qualities ascribed to Warwick are more applicable to an older man, particularly those of persuasion and statecraft which take time and experience to develop. Paradoxically, the Warwick of history was still only in his thirties at the height of his power and forty two at his death. The character on stage requires not only the physical attributes of youth, but also the credibility from experience accruing with age. The three actors sought pictures of the Earl in attempts to gauge an idea of style and size, without success. There are no physical remains of the Earl, either at Warwick Castle or at his original monument at the Salisbury mausoleum in Bisham Priory, Berkshire which was swept away during the Dissolution. There are no long bones to measure for height; no DNA samples to analyse for genetic characteristics.

There are few clues to Warwick's physical appearance in Shakespeare's text, although the dramatist makes reference to one specific feature of Warwick's appearance, when Edward IV and Warwick meet in the final actions of *3 Henry VI*.

The King says:

Sail how thou canst, have wind and tide thy friend,  
 This hand, fast wound about thy coal-black hair,  
 Shall, whiles thy head is warm and new cut off,  
 Write in the dust this sentence with thy blood,  
 'Wind-changing Warwick now can change no more'.  
 5.1.53-7

However, there is no historical evidence that Warwick had black hair. This surely would relate more closely to the appearance of the performer in the plays, although unlike casting for physique, the convention of a dark-haired actor playing the part has not been specifically followed in later performances. Phil Corbitt of Northern Broadsides is fair haired, as is Mark Wing-Davey in the BBC/Time-Life production.

Warwick was described by all three as predominantly physical and they were fully aware of his chronicled reputation for energy and vigour. Playing the part required great reserves of stamina, not just for the fight scenes, but in terms of imprinting his persona with the audience. All the actors were over six foot tall and two acknowledged that their height and physique was a factor which they felt earned them the role. Phil Corbitt was most explicit:

I felt I was chosen for the role because I could handle the fights, being over six foot and fit. The part is physically demanding, requiring not only agility and strength but also emotional stamina.

I calculated that, in the three plays, Warwick is on stage for twenty six scenes and has 8% of the lines, in comparison with Henry who has 10% of the lines in twenty two scenes and York 8% of lines in nineteen scenes. The editors of *The Arden Shakespeare* point out that, for scenic appearances: 'A benchmark is Hamlet, one of Shakespeare's longest roles, who is on stage for twelve scenes in a single play.'<sup>11</sup> Warwick is on stage for thirteen scenes in *Part 3*, one scene only with no lines to speak (2.4). He is involved in three battle scenes, with the possibility of two individual fights.

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<sup>11</sup> *King Henry VI Part 3*, App. 2, p. 410.



Through Warwick's physicality, Shakespeare invokes the Earl's fundamental notion of the ultimate prudential and utilitarian obligation of nobility: to take physical action against weak kingship in order to preserve civil peace and individual life. This is most clearly articulated in his rhetorical questions to Edward at the end of the trilogy:

Alas, how should you govern any kingdom,  
That know not how to use ambassadors,  
...  
Nor how to study for the people's welfare,  
Nor how to shroud yourself from enemies?  
4.3.35-40

Such straightforwardness leaves little room in Warwick's text at this point for an equivocal interpretation; the audience will receive what these actors consider to be an honest portrayal of an uncomplicated character. There is opportunity in their use of body language for actors to render idiosyncratic emotions. For example, when Warwick sheds tears over the loss of Anjou and Maine, Patrice Naiambana admitted that the text at the beginning of *Part 2* presented problems for him:

Warwick was propelled by the loss of Anjou and Maine. I had problems with getting the speech right, Warwick was so upset, but there had not been enough exposition up to this point about him to decide how the speech should be delivered. Initially I did try different styles, but finally I cut the tears and played it in a rage, given the energy of the man. I emphasised his own personal obsession, France, which was the core of Warwick's honour. The medieval code was the relationship of honour and faith with Christianity. Warwick had very clear Christian values, especially keeping oaths and promises.

