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Reigning over Reality:
Power and Performance in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* and *Richard III*

By Katherine Cahill

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INTRODUCTION:

Plots. Hidden motives. Subtlety, falseness, treachery: Richard III, Wolsey—each of these leaders engage in the craft of deception, in subtle avenues of power-wielding, to preserve authority. Wolsey flatters, double deals, and eliminates other favorites with King Henry VIII in his desire to achieve the papacy. Similarly, Richard III lies, betrays, kills, and flatters his way to the throne. William Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* and *Richard III* each consider relations between rulers and ruled as they sketch chapters of their respective monarchs' reigns. Each play, as it follows its respective monarch, examines performance as it's used to gain, maintain, and wield power.

As the term "performance" carries with it many definitions and connotations, I will clarify by defining it here as deliberate behaviors by some characters to manipulate the way others perceive or accept reality; fiction-making. My argument will often use the terms "performance" and "deception" interchangeably, on the basis of my categorization of deceit as a type of performance. I have done so to emphasize Shakespeare's consciousness of the theatricality of power, to accentuate both the performative and ambitious elements of the behaviors I'm examining. In the act of deceit, the deceiver plays a part to guide his or her audience's understanding of reality, generally with the aim of achieving some subtle ambition. The deceiver must exert power over the receiver of his deception in order to obtain his goal. At the same time, the deception requires a masking of the performance, a concealment of the treachery, in order to maintain audience compliance.

With an exploration of performance's capacity to influence its audience, this piece focuses on the thoughts, emotions, and circumstances of characters—their "realities." Again, the broadness and complexity of the term "reality" necessitates a more concrete definition. Here,

reality means "existence" or "truth." It's an aspect or version of truth; possibility. My definition of reality therefore includes the existence of ideas. This includes ideas as potential and ideas that exist only in the mind (belief). With this in mind, my argument demonstrates that control over a person's realities represents the ultimate control over that individual

HENRY VIII: WOLSY'S PERSUASIVE POWER

Feared favorite: Cardinal Wolsey advances his power through influence and persuasion, controlling the English court through the medium of the crown. He pursues his papal ambitions by ingratiating himself with, and manipulating the realities of, King Henry (and presumably the Pope). Armed with his "place next to the King" (1.1.66), he preserves his status and guides the King's realities by eliminating rival influences—by gatekeeping potential realities. His lies, often designed to ensure these eliminations, impact reality, revealing the power of audience over performance. Finally, Wolsey employs flattery and his knowledge of the King's existing desires to bolster his fiction of loyal subject and friend to the King. Wolsey's command over the King and its impact on the realities of both King and court proves that the framework of reality—how it is presented, how it is delivered, and how much of it is considered—directs an audience's understanding of reality. As a result, performance shapes, even *becomes*, part of reality; and as a director of reality, performance is power and a means to gain power.

From performance to reality: the Cardinal's crooked keeping of the King illustrates that deception can become part of reality by shaping audience perception of reality. In other words untruth becomes incorporated into reality by shaping the realities people have available and how they perceive those realities. According to two gentlemen discussing the Duke of Buckingham's arrest, "This is noted, / And generally: whoever the King favors, / The Cardinal instantly will

find employment, / And far enough from court too" (2.1.45-48). In other words, Wolsey's deception involves removing other performers and their potential influence. He omits truth—an embodiment of the proverbial concept of "lying by omission"—in order to present a distorted impression of reality. His method of guiding his audience away from truth, of gatekeeping information, reveals that reality is shaped by the information people receive, by the potential realities they have available for consideration. Potential realities serve as possibility; they exist in the mind and exert influence, even if they are ultimately rejected. Just by existing—just by being presented to an audience as worthy of attention—these potential realities impact what audience members think about, what they allow to influence themselves, and what they accept as true. They distract from other performances and other realities.

By regulating exposure to competing performances, Wolsey gains control over the information Henry receives, and therefore over his understanding of reality. In the opening scene, the nobles complain about Wolsey's control over and confiscation of the nobility's fortunes, a way of weakening or exerting power over potential influencers of the King. Gentlemen discussing Buckingham's arrest indicate that the Cardinal has a history of removing his enemies, specifically citing the Earl of Kildare and the Earl of Surrey. Incidentally, Buckingham's arrest especially exemplifies Wolsey's elimination of competing performances. The court in general agrees that "Certainly/The Cardinal is at the end of this [the Duke's arrest and conviction]" (2.1.38-39), and Queen Katherine insinuates doubt over Buckingham's guilt when she questions the validity of the witness as the Duke's former surveyor. During the questioning of the witness, Wolsey encourages the surveyor's testimony at every point, further indicating his role in the elimination of the Duke. And at this same questioning, the King's interaction with both his wife and the witness demonstrate that he has fully rejected the

competing reality of Buckingham. His own words indicate that he did once entertain the Duke's realities; he recalls that "we, / Almost with ravished listening, could not find / His hour of speech a minute" (1.2.119-121). But despite his respect for the "learned and…most rare speaker," Henry fully accepts the Duke's guilt (1.2.109). Even before he hears the witness's complete testimony, he tells his wife that the Duke is now "become as black / As if besmeared in hell" (1.2.123-4); he does not even consider innocence a possibility, despite the fact that the witness is Buckingham's former surveyor. Wolsey has closed the King's mind to the Duke.

