Fernanda Korovsky Moura

DOUBLE-VOICED MEDIEVALISM: CHARLES MACREADY'S RECONSTRUCTION OF SHAKESPEARE'S *KING JOHN* IN VICTORIAN LONDON

Dissertação submetida ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Inglês: Estudos Linguísticos e Literários da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina para a obtenção do Grau de Mestre em Inglês.
Orientador: Prof. Dr. José Roberto O'Shea.

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Esta Dissertação foi julgada adequada para obtenção do Título de "Mestre em Inglês", e aprovada em sua forma final pelo Programa de Pós-Graduação em Inglês: Estudos Linguísticos e Literários.

Florianópolis, 24 de agosto de 2016.

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I dedicate this work to theatre historians around the world, who have the fascinating task of reconstructing the past, making it available to us in the present.

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Sonnet 65

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,
But sad mortality o'er-sways their power,
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?
O, how shall summer's honey breath hold out
Against the wreckful siege of battering days,
When rocks impregnable are not so stout,
Nor gates of steel so strong, but Time decays?
O fearful meditation! where, alack,
Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?
O, none, unless this miracle have might,
That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

(William Shakespeare)

ABSTRACT

The problem addressed in this thesis concerns the analysis of William Charles Macready's reconstruction of Shakespeare's *King John* in Victorian London. During the nineteenth century, the Medieval Revival movement achieved its peak. This movement aimed at reviving the Middle Ages as the glorious birth of English culture and identity in opposition to the Ancient Roman and Greek traditions. As a consequence, artistic manifestations which expressed medieval themes gained prominence, including Shakespeare's historical plays. Macready's production of *King John* premiered at Royal Theatre Drury Lane on 24 October 1842, therefore, during the heyday of the Medieval Revival. My initial questioning was on the implications of this medievalist trend of the nineteenth century in Macready's production. My initial hypotheses were two: Macready's production followed the general Victorian perspective on the Middle Ages, which was romanticised and idealised; or his production maintained a more negative outlook on the medieval past, characteristic of the Renaissance period, in which Shakespeare wrote the original play. What I came to realise during this study was that in Macready's case both perspectives intertwined on the Victorian stage. My analysis is based on postmodern discussions on history, historiography, and theatre historiography, mainly supported by the works of Linda Hutcheon, Hayden White, Thomas Postlewait, and Richard Schoch. Schoch's concept of *double-voiced historicism* permeates this thesis. From his concept, I have created the notion of *double-voiced medievalism*, which is the combination of two different perspectives on the Middle Ages in one artistic manifestation. The main corpus of the present analysis was Charles Shattuck's published version of Macready's prompt-book for Shakespeare's *King John*.

Keywords: William Shakespeare. Victorian Theatre. Medievalism.

RESUMO

O problema abordado nesta dissertação diz respeito à análise da reconstrução de William Charles Macready da peça King John de Shakespeare na Londres vitoriana. Durante o século XIX, o movimento Medieval Revival atingiu o seu auge. Esse movimento destinava-se a reviver a Idade Média como o glorioso nascimento da cultura e da identidade inglesas em oposição às tradições da Antiguidade Greco-Romana. Como consequência, as manifestações artísticas que expressavam temas medievais ganharam destaque, incluindo as peças históricas de Shakespeare. A produção de King John de Macready estreou em 24 de outubro de 1842 no Royal Theatre Drury Lane, portanto, durante o auge do Medieval Revival. Meu questionamento inicial foi sobre as implicações dessa tendência medievalista do século XIX na produção de Macready. Minhas hipóteses iniciais eram duas: a produção de Macready seguiu a perspectiva geral vitoriana sobre a Idade Média: romantizada e idealizada; ou a sua produção manteve uma perspectiva mais negativa sobre o passado medieval, típica do período da Renascença, em que Shakespeare escreveu a peça original. O que eu vim a perceber durante este estudo foi que, no caso de Macready, ambas as perspectivas se entrelaçaram no palco vitoriano. Minha análise é baseada em discussões pós-modernas sobre história, historiografia e historiografia do teatro, tendo como suporte, principalmente, os trabalhos de Linda Hutcheon, Hayden White, Thomas Postlewait e Richard Schoch. O conceito de double-voiced historicism de Schoch permeia esta tese. A partir do seu conceito, eu criei a noção de double-voiced medievalism, que é a combinação de duas perspectivas diferentes sobre a Idade Média em uma manifestação artística. O principal corpus da presente análise foi a versão publicada de Charles Shattuck do prompt-book de Macready da peça King John de Shakespeare.

Palavras-chave: William Shakespeare. Teatro Vitoriano. Medievalismo.

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INTRODUCTION

Time is a wonderful and mysterious concept. No wonder it has fascinated artists throughout the centuries. As the epigraph to this thesis suggests, Shakespeare was no exception. In his sonnet 65, Shakespeare writes about the unstoppable force of time, this "wreckful siege of battering days" (6). Nothing can stop time's wrath, not even impregnable rocks or "gates of steel so strong" (8). Not even "time's best jewel" (10) can resist time, unfortunately. As what this jewel may refer to, the interpretations abound. In my case, I sustain that "time's best jewel" is art—theatrical art. As lamentable as it may be, a theatrical event fades as soon as the curtains close on the stage. Countless times curtains have been closed on stages around the world throughout the centuries, each performance with an enchantment of its own. However, albeit these spectacles are over, their magic has not been extinguished. As Shakespeare puts it, "unless this miracle have might, / That in black ink my love may still shine bright" (13-14); as long as our pens continue to write about these spectacles, they remain alive. The theatrical event itself is, *de facto*, irretrievable. Nonetheless, based on research and imagination, it is possible to reconstruct those theatrical events, bringing them back to life. That is the fascinating task of the theatre historian. That is what I attempt to accomplish in this thesis.

Victorians were also mesmerised by the concept of time. During the nineteenth century, there emerged a desire to know the past. The English wished to understand their heritage, even more at a time of significant changes, such as the moment in which Victorians lived. In contrast to the chaotic Victorian Era, they searched their past for a moment in history on which they could look back in a nostalgic manner, in which they could feel "at home". And they chose the Middle Ages, the birth of English culture. The medieval past with its huge castles, brave knights, free people, and courtly love, was revived in the English imagination, being expressed in several areas of thought and artistic expression.

As a result, artists from the past regained prominence, such as William Shakespeare—especially his historical plays, which reconstructed significant moments and historical figures. Added to the Victorian taste for spectacle, productions of Shakespeare's historical plays became a feast for the eyes: extravagant costume, grand sets, admirable performances; all underlined by careful historical research. William Charles Macready (1793-1873) was one of the main Victorian theatre managers who ventured into the realm of historical theatre. His

productions were abundant, but my focus here will be on his reconstruction of Shakespeare's *King John*, a play that gained unprecedented popularity in the nineteenth century, which premiered at Theatre Royal Drury Lane on 24 October1842.

As a scholar who is passionate about history, the medieval past, and Shakespeare's legacy, I take the present research to be expressively significant. With this work, I begin my journey as a theatre historian who digs out of books, prompt-books, old magazines, newspapers and diaries the raw material of historical artefacts, and pours new life into them, reconstructing a theatrical performance which may have happened weeks, years, or centuries before. With the work of a theatre historian, these moments gain life again in our minds, evoking "ghosts" from the past, and offering them immortal existence. In analysing Macready's production of *King John*, not only the Victorian past is summoned, but also the Renaissance context surrounding Shakespeare's creation, and the medieval past represented on stage. This makes this journey even more fascinating to me.

In addition to being personally meaningful to me, this research also adds to the academic discussion of history through a postmodern perspective, which regards history as multifaceted and open to interpretation. Moreover, this thesis brings light to the work of one of the most important theatre managers and actors of the Victorian Era, whose work has not yet been sufficiently explored in academia: William Charles Macready, the eminent tragedian and celebrated Shakespearean. Finally, this work also foregrounds one of the least studied of Shakespeare's plays: *King John*, written at the end of the sixteenth century. Albeit it has been neglected by many scholars, this play offers a plethora of themes, unforgettable characters, remarkable lines, and a beautiful performance history ready to be investigated.

Bearing this in mind, the main objectives of this thesis are to study the rise of interest in historiography and Shakespeare's history plays during the Victorian Era, along with the Medieval Revival movement in the nineteenth century, which wished to revive the Middle Ages as the great period in English history. Moreover, I propose to draw correlations between the political context in King John's reign with Shakespeare's time and the Victorian Era in order to identify any particular reasons for the Victorian interest in the play. Finally, I aim at analysing Macready's production in view of Richard Schoch's concept of *double-voiced historicism*, which is the overlapping of different historical approaches in a theatrical event. From that, I wish to illustrate my concept of *double-voiced medievalism* by means of Macready's

reconstruction of King John's reign, which brings together two different perspectives on the Middle Ages: the Renaissance and the Victorian.

Chapter 1 is dedicated to Shakespeare and his role in Victorian society. I write about Victorians' transitional society from the old to the new, their sense of patriotism, a desire for both innovation and conservatism, their sense of morality, the weight of censorship in the theatre, their taste for spectacle, and self-improvement by means of education. Based on Russel Jackson (1994), I discuss the four aspects of theatre history in the Victorian Era: the possibilities offered by newly-developed technologies, the increasing status of the theatre, theatre as illusion, and as popular culture. Supported by Alice Chandler (1970), I also write about the Medieval Revival movement in the nineteenth century, which sought in the Middle Ages an idealised home for English history and culture.

Furthermore, chapter 1 also encompasses the theoretical discussion on history, historiography, and theatre historiography. Based on Hayden White (1978) and Linda Hutcheon (1989), I write about history through a post-modern perspective. In this sense, history is plural, fragmented, and multifaceted. Therefore, historical writing is always a reconstruction of past events, which is embedded by the ideological, cultural, and social roles of the teller. History is open to multiple interpretations. Consequently, theatre historiography is also based on reconstruction. Having as theoretical background the works by Thomas Postlewait (2009) and José Roberto O'Shea (2004; 2015), I will write about theatrical analysis as reconstruction—every performance can be reconstructed based on historical research and the analyst's ability of interpretation. After the curtains have been closed, the theatrical event itself is lost, but the possibilities of reconstructing it are innumerable. Finally, I also write about Renaissance and Victorian perspectives on the Middle Ages, based on Schoch's concept of *double-voiced historicism* (2006).

Chapter 2 will be devoted to the possible "worlds" around Macready's *King John*: King John's reign in the early-thirteenth century, and Shakespeare's context of production for *King John* (1595-96). To that end, I explore recent historiography concerning King John's reign (1199-1216), especially the works by W. L. Warren (1997), Derek Wilson (2011), and Simon Jenkins (2012). Based on these works, I write about the partiality of King John's contemporary chroniclers, his allegedly devilish ancestry, his stereotypical image as a tyrannical, lustful, and irreligious king, and the main events in his reign, including his contested right to the throne, his loss of English continental

territories, his marriages, the barons' rebellion, the Interdict, his Excommunication, and Magna Carta. Furthermore, in this chapter I also write about the way in which Shakespeare resourcefully compressed the seventeen years of King John's reign into a five-act play, transforming major historical events into specific dramatic moments, and reallocating these events in order to place the plot of Arthur's murder as the climax of his play.

In chapter 3 I address the "ghosts" that have wandered the theatres throughout the centuries. Indeed, Macready's *King John* is an assembly of ghosts: Shakespeare's ghost, King John's ghost, ghosts of past performances, and a whole myriad of other ghosts that certainly made an appearance in Macready's production. In this chapter, I also discuss the artistic heritage and the main agents in the studied performance, especially Macready's action as theatre manager and in the title role. Furthermore, I explore what a typical actor's life was like at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and how the situation changed throughout the period. Finally, I also write about the contribution of the set designer William Telbin, the costume designer Charles Hamilton Smith, and about Macready's career in the theatre.