The actor interpreted Shakespeare's text as reflecting not only Warwick's self-interest, but also his sense of morality, which conjoins with honour to influence his decision-making and actions.

Finally, in answer to the question ‘What did you come away with at the end of the run?’ Naiambana had come to the view that Shakespeare sees Warwick as a larger-than-life figure and, ‘vindicated by the text’, felt he had been successful in developing his instinct to play him accordingly. He summed up his perception of the character as one which had significant substance:

I feel that there is enough in Warwick for a play in his own right. The through-line is he stands for something, and will follow through on that. Woe betide anyone who crosses him: when he come behind you - he’s behind you. I would have liked to explore the complexities of Warwick’s decision making. I don’t see the character in isolation of the story I am telling. The purpose of the story is an integral placing of all characters. It is about the function of power, powerlessness and the futility of war. Warwick has a function in that. The only serious challenges for me were technical – doing it – doing it better and growing as an artist.<sup>12</sup>

Two and a half years is a long run in one role. Even in popular, long-running West End productions, there are regular changes to cast lists. Naiambana pointed out that the ensemble was ‘now getting into its stride and another year would have been even more productive.’ He emphasised how he had had to pace himself to accommodate the physical and emotional stamina required for the role. In the last days of his run, he considered that:

It was only in the final Stratford ‘Glorious Moments’ that I felt I had mastered the energy, food intake and pacing necessary to get into the huge motor that drives Warwick. I always used to be mentally and physically very tired at the end of a trilogy day. This is not the case now.

He came back to the idea of Warwick’s role as deeply connected with his own rite of passage as an actor. The technical maturity he had gained, with focussed engagement with the text had imprinted:

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<sup>12</sup> Email from Patrice Naiambana, 30<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

...a peculiar stamp on psyche and craft. I will consider the end of this contract a glorious birth, a preparation for other challenges, as the entire journey has been a rite of passage.

The 'other challenges' will include the title roll in Michael Boyd's RSC touring production of *Othello* in 2009.

Phil Corbitt was limited by the time scale for rehearsal, the director's robust pre-conceived view of how the plays should be presented, and above all the heavy cutting of the text to fit these requirements. Consequently, *The Wars of the Roses* as presented by Northern Broadsides was not a good vehicle for Warwick, who was subsumed into the general nobility and at times difficult to differentiate as a key player. The production was also overloaded with a declamatory style. The one redeeming factor was that Corbitt had a large physical presence which made him easily definable in the choreographed battle scenes. He approached the role of Warwick with a vigour which increased as the plays progressed. The scenes moved very quickly, for example the death of Talbot was instantly followed by the Temple garden scene, confusing for some of the audience overheard at the interval. Corbitt also found the role tough emotionally and physically, with the additional stresses of touring, but had a clear expectation of outcomes of performance:

Although exhausting, I enjoyed playing the part because Warwick is so straightforward and clear. I hope the audience will leave the theatre remembering that he is a strong, powerful yet flawed character, ultimately trying to do what is honourable, but caught up in the politics of his time.

The outcome for the audience leaving the auditorium of the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, after the Northern Broadsides' production of *The Wars of the Roses*, was confusion. They were perplexed by the complexity of characters, battles and

internecine plotting; although impressed by the use of the Yorkshire dialect, which they considered gave the production realism.

Don Carrier's view of role and performance was that it was 'unfinished business':

I would like the opportunity of doing this play again in its entirety, with all its repetition and over explicitness. To truly see the downfall of a king and the flaws that led to it. Warwick was right in the centre of all the machinations and ebb and flow of the search for power. The story is universal- a weak leader led by his coterie. I would like to see this play in a more modern setting- it would be interesting. Warwick would be a true political operative- a survivor.

He felt the experience of bringing an historic figure to dramatic life could, if time permitted, be a springboard for further research into the Earl's historiography.

