The Kingly Bastard & the Bastardly King: Nation, Imagination, and Agency in Shakespeare's *King John*

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In *The Life and Death of King John*, Shakespeare delivers a controversial character who demonstrates remarkable imagination, individuality, and agency, a fictional Bastard whom the playwright uses to interrogate notions of "truth," "rightness," and legitimacy. The Bastard character's capacities are important, because as the pivot between Shakespeare's two tetralogies, *King John* was first staged as England moved from empire to nation. It is argued here that Shakespeare's history, about the reign of perhaps England's worst king, encouraged playgoers to think of themselves as individuals with the agency necessary to *choose* nation rather than merely exist as subjects whose nation chose them.[1] While complexly persuasive, the play is not polemical or propagandistic in the traditional sense. *King John* thematically echoes and supports much of the propagandistic print media of the day, but because it is not a polemic, the play invites audiences to reason with and against its characters, in particular with the Bastard character, as they attempt to navigate the "thorns and dangers" of their world (4.3.147).[2]

This article proposes Shakespeare's richly imagined Bastard, Philip Falconbridge, son of Richard the Lionhearted, as a very different sort of hero and protagonist, and it uses him as a prism through which to see Shakespeare's participation in the project to imagine or invent an England. In applying Benedict Anderson's ideas of "imagined" nations and national community, and in building on Claire McEachern's proposition that Shakespeare, along with Edmund Spenser and Michael Drayton, wrote or inscribed a nation through texts, this article interrogates *King John* as part of a larger study that reads Shakespeare's histories as contributors to and not merely portrayals of national identity, a project that similarly reads *Richard III* and *Henry V*.[3] This

particular reading argues that the play is not contradictory or confused in its presentation of the Bastard, as some critics have found it, but rather that the character's transformation in his pursuit of an "ordering of the time" is a key to understanding the kind of nationalism that Shakespeare is seemingly advocating or, regardless of intent, persuasively depicts in this complex play. It is a reading that sees language not as a neutral medium, passing freely and easily into the private property of any speaker's or interpreter's intentions, but one that interprets Shakespeare's histories as a coherent, cohesive attempt to implement a nation, or, to use a less anachronistic term, nation-ness.[4]

To propose some possibilities about what Shakespeare communicated to audiences in the late 1590s when *King John* was probably written and first performed, this article considers a few organizing questions: What does the Bastard character, as he who possibly "embodies England and the English soul," suggest from the perspective of a noble about "Englishness" and England as nation?[5] To use Anderson's terms, how does the Bastard contribute to the idea of England as "an imagined political community . . . both inherently limited and sovereign," rather than defaulting to the early Tudor notion of nation as merely race, kind, or kin?[6] If nationhood is, to use Stephen Kemper's phrase, "a conversation that the present holds with the past," Shakespeare can be seen as informing this conversation by blending the historical and the fictional, and in this naturalized blend drawing from and contributing to the collective memory (or *post-memory*, as Anderson refers to it) and shared culture that are necessary ingredients of nation-ness as a cultural expression.[7] This view of nation-ness is in contrast to England as empire, as Henry VIII declared it to be more than sixty years prior to Shakespeare's writing of King John.[8]

In interrogating Shakespeare's conscious or unconscious project to create or imagine a nation, *King John* is a text worth close examination. The play's politics "seem beyond dispute," as David Womersley put it, ending with "a note of refreshed, exhilarated patriotism and newly forged national integrity."[9] The utterly national Bastard is the last man standing, ending the play with an attempt to inspire future England to be to "true" to itself. In this attempt, Shakespeare, through his character, therefore imagines a unified and unifying national "truth." But the Bastard's patriotism is not simply reflexive; it is considered and questioning, crystallizing as the character becomes a noble, even kingly citizen. This article, therefore, disagrees with

Alexander Leggatt's view of the Bastard as merely "drifting" into his allegiance.[10] Falconbridge stirringly declares at the play's close, in some of the play's most memorable lines:

> This England never did, nor never shall,
> Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,
> But when it first did help to wound itself.
> Now these her princes are come home again,
> Come the three corners of the world in arms,
> And we shall shock them. Nought shall make us rue,
> If England to itself do rest but true. (5.7.116-22)

Background

Lacking a conventionally satisfying protagonist and absent a miraculously heroic ending, the "notoriously episodic" *King John* is very rarely staged.[11] First performed since the time of Shakespeare in February 1737 at Covent Garden in London, a staging that was revived in 1823, the play eschews a traditional narrative and a prototypical hero.[12] In attempting to explain this, Sigurd Burkhardt surmised that Shakespeare was "bored with a theatrical chore," more interested in finishing quickly, with "no way to put Humpty Dumpty back together again."[13] This criticism is misguided.

While not wholly neglected in the literature, *King John* has not generated anything of the same scholarly interest or output as Shakespeare's other plays, including all of his histories. Emrys Jones suggests that of all of the playwright's early plays, it is *King John* that has "receded furthest from us, so that a special effort is needed to recover it."[14] Scholars have been particularly quiet on the subject in the last twenty-five years, after a flurry of interest in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Perhaps disillusionment after the Vietnam War and Watergate fueled an interest in the play's themes of sedition and political commodity, at least among scholars in the United States.

Though the play's relatively low profile and even languishing could be explained by the infrequency of its staging, Virginia Mason Vaughan has suggested that the play is ignored more because it does not fall within the broad scope of series like the two tetralogies between which it somewhat awkwardly sits.[15] No book-length scholarship of *King John* has yet been published, and it does not help the play's popularity, as Carole Levin points out, that John, the historical figure, has been despised with near unanimity for centuries.[16] His military defeats, stamping rages, and appalling cruelties, his sloth, lechery, and gluttony, and his

capitulation both to the Pope and to his own rebellious barons establish him as perhaps the "worst monarch to rule England."[17]

Following Shakespeare's visually daring *Richard III*, *King John* should be seen as a further dramatic development away from or beyond the moralist tradition in theater and a recognition by Shakespeare that the God-ordained Tudor progression assumed by so many of the period's plays ultimately was an imaginative dead end. *King John* can and perhaps should be read, therefore, as a series of debates and point-counterpoints, which provides for an interesting look at the playwright's development in his writing of history. Shakespeare in the play moves beyond local political interests and elevates his view of national identity and of citizenship, and he does this ingeniously through the experience of one of the period's ultimate "others," a bastard son. Unfortunately, a series of debates does not lend itself to dynamic staging, as several scholars have noted, which likely explains its rarity on the world's stages.[18]