In Chapter 4 I aim at reconstructing the opening night of Macready's *King John*'s opening night on 24 October 1842 (entrances and exits of actors, scenery changes, *entr'actes*, sounds, and lighting), based on Charles Shattuck's *William Charles Macready's King John*, a published version of Macready's prompt-book. In this chapter I write about the importance of the prompt-book as a historical artefact and as resource for the theatre historian. I also investigate Victorian critical reviews on Macready's production, which—just like Macready's spectacle itself—also show traces of *double-voiced medievalism*. Furthermore, I analyse Macready's reworking of Shakespeare's texts, exploring the implications of his alterations in the original text. Lastly, I investigate Macready's performance in the role of King John, based on contemporary reviews, reviews of his previous performances as the king, and preparations and comments expressed in Macready's own journals.

Finally, the last chapter of the present thesis is devoted to my final considerations, in which I readdress some of the main issues concerning my study, including key theoretical concepts and main findings, as well as appointments for further research.

Bearing that in mind, let us go back to the evening of 24 October 1842, and imagine ourselves sitting in one of the rows at Theatre Royal

Drury Lane, preparing for Macready's spectacle in *King John*. Let us open the curtains.

1 "ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE":[1] Victorian society and theatre

We of a certain age belong to the new time and the old one. We are of the time of chivalry [...] We are of the age of steam.
(*Roundabout Papers*, William Thackeray, 110)

Figure 1 - The Strand, London, Arthur E. Grimshaw (1899)

1.1 Shakespeare and the Victorian Era

The Victorian Era in English history[2] was a time of great change in several spheres. Queen Victoria's reign, which lasted sixty-four years (1837-1901)—one of the lengthiest reigns in the history of the English monarchy—began with, according to Maureen Moran, the last breaths of the Romantic period, which had shaped the artistic and intellectual productions of the late-eighteenth century, along with the political and economic turmoil of the Industrial Revolution; and finished in the very beginning of the twentieth century, a time full of promises of a new era (2012, 1). New discoveries in the scientific field, such as Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, destabilised people's beliefs in the religious dogmas that had been preached by the Catholic Church for centuries. Furthermore, technological innovations provided society with an improved quality of life in areas such as medicine, transportation and urban planning (Moran 3).

However, while the Victorian Era was considered a moment of significant change, it was still characterised by a sense of and need for tradition. Although society was eager for innovations in all fields of knowledge, Victorians also sought all that reminded them of a safe and peaceful time in the past. As the epigraph to this chapter suggests, Victorians lived a time of transition from the old to the modern world. As well as wishing to unravel the wonders of modernity, they still did not want to let go of their legacy of a formidable past (Moran 7).

The arts were a remarkable means through which Victorian anxiety was represented. Late Romantic themes could still be found along with the more realistic vogue of the mid-nineteenth century.

[1] *As You Like It* (2.7.138).
[2] After studying the theoretical framework for the present thesis, I have decided to always refer to *history* in lowercase letters, as this chapter will go on to argue (See mainly 1.2).

Additionally, Victorian social and political values, beliefs, and desires were also artistically explored. In a time of expansion of the British Empire, a proud English nation felt the need to vent its patriotism. Nineteenth-century artistic production was the canvas on which an idealised British identity was painted. For that aim, great masterpieces from the past were revived, especially those that added to the foundation of a British national identity, such as William Hogarth's[3] engravings, J. M. W. Turner's[4] paintings, King Arthur's Round Table tales (Moran 10; 21), and, of course, Shakespeare's plays.

In addition, Moran stresses that Victorians found in artistic and cultural events a way to educate the population. The government encouraged art galleries and public art exhibitions, and offered funding for museums and theatrical spectacles, amongst other popular activities. Victorians believed that art was intrinsically connected to ideology (12). In other words, art was a powerful instrument to control the nation's values and beliefs and, therefore, was strategically used in order to induce certain attitudes and ways of thinking.

One of the aims of Victorian art was to incite patriotic awareness in the population, reminding them that they were part of a powerful Empire with territories all over the world; consequently, they should be proud of their English identity. A fine example of the Victorian taste for nationalistic spectacle and ostentation is the Great Exhibition of 1851, promoted by Prince Albert and held at the Crystal Palace in London. Moran explains there were over 100,000 exhibits, allowing the population to see all the great advancements in technology, photography, imported merchandise from the British colonies, amongst other curiosities and innovations. She explains that "above all, the Exhibition made a deep impact on the mid-Victorian sensibility, encouraging patriotism, and associating the expansion of knowledge and the acquisition of material commodities with the excitement of a modern age" (Moran 14-15). The exhibition implied that London was the place where everything happened and where the English could enjoy all the delights that living in the nineteenth century could offer.

Nonetheless, at the same time that England professed itself to be a modern country, it still preached conservative ideas. Certain themes were considered offensive to be explicitly dealt with in literature, theatre, and in the arts as a whole, such as adultery, unorthodox social

[3] William Hogarth (1697-1764) was an English painter who was famous for his engravings on moral subjects.

[4] Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851) was an English Romantic painter who was famous for his landscape tableaux.

behaviour, extra-marital relations, non-Christian beliefs, etc. (Moran 17). Censorship was heavy, as the Licensing Act of 1737 still effective in the period, discussed later on in this chapter, proved.

The turn of the century, from the eighteenth to the nineteenth, saw an opposition of two distinct movements in art. On the one side, Neo-Classicism, which considered the Ancient Greek and Roman ideals of beauty as the goal to be achieved, marked by regularities, symmetry, and reference to Classical themes. On the other, Romanticism, with its rich language, subjectivity and emotion (Moran 18). Alice Chandler explains that the classic, which was "measured, rational, and calm," contrasted with the medieval that represented "boundless energy and aspiration" (9).

One of the main characteristics of early- and mid-Victorian artistic production was the nineteenth-century medievalist movement. This trend collaborated with the emotional desire of the Romantics to bring back the time in history they considered to be the glorious birth of English culture and identity: the Middle Ages. Just as the Romantics, the medievalists "had links to the renaissance of interest in nature, primitivism, and the supernatural and to the increasing valuation placed upon the organic, the joyous, and the creative" (Chandler 7). Moran explains that medieval themes could be found in many areas of the arts, such as in fiction, poetry, painting, neo-gothic architecture and decoration, and even in masquerade parties. This movement was known as the Gothic Revival (21).

Victor Hugo's preface to his play Cromwell, written in 1826 but never performed on stage, proposed that the heroes and models from Classical Antiquity should be forsaken in the benefit of representing modern history (Heliodora 252). That was the essence of the Romantic movement and true for the theatre as well as other artistic manifestations, such as literature, poetry, and the visual arts. Barbara Heliodora states that the concept of "modern history," as used by Hugo, ranged from the Middle Ages up to Hugo's nineteenth century. It was a moment in history with which authors and public alike could better identify than with Greek or Roman history (253).

Another term used to describe this movement that breathed new life into the Middle Ages in Victorian Art is the Medieval Revival, as used by Alice Chandler. According to Chandler, medievalism has existed in varying degrees throughout the centuries, from the Renaissance to the present day, but it achieved its summit in the nineteenth century. As mentioned before, the Victorian Era was a time of great change; therefore, "the more the world changed, and the period

of the medieval revival was an era of ever accelerating social transformation, the more the partly historical but basically mythical Middle Ages that had become a tradition in literature served to remind men of a Golden Age" (1). Chandler explains that the core of the medievalist movement was to leave the chaotic nineteenth century and to go back to a time in the past which was safe and idealised. In agreement with Chandler, Moran states that "this fashion for mediaevalism expressed an idealized version of nationhood" (21).

The Middle Ages had ceased to be considered the Dark Ages and had become the Golden Age in British history; it was rather a metaphor for joy and order than a real historical period. As Chandler puts it, "behind all these varying expressions of a medievalizing imagination lay a single, central desire—to feel at home in an ordered yet organically vital universe" (1). “Home” was in the Middle Ages, hence the desire to revive artistic works which were set in that distant past: in poetry, fiction, drama, visual arts, architecture, amongst other fields. "At the height of the revival scarcely an aspect of life remained untouched by medievalist influence" (Chandler 1). The consequences of this medievalist influence in the Victorian culture are discussed later in this chapter.

As of the mid-nineteenth century, however, society's artistic taste seems to have changed. In all fields of art, the most appreciated works were the ones which portrayed the "real" world in opposition to a romanticised version of it (Moran 19). Writers such as George Eliot, Charles Dickens, and Elizabeth Gaskell gained prominence then with their narratives that no longer depicted ideals of love, but the harsh realities of the common people. In a time of decline of the aristocracy, economic development and increasing influence of the middle-class, unrest of the working class, and imminent downfall of the British Empire, English artistic productions had to ensure the population of the grandeur of their own nation and to guarantee the feeling of English superiority. Nevertheless, Moran points out that this feeling of supremacy and safety that the Empire heralded "existed more in the cultural imagination than in fact" (53). The perspective of the people colonised by the English was quite different. They regarded the British crown as "alienating, degrading and oppressive" (Moran 53). As a consequence, by the end of the century, uprisings throughout the colonies challenged the supremacy of the British Empire.

Victorian anxiety is depicted in literature. According to Moran, the idea behind transporting past settings and characters into contemporary literature was to bring "consolation by suggesting heroic

predecessors experienced similar anguish over lost ideals" (69). Hence the proliferation of "familiar characters, or character types, from fairy-tales, legends and mediaeval romances" (Moran 75) in diverse genres, such as poetry—for instance, works by Alfred Tennyson,[5] Matthew Arnold,[6] and Dante Gabriel Rossetti[7] (Moran 67, 69, 75); historical fiction—as written by Walter Scott[8] (Moran 84); popular fiction—"derived from the Gothic literary movement from the previous century, which set most of its stories in a romantic and mysterious past, such as the very popular 'penny dreadfuls'"[9] (Moran 89); and in drama—as in the revival of interest in performing Shakespeare's works, especially the historical plays, which brought to the stage important figures from English national history, such as King John, Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V, Henry VI, and Henry VIII.

1.1.1 Victorian Theatre

The Victorian population had a major interest in theatre as a means of entertainment. Even vis-à-vis other popular activities of the period, such as dioramas,[10] international operas, and ballets, the theatre remained as the preferred choice for the majority of Victorians (Moran 96). Russell Jackson points out that in an ever more industrialised and urban society the theatre was vital to popular culture and to its entertainment industry (1994, 1), for it was the main source of amusement which attracted both the literate and the illiterate (9).

According to Jackson, it is possible to discuss four different aspects of the history of theatre in the Victorian Age. The first is related to the new technologies that enabled the development of new techniques and experiments on stage (2). Moran calls attention to these new

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[5] Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892) was an English poet. One of his main works is *The Idylls of the King* (1855-59), a collection of twelve narrative poems that retell the legends of King Arthur.

[6] Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) was an English poet and critic.

[7] Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) was an English poet. He founded the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848 with William Holman Hunt (1827-1910) and John Everett Millais (1829-1896).

[8] Walter Scott (1771-1832) was a Scottish writer and poet.

[9] "Penny dreadfuls" were cheap popular books produced in the nineteenth century. These stories usually revolved around sensational themes, including crimes and supernatural events.