Wolsey's schemes depend completely on his privilege with Henry, so his control over the monarch must be carefully maintained. That control involves keeping himself central in Henry's favor and in Henry's life and realities. The success of Wolsey's performance demands a primary audience of just one, demands convincing only one person. But that person must be fully convinced; the King must fully buy into Wolsey's fictive realities and into his role of faithful friend and adviser.

By isolating the King from other performances, Wolsey provides greater stability to his own favored status and the realities he presents to the King; he can (theoretically) ensure that others do not gain power over the King or provide more convincing realities than his own. Moreover, he is more likely to be able to prevent rival performers from undermining his own performance by shedding light on his deception. His concern with who the King favors is exemplified in his anxiety about an archbishop: "Again, there is sprung up / An heretic, an arch one, Cranmer, one / Hath crawled into the favor of the King / And is his oracle" (3.2.101-4). Wolsey's language reveals his distress that someone has yet "again" curried favor with the King—implying that this is not the first time. Just by currying favor with the King, any new favorite takes away from Wolsey's control over the King, because any new favorite has a level

of power to countermand Wolsey's performance, to steer the King away from Wolsey's realities. But Cranmer's growing status particularly poses a threat; his performance conflicts with Wolsey's. The "heretic" archbishop is utilizing his influence to endorse realities Wolsey does not want, to support Henry's desires for Anne Bullen, "A spleeny Lutheran, and not wholesome to / Our cause (3.2.99-100). Cranmer has not only gained a dangerous level of influence, but his performance threatens the Cardinal's "cause" and his hold over the King's religious realities. He has gained sway over the King's values and belief system, over the King's perspective. With a foothold on the way the King's mind works, this "arch" enemy perhaps also establishes himself as a gatekeeper for the King's realities—a position Wolsey would undoubtedly like to keep to himself.

Wolsey's reference to the Archbishop as the King's new "oracle" emphasizes the connection between religion and Cranmer's clout. To the Cardinal, a Christian, belief in an oracle would be belief in something obviously rubbish, something untrue, made-up, and delusional—an artificial, even performative, influence on reality. His emphasis on a heathen religion connotes his scorn for the archbishop's religious beliefs.

But Wolsey recognizes that oracles have power. As authorities in polytheistic religion, oracles divined and interpreted messages from the gods. In doing so, they guided the daily lives of believers by shaping what they thought about and believed in. Regardless of truth, the information the oracles imparted shaped the daily realities of practitioners. It shaped the realities followers *acted* upon—and therefore the future it was supposed to predict. According to the Cardinal's metaphor, Cranmer is likewise a false interpreter of truth and reality. With his opposing religious beliefs and his shepherding of the King's realities away from Wolsey's "right" or "true" realities, the archbishops functions as a kind of oracle for a sham religion and a

fake reality. But because he has a follower, one who apparently accepts his version of reality, Cranmer's performance, too, molds existing reality and future reality. His audience's attention to and belief in his performance enables Cranmer's shaping of reality—enables him to be an "oracle."

Wolsey disparages Cranmer's position of "oracle," scorns the Lutheran's false realities. But far from suggesting ethical outrage over Cranmer's abuse of influence, his attacks rather affirm his jealousy. As evidenced, Wolsey has no qualms over controlling the King's realities. He himself strives to be an oracle, to interpret reality for his audience. However, unlike the presumably sincere Greek oracles, he provides his own reality to further his ambitions. He seeks to alter events (both current and future) by manipulating perception of existing realities and encouraging belief in the realities he endorses. His duplicitous influence over the King becomes part of court reality, augmenting the relationship between belief and reality, audience and performer.

A result of Wolsey's realities, Buckingham's arrest particularly epitomizes this idea of belief becoming truth when deception shapes or becomes reality. The Duke says, "It will help me nothing / To plead mine innocence, for that dye is on me / Which makes my whitest part black" (1.1.207-9). His analogy of dye exemplifies the altering of reality by untruth. Dye certainly alters the appearance of the material, but it also becomes incorporated into, a part of, the fabric. Buckingham does not argue that he *seems* guilty. He does not claim that his "whitest part" *looks* black. Instead, he indicates that Wolsey's deception has already made him black—that at the very instant of the arrest, or the accusation, or the poisoning of the King's mind against himself, his reality changed. Ironically, Buckingham's remark anticipates Henry's own allegation (mentioned above) that he has "become as black / As if besmeared in hell" (1.2.123-

4), reinforcing the image of being smeared with dye, of changing with this new reality. And he has changed, at least in the eyes of the law, and perhaps to the eyes looking back on history. Even among the people of the court, who generally believe in his innocence, Buckingham must be viewed as a traitor and an enemy of the state. Therefore, to the Duke, the performance has already stained the real truth, has indeed become true, because others believe it to be true, or must accept it as true.