Elizabethan era history plays were expected to shed light on contemporary events by holding up a mirror on the times and by providing examples that could be studied for their immediate practical importance.[19] Playwrights drew from the past for didactic purposes, liberally re-mixing historical events for these purposes.[20] Actors during this period were among the "chroniclers of man's great deeds," and it was in the theater that the "actions of the world are preserved for the instruction of future generations," as Anne Righter put it.[21] *King John* does not disappoint in this regard, but in this reading, the play also is regarded as part of a much larger project to imagine an England, a project that, as Anderson argued, depended upon a unifying print culture, and a project that, as McEachern conceives of it, joins Shakespeare with Spenser ("The Faerie Queen") and Drayton ("Poly-Olbion") as writers of "political discourse [that] inscribe and imagine a nation."[22] Elizabethan history plays can be considered as part of a print culture that welded the nation together in, as Michael Neill put it, "helping to reform the inchoate babble of a bastard tongue into a true national language."[23]

In communicating and, as works of fiction, even creating this collective memory, or what Stephen Greenblatt calls "the collective consciousness of the kingdom," Shakespeare's history plays furnish the project to inscribe and imagine a nation with what Roland Barthes described as a mythic truth and a naturalized history.[24] As a contributor to this cultural consciousness and

corporate identity, Elizabethan theater created imaginary worlds of increasing naturalism and depth, fostering a belief in playgoers that illusion could exercise power over reality.[25] The play metaphor is quite powerful, making the theater an important source of what was a "newfound sense of national unity and purpose which was the mainspring of Elizabethan activity in every field," according to John Dover Wilson, writing in his introduction to *King John*.[26] The degree to which this "sense" of national unity and identity was true or accurate or real is beside the point: as Anderson argues, "nationhood" here is an ideal and imagining of something forever just beyond reach. Thus, Shakespeare's histories are involved in something much larger than propaganda or patriotism, or what Gerald Newman defines as "a mere primitive feeling of loyalty."[27]

The mostly propagandistic plays that were contemporary during the reign of Elizabeth promoted a larger narrative of God divinely appointing Elizabeth and the Tudor reign after and perhaps because of the sins of the Plantagenets, Yorks, and Lancasters. In his imaginative capacity and "loyal but searching study of England's past," Shakespeare did much more than support the orthodox casting of contemporary politics, however, and it is his unorthodoxy that is highlighted in *King John*, Shakespeare's only play dramatizing English medieval history prior to the fall of Richard II.[28] It is important in the larger project that the play looks back to one of the first kings of the Plantagenet dynasty in order to condemn that reign, but in that condemnation to hold up, examine, and celebrate the Bastard's self-determination and the transformation of what could be called civic duty into the much more powerful and persuasive desire.

Myth and history

Emrys Jones described the Bastard character as standing "with one foot in history, the other in myth"; he can thus appeal to a "deep layer of audience-memory."[29] As a mythic character in the Barthesian sense, a social type, and epithet, the Bastard conflates "past significance and performed meaning."[30] Like the hero of a medieval romance, he is larger than life, while at the same time believable, life-size, heroic, yet also human. Playgoers read and experience this myth as a story that is at once unreal and yet true, or the bearer of larger truths; this is the principle of myth: history transformed into nature as its myths are experienced as "innocent speech."[31] The Bastard's speech is all the more innocent because he is so human, just a "good, blunt

fellow," in the playwright's description (1.1.72). He establishes a connection with audiences immediately, just as they are getting acquainted with him in act 1. He does this with a sense of humor and ready wit, because of his satirizing view of nobility and court life, and due to his comic familiarity with his own illegitimacy. Jones credits the character with "warmth and energy of mind," and with a good-humored laughter that is a "most powerful and rapid of creative solvents."[32] Yet he maintains enough distance from the action of the play, what little there is, to comment on and make meaning of it, even to earn the audience's trust as a guide to the "truth" of the play. In Barthes's terms, the Bastard invites, if not obliges, playgoers to acknowledge the intentions that have motivated him as myth and *King John* as history because myth does not hide, but privileges or signals a particular, even individual history, as "a confidence and as a complicity."[33]

This complicity is all the more intriguing because, as a bastard, the character draws attention to the nature of order, authority, legitimacy, and, for this play, all-important "right" and "right-ness," especially for a society organized on paternal authority. Plays with a prominent bastard character "advertise an awareness of the false consciousness which creates legitimacy and upholds . . . the State," as Alison Findlay argues in her exhaustive history of bastardy in Renaissance England.[34] Because through the father a son claims his inheritance and is eligible for, among other "rights," civil office, the character's bastardy is a commentary on John's own claim to the crown, which, depending on how the play is interpreted, is also either an affirmation or a critique of Elizabeth's own claim to the throne. (Her own "secret" bastardy had been declared in the 1536 Succession Act.[35]) *King John*'s Bastard is, after all, a contravention of the law, as John himself notes in the first act, just as the King, though affirmed by the law in a *de facto* sense, is a bastard to the throne. He possesses it, but, at least in Shakespeare's telling, has not the same right to it that Arthur does. This makes the king's knighting of the Bastard in act 1 a wicked joke on the king himself: the bastard king making legitimate the Bastard son of Richard, in contravention of English common law, and giving the Bastard possession of a place in the court to which the Bastard has no "right" (1.1.117-30). The Bastard's physical presence and his ascension to knighthood in turn illegitimates the law, which is typically personified as male, as "father," in counterposition to the feminine or motherly love of country. To anticipate the play's climax, this bastardy also precludes Philip/Richard Falconbridge

from laying any sort of claim to the crown himself, lacking as he does his father's name, even though he is by play's end its most kingly character.

In rendering a very individual history of an invented bastard character, portraying him as the key agent in what otherwise is a reading of a national history, Shakespeare was making a most unorthodox move in that most orthodox of nationalistic enterprises—that of fostering patriotism. Following the character's cues in the source text, *The Troublesome Raigne of King John*, Shakespeare has the Bastard sever his familial ties in order to dedicate him to service to nation. His domestic origins become national, and his nationalism and patriotism become more important in the play than honor, "right," and objective meaning or truth, which are trampled by several characters in the play. "But truth is truth," Robert Falconbridge says, to point to just one example, when clearly "truth" is not truth (1.1.106). This continual trampling for Eamon Grennan is "one of the most striking linguistic features of the play."[36] The Bastard's origins and "rights" are contested even within his own family, for whom he is an inconvenient "truth" or presence. It is relatively easy for the character, then, to disintegrate in favor of service to nation, and he is immediately welcomed into John's court and adopted as a Plantagenet, dedicated to a career as caretaker of England rather than as caretaker of the Falconbridge estate.[37]

It is important that Shakespeare, like the author of *The Troublesome Raigne*, gives the last and most patriotic lines to the Bastard, lines spoken after the character has proven his mettle and merit on the battlefield. In Shakespeare's imagining of national community, "nation is . . . conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship," as Anderson described it, even despite the inequality and exploitation of its members, including and especially the "illegitimate," the lowly, the bastards.[38] It is this fraternity that makes it possible for the Bastard to so willingly risk death. And this has not changed. So many are willing to die for such limited national imaginings as the flag or the uniform, which are, in their simplest terms, mere symbols. The Bastard character can be read as contributing to this fraternity in profound ways, and to a particular imagining for which he would quite readily die. Shakespeare has the Bastard prove this willingness valiantly on the battlefield to mark even greater the contrast between the bastard "hero" and the incompetent king, the play's true illegitimate.