[10] Dioramas were three-dimensional mobile theatre devices that depicted life-size landscapes, usually of distant or mythical lands. In order to emphasise the spectacle of the piece, special lights were used to illuminate the stage. The dioramas were exhibited in buildings designed to display them and were a popular means of entertainment in the Victorian period. For an illustration of a nineteenth-century diorama, see Appendix A.

possibilities, such as "sumptuous lighting, costumes and stage properties, together with elaborate crowd scenes, ingenious plotting and sentiment by the bucketful" (95), which characterised Victorian theatre. Furthermore, technical advancements offered the theatre hitherto unimaginable options:

> New lighting techniques made optical illusions especially powerful. The move from wax candles to limelight, then to gauze around gas jets, and finally, to the incandescent bulbs of the late-Victorian theatre increased the possibilities for greater realism (and improved safety). With the darkened theatre the norm by 1850, clever lighting could simulate storms, shipwrecks, ghosts and fiery conflagrations. By the end of the century, ever more imaginative application of engineering science, including hydraulics, meant bravura aquatic spectacles, train crashes, horse races and even earthquakes could be replicated. (Moran 98)

There were countless possibilities to recreate any imaginable scenario on stage. These possibilities excited both theatre managers, who had fewer restrictions in creating or choosing texts, and audiences, who never knew what to expect from a theatrical spectacle in the nineteenth century: for example, the staging of the battle of Angiers scene—not present in Shakespeare's original text—in Herbert Beerbohm Tree's King John in 1899 at Her Majesty's Theatre in London (Cousin 45). In the introduction to the 1998 “Oxford Shakespeare” edition of King John, A. R. Braunmuller states that the battle was added in Act III and reproduced in a great tableau,[11] which added to the performance of the actors on stage (86). Up to this day this performance is remembered for this extravagant tableau, alongside the other tableau created for the scene in which King John is forced to sign Magna Carta—another episode added by Tree which was not in Shakespeare's original text.

The illusion the theatre offered to the spectators was, according to Jackson, one of the key aspects of Victorian theatre. He states that:

> the romantic, visionary definition of dramatic poetry demanded a stage that should contrive to lose its

[11] For a photograph of this tableau being used on stage during the battle scene in Beerbohm's Tree 1899 production, see Appendix B.

> identity in the service of this absolute illusion and make the spectators forget—for as much as possible of their time in the theatre—that they knew a world more 'real' than that placed before them on the stage. (1-2)

When the outside world was turbulent, the theatre was a way to escape to another world, even to another time in history. This was especially true for the working class, for whom the theatre and the public houses were a sure getaway from an arduous life (Jackson 10).

New possibilities were also offered in the realm of costume design, scenic painting and decoration. The technical advancements of the nineteenth century allowed the theatre to pursue historical "authenticity."[12] By historical "authenticity," Stuart Sillars means "authentic visual presentation of the periods in which the plays were set, not that in which they were written" (54). The plays' performances ceased to have a general Renaissance style, related to Shakespeare's time, and began to focus on the specific periods therein depicted: for instance, early-sixteenth-century England in Henry VIII, early-fifteenth-century England in Henry V, and England at the beginning of the thirteenth century in King John. In fact, as Sillars points out, even the comedies, which are usually set in no specific historical period, were carefully dated and given appropriate scenic devices and costumes (54), reflecting the Victorian thirst for historical knowledge and "authenticity."

The newly developed theatrical technologies also allowed theatre managers, such as Macready, Samuel Phelps (1804-1878), Henry Irving (1838-1905) and Herbert Beerbohm Tree (1852-1917), to be ever more extravagant in their recreations of past times on the stage through Shakespeare's plays, answering to the Victorian demand for spectacles of all sorts (Foulkes 2008, 5).

Moreover, Hugo in his Romantic manifesto, the aforementioned preface to Cromwell (1826), advocated that the theatre, in addition to depicting modern history, should abandon the neutral and impersonal settings of the neoclassic tragedies. Instead, performances should offer a local atmosphere for the spectacles (Heliodora 253). Heliodora states that this search for local theatre "led the romantic theatre to be staged with scenography of great realism in order to create an environment

[12] I use the word "authenticity" in quotation marks because I believe historical authenticity, as well as historical accuracy, is impossible to be retrieved. Historical representations are always a mode of reconstruction and, therefore, cannot be simply categorised as authentic or not; or as accurate or not. This discussion will be further elaborated in the present chapter of this thesis.

where the habits, costumes, gestures and the way of speaking of the time and place where the action happens, could be plausibly represented" [13] (253). Hence the proliferation of extravagant realistic performances of plays representing modern history,[14] including Macready's King John in 1842.

However, Moran points out that "such picturesque lavishness shifted attention away from plot and characterization; it seemed unimportant that Shakespearean texts were cut and rearranged to accommodate complicated scene changes" (98). Foulkes points out that cuts of over a thousand lines were not uncommon, especially for the actor and theatre manager Charles Kean (1811-1868) (2008, 5), who was known for his extravagant performances of historical plays. At times, texts were "sacrificed" for the benefit of the spectacle, as in the aforementioned 1899 Beerbohm Tree's production of King John at Her Majesty's Theatre in London, in which performance, as we have seen, Tree added two episodes of historical importance that were not present in Shakespeare's original text: the battle of Angiers and the signing of Magna Carta (Cousin 45). Sillars also agrees that "the plays on stage and page do not necessarily grow close together. The emphasis on antiquarianism that in part drove researches into Shakespeare's texts was also an impetus behind stage productions emphasizing historical authenticity to the periods which the plays were set" (14). Nonetheless, all this preoccupation with spectacle and historical representation on stage may have cast a shadow over another purpose of the theatre: to deal with human feeling and behaviour (Jackson 2).

The second aspect of the history of the Victorian theatre, according to Jackson, focuses on the establishment of the theatrical institution as socially respectable. In the nineteenth century, the middle and upper classes returned to the theatre. This had important consequences, such as the amelioration of the theatre's infrastructure, the comfort it provided to the audience, and the professionalisation of actors and actresses (3). Even the Queen herself could be seen at the theatre regularly. According to Richard Schoch, Queen Victoria was an enthusiast for the theatre and greatly responsible for elevating the status of the theatrical business. He explains that "when in London, the Queen often attended two or three performances a week, a rate of theatre-going worthy of a professional dramatic critic" (2004, 105), although she

[13] My translation.

[14] As we have seen, by "modern history" Hugo refers to the moment in European history from the Middle Ages up to his own lifetime, in the nineteenth century.

could not attend every theatre. The Queen would only be seen in her royal box in large and respectable playhouses, such as Covent Garden and Royal Theatre Drury Lane, the only ones allowed to perform legitimate drama[15] until the Theatres Regulation Act of 1843.

In addition to paying private visits to the theatres and visits "in state,"[16] the Queen also patronised certain theatre houses or theatre professionals, being careful not to favour any one in particular—although that occasionally happened, as in 1839, when the Queen unquestionably showed her preference and royal support to Mr. Van Amburgh, an American lion tamer recently arrived in England who delighted the sovereign with his spectacular wild show with lions and tigers (Schoch 2004, 118-19). Her preference for a circus act over the legitimate national drama infuriated several theatre professionals, including Macready, who wrote in his diary that "the Queen was going to pay a third visit to Drury Lane theatre to see the lions, and after the performance to go on the stage!" (Trewin 170). Nonetheless, the episode was beneficial in the way that it called Victoria's attention to the importance of supporting "legitimate" drama and of attending national plays, including the ones staged by Macready.

With the improvement of the structure of the venues, the theatre had also become a place for social engagement. Since the new theatrical techniques in changing scenery required more time to be adjusted, the intervals between the acts became longer. As a consequence, more theatres built seating areas and crush bars that allowed theatregoers to socialise, reinforcing the theatre's position as the favourite source of entertainment in the nineteenth century (Sillars 55).

Furthermore, the new conditions of the theatre houses also influenced the performances. Moran explains that previously theatres were usually similar to dark barns and, therefore, required the actors to shout and make use of coarse and exaggerated gestures. When theatres moved to more intimate spaces, acting could be more delicate and emotional (97). Moreover, at the beginning of the Victorian Era, the theatre had developed a cult for famous individual actors, who attracted audiences, such as Charles Kemble (1775-1854), Macready, Phelps, Kean, Irving and Beerbohm Tree, whose fame could be compared to that of rock stars nowadays. This preference for individual actors

[15] The issue of what was considered "legitimate" drama will be discussed later on in this chapter.

[16] The visits "in state" were official royal visits to the theatre, which had to be planned in advance so that the Queen could choose what she would like to watch on the stage during her visit. It was a great honour to the theatre in question to receive the Queen and her party.

influenced the performances, which revolved around the main actor and had, therefore, little notion of dramatic interaction, or ensemble performance (Sillars 52).

The third aspect of Victorian theatre history deals with the theatre as an expression of popular culture. Jackson states that in a time of urban growth, better education of the people and new means of transportation transformed the theatre into mass audience entertainment (3). With the increasing number of playhouses and their different audiences, a debate emerged regarding what was considered "legitimate" drama and who was allowed to stage those dramas. In fact, according to Moran, before the Theatre Regulation Act of 1843 the majority of theatres in London were not authorised to stage straight plays, the so-called legitimate plays.[17] Instead, they had to insert at least five musical intermissions, fragmenting the spectacle somewhat. These were known as the burlettas (96). These musical spectacles were legally permitted to be staged by minor houses (Jackson 3).

Before the Theatre Regulation Act, which repealed the Licensing Act of 1737,[18] only two theatres in London had permission to perform legitimate drama: Covent Garden and Drury Lane. From 1843 onwards, the monopoly of straight plays performances was dissolved and many theatre houses began to stage popular plays, including Shakespeare's (Sillars 51). As a consequence, there were even more theatres in the cities and more audiences from all social classes attended the performances. As an illustration, Moran explains that "in 1851, 20 theatres could be found in London. By 1900, there were 61 London theatres, all demanding fresh sensations and new material" (Moran 97). As the favourite Victorian entertainment, the theatre required more and more innovations to keep audiences interested.

The dissemination of the theatre also reflects the Victorian desire for intellectual advancement and self-improvement. Indeed, one of the reasons why Shakespeare was one of the most performed playwrights of the century is that he worked both as a national symbol, a sign of Victorian patriotism and desire to construct a British identity, as well as a moral guide. Shakespeare was presented to society through the performance of the plays duly modified according to the Victorian

[17] The legitimate plays—or legitimate theatre—were, according to the Licensing Act of 1737, "serious" spoken dramatic performances of classical authors, such as Shakespeare, without musical intermission. The Licensing Act restricted the performance of legitimate drama to Covent Garden and Theatre Royal Drury Lane until 1843.

[18] The Licensing Act of 1737 prohibited the performance of spoken drama without music in any playhouse except the patent theatres Drury Lane and Covent Garden (Sillars 51).

needs. According to Sillars, the choice of Shakespeare's works was not incidental:

> Already established in the preceding century as the greatest statement of English values, the works were increasingly becoming a means of moral guidance and instruction, as their adaptation for reading by children and the growing number of editions aimed at popular readership make clear. (51)

Enjoying Shakespeare had ceased to be a privilege of the wealthier and more educated ranks of Victorian society. Shakespeare was now available to all in various editions and language forms, and his works were performed in distinct neighbourhoods at different prices.

As theatre became more popular, in the mid-nineteenth century theatre managers had to look for accessible sources of material for performance and, as a solution, several best-selling novels were adapted to the stage, as a means to guarantee the public's interest and approval. Works by Walter Scott, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Wilkie Collins, and Charles Dickens were some of the sources for successful stage adaptations (Moran 97).

Another popular trend in Victorian theatre was the melodrama, which appealed more to the working and lower-middle classes. These plays were quite simple in plot and structure, and interested large audiences by dealing with themes such as the clash between love and duty, scandals, crimes, and excessive sentimentality (Moran 98-99). The effect that this theatrical genre had on early-Victorian historical plays is clear, especially in terms of the taste for exaggerated pageantry.

In addition to corroborating Victorian historical consciousness, the choice for the performance of historical plays was also a means to explore new theatrical technological possibilities and to indulge in pageantry. Charles Kean's several Shakespearean historical revivals, for example, "were unremittingly criticized for masking mediocre acting with excessive spectacle" (Schoch 2006, 65). Kean's 1846 production of King John at the Park Theatre in New York City, a teaser for his future productions at the Princess's Theatre in London, comprised 176 costumes, 15,000 square feet of painted scenery, a playbill explaining the historical veracity of the production, and a total budget of $12,000 (Schoch 2006, 27).