Although Warwick's linear historical reputation was not researched fully by any of the actors, the character became memorable for them through Shakespeare's development of Warwick's specific characteristics clearly described in the chronicles: honour, loyalty, plain-dealing, but also self-interest. They all considered honour and pride as the prime motivators for Warwick's actions, but with varying conceptions of what they constitute. For Patrice Naiambana, the historical Warwick's honour was vested in his membership of the House of Neville, which had a distinguished pedigree and hereditary coats of arms: 'Warwick is rooted in a familial hierarchical structure wherein he is supreme.' Don Carrier and Phil Corbitt agreed that, as well as being part of a noble cadre, Warwick was intrinsically honourable through his sense of 'trying to do the right thing'. Unlike Henry, he does not call on God or providence to assist him, although his belief system is unexceptionally Christian. The actors were unanimous in their views that Warwick becomes more self-confident as his dramatic narrative unfolds. They recognised

how Shakespeare utilises Warwick's characteristics to interpret the Earl's fundamental belief in maintenance of rightness through rigorous protection of honour at any price. These beliefs are played out in a series of events, political and martial which, because of their robust staging cannot fail to resonate with the audience.

The actors brought three distinct approaches to the role of Warwick, all mediated by directorial requirements. Phil Corbitt was essentially pragmatic in his view of Warwick as a straightforward, martial character, who required little subtlety in performance since his qualities were clearly exposed in the text: honour, pride, expediency and above all, physicality. The Ontario production, significantly reducing the trilogy, simplified the politics and personalities, which Don Carrier at times regretted, but, like Corbitt, he felt it allowed a straightforward reading of Warwick which could be translate into a comparable performance. Both recognised that their directors were looking for clear through lines by which to engage their audiences.

Patrice Naiambana's position was unique in that he maintained the role in both tetralogies for almost three years. Consequently he became immersed in the character, seeking out modern analogies, particularly with reference to his African upbringing. As the performances progressed over time, his approach to the role modified and he attempted to instil some of the subtleties of the text which Corbitt and Carrier had no time to explore. His theological reading of the part was highly

individualistic and subjective, and not identified in any historical sources available to Shakespeare.

The challenge for the actor in reprising this role is to find a through-line to Warwick's dramatic persona by clarifying those key characteristics originally identified in the historical sources, distilled into dramatic form by Shakespeare and finally presented on stage for an audience's reaction. Regardless of their individual approach to research and performance, each actor discovered elements in Warwick's character, persona and role which they elided into an 'essential Warwick', one fit for the directorial purpose with which they were presented. It is this 'essential Warwick', with his quality of flawed nobility and timeless political ambition which Shakespeare instils into individual and collective memory through his poetic language.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis I have not been concerned with making judgments on either Warwick's politics or morality; Shakespeare does neither. Among the numerous characters appearing in his plays there is the indelible stamp of goodness and evil; he takes these starkly opposing elements and leads the observers to their own conclusions. Historical figures assume a dramatic life and momentum, which carries them not only through their theatrical journey, but also into collective memory. In the *Henry VI* trilogy, the dramatist presents the setter-up of kings purely as a figure in the context of his time. Shakespeare leaves a narrative mediated between the historical truths embedded within contemporary sources of evidence, and the mythological perceptions of those truths which have evolved down the centuries.

In all his chronicle-based plays, Shakespeare has become the interface between historiography and story-telling. He is an observer and interpreter of events and responses, not an evaluator of actions and outcomes. The dramatic impact of his text and direction opens up that possibility for his audience alone. As far as Warwick is concerned, the dramatist leaves an audience to make up its own mind whether the character achieves his ambitions and whether his actions are justified. Whatever the view the audience may walk away with, Shakespeare demands a consideration of a character such as Warwick and as a corollary, a possible interest in his historiography. His success in reinvigorating mimetic figures from the past reflects his ability to unfold, with speed, historical events in an invigorated form, which retains our interest. In this Shakespeare is no different from a very good

teacher, or an experienced modern-day historical documentary producer. Both understand our need, as visual learners, for the enlivening of the normal *longeurs* of history with sharp, visual images. Shakespeare's conflation, rearrangement and poetic representation of Warwick's historical narrative is most effectively and memorably relayed in the flesh, through the three-dimensional medium of theatre. From Shakespeare's moulding of medieval history, Warwick becomes one in a muster of figures treated in a similar way: Richard II, Henry V, Joan of Arc and Richard III are good examples. They are all part of the stereotypical image of the period, underscored in Shakespeare's dramas and embedded in cultural memory.