Whether the Bastard character can be rightly called a hero is a question on which scholars are fairly evenly split.[39] On one hand, E. A. J. Honigmann offers evidence of the Bastard's hero status in noting that the personal pronoun "I" is used fifty-eight times in the play's first act, fifty-one of those by the Bastard character, who is almost alone in enjoying the privilege of the soliloquy.[40] He is a protagonist of sorts, and in his agency and volition this "hero" can be read as moving from "subject" to "citizen," or to a rather innovative idea or model of citizenship for the period, even a controversial one.[41] Thus, he provides the project to imagine a nation with an important cognitive or imaginative bridge over which to cross to nation from empire, to citizenship from subjection, and to agency and choice (and, therefore, true fraternity) from blind loyalty and obedience. The Bastard therefore chooses the true and right path to loyalty and patriotism, as only a bastard son excluded from the patriarchal State could. His choice is sealed in the play's final words. This agency and autonomy, smartly mobilized by an "unnatural," illegitimate character, demonstrate Shakespeare's imaginative capacity. Ernest Gellner uses "nationalism" to describe "not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness," but the *invention* of nations where they do not exist.[42] The Bastard provides, then, a bedrock principle or seed of true nationalism in this Gellner sense, as opposed to unthinking, lockstep loyalty.

On the other hand, E. M. W. Tillyard, John Dover Wilson, J. L. Simmons, and R. Ornstein argue that the play is patriotic, but not propagandistic. Tillyard, et al., argue that Shakespeare's histories uncritically present the Tudor worldview in expressions of blind, royalist patriotism.[43] "That the plays assert the evils of rebellion and are generally orthodox in their support of the Tudor monarchy is obvious," as Ribner put it. "They could scarcely have been staged had they done otherwise."[44] This description fails to appreciate Shakespeare's innovation in his use of the Bastard's subversive power to critique law, authority, and succession, even as he ultimately affirms them. David Womersley correctly identifies the playwright's "unorthodox orthodoxy," both in mode and means, because in articulating and effecting personal agency, self-determination, and choice, Shakespeare proves remarkably heterodox.[45]

The invention of agency

To appreciate Shakespeare's use of the Bastard character in *King John*, it is useful to compare the playwright's Bastard with

that of his likely primary source, the anonymously penned *The Troublesome Raigne of John, King of England*, as several scholars have done.[46] For both plays, the character has no clear historical referent, giving each playwright license to use the character to provoke and proscribe, decry and comment, criticize and instigate.[47] *The Troublesome Raigne* deploys the anti-papal character for an explicitly orthodox set piece of Tudor propaganda that promotes reflexive obedience to the crown, the unquestioned sovereignty of the king, and the dangers of seditious acts. Shakespeare, however, in a far more nuanced and complex construction, de-emphasizes religious themes and blind patriotism. As a whole, *King John* is only "mildly Protestant," and it is relatively gentle with England's chief "other," the French.[48] Shakespeare emphasizes the Bastard's moral and national development as a metaphor for legitimacy; the Bastard is Shakespeare's moral and political center of gravity or fulcrum for what otherwise is a see-saw series of arguments. The real creativity in Shakespeare's play, then, is the question he chooses to ask as the basis for the narrative and for the motivations of his characters. This determination controls all others.

In the beginning of both plays, the Bastard is presented with a question and choice by Queen Elinor. From Shakespeare's version, the Bastard must decide

> Whether hadst thou rather be: a Falconbridge,
> And like thy brother to enjoy thy land,
> Or the reputed son of Coeur-de-lion,
> Lord of thy presence, and no land beside? (1.1.135-38)

In other words, Bastard must choose either to be the safe caretaker of the family estate or, risking safety and all else, dare a path to caretaking England and her king. In the propagandistic *Troublesome Raigne*, the typical stage ruffian lacks the capacity, morally or spiritually, to deny his heritage and lineal history as part of "a worshipful society" (1.1.206). Thus, he "chooses," or defaults to, his Falconbridge identity and the estate that comes with it. In Shakespeare's version, however, one in which the Bastard has an even stronger legal claim on his family inheritance, the character immediately chooses instead a place in King John's court and the "right" to die for country on the battlefield. As a bastard, Falconbridge understands full well the limitations of legitimacy and "right," perhaps better than anyone but the usurping king, and in his choice he transcends or at least re-defines both legitimacy and right in a way the king cannot.

In his free agency, the Bastard can be read as representing all Englishmen, or "subjects," facing questions of loyalty amidst competing claims to the crown. Few playgoers could have missed the parallel between John and Arthur on the one hand and Elizabeth and Mary on the other. The Bastard marks John as the true bastard, just as Elizabeth's bastardy, while unspoken, served to underline doubts of her legitimacy as queen. The Bastard answers Elinor's question: "Brother, take you my land, I'll take my chance" (1.1.152), and thus he rejects a history that would grant and guarantee name and title for the freedom to create both. He chooses the freedom to create or re-create himself, to become "lord of his presence" while still a "bastard to the time" (1.1.208). Yes, he is fictional, but in the theater, all characters ultimately are fictional, as John himself acknowledges in act 5: "I am a scribbled form, drawn with a pen" (5.7.33).

The Bastard's fictionality, then, is precisely how he can serve as metaphor for England, especially a future-facing England trying to resolve its past (to once again evoke Stephen Kemper's notion of nation-ness). As someone without historical referent, the Bastard is free to invent himself in ways that the play's historical characters cannot. By foregrounding this invention, Shakespeare moves to the background the heretofore seemingly immutable defaults of blood, paternity, and genealogy, which are shown in Shakespeare's play, suddenly and startlingly, to be subject to the Bastard's personal agency.[49] He is not unlike the citizens of Angiers in act 2, who, in the Bastard's own words, must choose to whom to prove loyal (and, therefore, to whom to become disloyal). "By heaven, these scroyles of Angiers flout you, kings, / And stand securely on their battlements / As in a theatre, whence they gape and point / At your industrious scenes and acts of death" (2.1.380-83). As he so often does, Shakespeare uses the artifices of the theater to limn the limits of politics.