But the King and the court are not the only ones accepting this dyed truth, this altered reality: Buckingham himself immediately articulates and resigns himself to it. His submission to his fate obviously reflects his values and limited options in a state ruled by a king ruled by a cardinal.[1] But perhaps his acceptance also reveals that the dye has worked on him. His belief in his black stains gives them more validity, gives them a more pervasive impact on reality. They gain greater weight and become truer.

The Duke of Suffolk, too, reiterates the power of audience belief and the necessity for that belief in successful performance. During a conversation lamenting the Cardinal's sway over the King, Suffolk says, "His [Wolsey's] curses and his blessings / Touch me alike; they're breathe I not believe in" (2.2.51-2). He claims that Wolsey has no power over him because he does not believe in the Cardinal's performance. The Cardinal may impact his fate, but he cannot change his (Suffolk's) internal reality. Unlike Buckingham, Suffolk casts off the potential realities of Wolsey because he understands that they are deceptions, and they're deceptions he isn't fooled by. In doing so, he refuses to give Wolsey's performance consideration—a way of taking power from Wolsey into his own hands. Suffolk's assertion does ignore the impact his

[1] This is an oversimplification of the complexity of Tudor politics and government to emphasize Buckingham's limited options and Wolsey's influence. See Boris, especially pages 11-51, for an analysis of Tudor parliament and monarchy. For more information on treason and the relationship between Tudor kings and the nobility, see Brigden 140-8, 162-71.

surface reality can have on his internal reality, as well as the possibility of self-delusion regarding his internal realities. But at the same time, he reminds readers that in performance, "images of authority become subject to the approval of an audience" (Kastan 157). The very act of performing demands consideration, interpretation, and judgment from an audience who may choose to reject the performance's realities, or who may refuse to give the performance attention.

As articulated above, Wolsey's deception utilizes a method of artificial maneuvering and altering of reality and potential realities. He gatekeeps information in order to preserve control over the realities available to the King, and he often supplants existing realities with his own in order to do so. But just as he immerses reality in his deception, he likewise immerses deception in his reality.

Wolsey builds on the King's existing realities—indeed, adheres to them as much as possible—in order to achieve his deception and give his performance greater authenticity. He preys on the King's emotions, beliefs, circumstances, and—above all—desires, in order to curry favor and chase after his own ends. Armed with honeyed words, he particularly avails himself of King Henry VIII's desire for a divorce with Katherine, seemingly advancing the King's cause with the Pope. Wolsey participates in, even feeds, the King's charade of a pricked conscience over the legitimacy of his marriage to Queen Katherine, "the dowager / Sometime our brother's wife" (2.4.177-8). In other words, he reinforces the King's desire to remarry, at the same time encouraging the King in his desire to see a divorce as a painful necessity.

Wolsey appropriates Henry's realities—the realities the King has established for himself, the realities the King wants to establish for himself, and the realities the King wants to believe in. For example, when he and Cardinal Campeius enter with a commission from Rome, Wolsey presents the nature of the visit with a fawning affirmation of the justness of Henry's petition to

Rome, “the nurse of judgment,” ending with an introduction to the “just and learned” Campeius. He begins with:

> Your grace has given a precedent of wisdom
> Above all princes in committing freely
> Your scruple to the voice of Christendom.
> Who can be angry now? What envy reach you? (2.2.84-7)

With his address, Wolsey employs Henry’s existing pretensions, hopes, convictions, fears, and justifications in his performance of confidant and counselor. His words are a rather dramatic reassertion of Henry’s desired image of devout Christian striving to amend his sins—an image the King has (in part) already convinced himself to be true.

But though dramatic and transparent, the Cardinal’s fawning reinforces his loyalty and his apparent confidence in the King’s justness in “committing [his] scruple to the voice of Christendom.” It verbally affirms the King, give validity and support to his beliefs and actions. Wolsey does this again and again. Later in this same conversation, he says to the King, “I know your majesty has always loved her / So dear in heart not to deny her that / A woman of less place might ask by law” 2.2.108-10)—a reinforcement of the King’s oft-proclaimed love for Katherine, “so sweet a bedfellow,” (2.2.141) with her “rare qualities” and “her meekness saintlike (2.4.134-5). Wolsey utilizes the subtle power of suggestion. His reiteration is persuasion by nature of repetition. He helps the King delude himself, helps Henry buy into his own realities. By telling the King what he wants to hear, by making him feel good about himself, Wolsey increases the likelihood of acceptance of his performance. He yet again

acknowledges the power of belief in performance: here the King *wants* to believe, making him a ready audience for Wolsey's performance. People like to be around people who make them feel good about themselves. Similarly, audience members enjoy performances that inflate their egos and that move them, or appeal to them as true. Wolsey's performance succeeds in both, strengthening the bond between himself and his audience.