On stage, the Earl's dramatic narrative is crisply presented and, as such, directs us immediately to those key qualities which impact on his actions. The underlining intent of the soubriquet 'kingmaker', (an agnomen never explicitly referenced by Shakespeare) is inextricably linked by the dramatist to issues of effective kingship and governance, which are timelessly relevant. In modern times Warwick's soubriquet provides him with an advantage over the rest of the noble roll-call, in that it is quick and easy to conjure up. It offers not only a political peg on which to hang him, but also becomes the tag by which his whole historical *raison d'être* is advertised. Shakespeare's references to the uniqueness of such a soubriquet, coupled with the reputation established by his historiography, perpetuate the Earl as an iconic theatrical figure.

As a dramatic 'exemplary icon', in Linda Charnes's perception of the term, Warwick requires descriptors. His intensely focussed and narrow band of values



might be compared with those qualities Horace reports of Achilles: *impiger* (diligent, active) *iracundus* (passionate, irascible) and *inexorabilis* (not to be moved).<sup>1</sup> The reportage in fifteenth century chronicles, both at home and abroad, iterated such a narrative: loyalty to his friends, open-handedness to his affinity and uncompromising in his treatment of his enemies. Understanding the value of the common touch, he had the ability to work a crowd with subtle oratory; he read political situations well, using them to his advantage.

After the chroniclers and *The Mirror for Magistrates* laid out such descriptors, and before modern historians attempted to analyse and dissect Warwick in detail, Shakespeare has intervened, to provide us with a dramatised narration, one which not only confirms this ideal, but also shows us different sides of the same coin. At times in the trilogy, Warwick is dynamic and resolute, as in the parliament scene in *Part 1* (1.1); but he is pragmatic when musing on his own demise, and in his admission of failure at the second battle of St Albans, where he could also be perceived as irresolute. He is an impulsive risk taker when he turns on his protégé at the end of the final play in the trilogy, although careful and objective in his report of Gloucester's murder in *Part 2*. He is portrayed as excessively martial and unheeding of his own safety at Towton; smooth-tongued and self-serving in his swing to support Henry against Edward. These are the characteristics, enmeshed within the text, which bring to life Warwick's persona so emphatically and memorably, sustained by his consistent dramatic qualities: single-mindedness, self-confidence and physicality.

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<sup>1</sup> See G.K. Hunter, *English Drama: 1586-1642* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 87, where he compares the qualities of Titus Andronicus with those ascribed by Horace to Achilles.

The paradox is that historically Warwick's action narrative has not retained such an iconic status; rather it is his agnomen which remains perpetual. He falls among a group of characters from the Middle Ages who suffer from lack of exposure in the modern world, but who have been granted a stay of execution from oblivion through the dramatisation of English medieval history in Shakespeare's chronicle plays. There are practical reasons why mainstream historical accounts fail to engage us with figures such as Warwick. The most obvious is that there is no longer routine exposure to his narrative through the school history syllabus. He has evolved as an arcane figure, of interest only to academic specialists and enthusiastic amateur historians.

In the current education system, there is limited access to the history of the medieval period. Primary pupils move swiftly from the Romans to the Normans, leap a few centuries and arrive at what is perceived as the more colourful and engaging period: the Tudors. Sturdy beggars and sea battles offer visually stimulating opportunities in the classroom. With the exception of the Black Death and a few gory battles, medieval history provides very few significant, eye-catching events readily convertible to graphic images, a prerequisite for teaching in the twenty first century. There are also the complicated, convoluted contentions between a myriad of medieval magnates, the majority with confusingly similar forenames, not to mention their topographically-referenced titles. The macro-economics of the late medieval period, detailing the long-term effects of labour shortages which followed the plague in 1348, the consequent evolution of bastard

feudalism, together with the political legacy of early enclosures, raise little interest in the secondary examination syllabus.