In contrast to the timid, commodious citizens of Angiers, the Bastard establishes his independence in the play's opening scene through the zodiac of his intelligence and wit. At first irreverent and satiric, he resurfaces throughout the play, maturing along the way into an eloquent, stirring voice for England as sovereign, independent nation; he becomes "the mouthpiece of official patriotism," as Grennan describes him.[50] But he becomes much more as he goes beyond politics and history to more universal themes and questions. The character's sarcasm and wit supply him the distance Shakespeare needs to make the character a sort of spectator-surrogate; he is involved in the action, but sufficiently

disengaged to comment on it, just as he does in Angiers on the battlements.[51] His speeches get special force from the fact that their voice is that of a cynical observer. This critical distance makes his considered choice of country over self-interested gain worth studying.

Shakespeare's move away from reflexive obedience is important because before the Bastard can represent the body politic as a horizontal fraternity of loyal citizens, the "hero" must first become worthy by showing the way. For the Bastard, as for the king, the limits of legitimacy and "right" are the principal problems. The character of the Bastard is a questioning of the legitimacy—its genesis and nature. The Bastard sees, as John surely does, the distinction between being "true begot" and "well begot" (1.1.76-78). While he cannot fully control the former, regardless of his choice, he can achieve the latter, just as John "by chance but, not by truth" obtained the throne (1.1.170). The Bastard passes this first test in much the same way that the king fails his, thus presenting in microcosm England's national crisis. The Bastard successfully claims a right to his father's estate, even over his elder brother's claim, then determines his identity by leaving that estate. The king, meanwhile, will be defeated by France and then by the papal legate, before being poisoned by a monk. The Bastard's world is forming just as John's is disintegrating.

In the transition or, more accurately, transformation that the opening scene begins, the Bastard shakes off the fetters of the Vice character type of the morality plays on which he is clearly based, especially in the earlier *The Troublesome Raigne*; rather, he is an evolutionary link from the Vice character to a wonderfully and newly creative, individuated character, one who in his individuality ennobles his ultimate choice of a unified if imperfect England over no England at all. When faced with the existential problem of finding meaning and orientation in a topsy-turvy world of moral confusion, ambiguity, and win-at-all-costs politics, "the man of action becomes for an intense moment the man of thought."[52] He is, in other words, a portrait of emergent patriotism that contrasts sharply with the Tudor propaganda of the day, which, in addition to *The Troublesome Raigne*, included John Bale's earlier chronicle, *Kynge Johan*, John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, and various broadsides and pamphlets.[53] This mostly anti-Catholic, war-mongering propaganda promoted the principles of order and allegiance to the throne, not as a matter of rational choice, but unthinkingly as absolutes. Rational

choice, after all, implies the possibility that a person might at different times and in different circumstances choose differently. Shakespeare's genius is in dramatizing the fatherless Bastard as ratifier of paternal order and orthodoxy, at a time when Elizabeth most needed it.

With the Bastard's autonomy established and his future a mostly blank slate, to what does the Bastard commit? If he is the play's kingly or "true" character, and his juxtaposition with John helps to establish this, why does Shakespeare have the Bastard deliver a speech in act 2 declaring as his gods "that smooth-faced gentleman" commodity and self-interested gain? Is his cosmopolitan perspective no different from anyone else's?

> Mad world, mad kings, mad composition!
> John, to stop Arthur's title in the whole,
> Hath willingly departed with a part,
> And France, whose armour conscience buckled on,
> Whom zeal and charity brought to the field
> As God's own soldier, rounded in the ear
> With that same purpose-changer, that sly devil,
> That broker that still breaks the pate of faith,
> That daily break-vow, he that wins of all,
> Of kings, of beggars, old men, young men, maids,
> Who, having no external thing to lose
> But the word 'maid,' cheats the poor maid of that:
> That smooth-faced gentleman, tickling commodity,
> Commodity, the bias of the world,
> The world, who of itself is peisèd well,
> Made to run even upon even ground,
> Till this advantage, this vile-drawing bias,
> This sway of motion, this commodity,
> Makes it take head from all indifferency,
> From all direction, purpose, course, intent:
> And this same bias, this commodity,
> This bawd, this broker, this all-changing word,
> Clapped on the outward eye of fickle France,
> Hath drawn him from his own determined aid,
> From a resolved and honourable war,
> To a most base and vile-concluded peace.
> And why rail I on this commodity?
> But for because he hath not wooed me yet:
> Not that I have the power to clutch my hand,
> When his fair angels would salute my palm:
> But for my hand, as unattempted yet,
> Like a poor beggar, raileth on the rich.
> Well, whiles I am a beggar, I will rail,

> And say there is no sin but to be rich:
> And being rich, my virtue then shall be
> To say there is no vice but beggary:
> Since kings break faith upon commodity,
> Gain be my lord, for I will worship thee. (2.1.571-608)

This speech is the play's bewildering riddle and the fault line along which criticism of the play chiefly divides. As van de Water put it, this soliloquy is "an extremely difficult speech for critics who would have the Bastard the embodiment of kingliness."[54] For her, the Bastard is simply a "thinly disguised vice" who clumsily becomes or is replaced for the last two acts by "the embodiment of active and outraged nationalism."[55] In her interpretation, the character first chooses commodity. In a lop-sided, misshapen play, two bastards bearing absolutely no relation to each other animate the action in a sort of tag-team fashion. For other critics, such as Manheim and Tillyard, the Bastard evolves and grows as he navigates his "mad world." He becomes the moral voice and conscience of England just as John crumbles, to further muddy the already murky moral waters that all of the characters stumblingly, haltingly navigate.

Clues to the riddle are perhaps in the speech itself, in particular the pejorative references to commodity and gain, which as the Bastard's professed goals may or may not be authentic. A "vile-drawing bias" and a "sly devil," commodity is personified by the Bastard as an indifferent and bawdy broker tempting with wealth. Even the coins are deceptive, embossed with "fair angels," corrupting the world and its kings. For an otherwise noble, even regal character, surely such a devilish "god" cannot be his, a god claimed only at the very end as sanctioned by Philip's and John's own demonstrated allegiance to commodity above all else. Tillyard noted Shakespeare's use of "this all-changing word" as a reference to God's creation of the world through the Word, a word that in the devil's hands (and mouth) becomes all-corrupting and rends the fabric of God's order.[56] The result is, naturally, a "mad world, mad kings, mad composition." The Bastard's ultimate choice, which is anything but commodity traditionally understood, strains van de Water's analysis. Audiences can see this; they know the Bastard is different, that he is the play's moral agent who, as he moves through the play, reveals the true character of those around him.