Finally, the fourth aspect of the history of Victorian theatre discussed by Jackson is its ascent as artistically unified. He signals as causes to this unity:

> the demand for an overall sense of composition in staging and performance, the emergence of the independent 'producer' or (in modern British usage) director, with command over every department of the theatre and an identifiable approach to the text or the subject matter. (4)

Moreover, the rising status of the playwright and the acknowledgement of dramatic copyrights also added to the establishment of the theatre as artistically unified (Jackson 4-5).

It is also important to mention the late-Victorian theatrical comedy of manners, whose great exponent was Oscar Wilde with his witty plays that criticised society's moral hypocrisy. Significant plays of this period are Lady Windermere's Fan (1892), An Ideal Husband (1895), and The Importance of Being Earnest (1895). As Moran points out, the nineteenth century was a period of great change in the theatre; in fact, she calls it a "theatrical revolution" (103). Theatre became a solid literary institution with great influence on society's values and beliefs. Furthermore, it had acquired an elevated artistic and social status, along with the actors and theatre managers, who also gained greater prominence.

As a matter of fact, Foulkes points out that at the beginning of Victoria's reign the theatre had been highly depreciated. As a means to elevate the status of the business and of themselves, the professionals involved in it managed to transform the theatre into a national event. For that aim, performing Shakespeare was essential, since he was a symbol of national pride (2002, 3), respected outside the theatre as a great author and poet (Foulkes 2008, 1). Furthermore, Queen Victoria, herself a constant presence at the theatre, as we have seen, offered the greatest example of the respectability of the metier. "If theatre was good enough for the highest family in the land it was good enough for any family in the land", concludes Schoch (2004, xvii). By the end of the nineteenth century, the theatre had completely changed its renown. As Moran puts it, "Victorian theatre finally occupied the place cinema would hold in the twentieth century. Intellectually dignified and popular, it offered entertainment and cultural challenge to an audience hungry for its delights" (103).[19] Such a role in Victorian society cannot be neglected,

[19] Original emphasis.

hence the importance of analysing the influence and impact that the theatre had on its nineteenth-century audience.

1.1.2 Victorian Historiography

The developments and advancements of the nineteenth century gave the Victorians a sense of superiority in relation to previous periods in history, which caused an increasing interest in knowing more about and honouring their past. Moran states that "the discourse of science inflected language and literature. A detailed attention to 'data' and 'facts' in part explains the Victorian love of history, biography and elaborate material details in fiction" (56), alongside the aforementioned Victorian desire of self-improvement.

The taste for history is also evident in Victorian literature. The historical novel gained prominence as the nineteenth-century audience was keen on reading about great moments and figures of the past. Examples are various, such as William Thackeray's The History of Henry Esmond (1852), Walter Scott's Waverly novels (1814-1832), Charles Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities (1859), Charlotte Brontë's Shirley (1849), George Eliot's Romola (1863), amongst others (Moran 84).

Schoch draws attention to the fact that performance, history and politics were intertwined in Victorian England (2006, 6). The recovery of medieval literature, important historical events and persons was one of the major political projects of the nineteenth century (Schoch 2006, 12), and the theatre was a way through which this recovery was possible—visually possible, to the delight of the Victorians, who had a peculiar taste for visual spectacles.

The production of historical works was also prolific in the nineteenth century, when history established itself as a professional area of knowledge and research. As Richard Schoch (2006) puts it, the nineteenth century was "the golden age of history":

> It was a time when the desire to know and possess the past rivaled science as the dominant system of cognition, and history as a practice seemed to overtake the whole scope of representational activities: literature, architecture, handicrafts, painting, photography, sculpture, spectacle, and theatre. (1)

Writers such as John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), John Ruskin (1819-1900) and John Henry Newman (1801-1890), known as the "sage writers" of Victorian Prose, contributed to discussions in the fields of politics, philosophy, literature, art and theology (Moran 105).

The flourishing of history as a respectable area of research also influenced theatrical events in the late-eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century. Examples of performances grounded on serious historical research are numerous. Schoch names but a few:

> Philippe De Loutherbourg's[20] designs of the Gothic picturesque for David Garrick[21] in the 1770s, William Capon's[22] scenes of 'ancient English streets' created for John Philip Kemble[23] in 1794, Clarkson Stanfield's[24] dioramas used in William Charles Macready's 1839 production of Henry V, and the hundreds of antiquarian scene designs created expressly for Charles Kean's[25] Shakespearean revivals at the Princess's Theatre in the 1850s. (2006, 2)

As mentioned earlier, the concern for historical validity in the theatre comprised not only the preference for plays which had a medieval

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[20] Philippe De Loutherbourg (1740-1812) was a Franco-British painter, who was famous for his elaborate scenic designs for theatres in London.

[21] David Garrick (1717-1779) was an English actor, playwright and theatre manager. He was the manager of the Royal Theatre Drury Lane for twenty-nine years.

[22] William Capon (1757-1827) was an English-Norwegian painter. He was a scene painter at the Royal Theatre Drury Lane.

[23] John Philip Kemble (1757-1823) was an English actor and theatre manager at the Royal Theatre Drury Lane and at Covent Garden. He was the brother of Charles Kemble (1775-1854), who was also an actor. They both performed several Shakespearean characters.

[24] Clarkson Stanfield (1749-1867) was an English painter. He worked as a decorator and scene-painter and became known after being hired by the Royal Theatre Drury Lane. He was also known for his large-scale dioramas and panoramas.

[25] Charles Kean (1811-1868) was an Irish actor. He was the son of the well-known Shakespearean actor Edmund Kean (1787-1833).

setting. Rather, it encompassed all areas of the theatrical business: scenography, costume, acting style, and performance.

The nineteenth century was truly a remarkable era for theatrical advancement. It was a time when history could be enacted on stage and historical figures and events could be seen brought back to life right in front of an eager Victorian audience. In his elaborate study of Victorian performances of Shakespeare's history plays by Charles Kean at the Princess's Theatre between 1852 and 1859, Schoch explicitly rejects, and I agree, "both J. L. Styan's ahistorical view that the Victorian theatre's devotion to antiquarianism was a 'misplaced belief' and Dennis Kennedy's surprisingly simplistic assertion that Kean's audiences were 'distracted from the play by manipulated historical pictures'" (2006, 8). On the contrary, the antiquarian Victorian revivals of Shakespeare's historical plays had the reflection of the Victorian historical consciousness at the core of their nature. Just as Kean, Macready was, some years before, already delving into the relation between theatre and history. Schoch highlights a possible difference between the two theatre managers: "if Charles Kean's goal was to use Shakespeare to represent history, then Macready's was to use history to represent Shakespeare" (2006, 3). Either way, the nineteenth-century historical thirst and awareness was both present on the Drury Lane and on the Princess's Theatre stages. For Schoch, Kean's Shakespearean historical revivals were not "a naïve fascination with historical accuracy [...] but historicism in action" (2006, 8). In my view, Macready was also part of this movement to put history in motion and an advocate of the theatre as "historicism in action." I shall further elaborate this concept in the following chapters of this thesis.

Another issue concerning the relationship between history and theatre is the notion that a historical representation, be it on stage or by means of professional history writing, is always a reconstruction. The "true" past events can never be fully retrieved. As Schoch puts it, "there can be no pure or unsullied recovery of the past because all historical representations are mediated by yet other representations. A Shakespearean past thus inevitably ghosts or hunts theatrical representations of the medieval past" (2006, 10). Victorian historical representations of Shakespeare's pasts are therefore inexorably shaped by a Renaissance perspective on the Middle Ages. This is what Schoch calls "double-voiced historicism" (2006, 11): a medieval past rewritten by a Renaissance writer and performed by a Victorian actor, in which two different historical approaches intertwine. The concept of "double-

voiced historicism" is further explored in the following chapters of the present work.

1.1.3 Victorian Medievalism

The mid-nineteenth century developed a great taste for archaeology and history, as illustrated by the aforementioned Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.[26] The Brotherhood wished for an artistic revolution, in which idealisation and sentimentality would give way to naturalistic depictions of religious, legendary and literary figures, medieval iconography, and realist details that opposed the Italian ideal created by Raphael and his followers at the end of the fifteenth century (Moran 117), hence the name *pre*-Raphaelite. Beautiful paintings are the result of this artistic revolution, including the famous *Ophelia*, painted by Millais in 1851-52, which depicts one of the most renowned Shakespearean characters apparently singing in the river before she drowns; the polemic naturalistic illustration of Christ with his family in Joseph's workshop in Millais's *Christ in the House of His Parents* (1849-50); and the later *The Lady of Shalott*, a figure of the Arthurian legends majestically painted in 1888 by John William Waterhouse (1849-1917), an artist who identified with the Brotherhood and continued with its style even after the group's dissolution.

The Pre-Raphaelite movement in art also had an impact on literature, especially in poetry. The artist and founding member of the Brotherhood, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who was also a poet, was the first to bring pre-Raphaelite concepts to the written form. According to Moran, elements such as "archaic diction and courtly love allusions, a vaguely religious mystical symbolism and sensuous descriptive detail" thrived in mid-nineteenth-century poetry (118). That is another illustration of the appeal of medievalism to Victorian artists and audience.

In the realm of the theatre, performances were a way to bring back the glorious past, at least momentarily, on stage. As Schoch puts it, "in the theatre, above all, the past was not dead. It was not even sleeping. It was alive and well and appearing nightly" (2006, 2). On the Victorian stage, the audience could “relive” the Middle Ages and see with their own eyes important figures from British history: for instance, the cruel King John, by means of the performance of Shakespeare's homonymous play.

[26] See note 7.

Schoch calls attention to the fact that the revival of Shakespeare's historical plays was by no means the only manner to relive the Middle Ages on stage, but "it was the only effective way" (2006, 8). Other medieval sources, such as "liturgical tropes, morality plays, and Corpus Christi cycles" did not appeal to the Victorian taste, while foreign works did not provide a sense of national history (9). Since Victorian theatre responded to the nineteenth-century need for nationalism, a historical piece would only be successful if it depicted a noteworthy moment in English history. That is why Shakespeare was the Victorian favourite, since he was not only a symbol of national pride himself, but also the author of plays set in important periods of English history: from the Plantagenet dynasty, in *King John*, up to the reign of Henry VIII, the father of Elizabeth I, the current monarch in Shakespeare's time.

The Medieval Revival, as Chandler calls this trend for medievalism in the nineteenth century, had as its main characteristic the appropriation of the Middle Ages as a metaphor: "a metaphor both for a specific social order and, somewhat more vaguely, for a metaphysically harmonious world view" (1). The Middle Ages had become a synonym for perfection in the nineteenth-century imagination. All the hardships and privations of the early centuries were deliberately forgotten in order to find in the Middle Ages an example of a perfect society: distant in time, the birth of English civilisation, a world of chivalry, respect, courtly love, and heroic deeds. All of this was contrasted with the rapid mechanisation and industrialisation of the nineteenth century, which was transforming Victorian society—many thought it was changing for the worse, another reason for regretting the loss of medieval ideals.

Newly-industrialised England offered poor living conditions to factory workers, who tended to believe that the common man was more content and had a better life in the Middle Ages. John Ruskin, as we have seen, one of the Victorian sages, compared the life of a medieval workman with that of a modern worker, and concluded that the medieval man was happier and freer, because he was not only a tool in a system, not just an automaton following orders in a factory, but a creative agent (Chandler 7). Ruskin’s statement is an illustration of the Victorian idealised view on the medieval past, which was not necessarily true. Chandler points out that "throughout the nineteenth century medievalists expressed horror over the degraded and impoverished condition of the industrial proletariat" (3), which was reflected in the artistic productions of the time. In addition, nineteenth-century society also longed for the unity of medieval communities that they believed had been lost in their

own time. "In contrast to the alienated and divisive atmosphere of an increasingly urbanized and industrialized society, the Middle Ages were seen as familial and patriarchal" (Chandler 3), in their feudal system that supposedly provided men with responsible and honest masters. Chandler explains that nineteenth-century workers regretted the loss of connection between individuals—the relationship between farmer and field hands, craftsman and apprentices, master and labourers, etc. (3). All these bonds had weakened with the advent of the industries. As a matter of fact, Thomas Carlyle, as we have also seen, another Victorian sage, believed that this loss of connection between individuals in society was one of the worst symptoms of contemporary life (Chandler 3).