Warwick does bear the distinction of being included as one of the forty nine characters selected for a series of *Ladybird* books for children, published in 1966 and called *Adventures from History*, but now out of print. *Warwick the Kingmaker* was placed in the series alongside other historical luminaries, including Alfred the Great, David Livingstone and Napoleon. In this version, Warwick's historical narrative was taken directly from Shakespeare's dramas and included the fictitious scene in the Temple garden, written as though it were factual, with an illustration to match.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, there is a generation of middle-aged adults, introduced to Warwick as children through this account, who are now convinced that the plucking of the roses was an actuality. However, this is no different to many of the adults who view the trilogy in the theatre. Unless they read their programme notes carefully, or have researched the period previously, it is likely that this beautiful myth vividly portrayed on the stage, will also be memorised as historical fact.

As for any detailed knowledge of the Earl of Warwick, an unscientific questioning of colleagues, pupils and friends left me in no doubt that, in their minds, his status remains that of a vague, historical figure. It was only those who had recently seen the Royal Shakespeare Company's history cycle, during the *Complete Works* in 2006-8, who could confirm that they were left with illuminating memories and perceptions of Shakespeare's Warwick, which was unknown to them previously.

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<sup>2</sup> L. du Garde Peach, *Warwick the Kingmaker: A Ladybird 'Adventure from History' Book* (Loughborough, 1966), p. 6.

A few had recall of Sellar's and Yeatman's *1066 and all That*, in which Warwick was the Baron to whom any one wishing to be considered for the position of King had to apply. Answers were required to nine searching questions including: '1. Are you a good plain crook? 8. Do you intend to be a) a Good King, b) a Bad King, c) a Weak King?', and submitted on a form available on request at the Kingmaker's.<sup>3</sup>

Transposed to a theatrical format, expectations of Warwick's historical narrative are fulfilled in Shakespeare's trilogy. Nicholas Grene comments that: 'The audience is there to watch Warwick become the figure history has pre-assigned him to be.'<sup>4</sup> In our mind's eye, we take from the theatre a mental image of what we have seen on stage as the materialisation of the historical figure. This remains with us as the core of our appreciation. The mental image drawn from theatrical effects is bolstered by those elements of the text which are most stimulating to the memory. Shakespeare's delegation of language to his character, and its formulation to an individualistic style of delivery, sets Warwick apart: crisp, plain and to the point. His choice of rhetoric through metaphor for the character aptly suits the essence of Warwick's persona, as identified in his historiography. It is unembellished and essentially rustic, until the final scenes when, at his most portentous, he resorts to classical allusion. As an adjunct, the dramatist devises a specific scene which cannot fail to impact on our senses and be retained in our memory. The unfolding events in the French court, breathtaking in their effects, provide a lasting audio-visual impression

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<sup>3</sup> W.C. Sellar and R.J. Yeatman, *1066 and All That*, 2nd edn (London: Methuen, 2005), pp. 68-69.

<sup>4</sup> Grene, p. 98.

of Shakespeare's appropriation of the 'kingmaker's' historical narrative. Finally, in his ritual passage of death Warwick reverts to the rhetoric of territorial imperative, which has so fundamentally shaped his life.

Shakespeare has put together the story of Warwick and left us with both a mental and material picture of the maker of kings, in a turbulent and confusing period of history. The dramatist develops and unfolds Warwick's qualities in an orderly and sustained way. In the Temple garden, a young Warwick is introduced as an innocent, unpractised in politics, emotionally swayed by that which he most firmly believes: the fundamental principle of inheritance through legitimate lineal descent. He later moves on to become an objective observer and lucid reporter of a singular death, which becomes the catalyst for the events which follow. His exposition of the murder of the Duke of Gloucester is not only adroit in its succinctness and forensic observations, but also a master-class on how to hold the attention of an on- and off-stage audience. Fully trusted by King Henry and the commons, his burgeoning confidence leads him to remove two kings who, in his view, have weakly allowed themselves to be surrounded and manipulated by the type of company he instinctively detests: parvenus and self-seekers. It is always a short step from recognition to deployment for a character whose motivations are pursued through physical action, a topos for Warwick throughout the plays.