Given the action of the play, seeking personal gain is the logical application of the Bastard's analysis of the world's "composition." His analysis seems troublingly accurate. Where

the Bastard is a true "bastard to the time," the "true sons to the time"—John, Philip, Pandulph, and the nobles Salisbury, Pembroke, and Bigot—prove the Bastard's critique to be accurate.[57] All of these players "break faith upon commodity." John surrenders his French holdings "to stop Arthur's title," despite his threats in act 1 that England's cannon would be heard as a "trumpet of our wrath" (1.1.26-27). He then declares allegiance to the Pope to halt Lewis's invasion of England (5.1.1-5), even after speaking so eloquently that "no Italian priest" would ever "tithe or toll in our dominions" (3.1.81-82). Pandulph coldly and very successfully manipulates France and England, Philip and John, against each other, with little or no regard for principle or conviction; he is utterly pragmatic in geopolitical terms, seeking nothing but gain for the papacy. With their own agency, the nobles choose rebellion over national unity.

These choices disqualify these characters as the play's center of moral vision, even as they strew the moral landscape of the last man standing, that of the Bastard, with "thorns and dangers." In so doing, these commodious choices highlight bastardy as an organizing metaphor, as Stroud pointed out, and they present ironically and with great clarity the distorted values of the society the Bastard chose for himself.[58] While he chooses "rightly" and leads England against France, bravely fighting for the king (and, in another irony, living up to his natural father's lion-hearted reputation for battlefield valor), the "true" sons of the time wish to take flight at even the hint of treachery, before Arthur can be proven dead by the king's command. Thus, Shakespeare creates parallels between the very public action on the stage and the betrayals of the bedchamber—the adultery that leads to illegitimate children. For Tillyard, the theme of rebellion, or infidelity at a national level, gives a play generally lacking in unity at least a measure of it.[59]

Another seed of the Bastard's true character inscribed by Shakespeare in act 1, his willingness to die for country, should be considered in a national context. When Elinor asks him to join her army bound for France, the Bastard does not hesitate: "Madam, I'll follow you into the death" (1.1.155). This same resoluteness is on display later, in act 4 after the death of Arthur, in a scene that is the play's pivot. For Anderson, it is this willingness to die even more than the willingness to kill that attests to the imaginative power of "nation-ness," a conception of "deep, horizontal comradeship" that is capable of justifying such commitment.[60] This idea of ultimate sacrifice can only come with an idea of

purity through fatality. Also, the Bastard's quick commitment to die for queen and country is complemented by a generosity of spirit and patience shown toward his mother later in the first act. Playgoers are likely to affiliate with him, therefore, recognizing that though he is about to embark on his great adventure, he unselfishly turns his attentions to comforting his mother, Lady Falconbridge (1.1.261-78).

For Grennan, too, the play presents two different bastard characters, but the change or switch can be explained if the character is seen as an individual in the first three acts and, in the final two acts, the personification of conventional, official patriotism, though one that is willingly embraced, even desired. "The explosive personality of the earlier part of the play has stiffened into an official posture," Grennan writes, as the character sheds his individuality to become the public, symbolic voice of orthodoxy.[61] Thus, Grennan straddles the critical fault line, rationalizing the split as Shakespeare's shifting of the play's center of gravity and, here conceiving of Shakespeare as a historian, its transfiguring of historical personality into service to conventional patriotism. Such an analysis risks diminishing Shakespeare's argument in and through the Bastard for achieving representativeness, as opposed to being born with a "true" or "right" version of "greatness." This view also fails to see the importance of the Bastard's individualism in the second half of the play, when John disqualifies himself as *de facto* king, and when despite this disqualification the Bastard identifies national unity as even the individual citizen's true intent and highest commodity. The disillusionment of the young, adventurous idealist becomes a measure of his virtue as he proves unshakeably loyal, and it is the nobles' disloyalty that underscores this virtue.

Grennan's reading does, however, importantly highlight Shakespeare's role as historian and the Bastard as a form of *historia*.[62] Shakespeare resembles Walter Benjamin's storyteller as a narrator who knows and incorporates earlier tellings to insure the "truth" or meaning of the whole.[63] Shakespeare appropriates, molds, and condenses historical and dramatic sources like *The Troublesome Raigne* into a more cohesive narrative that suggests a general cultural understanding of the original events and historical figures for circulation beyond the playhouse. These acts of transference transpose the scenes of particular experience into a figuration of collective life and memory, leading Middleton Murry to describe the Bastard as embodying England's national soul.

Regardless of which side of the fault line a reader stands, the Bastard can no more be taken at face value in his act 2 soliloquy than he can viewed later, when he argues his lack of religion ("If ever I remember to be holy" [3.2.26]), for, as Tillyard argues, "in actual deed he has the fidelity and the self-abegnation, or at least the conscientiousness, of the pelican."[64] Because he does transform into a kingly character "true" and "right," several critics have compared the Bastard with Shakespeare's *Henry V*, one leg of McEachern's tripod of nation-ness written or inscribed into the popular imagination. Simmons, among others, believes this comparison to be "a critical mistake," because the Bastard has no identity apart from his connection with the king.[65] He is the embodiment of the ideal subject, and juxtaposed with a dissolving monarch, he shows himself to be the natural ruler that John fails to be. In this assessment, it is the Bastard rather than the king who jumps off the page as the character who is more passionate, more individuated, more human, and most kingly. This is his power. As an illegitimate son registering otherness as an outsider to established authority, standing at play's end in the rubble of all that was supposed to be "right" and legitimate, he chooses love before law and desire beyond the obligations of duty.