Certainly the Victorians had a distorted view of the Middle Ages due to the situation in which they were inserted. It was not because of lack of knowledge of the "real" Middle Ages, but rather a heartfelt desire to find in the past a model of a perfect society—which, since distant in time, had lost flaws and maintained only advantages—, a place to escape in order to forget the misfortunes of the present. As Chandler puts it, the yearning for the distant Middle Ages functioned as a regret for the loss of pastoral England, as well as a belief in medieval freedom (9). It was the reflection of the Victorian wish to erase the factory chimneys from sight and return to a landscape of castles, knightly battles, free labour, and courtly love.

1.1.4 Victorian Shakespeare

As we have seen, with the increasing Victorian interest in history and national symbols, the figure of William Shakespeare regained attention. Being one of the greatest names in English literature and culture, Shakespeare and his works were selected to represent Victorian ideals, and his historical plays were significantly valuable since they depicted important periods in English history. The performance of historical plays was a means to reconnect the Victorians with their past and heritage.

However, Sillars points out that the Victorians rather praised Shakespeare as a person than as a playwright. He was considered a moral guide, a great thinker, and, more importantly, "a great Englishman whose gifts were divinely inspired" (6). John Ruskin believed Shakespeare had great value because he managed to combine entertainment with education (Sillars 5). In a world ever more changing and uncertain, Shakespeare was elected by the Victorians to represent

tradition and Englishness, and his plays became a vehicle for transmitting Victorian ideologies.

According to Sillars, the speeches given during the celebrations of Shakespeare's tercentenary in Stratford-upon-Avon in April 1864 give an idea of the Victorian perspective on Shakespeare. Charles Wordsworth, Bishop of St. Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane in Scotland, and also a prominent scholar, for instance, praised Shakespeare's knowledge of the Bible reflected in his works. Moreover, Reverend Chenevix Trench, who was also a poet, affirmed that "while Shakespeare was the embodiment of all things English, he was also a gift sent from God to 'mould a nation's life' to ensure that it would be 'animated and quickened to heroic enterprise and worthiest endeavour', as well as offering 'ideals of perfect womanhood'" (7). Shakespeare's works were, no doubt, interpreted in a way that could convey the meaning desired by the interested party. In the examples aforementioned, Victorian churchmen found in Shakespeare a concern with religious conduct and biblical references that is not necessarily Shakespeare's.

Shakespeare became a myth during the Victorian Era. Everything related to him, his lifetime and birthplace acquired significant value, emotionally and financially. Sillars states that physical memorabilia related to Shakespeare became an indispensable item in Victorian homes. Shakespeare remained an active figure during the nineteenth century through

> the sale of objects avowedly made from the mulberry tree [of the garden in New Place][27], commemorative ribbons, Staffordshire ceramic figurines of actors in Shakespearean character and Shakespeare himself, and other impedimenta without which no serious Victorian parlour was complete. (8)

Shakespeare's status raised from a simple man who wrote popular plays in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries to a mythical symbol of English history in the Victorian Era.

Although Shakespeare was present in scholarly speeches and elite homes, the Renaissance dramatist made his way into the working

[27] New Place was the last residence of Shakespeare in Stratford-upon-Avon, where he died in 1616. The house unfortunately no longer exists, although the land is owned by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

class as well. On April 23, 1864, the Working Men's Shakespeare Committee organised an event called "Grand Miscellaneous Entertainment and Monster Demonstration of the Working Classes", which gathered over four thousand people. The people began to realise that the ideas presented in Shakespeare were not only the ones preached by the clergy or the higher classes. According to Sillars,

> Shakespeare was part of the national consciousness, it seemed, in ways that went far beyond ideals of identity and moral guidance. There was, in the coming together, just a hint that his plays might contain ideas counter to those of established rank and order, and that those who had read speeches from the plays in the National Schools, or bought cheap editions of them as a means of self-improvement, would reject the social structures of which the plays had, in the minds of the Stratford and London tercentenary committees, been an inseparable, God-given part. (11)

This extract demonstrates how intrinsically connected were theatre and politics. The nineteenth-century stage was a means to convey political ideas and to encourage certain social conducts. At this point, the masses were beginning to become aware of the political power of theatrical performances, to challenge the received interpretations, and to have interpretations of Shakespeare's texts of their own.

Shakespeare could be encountered by the Victorians not only by means of performances—which were abundant from the Theatre Regulation Act in 1843 onwards and usually available to all class ranks, although seated in separate sections in the theatre—but also by means of references, allusions or intertextuality in contemporary poems and novels (Sillars 12). In addition, Shakespeare's texts were re-edited with annotations to aid the comprehension of Victorian readers as well as with modern spelling to facilitate the reading for younger readers. The plays were printed in different editions depending on the target audience—luxurious, illustrated leather-bound editions filled the shelves of the elite, whereas cheap volumes were available for the working classes. Everybody made an effort to learn a few Shakespearean lines, because knowing Shakespeare was a sign of "cultural maturity." Furthermore, Shakespeare was quoted and alluded to in cartoons, such as the ones with political implications published in *Punch* magazine, founded in 1841; Shakespeare's characters called the attention of

Victorian painters, being the inspiration for several oeuvres of the period; the cult of Shakespeare, the man, gained prominence with the publication of the writer's biographies; Stratford-upon-Avon became a mandatory visit for all English men and women; and, finally, Shakespeare made his way into academia, where analysis of his works and characters became definitely legitimised (Sillars 15-17).

The aforementioned examples verify the significant presence of Shakespeare in Victorian society in all areas of representation. Throughout the nineteenth century,

> Shakespeare was the playwright whose plays audiences wanted to see, no doubt in some cases because of patriotic and sentimental attachments, but above all because of their sheer entertainment value: the action-packed plots, the legendary yet recognisably human characters, the rich humour, the lofty tragedy, the sensational murders, spine-chilling apparitions and breathtaking battles as well of course as the incomparable language. (Foulkes 2002, 3)

As Sillars puts it, "it is hard to name an area of intellectual or social life in which the works did not feature" (16). That is why when studying Victorian Shakespeare, it is indispensable to understand Victorian society, its way of living and its perspective on matters, such as art, culture, history, and historical representation.

1.2 Historical reconstruction on stage

Before analysing Macready's 1842 production of Shakespeare's *King John* at Theatre Royal Drury Lane, it is important to discuss a few concepts concerning the analysis of past theatrical performances: history, historiography, and theatre historiography.

First of all, the definitions of history on which this work is based need to be presented. According to Raymond Aron, "no such thing as a historical *reality* exists ready made, so that science merely has to reproduce it faithfully. The historical reality, because it is human, is *ambiguous* and *inexhaustible* (118)"[28]. From this perspective, there is not one single historical reality that can be retrieved by historians and therefore reproduced faithfully. As Aron explains, history is human and,

[28] Original emphasis.

consequently, “ambiguous and inexhaustible”, open to interpretations and continuous debates. Linda Hutcheon (1989) in *The Politics of Postmodernism* points out that Fredric Jameson’s idea of History—with capital letter—as “uninterrupted narratives” has been contested by a postmodern perspective on histories—in the plural—that are “plural, interrupted, unrepressed” (65). The approach to History as a unique, unalterable and unquestionable report of past events no longer stands. Phyllis Rackin adds to this discussion by affirming that “in the light of the contemporary revolution in historiography, the old positivist claims about an objectively ‘true’ history beyond the reach of ideology seem impossible to sustain” (x). Today—and I strongly agree with this view—, history is seen as multifaceted and fragmented. It is the result of an everlasting discussion and overlapping of different interpretations—congruent or incongruent—of past events.

It has become clear that there is neither one single possible interpretation nor a unique way of understanding a historical event. Conversely, there are numerous points of view which add to the rich product that is historical analysis. That, by no means, suggests the denial of the existence of a real past event, “but if focuses attention on the act of imposing order on the past, of encoding strategies of meaning-making through representation” (Hutcheon 67). Meanings are constructed by means of historical representations, which cannot be regarded as objective or disinterested. As Hutcheon explains, “provisionality and undecidability, partisanship and even overt politics—these are what replace the pose of objectivity and disinterestedness that denies the interpretative and implicitly evaluative nature of historical representation” (74). History, as Rackin explains, cannot be seen from an ahistorical vantage point (x): all historical representations—written, artistic, theatrical or any other mode of expression—are a product of their own time, therefore inescapably influenced by the current ideology of the time and people involved. Historical facts inevitably pass through the interpretative filter of the teller, be it fictional or historical writing.

Secondly, it is essential to put forward the concepts of historiography which guide the present work. Historiography, in general terms, is the writing of history. However, historiography “is no longer considered the objective and disinterested recording of the past; it is more an attempt to comprehend and master it by means of some working (narrative/exploratory) model that, in fact, is precisely what grants a particular meaning to the past” (Hutcheon 64). Thomas Postlewait agrees with Hutcheon when he states that historiography has come to mean much more than merely the writing of history; it now also

encompasses theories and philosophy of history (2). For Postlewait, historiography is "not only the methods that define and guide the practice of historical study and writing but also the self-reflexive mindset that leads us to investigate the processes and aims of historical understanding" (2). Therefore, historiography is a complex process by means of which we come to critically analyse and comprehend historical events, bearing in mind that, as we have seen, history is a multifaceted phenomenon open to several interpretations.

As early as 1978, Hayden White, one of the pioneer theorists in analysing the correlations between historiography and fiction writing, and who has influenced other theorists such as the aforementioned Linda Hutcheon, reminds us of the very nature of historical narratives: they are "verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much *invented* as *found* and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences" (82).[29] By this, White does not deny the existence of a historical past. Essentially, he affirms that any attempt to narrate a historical event will inevitably include fiction. White's argument was innovative in the way that he acknowledged that the boundaries between historiography and fiction writing are not fixed but blurred. There is not one clear distinction of what is purely historiography or what is purely fiction. In fact, a thoroughly historiographical work would be simply impossible to achieve, because it would always be permeated by its writer's ideologies.

When historians write history, they follow a process White calls *emplotment*, which is the transformation of chronicles into stories (83). In this process, historians derive meaning from fragmentary historical records by organising them in a coherent narrative:

> The events are *made* into a story by the suppression or subordination of certain of them and the highlighting of others, by characterization, motif repetition, variation of tone and point of view, alternative descriptive strategies, and the like—in short, all of the techniques that we would normally expect to find in the emplotment of a novel or a play. (White 84)

In this manner, the historiographer's work is similar to the fiction writer's in the way that both express thoughts and ideas by means of a

[29] Original emphasis.

story with characters, settings, plots, themes and points of view. Shakespeare, in his reconstruction of thirteenth-century England, emplots King John's reign in a five-act play just as W. L. Warren—as we will see—emplots it in a three-hundred-page biography. Although they were written for different audiences and purposes, these two forms of historical writing are based on a common ground: historical reconstruction.

Rackin explains that the change of perspectives on historiographical understanding began during the Renaissance, the period in which Shakespeare lived and wrote. According to Rackin, historiography ceased to be regarded as the written expression of one undisputable truth; it was now beginning to be seen as the result of multiple interpretations and, for that matter, susceptible to incredibility and contestation. Additionally, the advent of the moving type and the increase of popular literacy allowed history writing to become more accessible to a wider public (13). Rackin also submits that the figure of the historian was slowly being demystified during the Renaissance: he was "no longer an authority simply by virtue of his authorship, he came to be seen as a fallible human being, located in a particular time and place, limited by ignorance, subject to bias and blindness, struggling to recover a past in which he had not lived" (13). These new ideas surrounding historiography most certainly influenced the artistic production of the time, including Shakespeare's. Since the historian had fallen from his pedestal of supreme historical authority and was regarded as susceptible to errors, historiography was no longer unreachable. If historians were "fallible human beings", other fallible human beings could express their own reconstructions of history, such as artists, poets and playwrights. History was now a well into which anyone could venture to jump. Shakespeare decided to take a leap and venture through the world of historical representation by means of his historical plays.