Indeed, Wolsey's rhetorical "Who can be angry now? What envy reach you?" considers and dismisses Henry's fear of criticism, at least from anyone of "goodness" and reason (2.2.87, 89). The Cardinal utilizes Henry's concern with his image, made evident by the King's continuous and public emphasis on his poor "conscience," as well as his lengthy and public narration of how he arrived at these misgivings. In other words, the Cardinal makes use of an existing emotion of Henry's to give his performance more truth. Interestingly, his reassurance is grounded not in logic, but in the assumption that the King's actions are righteous; his words evoke a "we're right because we're right" fallacy. He supports his assumption by implying that anyone who criticizes the King's actions could not possibly be people of "goodness"—he makes the situation about his own perceptions of character, rather than on logic. Like Henry has done, he makes claims about justice and truth based on his own conscience and his own appeal to conscience and rightness (Wegemer 74). He proposes a reality and backs it on his own authority. Admittedly, he serves as a cardinal, giving him a certain degree of religious authority, but it's interesting that he uses his position to make empty and biased claims about reality and justice

As illustrated, Wolsey's use of the King's realities, of his existing emotions, beliefs, and performances makes his performance all the more viable and authentic for its immersion in reality. His deception, therefore, lies as much in the *fact* of his performance, as it does rather than in *what* he is doing in his performance: his deception is in the fact that he is out for himself,

not for the King. And his betrayal gives him power and authority over the King's mind, emotions, and behavior.

The cozening cardinal himself recognizes his own clout, emphasizing the level of his control over the King's realities. When he examines the incriminating papers the King has returned to him, Wolsey asks himself, "Is there no way to cure this? / No new device to beat this from his brains?" (3.2.216-17). Aware of his subterfuge, he has not deluded himself in his methods, in his desire to seek out "new device[s]" to maintain his performance. But more significantly, his violent language connotes his sense of control over the King, and of the aggressive, forceful nature of that (self-ascribed) control. Wolsey even, at times, expects the King's obedience—and he gets it. In the aforementioned scene in which he enters with the commission from Rome, Wolsey requests, "I would Your Grace would give us but an hour/Of private conference" (2.2.79-80). He has the audacity to request the King to dismiss the nobles he's entertaining, to tell the King what to do—and the King does it. Later, at the reading of the commission, when the Queen accuses Wolsey of harming her marriage, he "require[s]" that Henry "declare, in hearing / Of all these ears…whether ever I / Did broach this business to Your Highness" (2.4.141, 142-6). And again, the King immediately accedes. Certainly, Henry's acquiescence demonstrates his feelings of friendship toward Wolsey, but they also show his willingness to comply with Wolsey's realities and surrender a degree of authority or control in public. His surrender is, of course, willing; Wolsey only has power because the King gives it freely (Tennenhouse 97). However, the King does give it upon Wolsey's demand, and he does do it in front of his subjects. Indeed, the Cardinal actually stresses the importance of the public "ear" in his insistence to be exculpated. His public dominance over the monarch makes obvious

to the court the success of his performance, but at the same time, it conveys a greater personal control over the King. It's an open acknowledgment of power.

Wolsey's deliberate and open use of authority, paired with his aggressive language, manifests his sense of control over Henry, but it also indicates his arrogance. He seems to feel he has a right to the King and to his command over him, almost to an obsessive degree. Indeed, he even claims the King's realities, his mind, his "soul" (2.2.25).

Wolsey's obsessive control over the King is evinced in the King's adoption of his realities. Wolsey tells the nobles arresting him, "So much fairer, and spotless, shall mine innocence arise / When the King knows my truth" (3.2.300-1). Wolsey clearly knows his game is up—that he is, as he says, about to fall from "the highest point of all [his] greatness (3.2.223). Vulnerable, confronted with the exposure of his true nature, he attempts to regain some measure of control over the situation with deception: he invokes his usual role of loyal subject, favorite of the King. His desperate threat is a grasping at the last shreds of his dignity, a last-ditch effort of a cornered bully. At the same time, though no longer true, his words are an open acknowledgement of his former command over the King's realities. Wolsey does not even bother to pretend that his version is "the" truth (or, rather, the most accurate rendering of reality he can provide). Instead, he refers to his version as "my truth," as a truth he has shaped or designed—and certainly one he possesses and controls. He has *ownership* over this reality. Wolsey's invocation of possession over his reality perhaps signifies the most powerful theoretical reality of all, one free from influence or control by others and their performances. Certainly such a powerful personal reality is impossible (for what reality can be wholly free of all influence and performativity?), but the concept accentuates Henry's manipulated realities.