Arthur's corpse

The Bastard's kingliness emerges upon the death of Arthur, a scene that is for Tillyard the play's "culminating and best," and a scene that foregrounds the play's unifying theme of the evils of rebellion and sedition.[66] It is also entirely fictional, allowing Shakespeare, who makes Arthur younger as if to make his supposed murder all the more horrible, to juxtapose the nobles—"sons of the time" and legitimate heirs all—with the Bastard, for a rich study in contrasts. The "true and right" nobles determine John to be guilty, seemingly in a hurry and without any proof, and they use John's guilt to justify their hasty rebellion. Of course, they are wrong. The Bastard, however, sees beyond the crime, calling it "the graceless action of a heavy hand" (4.3.58), a potential breach of the will of God, and as a result he reserves judgment until a deed with such grave implications can be proven ("If that it be the work of any hand" [4.3.59]). When the nobles set upon Hubert, it is the Bastard who protects him, restraining Salisbury with the kingly caution, "Your sword is bright, sir: put it up again" (4.3.80). These are words one might more expect from Henry V.

Though the Bastard recognizes Arthur's right to the throne and suspects John of murder, he is resolutely concerned for England. He alone thinks through what "right" and "true" action to take, instructing Hubert, an Abrahamic figure in the near-sacrificing of the innocent Arthur, to

> Go, bear him in thine arms:
> I am amazed, methinks, and lose my way
> Among the thorns and dangers of this world.
> How easy dost thou take all England up!
> From forth this morsel of dead royalty,
> The life, the right and truth of all this realm
> Is fled to heaven: and England now is left
> To tug and scamble, and to part by th'teeth
> The unowed interest of proud-swelling state:
> Now for the bare-picked bone of majesty
> Doth dogged war bristle his angry crest
> And snarleth in the gentle eyes of peace:
> Now powers from home and discontents at home
> Meet in one line: and vast confusion waits,
> As doth a raven on a sick-fall'n beast,
> The imminent decay of wrested pomp.
> Now happy he whose cloak and cincture can
> Hold out this tempest. Bear away that child
> And follow me with speed: I'll to the king:
> A thousand businesses are brief in hand,
> And heaven itself doth frown upon the land. (4.3.145-65)

In crisis the Bastard rises above the nobles, John, and even his own critical distance and satirical irony; it is a dialectic of separation. He imagines an England under God, an England "in grace." Arthur, the "life, right and truth of all this realm" is gone to heaven. England is invaded and her armies divided. What "now"? This fully present tense word, "Now," repeated throughout the speech, draws attention to the fact that that the Bastard has a choice, now; this moment is or could be a turning point. And the crisis is double; it is a crisis for the Bastard but also for the body politic.[67] Describing the death as "a graceless action," the Bastard momentarily loses his way, amazed and shaken amidst and by the vicissitudes of self-interested politics and war. But he recovers, and he resolutely determines, "I'll to the king: A thousand businesses are brief in hand." This quicksilver recovery in which the Bastard chooses loyalty and nation over commodity and gain looks a lot like honor, an honor that has been transformed from feudal to national. Along the progression

Shakespeare has plotted for the character, the Bastard's decision also seems inevitable, or historically "natural."

As Tillyard noted, the Bastard makes his choice "with superb strength and swiftness," and he makes it once and for all.[68] Shakespeare then vindicates the choice with the poisoned death of John and the ascension of Henry III, a most Arthur-like heir. (It is Shakespeare who vindicates, because in most Tudor histories, the *de facto* legitimacy of John's crown is not questioned. Furthermore, the barons' revolt was in fact motivated by disgust over taxation and because of an accumulation of mostly fiscally related grievances, not Arthur's death). Not coincidentally, in the very next scene, after such a kingly display of character and leadership by the Bastard, John very weakly hands his crown over to Pandulph. It is the Bastard who furnishes the play with a glorious moment of considered patriotism, and as such he "dominates" the play; he "represents England against the vagaries and viciousness of a titular king," as Middleton Murry wrote. "His is the native royalty, while the King is a shadow."[69]

Act 4's third scene, therefore, serves as the Bastard's climactic and transformational moment. His wobble and waywardness suddenly and completely are gone, and he plunges back into the "tug and scamble" to defend Hubert and hold England together. He is able to control his outrage in refusing to become a "dog quarreling over a bone" or a man gone astray in a wilderness of thorn bushes. As caretaker of the garden of England, he will remove the scrub and enclose it once more. In short, the Bastard shows, as Matchett described, "the self-denying acceptance of a higher duty which true loyalty demands from men of honour."[70]

This transformation leads John, again very naturally and seemingly inevitably, to ask in act 5 whether the Bastard possesses "the ordering of this present time" (5.1.79). It is almost as if John wishes to pass his crown to the Bastard, at least morally or figuratively or imaginatively, which culminates Shakespeare's metaphorical use of the Bastard as nation in microcosm. Rather than either fleeing or trying to somehow exploit an inept and fading ruler, the Bastard essentially invents a king. Speaking to John and encouraging him in his symbolic and national role, the Bastard sounds like the playwright to his leading player:

> Be great in act as you have been in thought:
> Let not the world see fear and sad distrust
> Govern the motion of a kingly eye:
> Be stirring as the time, be fire with fire,
> Threaten the threat'ner and outface the brow

> Of bragging horror: so shall inferior eyes,
> That borrow their behaviours from the great,
> Grow great by your example, and put on
> The dauntless spirit of resolution.
> Away, and glisten like the god of war
> When he intendeth to become the field:
> Show boldness and aspiring confidence. (5.1.46-57)

Of course, John isn't up to the part, even as political theater, which is why he at least symbolically cedes rule to the Bastard in asking him to order the present time. And the Bastard once again rises to the mostly rhetorical challenge, ordering more through poetry than politics.[71] To fend off England's enemies and bind England and the English together, the Bastard imagines and stirringly creates the image of a resolute, courageous, and honorable king and, therefore, a resolute, courageous, and honorable England for which the king is a symbol:

> Now hear our English king,
> For thus his royalty doth speak in me:
> He is prepared, and reason too he should:
> This apish and unmannerly approach,
> This harnessed masque and unadvisèd revel,
> This unheard sauciness and boyish troops,
> The king doth smile at, and is well prepared
> To whip this dwarfish war, these pigmy arms,
> From out the circle of his territories. (5.2.129-37)

Through the Bastard, Shakespeare creates the image of a unified nation at a time when England "was as variable as . . . representations of it," as Helgerson noted. "Not even its name remained fixed," like Philip/Richard Falconbridge himself.[72] Like the king the Bastard imagined, England, too, is a fiction, but one that in its naturalized "truth" can effect the very loyalty and unity England needs to be a nation. Such a fiction avoids or extinguishes "vast confusion" in its "ordering of the present time" through the peaceful transfer of kingly power. In ordering the present time, the Bastard paints "in the most heroic colors he knows because he has come to realize something about kings. They are all men, and thus they are all weak."[73] For his own part, the Bastard realizes that "true subjection everlastingly" (5.7.109) is a subjection willingly chosen for the sake of nation rather than self. He relates to his nation, and the nation reciprocates; he articulates "nation-ness," and the nation as a unified, coherent whole, or at least imagined to be, in turn articulates the Bastard as loyal citizen.