Finally, there is an on-going debate about the distinction between *theatre performance* and *theatre historiography*. Patrice Pavis (2006) discusses the issue in terms of *performance* and *theatre reconstruction*. According to him, in order to "analyse" a performance, one has to be present at it. Pavis points out that the experience with the theatrical performance, in this case, is first-hand and, therefore, is not disturbed by other mediations. A theatrical reconstruction, conversely, is based on the analysis of secondary sources, such as historical documents and records, since the analyst cannot be physically present at the performance in question (2-3). The latter, Pavis asserts, cannot be called

performance analysis. It is, in his opinion, a *reconstruction* of past performances (3).[30]

Nonetheless, any attempt to retell a "brute" historical or theatrical event, be it by means of first-hand participation or by means of secondary sources, is a reconstruction. According to Hutcheon, amidst the discussions of history and historiography through a postmodern perspective, there "is a new self-consciousness about the distinction between the brute *events* of the past and the historical *facts* we construct out of them. Facts are events to which we have given meaning. Different historical perspectives therefore derive different facts from the same events" (57).[31] From this outlook on historical representation, historical events become facts by means of our interpretation of them. Consequently, the very same event—historical or theatrical—may spring a great variety of interpretations from individuals who were present at the event, who were told about it, who read about it, or who had any other contact with the event. The retrieval of the "brute event" itself, in this sense, is impossible.

Hutcheon also highlights the fact that "the teller—of story or history—also constructs those very facts by giving a particular meaning to events. Facts do not speak for themselves in either form of narrative: the tellers speak for them, making these fragments of the past into a discursive whole" (58). In this way, the "brute events" of the reign of King John (1166-1216) become facts as well as discourse when they are given meaning by their tellers: Shakespeare in the end of the sixteenth century interpreted those events and gave one possible meaning to them by means of fictionalising them on stage; Macready at the beginning of the nineteenth century revisited Shakespeare's text and gave new meaning to the "brute events" that inspired the play by means of readapting them to the Victorian stage; the critics who have written about the fictionalised versions of King John's reign as well as historians who have investigated this period in English history have also given new meanings to the "brute events," which, themselves, are irretrievable. This is the beauty of history: by means of the proposal of new meanings by different tellers, the historical facts never die, but are constantly revisited.

Based on Hutcheon's postmodern perspective of history, Pavis's idea of performance is no longer acceptable, for each and every performance is a reconstruction, whether the analyst is present at it or

[30] Original emphasis.
[31] Original emphasis.

reading about it through secondary sources. Even an analyst who has the experience of the performance first-hand will construct his/her interpretation based on his/her individual background, which will be different from another analyst's who may be watching the very same performance. Therefore, every analysis of any performance, live or not, is a reconstruction. José Roberto O'Shea adds to this discussion by stating that "the analysis of performance is not an experimental science in search of empirical demonstration, but an interpretative intellectual exercise, in search of construction of meaning" (2015, 7-8). The word *construction*, and its derivation *reconstruction*, is key in Hutcheon's, O'Shea's, and my own perspective of performance analysis. Every performance after the close of the curtains, as put by O'Shea, "vanishes" (2015, 8). Therefore, any attempt to retrieve it will forcefully be a reconstruction, based on interpretation and meaning construction.

Theatre—unlike drama, which is the written dramatic text and, therefore, has a long life—"having *vita brevis*, […] is not fixed, hardly recordable, unrepeatable, and difficult to measure" (O'Shea 2004, 146). Theatre encompasses a lot more than the written text: it has performance at its core. As O'Shea puts it: "theatre is spoken language signifying side by side visual, aural, and sensorial language, by means of actors, space, movement, props, light, music, and the complex interrelations among these, all coming to fruition in reception" (2004, 147). All these elements, which are so fluid and likely to change in every performance, will inevitably influence the spectator's experience in the theatre. Even spectators watching the same performance in the same playhouse but sitting at different distances and angles from the stage will forcefully have distinguished perceptions. Therefore, each spectator constructs the performance as well as a theatre historian does.

Furthermore, it is just as possible to reconstruct a contemporary play as it is to reconstruct a production performed centuries ago. As Postlewait puts it:

> In some cases our historical representations of modern events may be as flawed as those we put forward for pre-modern events. In fact, we can sometimes recover performance methods, in striking detail, from five and six hundred years ago, yet bungle the basic details of a contemporary event. (2009, 61)

Both events, modern or pre-modern productions, will forcefully be reconstructed by the theatre historian and the success of their analysis

will depend on the historian's ability to work with text, context, and archival documents.

This debate between theatre historiography and performance analysis was also taken up by Postlewait (2009), who uses the terms *documentary scholarship* and *cultural history*. In doing documentary history, the theatre historian transforms "history-as-record"—the archival documents, all historical sources such as written and oral reports, material objects and archaeological remains—into "history-as-event," which is the theatrical event itself and, therefore, no longer exists (Postlewait 27). The process of transforming "history-as-record" into "history-as-event" is a reconstruction. As Postlewait puts it, "the recovery process, an act of reconstruction based upon factual data and imagination, depends upon the historian's skills and talent for research, organization, description, analysis, interpretation, and argument" (27). That is why the theatre historian's task is so fascinating: it combines history, culture, literature, and art. The theatre historian, based on factual data, reconstructs a moment in the past (the context), a specific place (the playhouse), a text (the play), and the people involved (the director, actors, and audience). The theatre historian, as well as any historian, works on "rational principles of possibility, plausibility, and probability" (Postlewait 27); there is no certainty.

The approach towards theatre historiography called *documentary scholarship* by Postlewait (2009) has gathered a lot of negative criticism. According to Postlewait, recent scholars have regarded the documentary scholarship method as positivist and antiquarian, because it focuses on the analysis of archival documents and empirical procedures, but often fails to consider the theatrical event as cultural and social (58). I agree with Postlewait's criticism at a purely documentary analysis. Little does it matter to reconstruct a past theatrical event based on historical documents if one does not take into consideration the social and cultural dimensions of the event, which are so intricately connected to all theatrical and other artistic productions. A theatre event is part of its context: it influences the outside world, and is influenced by it. As Postlewait puts it, it is not enough to know what, where, when and who happened. It is necessary to know *how* and *why* (59).

Based on more recent studies and theories on New Historicism, cultural materialism, identity studies, amongst other fields of historiographical investigation,[32] there has sprung another approach

[32] The scope of this investigation does not allow for the discussion of these concepts.

towards theatre historiography: *cultural history*. By using this method to reconstruct a past theatrical event, the theatre historian must take into account the social, economic, religious, ideological, and other contextual variables that may have had an effect on the performance. Postlewait argues that the theatrical event can be analysed as part of an artistic movement, as participating in a developmental process of controversial reception, as a moment in an actor's, playwright or theatre director's biography, as part of a social history of theatre criticism, amongst many other possible paths of investigation (78-79). The cultural historian focuses on the world around the theatrical event rather than on the event itself.

These two approaches towards theatrical events—documentary scholarship and cultural history—are two extremes in the area of investigation in theatre historiography. Postlewait rightly advocates that these two extremes must not be regarded as opposites. He contends that:

> The opposition between documentary scholarship and cultural history is a false dichotomy. The commitment to documentation is not an antiquarian vice to be overcome; it is one crucial aspect of the historian's sensibility and responsibility. We gain nothing as historians by trying to set up an opposition between documentary and cultural history. Description and analysis go hand in hand with explanation and interpretation. Each well-documented theatre event requires a well-developed contextual understanding. (85)

Therefore, the theatre historian should find a balance between documentary scholarship and cultural history, working both inductively—by gathering and analysing reliable archival sources—and deductively—by interpreting the data in accordance with the context around the theatrical event and by not falling into a generalised and reductive interpretation (Postlewait 49).

That being said, the ideas concerning theatre historiography and performance analysis, or documentary scholarship and cultural history, should not be regarded as opposite. Quite the contrary, the theatre scholar profits from both of them and should base his/her analytical work on both fields of research.

As Postlewait puts it, in order to analyse a theatrical event from the past, it is necessary to reconstruct the past event and its historical

context, establishing some of the "truths" concerning this particular event (22). I think it is interesting that Postlewait uses the term *truths* in the plural, because, as advocated by Hutcheon (1999), there is not one universal truth when it comes to historical writing. All historical writing is a reconstruction of facts, events and contexts susceptible to several interpretations. The theatrical event, as all artistic manifestations, should be studied in relation to its context of production.

1.2.1 Analysing historical theatrical events

As mentioned earlier in this work, studying the context of an artistic production is essential for its analysis. However, the term *context* is deemed too broad for Postlewait, who believes that the binarism *event—context* it not sufficient to encompass all fundamental aspects of theatre analysis (11). Instead of this binarism, he proposes a hermeneutical model that does not exhaust all possibilities in reconstructing past events, but that can guide the theatre historian in his/her task of analysis. In lieu of a two-way relationship, Postlewait suggests that the event situates itself in relation to four main contributing factors: the world, the agents, the reception, and the artistic heritage (15).[33]

Firstly, the artistic event is necessarily related to the world around it. It is influenced by the world just as it influences the world. According to Postlewait,

> theatre events are capable of representing and being influenced by any aspect of the world, in a multitude of modes, means, and manners. They also engage with alternative and possible worlds, the "as if" versions of existence. The theatrical arts have always been an important arena for representing the full imaginative realms of possibility (and even impossibility), as we fill the stage or the film with gods, demons, aliens, creatures, and a wild range of human beings. (12)

In the case of Macready's production of *King John*, it encompasses three worlds: the world in which the staging was situated, the city of London during the Victorian Era—which was already discussed in the present

[33] For Postlewait's heuristic model of the four parts of context that influence theatrical events, see Appendix C.

chapter of this work—; the world the staging represented, thirteenth-century England ruled by King John; as well as the world around its teller, Shakespeare's late-sixteenth century—both are discussed in the following chapter of the thesis. These three worlds converge and give meaning to Macready's production.

Schoch discusses this fascinating issue of different historical worlds converging on the stage in terms of *double-voiced historicism*. Theatrical representations of Shakespeare's medieval plays, *King John* included, "necessarily encoded Renaissance values about the Middle Ages" (2006, 145). In this way, Victorian theatre managers had to imagine three historical moments at once: the Middle Ages, Shakespeare's Renaissance England, and the Victorian era. As Schoch points out, it was eventually perceived "that the Middle Ages could not be authentically restored because it was always already mediated through an Elizabethan perspective" (146). In any case, the medieval past could never be retrieved regardless of the historical moment in which this attempt was made, either during the Renaissance, in the Victorian era, or nowadays. As we have seen, any effort to recover the past would inevitably go through the interpretative filter of the historian, which in turn is inescapably influenced by his/her ideological positions and cultural repertoire. What Schoch brings to the discussion, however, is that Shakespeare's reconstruction of King John's reign, for instance, is influenced by his time's and his own conceptions of the monarch, and Renaissance views on the nature of historiography and medievalism, as we will see in the section devoted to Shakespeare's *King John*. Moreover, Macready's reconstruction of Shakespeare's reconstruction of King John's reign adds a new voice to this historical process: Macready unavoidably brings Victorian—and his own—conceptions of thirteenth-century England along with Victorian—and his own—ideas on historiography and medievalism to the nineteenth-century stage, as I discuss in the following chapter of this thesis.