Wolsey does not lack in confidence about the King's (former) adoption of his reality, and it's no matter of if, but "when." The King will not believe, accept, trust, or understand the new reality: he "knows" the reality. That the reality becomes what the King *knows* to be true suggests the King's full espousal of Wolsey's reality as his own, rather than a belief in a reality acknowledged to be another person's. Such a complete adoption of a performative reality necessitates a surrendering of critical distance, of his power as a viewer and judger of a performance. He relinquishes even the possibility of control of his realities. In giving Wolsey so much control, Henry allows the Cardinal a kind of possession over his realities. Indeed, if Henry fully adopts the realities Wolsey (theoretically) owns and controls, that would give Wolsey ownership over his own realities—perhaps the most penetrating and intimate form of control over a person. Indeed, ownership of reality suggests an ownership over the King's person, over his self. This "control" is, of course, a possible implication of a claim spoken in desperation by the Cardinal. But the court's continued consternation at Wolsey's "spell" over the King gives Wolsey's words a degree of validity (3.2.20); the King seems almost possessed, and certainly not himself. Members of the nobility frequently comment on Wolsey's "witchcraft" and the blindness of "The King's eyes, that so long have slept upon / This bold bad man" (3.2.18, 2.2.41-2). They're perplexed at Wolsey's surprising degree of control over Henry and the court, even referring to the Cardinal's influence as "slavery" (2.2.43), yet another indication of Wolsey's ownership. The nobles' emphasis on the Cardinal's bewitchment and on his enslavement of King and court reveals ownership of reality as perhaps the ultimate form of controlling individual reality and the epitome of power of one person over another.

RICHARD III: TRANSPARENT TREACHERY

Self-proclaimed villain, renowned deceiver, gleeful colluder—Richard III seems to exemplify the role of evil mastermind. But though "subtle, false, and treacherous" (1.1.37), Richard is hardly the deft deceiver he claims to be. Unlike Wolsey, his pursuit of power does not tend to manifest itself in outright delusion, but rather in a masterful manipulation of an entire court. I do not mean that Richard does not lie. Quite the contrary: he lies, exaggerates, and distorts the truth almost constantly, just as Wolsey does. But he does not *delude*. In general, Richard's fellow characters are not fully duped, though he does manipulate their realities. Despite his claims of deception and lies, Richard does not tend to fully manufacture untruths. His untruths are hardly wild lies spun to ensnare a blind court in a massive brainwashing. They are founded on reality. Richard appropriates the truth; he builds on and twists the existing desires, fears, weaknesses, and circumstances of his fellow characters. What he *says* is often a lie, but there is an inherent element of truth, revealing that a convincing and maintainable performance must embody some aspect of reality.

No dupe: as discussed above, very few are fooled by Richard. He has about as much popularity with the court as Wolsey enjoys. Queen Elizabeth (Lady Grey) speaks of Richard's "interior hatred / Which in [his] outward actions shows itself / Against [her] kindred, brother, and [herself" (1.3.65-7). To Queen Margaret (widow of King Henry VI, of the losing Lancastrian side), Richard is "a murderous villain," a "bottled spider," and a fawning "dog" with a "venom tooth" (1.3.134, 242, 289-91). Richard's own mother, the Duchess of York, sees through her son's transparently masked treachery: "Oh, that deceit should steal such gentle shapes / And with a virtuous vizard hide foul guile! / He is my son, yea, and therein my shame" (2.2.26-28). Even Clarence's suborned murderers feel qualms about the morality of their orders and are not blind to Richard's evil nature when they disillusion Clarence about their instructions

to execute him. These are, of course, some of the more obvious examples of open acknowledgement of (and hostility toward) Richard's "true" nature.

What of Clarence, Anne, Buckingham, King Edward? Each of them seems to be deceived or persuaded by Richard, but as Donald Watson asserts in *Shakespeare's Early History Plays*, even these characters are not fully deceived. Clarence believe his conniving brother would "labour [his] delivery" (1.1.221), but his unease manifests itself in unsettling nightmares of Richard's betrayal (Watson 103). Anne's abrupt acceptance of Richard's marriage proposals—in spite of her expressed loathing—can hardly be attributed to pure delusion. In on the plotting, Buckingham "provides [Richard's] cues" (Watson 103); he can hardly be blind to Richard's true nature. But there the argument that Richard does not deceive at all falls short. As Watson claims, King Edward does appear to be shocked when Richard pronounces Clarence's death (103), but the King's angry and sorrowful outburst is directed at the whole room, at the whole court: he says, "for my brother not a man would speak" and "none of you would once plead for his life" (2.1.125, 129). Edward's accusation is directed at everyone, not just Richard. Indeed, he never gives indication that he has lost faith in or love for his scheming brother. I will argue that Richard does deceive some of his fellow characters, but I will not emphasize his behavior as "deception." It is deception according to more traditional definition of misleading, and I will make use of the term, but I will stress Richard's role in manipulating character realities. I prefer this usage, with its connotations of maneuvering and exploiting truth, as opposed to creating untruth.