That the Bastard ultimately chooses loyalty is utterly orthodox, of course, but how he becomes loyal and patriotic, which is to say rationally and with individual agency, is (or was) notably unorthodox. Thus, *King John* celebrates the body politic rather than the king, which is the important contribution to the larger project to imagine a nation that the play can be read as providing. The strength of the Bastard character as Shakespeare's conception, according to Jones, comes from the fact that he is "not only a 'loyal subject' but *vox populi*. When he speaks, he speaks not for one only but for many, the unknown multitude who make up the people of England."[74] The play's closing lines suppose a unified nation, an imagined community in and to which English men and women could remain true: "Nought shall make us rue,/If England to itself do rest but true" (5.7.121-22). In this supposing, Shakespeare invents an England and a history for that England that is, in the Barthesian sense, mythically "true" and "right" and natural. This "true" history is imagined and conveyed by an utterly fictional character who provides form and order where England's history was "shapeless and so rude" (5.7.28). (Shakespeare importantly gives these final words to the Bastard. In *The Troublesome Raigne*, the words belong to the newly crowned Henry III.)

It is useful to compare the Bastard's rousing closing speech with Salisbury's unrealistic vision for England as empire, one of crusading Christians expanding their territories by trampling their "pagan" foes on faraway shores:

> What, here? O nation, that thou couldst remove,
> That Neptune's arms who clippeth thee about,
> Would bear thee from the knowledge of thyself,
> And grapple thee unto a pagan shore.
> Where these two Christian armies might combine
> The blood of malice in a vein of league. (5.2.34-38)

Salisbury's is an untenable, unsustainable imagining, and it comes at a time when, under John, England's continental holdings were being surrendered; England was becoming an island nation again. Shakespeare's imagining is a particular kind of remembering, a mythic history that for Elizabethan audiences made John's reign "now." Elizabethans needed to find themselves on the victorious side in a continuum of past, present, and future; thus, Shakespeare chooses the telling examples, then molds and recasts them, and invents a "legitimate" bastard king to bring a history to bear on the present in manageable doses and as part of a unified, coherent, national story.

The past informs the present in the discovery, or really the creation, of a "natural" truth: what was and what *is* join in the expectation of what *must be*. Anderson argues that all profound changes in consciousness bring with them amnesias, and that out of these oblivions spring narratives, because what cannot be remembered must be narrated. In his analogy, it is as if Shakespeare is holding up to Elizabethan England a sepia-toned photo of herself in infancy, inviting a now pre-adolescent nation to remember its childhood. "How strange it is to need another's help to learn that this naked baby in the yellowed photograph, sprawled happily on rug or cot, is you," Anderson wrote.[75]

The Bastard isn't a source of wisdom so much as he is a timeless element out of a remembered past assumed to be "true" and "right" and "victorious." He is a patriotic past inevitably coursing into a complex, vexed, but ultimately manageable "now." Through him Shakespeare furnishes the agencies of mind and spirit that gather up the traditions of a people, transmit them from generation to generation, and create an imagined continuity that we call history. Naturalized and, therefore, mythic, this history must be taken on faith, and Shakespeare's voice makes this possible, even probable, especially as the Bastard supplies its humanity and familiarity.

Notes

1. Carole Levin, "A Good Prince: *King John* and Early Tudor Propaganda," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 11, no. 4 (Winter 1980), 23.

2. All references to the play are to *The RSC William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (New York: The Modern Library, 2007).

3. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: New Left Books, 2006, first published in 1983); Claire McEachern, *The Poetics of English Nationhood*, 1590-1612 (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1. For more on Shakespeare's project to make or invent or imagine an England, see Brian Carroll, "Richard as Waking Nightmare: Barthesian Dream, Myth and Memory in Shakespeare's *Richard III*," in *Visual Communication Quarterly* 20, no. 2 (Spring 2013); and Brian Carroll, "Appearances and Disappearances: *Henry V*'s Shimmering Irishman in the Project to Make an England," in *Journal of the Wooden O Symposium* 9, (Fall 2010): 11-32.

4. McEachern points out that the term "anachronism" itself dates back only to 1612 (7). For language as more than a neutral medium, see M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 294.

5. John Middleton Murry, *Shakespeare* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1936), 127.

6. Anderson, 6.

7. For the Kemper quote, Anderson, 7. For "post-memory," Anderson, 7. Marianne Hirsch's term *postmemory* is "distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection," in *Family*

Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard, 1997), 22.

8. The Ecclesiastical Appeals Act of 1532 (24 Henry VIII c. 12), in Geoffrey Rudolph Elton, *The Tudor Constitution: Documents and Commentary*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1982), vii.

9. David Womersley, "The Politics of Shakespeare's King John," *The Review of English Studies, New Series* 40, no. 160 (November 1989), 497.

10. Alexander Leggatt, "Dramatic Perspectives in *King John*," *English Studies in Canada* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1977), 10.

11. Eugene M. Waith, "*King John* and the Drama of History," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (Spring 1978), 199.

12. Ibid., 193.

13. Sigurd Burkhardt, *Shakespearean Meanings* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 134

14. Emrys Jones, *Origins of Shakespeare* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 235.

15. Virginia Mason Vaughan, "Between Tetralogies: *King John* as Transition," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (Winter 1984), 408.

16. Levin, 22.

17. Ibid., 17. Many of John Lackley's vices are on cinematic display in the 2011 film, *Ironclad*, one of only a handful of movies other than the many versions of the Ivanhoe and Robin Hood stories to include the historical figure.

18. Douglas Wixson, "'Calm Words Folded Up in Smoke': Propaganda and Spectator Response in Shakespeare's *King John*," *Shakespeare Studies* 14 (1981), 111.

19. M. M. Reese, "Origins of the History Play," in Eugene M. Waith, ed., *Shakespeare The Histories: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 46; Irving Ribner, *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare* (Princeton, 1957; rev. ed., London, 1965), 10.

20. Ribner charts the purposes of the Renaissance-era history writers, such as Raphael Holinshed in *The English History Play*, a history of the history genre in drama. The chart is also useful in considering the didactic purposes of playwrights such as Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe: the nationalistic glorification of England; an analysis of contemporary affairs, both national and foreign; a use of past events as a guide to political behavior in the present; a use of history as documentation for political theory; and a study of past political disaster as an aid to Stoical fortitude in the present (26).