Hence, based on Schoch's definition of double-voiced historicism, I propose a new concept: *double-voiced medievalism*, which gives this thesis its title. Schoch's concept defines the convergence of two historical perspectives of the same historical event, such as Shakespeare's and Macready's reconstructions of King John's reign in dialogue on the Victorian stage. Double-voiced medievalism, in this sense, refers to two different perspectives of the medieval past in confluence. Given this standpoint, neither perspective of the Middle Ages eventually undermines the other. Contrarily, traces of both views are perceptible and intertwine. Macready's 1842 production of *King*

John, for instance, was a place where Renaissance and Victorian perspectives of the Middle Ages converged, as argue in the following chapters.

As we have seen in this chapter, the Victorian era saw a rise of respect and interest in historical enquiry. History was established as an area of research and new methods arose in order to unfold the mysteries of the past. As more investigations were carried out during the nineteenth century, historians began to realise that Shakespeare made a few mistakes concerning historical "accuracy"[34] in his plays. This is to be expected, since Shakespeare's purpose is to adapt a historical moment in order to make it fit and attractive for the stage. However, Victorian antiquarians were not happy with the "distortions" Shakespeare had made. According to Schoch, "the more Shakespeare was understood to be a product of Renaissance culture, the clearer it became that his position in Victorian medievalism was an ambiguous one and that his level of historical consciousness was not on a par with that of the nineteenth century" (149). Victorians failed to understand the multifaceted and fragmented nature of history, which would inflame the discussions on historiography in the twentieth century.

Schoch points out that the incongruities between Shakespeare's medieval and the Victorian idealised Middle Ages occurred even at the level of narrative: "For with the possible exception of *Henry V*, the chronicle plays dramatize an unflattering period in the English past: John was a murderer, Richard II weak and derelict, Henry IV a usurper, and Henry VIII a tyrant and adulterer" (150). In this way, Renaissance and Victorian perspectives on the Middle Ages were at odds. The Elizabethans sought in the medieval past examples to be contrasted. They believed that Elizabethan England was ahead of the prosaic Middle Ages, and going back to a medieval past was to retrocede. According to Chandler, "the Elizabethans differed from their successors in their approaches to the past, since they used the Middle Ages to support change rather than challenge it" (2), hence Shakespeare's choice of imperfect monarchs, which would allow the Elizabethans to reflect upon their current political affairs.

On the other hand, nineteenth-century England, as we have seen, was in the midst of modern chaos and desolate about the uncertainties of the future. As Chandler points out, Victorian

[34] I use the word accuracy in quotation marks, because, in my view, as we have seen, there is no such historical accuracy that could be retrieved; any historical writing is inevitably a reconstruction. In this way, Victorians were hoping to achieve the unachievable: historical accuracy.

medievalists lamented the situation of the impoverished industrial proletariat, "working an eighty-four-hour week in lint-choked factories and living in sickness-breeding, filthy hovels. They believed that by comparison to the modern wage slave, even a thirteenth-century serf was fortunate" (3). In this way, differently from Renaissance thinkers, the Victorians believed the Middle Ages were a lost paradise. The medieval man was considered "a dynamic and generous creature, capable of loyal feeling and heroic action" (7), very different from the modern nineteenth-century "wage slave". The medieval movement in Victorian England was "a social and political ideal and its symbolic value [was] a metaphor of belief" (Chandler 10); a belief in order, chivalry and, as we have seen, a desire to feel at home. As Chandler puts it, "in contrast to the certainties of the Middle Ages, modern life seemed to offer only broken lines and meaningless energies" (11). In the following chapters, I will analyse both reconstructions of medieval England—sixteenth-century Shakespeare's and nineteenth-century Macready's—, and compare and contrast Renaissance and Victorian perspectives on the Middle Ages represented in both. Therefore, in addition to Schoch's double-voiced historicism, in Macready's production of Shakespeare's *King John*, I believe it is also possible to perceive double-voiced medievalism, since two different perspectives of the Middle Ages converge on the Victorian stage.

Secondly, the theatrical event relates to its agents, "specifically the relationship that operates between the event and those who created it: the playwright, the director, the performers, the designers" (Postlewait 12). In the 1842 production of *King John* several agents participated in order for the final event to be completed in the way it was: Shakespeare, the playwright who provided the foundational text to be performed on stage; Macready, the director and actor, who reworked Shakespeare's text, produced the performance, directed the cast, and acted in the leading role; all the actors in the production: Mr. Anderson, who had the role of Philip Faulconbridge, the Bastard; Mr. Barnett, who played Robert Faulconbridge; Miss Helen Faucit, who played the role of Constance; Samuel Phelps, who was Hubert de Burgh; and Miss Newcombe, who played young prince Arthur (Shattuck 45); as well as all the personnel behind the stage, who took care of scenery, costume, stage props, etc. All of them contributed to the final result. If one single agent had been different, the whole theatrical event would not have been the same.

Thirdly, when considering the context that influences a theatrical event, one should take into account the reception of the play.

Postlewait points out that the theatrical event receives meaning "from how it is received and understood by spectators, critics, the general public, and society at large. Reception and audience are always part of the context for theatrical events" (13). For a theatre scholar who studies past productions, the receptions can be investigated through newspaper and magazine reviews, journal entries of actors, spectators, or staff members, contemporary letters, amongst other historical documents.

Finally, the fourth part that encompasses the context in Postlewait's model is the artistic heritage:

> Every artistic event has a relation to the artistic tradition or heritage in which it operates, to which it refers, and out of which it shapes its own separate identity—sometimes in homage, sometimes in revolt. The heritage encompasses the artistic milieu of the event, the kinds of genres of drama, the canons, the aesthetic ideas and institutions, the artistic ideologies that may influence the work, the crafts of playwriting and theatre production, the mentors and models, the rhetorical codes and styles, the rules and regulations, the available poetics, and the cultural systems. (Postlewait 14)

In the case of Shakespeare's productions, the artistic heritage behind every production is extensive. Shakespeare's plays have already been performed countless times in different periods, locations, and with different agents. Before Macready and his troupe in 1842, other important theatre directors had already produced Shakespeare's *King John* with great success, including Colley Cibber's production in 1737, the 1800 and 1803 adaptations of Rev. Richard Valpy, and Charles Kemble's production of 1823 (Cousin 1994). The weight of this heritage most certainly influenced Macready's production and is worthy of being studied.

These four elements—possible worlds, agents, receptions and artistic heritage—shape the final product, which is the theatrical event. Every artistic event interacts with all the four aforementioned factors. However, as Postlewait points out, the theatre historian does not need to necessarily work with all four, but can choose to focus on certain key factors, such as one specific agent or a certain period's receptions (17). Due to the limited extension of this work, I cannot discuss at length all four contextual aspects that influenced Macready's 1842 production of

King John. As illustrated by Appendix C, Postlewait created a model of the four contributing factors to a theatrical event, which is composed of four triangles. Each triangle is in constant interaction with the other triangles and constitutes one potential "three-point investigation and analysis" (19): the relationship between the event, the possible worlds and the agents; the relationship between the event, the artistic heritage and the agents; the relationship between the event, the artistic heritage, and the receptions; or the relationship between the event, the receptions and the possible worlds. In this thesis I discuss the relation of the theatrical event with its possible worlds, artistic heritage, and agents—more specifically the relationship of one particular agent with the production: Macready, the theatre manager, director of the play and leading actor in the role of King John.

2. "UNEASY LIES THE HEAD THAT WEARS A CROWN":[35] *King John*'s possible worlds

Figure 2 - King John
Available at: http://www.shakespeareandhistory.com/king-john.php

> An uneasy atmosphere had prevailed in the Court of Brittany since the arrival of that unexpected visitor, Prince John […] – a man whose reputation was such as to lead the people to believe the legend that the Devil's blood had at one time infected the House of Anjou and that the Prince of Darkness had come to Earth again in the person of Prince John. (*Prince of Darkness*, Jean Plaidy, 19)

In order to analyse the relation between Macready's 1842 theatrical event and its possible worlds, I have looked at each possible world separately—King John's reign in England (1199-1216), Shakespeare's account of this period in history in *King John* (1595-96), and Macready's representation of Shakespeare's version of King John's reign on the Victorian stage (1842)—, and to compare and contrast them. The worlds represented on stage are at the very core of theatrical art. As Rackin points out, "theatrical performance by its very nature constitutes a critical point of interaction between words and the world" (ix). These interactions are discussed in the following section.

2.1 King John, King of England

The period in English history that both Shakespeare and Macready depict in their artistic productions—Shakespeare by means of his play *King John*, and Macready by means of his 1842 production of the same play—is the reign of King John. Before delving into the fictional representations of the monarch by Shakespeare and Macready, I have looked into historians' scholarly accounts of the reign of King John in order to compare its different ways of representation. It is important to emphasise, as we have seen, that a historian's narrative of a historical event passes through the interpretative filter of its teller as well as an overtly fictional representation. When analysing W. L. Warren's (1997), Derek Wilson's (2011), Simon Jenkins' (2012),

[35] *Henry IV – Part 2* (3.1.31).

Shakespeare's (1595-96) and Macready's (1842) accounts of King John's reign, one has to take into consideration that these accounts are embedded with each teller's point of view, and cultural, historical, political, and ideological background—be their work explicitly fictional or not.

It would be interesting to investigate historical writings about King John's reign from the English Renaissance period—which might have influenced Shakespeare's writing—and from the Victorian Era—which may have influenced Macready's staging. However, due to lack of primary resources, I have chosen to look into more recent historiography on King John, his reign and his time, which also brings to light earlier historical writings on the subject.

Warren published his biography *King John* back in 1961 in an attempt to fill the gap of knowledge about King John between the general public and professional historians. In his preface to the first edition, he writes that "while the former [the general public] has been left, by and large, with the Victorian assessment of the man, the latter [professional historians] have been induced by half a century of research to depart from it" (xviii). Therefore, whereas professional historians have developed research that has challenged the Victorian perspective on King John, the general public has most often stuck to the Victorian stereotype of King John as a brutal tyrant and England's "worst king".

John (1167-1216) was the son of Henry II (1133-1189) and Eleanor of Aquitaine (1124?-1204). John was the eighth child and fourth son. Before him, Henry and Eleanor had had Henry (1155-1183),[36] Richard (1157-1199), later known as Richard the Lionheart, and Geoffrey (1158-1186)[37] (Warren 17).[38] Henry II and his sons were from the House of Anjou and, therefore, were called Angevins. According to Warren, the "Angevin rulers of England had marked characteristics of personality. They were passionate and dynamic, with clever minds and strong wills. They had a hot temper which sometimes prejudiced their calculated schemes. They seemed, even to contemporaries, a little larger than life" (1). The stereotypes, or "persisting images" as Warren calls them, that have followed these historical figures up to our days are of

[36] Henry was crowned King of England while his father still lived. At that time, England had two kings. Henry II was known as the Old King and his son as the Young King. However, Henry the Young died at the age of twenty-eight in 1183, before his father's death.

[37] Geoffrey died in 1186, during the reign of his father Henry II. Therefore, he never became king. He had a son, Arthur of Brittany, with his wife Constance.

[38] In fact, Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine had five sons, but William, the first-born, died at the age of two.

"Henry as a strong and beneficent ruler, of Richard as a glamorous hero, and of John as a villainous failure" (4). Derek Wilson also discusses the stereotypical figures which these monarchs have become throughout history: "Richard's character has been distorted by legend into the personification of the perfect, Christian knight. By the same process John has been demonized as the archetypal 'bad king'" (55).