Heraclites said a man's character is his fate and Warwick provides us with an exemplar: his fate rests on his soubriquet which he acquired as a consequence of his character. Shakespeare takes those qualities as reported in the chronicles, to

underpin Warwick's function as a setter-up and plucker-down of kings. The Earl's legend rests on his agnomen first and foremost. The man assumes the name as the name absorbs the man; it is that which shapes our view of him, as both a dramatic and an historical figure. Shakespeare augments and sustains the basis on which Warwick develops as a character and as a concept. His role is not an accident of history: that is the right man in the right place at the right time; Warwick could not have sustained his dominant position unless he had the prerequisite characteristics. His by-name is not a qualitative descriptor, rather a political signifier and the Earl becomes inextricably interwoven with the philosophy of kingship, his soubriquet uniquely begging the question of who can make a king. Richard of Gloucester is quick to observe that, as an Earl, Warwick cannot make a duke in *3 Henry VI* (5.1.32). But at no point in the trilogy does anyone appear to remember the words of the prophet Daniel: that only God 'removeth kings, and setteth up kings'.

His role in the plays is progressive. He moves through various stages of chronological and dramatic development, each with their own relevance to his characteristics. His most important rite of passage, aside from death, results from the shock of Edward's dishonourable behaviour towards him: the first major experience of disloyalty that Warwick experiences. According to two of the actors I interviewed, playing the role of Warwick became part of their professional rite of passage. This was particularly true of Patrice Naiambana, who remained with the character for two and a half years and felt he had grown as an actor as a consequence of playing such a large, physically demanding part. During such a uniquely extended run, he could not fail but to investigate and absorb Warwick's

historiography, evaluating the character not only as a dramatic and historic figure, but also as a man.

Warwick has been assessed as one of the four most important characters in the trilogy, alongside Henry, Margaret and Richard of Gloucester.<sup>5</sup> There was a consensus among the actors that the ‘essential Warwick’ they discovered, through varying degrees of research, exhibited consistent dramatic qualities which were readily transferable to the stage; not least of these were his reputed physical presence and energy, which were taken directly from historical sources and utilised by Shakespeare at key moments to drive the action. These drivers contributed to the elements of historical truth contained in the dramaturgy, which tightened and focused the dialectic between themselves and their audience. The actors felt that the suspension of disbelief, as required in the dramatisation of a fictitious story, becomes less of a requirement for the audience when viewing the histories. It does not matter that his multifaceted roles, as documented in modern history, are underplayed by Shakespeare; his role as the man in the trilogy who physically set up kings is all encompassing. This is the key element which the audience will take away in their memory, bolstered by visual and textual signifiers.

In this thesis I have attempted to show that Shakespeare mediates Warwick’s qualities in such a way as to confirm his character as one deserving of retention in our memories. In J.R. Lander’s book *The Wars of the Roses*, there is photograph of a ring with the Warwick family badge of the bear and ragged staff. Inscribed on its

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<sup>5</sup> Tillyard, p. 191; Grene, p. 19.

face is the motto *soulement une*.<sup>6</sup> This remains as true now as it was when Warwick was alive. There has never been before, or since, another Kingmaker nominated as such by history. Shakespeare's dramatic reification of the figure in the *Henry VI* trilogy, that raised-up and set-aside monarchs, enables us to regenerate Warwick at will. Without such a resource, Richard Neville might become a mere footnote to an age which is itself becoming increasingly remote.

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<sup>6</sup> J.R. Lander, *Wars of the Roses*, p. 130.



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