Shakespeare elucidates this manipulating of reality for performance through Richard's concern with and targeting of the realities of the other characters. He says of his own schemes, "The secret mischiefs that I set abroach / I lay unto the grievous charge of others" (1.3.325-6),

with a succeeding summary of the discord he has incited. And despite his opening description of the new "glorious summer" peace that has budded out of "the winter[y]" War of the Roses, Richard clearly recognizes that this apparent ending of hostilities is an illusion (1.1.1-2). As Watson argues, Richard immediately "take[s] advantage of [the] faction-ridden court to trigger fears and suspicions" (112). Indeed, when Richard's just-arrested brother Clarence enters, Richard tells him, "Why, this it is when men are ruled by women / 'Tis not the King that sends you to the Tower / My Lady Grey his wife, Clarence, 'tis she / That tempers him to this extremity" (1.1.61-65). Richard redirects Clarence's attention from the king, making use of the existing resentment among the nobility toward the queen's family. He does not craft a new deception, but rather turns Clarence from one reality (that of the king's mistrust) to another, though unrelated, reality (that of factions). This is not to say that the queen has anything to do with Clarence's arrest—indeed, she later claims to be "an earnest advocate to plead for him" (1.3.87)—but there is truth in the court tensions. There is truth in what Clarence feels and believes about the queen and her people. His perceptions may be inaccurate, but they do exist—they are real to him. And because they are real to him, because Clarence already mistrusts the queen's people, he can believe and accept Richard's suggested new reason for the incarceration. Richard's exploitation of an aspect of truth gives the performance authenticity.

It's noteworthy that Richard does not make use of Clarence's initial blame of the King and his "hearken[ing] after prophecies and dreams," which have "moved his highness to commit me [Clarence] now" (1.1.54, 61). Clarence's accusation is an explanation closer to the truth, even if it only contains part of the truth. Richard has intensified Edward's suspicion of his brother and his guilt over his war crimes by utilizing his uneasy dreams and "urge[ing his] hatred more to Clarence" (1.1.146). (Clarence murdered Prince Edward, son of Henry VI, during the

War of the Roses in order to gain Edward the throne—which means the King owes his power to crime and kin.) In any case, Clarence's belief that the arrest is due to the King's dreams and prophecies incorporates more truth than Richard's suggestion, and it's certainly authentic to Clarence, giving it the groundwork for a successful continued deception. But in contrast with Wolsey's parroting of Henry VII's realities, Richard chooses to make use of an alternate truth, revealing that perhaps a reality can lie too close to the truth to sustain a successful performance. His method therefore steers Clarence away from a potentially damaging truth that could undermine his deception. At the same time it gives validity to performances involving active deception as opposed to passive deception. In other words, instead of allowing or even preserving audience beliefs, he strives to shape or alter (but not necessarily change completely) those beliefs. Such an active performance builds connection between audience and performer and generates trust in the performance helped it arrive at these conclusions. It makes the audience more personally invested in and attached to the performance.

Richard's concern with and desire to alter the perceptions of characters like Clarence displays his attention to individual realities. He strives not only to deceive, to keep his own intentions hidden, but to shape the realities of others, to exert control over how they think, feel, and behave. Iago-like, he seems to enjoy the crafting of his schemes, a careful interest in the smaller details of manipulative control.

Richard's deliberate mental manipulation of Clarence is evident in his language, in *how* he accomplishes his manipulation. He verbally exchanges Clarence's reality and replaces it with his own. He dismisses Clarence's belief that it's "the King that sends [him] to the Tower" (1.1.63), but his reiteration of his brother's concern serves a secondary purpose of validation, of letting Clarence think that Richard listened to and considered his belief. But more importantly,

Richard establishes his own viewpoint by first vocalizing what *isn't* true, and then offering a replacement of what *is* true: "My Lady Grey his wife…'tis she / That tempers him to this extremity" (1.1.64-5). He does this again, more overtly, when Brakenbury (Clarence's guard) interrupts the conversation to explain that his orders were to prevent such "private conference" with Clarence (1.1.86). Richard advances an undisguisedly modified summary of their conversation:

> An't please your worship, Brakenbury,
> You may partake of any thing we say:
> We speak no treason, man: we say the King
> Is wise and virtuous, and his noble queen
> Well struck in years, fair, and not jealous;
> We say that Shore's wife hath a pretty foot,
> A cherry lip, a bonny eye, a passing pleasing tongue;
> And that the Queen's kindred are made gentlefolks:
> How say you sir? Can you deny all this? (1.1.88-96)

Here, Richard's recap is such an obvious misrepresentation of the truth that it's not supposed to be taken seriously; it's intended to be humorous, teasing, and a way to include Clarence in a shared joke. But even that is misleading. It's a crafty manipulation of language, one that reflects the power of suggestion. It's one of many examples of Richard's attention to the power of words. Though witty, Richard's corruption of the truth still plants an alternate version of reality that perhaps shapes Brakenbury's immediate interpretation by clouding the original

conversation. Certainly Richard's flippant tone proves unconcern over what has been said—thereby suggesting that Brakebury need not worry himself about it either. And at the very least, Richard's summary will compete with remembrance for the actual conversation later.

The most obvious reason, though, for Richard's eschewing of Clarence's truth for an accusation of the Queen is of course that Richard's new explanation makes better use of court divisions. Interestingly, like Wolsey, Richard also strives to remove or alter realities that could counter his own. However, his focus is centered on a court, not one person, and he wants to fortify the existing divisions. His work with competing realities must maintain those separations, must prevent cohesion—uniting of realities or a uniting of court members under one reality.

While there is indeed tension between the king and Clarence, Richard perceives the power of collective tensions over individual tensions. Indeed, he starts with the "in-it-together," group aspect of his suggested reason: "Why, this it is when men are ruled by women." He poses a larger problem of women as a threat to male power, a "this is bigger than us" scenario, with men as the victims. Even if meant in jest, this "us versus them" scenario evokes camaraderie, a sense of being wronged as a group. This group mentality is easily transferred to Richard's posed problem of the queen's influence, indicating performance's capacity to direct and project emotions. But why the attention to collectiveness in the first place? Richard's focus on group mentality attests to his recognition of an audience of more than one. He's not just performing for Clarence, he's performing for the court; he's performing with the awareness that audience members influence each other, that there's a theater atmosphere to establish. Audiences, crowds, groups—in each of these, members build on each other. Shared beliefs and responses are affirmed and spread, reinforcing a successful performance. And as Shakespeare implies, audiences are, to varying degrees, participants in performance, and good actors must consider not

only how the performance will be received, but also how it will be participated in. Clarence, on his way to prison and probable execution, hardly seems like a good example of Richard's concern with audience. But rather, he exemplifies Richard's careful attention to detail, Richard's understanding that he must not "run before [his] horse to market" (1.1.159). Until an audience member is fully disposed of, that member is worthy of performance.

Furthermore, there is power in collective reality and in the successful manipulation of that reality. In *Staging Politics*, Wolfgang Iser argues that "the pursuit of self-interest takes place through the manipulation of collective beliefs" (49). Iser gives special weight to shared norms and values and their role in change, maintaining that it's through the shifting of social norms that power itself shifts. Collective beliefs (and divisions) run deeper, are more ingrained, more validated, than personal ones—thus, to have control over collective beliefs is to have greater control over an audience. Richard's attention to collective beliefs is again demonstrated in his use of rumor to justify his behavior, or at least to ensure doubt in his audience's mind over the truth. For example, he spreads a fabrication of the princes' bastardy, and even of the late King's possible bastardy. He indirectly orders Lord Mayor to disseminate the alleged "manner and purpose of [Hastings's] treason" (3.5.56). Once king, Richard demands his servant Catesby to "Rumor it abroad/That Anne my wife is sick and like to die" (4.2.50-1). By utilizing rumor, a different use of collective beliefs, Richard is able to generate a kind of living performance, a performance that he sparks off with the understanding that it will grow and spread. Here, he makes use of the collective need to make sense of and interpret reality, as well as audience difficulty with accurately representing the truth. In other words, audience members can only explain what they believe to be true or what they recall or how they interpreted something; they cannot perfectly capture the whole of something. Richard utilizes this difficulty with

representation in that rumor tends to disseminate multiple versions of reality (or multiple potential realities), lending to an atmosphere of confusion and doubt.

But the mere shifting of collective beliefs isn't sufficient in the pursuit of power. Iser cites Richard's casting off of his society and its norms, his adoption of the appropriate norms to disguise his intent, and *then* his manipulation of the norms his society believes in, suggesting that the achievement of power requires performance (50). In other words, the attainment of power generally requires not only change, but ambition and dissimulation.