21. Anne Righter, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* (New York: Penguin, 1967), 158.

22. McEachern, 2. In addition to the two poems, McEachern reads or analyzes Shakespeare's *Henry V*.

23. Michael Neill, "Broken English and Broken Irish: Nation, Language, and the Optic of Power in Shakespeare's Histories," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (Spring 1994), 19. In addition, Douglas C. Wixson examines English pamphleteering as a model for the debate structure of *King John* (see note 18) and, as a byproduct, the play's role and place in the print culture of the period.

24. Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 180; Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 17. Barthes's essays were originally written between 1946 and 1956.

25. Righter, 81.

26. *King John*, ed. John Dover Wilson (Cambridge University Press, 1954), xv.

27. Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History* 1740-1830 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 53.

28. Lily B. Campbell, *Shakespeare's 'Histories': Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy* (San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, 1947), 11.

29. Jones, 249, 252.

30. Robert Weimann, "Mingling Vice and 'Worthiness' in *King John*," *Shakespeare Studies* 27 (1999), 130.

31. Barthes, 131.

32. Jones, 248.

33. Barthes, 121.

34. Alison Findlay, *Illegitimate Power: Bastards in Renaissance Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 19.

35. In *The Statutes at Large, from The First Year of King Richard III to the Thirty-first year of Henry VIII*, published by Jeremy Bentham, 1763, page 419, and available via Google Books. To mention Elizabeth's bastardy was treasonable as a challenge to her authority (Findlay, 2).

36. Eamon Grennan, "Shakespeare's Satirical History: A Reading of *King John,*" *Shakespeare Studies* 11 (1978), 32.

37. Denton Jacques Snider, *The Shakespearian Drama: A Commentary* (Boston: Ticknor & Co., 1889), 281.

38. Anderson, 7.

39. Emrys Jones, E. M. W. Tillyard, and Jacqueline Trace see the Bastard as at least a kind of hero, while Lily B. Campbell, Julia van de Water, and E. A. J. Honigmann are among those who do not, regarding the character as nonessential, as perhaps a "choric" presence and a holdover from the source text, the anonymously written *The Troublesome Reign of King John*. See Jones, *Origins of Shakespeare*, 246; E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (New York: Macmillan, 1946); and Jacqueline Trace, "Shakespeare's Bastard Faulconbridge: An Early Tudor Hero," *Shakespeare Studies* 13 (1980): 59-69; Campbell, *Shakespeare's 'Histories'*, 166; E. A. J. Honigmann, ed., *King John* (1954), lxxi; and Julia Van de Water, "The Bastard in *King John*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 11 (1960), 145.

40. Honigmann, 6.

41. McEachern cites Robert Doleman's 1594 publication, *Conference About the Next Succession to the Crown*, in which the author argues that no one form of government is divinely privileged and defends the people's right to choose their form of government (9). His argument elicited in 1598 an emphatic declaration of royal power by conquest, not consensus, from James I (*The True Law of Free Monarchies*). The Bastard's self-determination and *choosing* loyalty to king can be interpreted as at least sympathetic to Doleman's argument, though not an outright endorsement; the Bastard chooses monarchy.

42. Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1964), 169.

43. For example, see J. F. Danby, *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature* (New York: Faber and Faber, 1961), 78; Reese, 277-78; H. A. Kelly, *Divine Providence in the England of Shakespeare's Histories* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970); and Ribner.

44. Ribner, 206.

45. Womersley, 497.

46. Roy Battenhouse, "Shakespeare's Perspective and Others," *Notre Dame English Journal* 14, no. 3 (Summer 1982): 191-215; Eamon Grennan, "Shakespeare's Satirical History: A Reading of King John," *Shakespeare Studies* 11 (1978): 21-38; James P. Saeger, "Illegitimate Subjects: Performing Bastardy in *King John*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 100, no. 1 (January 2001): 1-21; John Sibly, "The Anomalous Case of *King John*," *ELH 33*, no. 4 (December 1966): 415-21; J. L. Simmons, "Shakespeare's *King John* and Its Source: Coherence, Pattern and Vision," *Tulane Studies in English*, 17 (1969); Ronald Stroud, "The Bastard to the Time in *King John*," *Comparative Drama* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1972): 154; Sidney Thomas, "'Enter a Sheriffe': Shakespeare's King

John and The Troublesome Raigne," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 37, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 98-100; Julia van de Water, "The Bastard in *King John*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 11 (1960); Robert Weimann, "Mingling Vice and 'Worthiness' in *King John*," *Shakespeare Studies* 27 (1999): 109-34; Douglas Wixson, "'Calm Words Folded Up in Smoke': Propaganda and Spectator Response in Shakespeare's *King John*," *Shakespeare Studies* 14 (1981): 111-28. Most of these scholars believe that Shakespeare used *The Troublesome Raigne* as his primary and perhaps only source text, writing King John probably around 1594 (Battenhouse, 192; van de Water, 137).

47. If in fact there are two playwrights. Tillyard has suggested, but not quite argued, that both plays were authored by Shakespeare (*Shakespeare's History Plays*, 216-17).

48. Tillyard, 215.

49. James P. Saeger, "Illegitimate Subjects: Performing Bastardy in *King John*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 100, no. 1 (January 2001), 6.

50. Grennan, 31.

51. Vaughan, 414.

52. James L. Calderwood, "Commodity and Honor in *King John*," in Eugene M. Waith, ed., *Shakespeare The Histories: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 97.

53. Ribner argues for Bale's *Kynge Johan*, written before 1536, as England's first history play "because it deliberately uses chronicle material in order to accomplish several legitimate historical purposes . . . a nationalist work dedicated to the greater glory of England" (39).

54. van de Water, 141.

55. Ibid, 143.

56. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:1-3, New International Version).

57. Stroud, 155.

58. Ibid., 162.

59. Tillyard, 221, 232.

60. Anderson, 7.

61. Grennan, 31.

62. Ibid.

63. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 106-109.

64. Tillyard, 228.

65. McEachern, 70.

66. Tillyard, 223.

67. Womersley, 509.

68. Tillyard, 225.

69. Middleton Murry, 98.

70. William H. Matchett, "Richard's Divided Heritage in *King John*," *Essays in Criticism* 12, no. 3 (July 1962), 253.

71. David Scott Kastan, "'To Set a Form upon that Indigest': Shakespeare's Fictions of History," *Comparative Drama* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1983), 14.

72. Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 8.

73. Michael Manheim, *The Weak King Dilemma in the Shakespearean History Play* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1973), 156.

74. Jones, 262.

75. Anderson, 204.