Richard, like Wolsey, recognizes the value of reality for successful performance, as evinced above. He concentrates on the court as a whole, and he enjoys a more artful manipulation of his audiences existing realities, but he still utilizes their circumstances, minds, and emotions—the things that drive them and impact their choices. And like Wolsey, Richard utilizes aspects other than reality in his performance. He, too, eliminates rival realities to gain and maintain power—both physically and verbally. He physically removes them to make way for himself in the role of King, and he verbally disposes of or alters competing realities to prevent court cohesion. But this cannot be enough when his audience is not deluded by his performance, when his performance is so often transparent. He also avails himself of the lack of agency of the characters around him to construct and maintain a passive audience. He exploits their lack of options to build an atmosphere of silent and apprehensive obedience.

Richard's thinly masked, often transparent, treachery in his ambitions proves that a successful wielding of power through performance requires not necessarily illusion or a total replacement of reality—not necessarily full belief—but rather subjects of that power who are uncertain about the truth and who are either unable or unwilling to take action. They don't have to be completely on board; they just have to obey. As in a performance on a stage, Richard's

performance requires an audience willing or forced to suspend its disbelief. Richard's accession to the throne particularly elucidates his manipulation of fear and lack of choice in a transparently performed charade. They set up a scenario designed to compel their audience (the citizens and Lord Mayor) to urge the crown on Richard. But their performance could not be much more obvious. Buckingham himself refers to Richard's clergymen as "props of virtue" and describes the prayer book as an "ornament" (3.7.90, 93), openly calling attention to the performativity of the moment. And indeed, since he has incorporated himself into the audience, he can provide their cues (for they are a part of the sham)—even though they must be familiar with his association with Richard. But by providing the charade, Richard and Buckingham accomplish several necessary elements for obedience. They create uncertainty about the truth with an alternate reality—the subjects may unsure of what exactly is happening, may even doubt Richard's sincerity or the charade, but they are left in doubt or confusion. The two schemers also provide an acceptable reality for their audience to cling to; they allow their audience to suspend its disbelief. And by supplying the scene and the cues, Richard and Buckingham provide direction for their audience, making compliance easy. Finally, their charade enacts a performance of choice for the audience. Lord Mayor and the citizens may not feel like they have much choice, but according to the charade they're participating in, they chose to give Richard his power.

But even when Richard's audiences do not want to bend to his wishes, they do not usually refuse him (and if they do, it isn't for long). The scrivener, referring to Richard's ascension to power, demonstrates this collective passivity, remarking, "Why, who's so gross / That sees not this palpable device? / Yet who's so bold but says he sees it not?" (3.6.10-12). The citizens involved in Richard's crowning perhaps best exemplify silence; prior to the crowning

scene, Buckingham "play[s] the orator" (3.5.92), speaking out before the citizens and Lord Mayor of the princes' supposed bastardy and urging Richard's ascension to the throne. But, as Buckingham relates, "the citizens are mum, and speak not a word" but rather "gazed each on other, and look'd deadly pale" (3.7.3, 21). They do not appear to buy into Richard's fictions, but they do not feel safe or certain enough to react openly; they are "deadly pale" with fear. They cannot be *sure* of what is real, and what is not. Richard exploits this uncertainty, this fear to ensure obedience. His audience's lack of agency, voice, choice, and certainty enables his power.

CONCLUSION:

As demonstrated through Wolsey's and Richard's pursuit of power through performance, power is achieved and maintained by commanding audience reality. Both actors manifest the importance of utilizing some aspect of truth in order to authenticate the realities they promote, but they diverge in their demands from their audiences. Wolsey requires belief in his reality, and through that belief, he incorporates his performance into reality. Richard, on the other hand, generally does not need full belief (though he certainly won't shy away from it), but his performance grounds itself on audience uncertainty. In their confusion and their inability to grasp onto (or at least fully pinpoint) any solid truth—they remain indecisive and unable to take action.

However, although both villains achieve successful performances at first, it's noteworthy that both fail. Wolsey—who does not ever achieve his goal of the papacy—depends too fully on the belief of a single audience member—to his cost. At the same time, he has too many enemies just waiting for him to slip. They do not seem to impact his downfall, but they reveal the shakiness of his deception for an audience of one. And lastly, his double-dealing with the King

and the Pope—his attempt to maintain too many realities—eventually exposes his deception. He had too much to keep up with. Indeed, his own misplaced documents shed light on his betrayal. On the other hand, Richard's performance seems maintainable initially. But when his performances become too transparent, they collapse. By the end of the his reign, his rule is marked by paranoia, threats, and use of force, rather than even an obvious charade for his audience to cling to. Perhaps he becomes too confident, or perhaps he is unable to successfully perform the role of King for his (now) larger audience, but he no longer carefully attends to the minute details of his performance—no longer ensures that every audience member is given attention, puncturing holes in his deception. Perhaps a better balance between Wolsey's and Richard's performance methods is required for a sustainable deception.

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