However, as we have seen, the writings of history are always inflected by the teller's points of view. Historians have access to information from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by means of surviving administrative records, but mainly by means of contemporary chronicles, which were written by people living in the same time as or near the time of the monarchs. These chroniclers were by no means impartial. According to Warren, "a considered judgment was passed on Henry by chroniclers of perspicacity and sound historical sense, Richard's reputation was glorified by an enthusiastic hero-worshipper, while John's was blighted by scurrilous gossip-mongers" (4-5). Rackin explains that the medieval chroniclers' historiography was firmly connected to theology. The world was considered to be ruled under God's will and the events described in the Bible were the one and only truth: "The medieval model for describing the progress of human life in time was the wheel of fortune, an endlessly recurrent cycle of rising and falling, designed to show the transience of all earthly glory" (6). Kings rise, but inevitably fall and die, due to their earthly nature. In this way, what we know of King John today has been influenced by the interpretative filter of its tellers: the chroniclers of the thirteenth century.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, stories of fairies, witches and monsters were as credible as accounts of ordinary happenings. Amongst the population of England and France at that time there was a belief that the Angevins had a devilish ancestress, which would explain their explosive temper and "demonic energy". The rumours were that a count of Anjou had returned from a distant land married to a strange woman. She was very beautiful, but she did not have any family or friends; she would avoid going to Church, and when she did, she would leave before the Consecration. Intrigued, her husband told his knights to prevent her from leaving Church before the holy ritual, which caused her to scream and fly out of the Church window. This woman, it was believed, was Melusine, daughter of Satan, from whom the Angevin monarchs of England had supposedly descended (Warren 2-3). A contemporary chronicler, Bernard of Clairvaux, later canonised Saint Bernard by Pope Alexander III, said: "From the Devil they came […] and to the Devil they will return" (Warren 2).

Historical accounts of the Angevin rulers, especially King John, have therefore been influenced by this contemporary supernatural belief of their first tellers. In addition, Warren highlights the fact that by the time of King John's reign most chroniclers who had written about Henry II and Richard I had stopped writing: "William of Newburgh stopped writing in 1198, a few months before John became king; Roger of Howden died in 1201, and Ralph Diceto in 1202. George of Wales lived on at least until 1216, but spent his time writing his memoirs of earlier days" (7). John, as a consequence, had very few people to tell his story. Furthermore, "among [John's] contemporary chroniclers (and only two wrote anything more than barest annals) was no one who knew him personally, no one who lived in his court and knew his ways" (Warren 7). Warren also emphasises the fact that not one of King John's contemporary chroniclers even described what he looked like. If it were not for the effigy in Worcester cathedral,[39] which was made around fifteen years after his death, we would not be able to picture his appearance (7).

Amongst King John's contemporary chroniclers were anonymous monks at Dunstable, Worcester, Tewkesbury, Glamorgan, and Surrey. According to Warren, since they were members of religious orders, their accounts of King John and his reign were most likely distorted by their feelings towards John, a monarch who fought the Catholic Church and put England under Interdict (9), which prohibited the clergy from conducting religious services.[40] "It was only with the greatest difficulty that they could ever bring themselves to speak well of John: all his acts were seen through the distorting glass of a particular tyranny" (Warren 9).

Matthew Paris, a monk at St. Albans Abbey from 1235—therefore, almost twenty years after King John's death—and English chronicler, would endorse this view of King John as tyrannical, bad governor, and lustful. For instance, he wrote the following about John: "foul as it is, hell itself is defiled by the foulness of King John" (Jenkins 55-6). Paris reworked the chronicles of Roger of Wendover, who was a monk at St. Albans before Paris, making these stories about John echo "down the long corridors of History", reverberating "in the popular consciousness of the past" (Warren 13). Warren points out that St. Albans received frequent visits and patronising from English barons.

[39] For a photograph of King John's effigy in Worcester cathedral, see Appendix D.
[40] The period of Interdict in the English kingdom during John's reign is further discussed later on in this section.

Consequently, both Wendover and Paris wrote their chronicles through a pro-baronial perspective, by no means impartial (Warren 16).[41]

In one of his chronicles, Paris describes the views of a clergyman named Robert on King John:

> So Robert, promising on his word as a Christian to tell the truth, was obliged to admit that John was a tyrant not a king, a destroyer instead of a governor, crushing his own people and favouring aliens, a lion to his subjects but a lamb to foreigners and rebels. He had lost the duchy of Normandy and many other territories through sloth, and was actually keen to lose his kingdom of England or to ruin it. He was an insatiable extorter of money; he invaded and destroyed his subjects' property; and he had bred no worthy children but only such as took after their father. He detested his wife and she him. She was an incestuous and depraved woman, so notoriously guilty of adultery that the king had given orders that her lovers were to be seized and throttled on her bed. He [*sic*] himsel was envious of many of his barons and kinsfolk, and seduced their more attractive daughters and sisters. As for Christianity, he was unstable and unfaithful. (15)

During the Tudor period in England,[42] nonetheless, the perspective on King John altered significantly. As Warren points out, "what posterity made of it [the traditional impression of King John illustrated by the extract of Paris' chronicle quoted in the previous paragraph] rather depended on its own historical predilections" (15). In other words, each generation would rework this traditional view of King John according to its needs and political purposes. "Tudor historians tended to dismiss the atrocities: they fastened instead on John's defiance of the pope and thought of him as an heroic precursor of Henry VIII badly let down by treachery" (Warren 15). By the mid-sixteenth century, King John was compared to Henry VIII, who, similarly to John almost

[41] In 1215 some barons during King John's reign rose against him demanding liberties, which resulted in the signing of Magna Carta by the king. This issue is further discussed later on in this chapter.

[42] The Tudor period in English history refers to the period in which the Tudor dynasty ruled England. The Tudor monarchs were: Henry VII (1485-1509), Henry VIII (1509-1547), Edward VI (1547-1553), Mary I (1553-1558) and Elizabeth I (1558-1603).

three hundred years before, had contested the Pope's authority and refused the control of the Catholic Church over England. In a moment in history, such as Henry VIII's reign, when the State was at odds with the Church, resulting in Henry VIII's rupture with the Catholic religious institution, his proclamation of himself as Head of the Church in England, and the creation of the Church of England, historians were led to seek in King John a precursor and supporter for Henry VIII's cause, reviewing previous historiography on King John.

It is important to note that Shakespeare wrote his play *King John* after the reign of Henry VIII and during the reign of his daughter, Elizabeth I, who was the offspring of Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn, the king's second wife. This marriage was not considered valid by the Catholic Church that refused to grant King Henry a divorce. Therefore, in the eyes of the clergy, Henry was considered still married to Catherine of Aragon, his first wife. This first quarrel between Henry VIII and the Catholic Church led him to later part with it, and create his own Church, where he would be the supreme ruler, only underneath God. The connection between the Renaissance political background and Shakespeare's depiction of King John is elaborated in the following section of this chapter.

Thus, nineteenth-century historians' views of King John were influenced by accounts of John's contemporary chroniclers. John Richard Green (1837-1883), who entered the Church but gave up his work as a clergyman to dedicate himself to historiography, wrote in his *Short History of the English People* (1874):

> In his inner soul John was the worst outcome of the Angevins[…] His punishments were refinements of cruelty, the starvation of children, the crushing of old men under copes of lead. His court was a brothel where no woman was safe from the royal lust, and where his cynicism loved to publish the news of his victim's shame. He was as craven in his superstitions as he was daring in his impiety. He scoffed at priests and turned his back on the mass, even amidst the solemnities of his coronation, but he never stirred on a journey without hanging relics around his neck. (52-53)

Green's view of King John, being himself a man of the Church, surely was not impartial. His historical writing went through his interpretative filter, based on his background as a clergyman and

probably on the Church's dislike of John due to his quarrel with the religious institution.

When it comes to information about John's childhood, historians like Warren point out that there are few records. The chroniclers were more preoccupied with John's brothers, who were closer to the royal line of succession. John was only the fourth living son, and "fourth sons, even of a king, are among the more insignificant of God's creatures, and it was against the odds that he would succeed to the throne" (Warren 26). Being the fourth son, John also had a smaller portion of his father's heritage. Henry, being the oldest son alive, would take his father's domains of Anjou, Maine, Touraine, Normandy, and England (Warren 27). Richard, the second son, would inherit his mother's property: the duchy of Aquitaine; and Geoffrey married the Breton duke Conan IV's daughter Constance, and became his heir to the duchy. As for John, his future remained uncertain for many years, which caused people to call him "John Lackland" (Warren 28).

Fate worked in his favour, nevertheless. Despite being the fourth son, John managed to ascend to the throne of England. Henry and Geoffrey both died before Henry II's death, which caused Richard, the second son, to inherit the crown after his father. Soon after Richard became king, he left England to fight for the Holy Land against the Infidels in the Third Crusade. According to Wilson, Richard left England in 1189 and would not return for the following four years (49). While he was away, John plotted with Philip II (1165-1223), King of France, to usurp the throne. These attempts were marred by Richard's return. The king, nonetheless, forgave his brother:

> Richard's patronising forgiveness was the culminating humiliation for John. The 'child', as Richard called him, was 27 years old, but could show a record only of failure and dishonour. Throughout his life so far he had been overshadowed by brothers who had made a name for themselves in the world (as their father had done) at the age of fifteen. In his efforts to emulate them he had shown only caricatures of their qualities: where the young Henry had been gay, he was frivolous, where Geoffrey had been cunning he was sly, where Richard was bold he was merely bombastic. The expedition to Ireland had been a fiasco; his assumption of authority in England during Richard's absence had been a hollow mockery. He stood in 1194 as a traitor and a

> fool. Such a reputation clung to him, and in some quarters was perhaps never entirely displaced; but, in fact, the real John had not yet emerged. (Warren 46)

Apparently, John had always lived in the shadow of his father and brothers' achievements. Finally, in 1199 Richard died suddenly due to the gangrene of a bolt wound, naming on his deathbed John as his heir (Warren 48). As Wilson interestingly points out: "Richard, the hero of chivalric romance, died in a rather unchivalric and unromantic way" (55). However, John's claim to the throne was contested because Geoffrey, his elder brother, had a living son, Arthur of Brittany (1187-1203). There was, consequently, an on-going debate about who had the right to inherit the crown: the dead king's brother or nephew.

According to Warren, "the fact that John had been designated heir by Richard on his deathbed was influential, but not decisive. […]. In the circumstances of a contested succession, acceptance by a sufficient number of influential men to secure investiture was what really mattered" (48-49). Subsequently, after Richard I's death, England entered a period of civil war: Arthur, who was only a twelve-year-old boy, was advised by his mother Constance to fight for the throne and was supported by King Philip II of France. John, on the other hand, was quick to secure the Angevin treasury, and, although many barons turned against him in favour of Arthur, he managed to get support from his influential mother, Queen Eleanor, from William Marshal,[43] and the Archbishop Hubert Walter.[44] The Archbishop advised Marshal: "mark my words, Marshal, you will never regret anything in your life as much as this" (Warren 49).

Despite all the dispute, John was crowned King of England on 27 May 1199 during the feast of the Ascension at Westminster Abbey. Nonetheless, even after his coronation, the people's support remained divided between John and Arthur.[45] In addition, King Philip II of France maintained his defence of Arthur. Finally, in May 1200, with the Treaty of Le Goulet, hostilities were suspended, and Arthur and his mother Constance were persuaded to make peace. According to Warren, "the basis of the peace was perfectly simple: John was accepted as the rightful heir of Richard to all the fiefs that his father and brother had

[43] William Marshal (114-?-1219) was Earl of Pembroke and served five English kings: Henry II, Young Henry, Richard I, John, and Henry III.
[44] Hubert Walter (1160-1205) was Archbishop of Canterbury.
[45] For a map of the regions in England and France which declared for John or Arthur in 1199, see Appendix E.

held on the continent, with a few minor modifications of the border. John, in turn, acknowledged that he held them from the king of France as his overlord" (54). Moreover, John's niece, Blanche of Castile, was assigned to marry King Philip's son, Louis. With her, Blanche would take to the French heir as dowry some fiefs that the French king desired. After the peace treaty, Arthur was acknowledged John's vassal (Warren 55).

In the summer of 1201, Constance of Brittany, Arthur's mother, died. By that time, Constance and Arthur were completely reconciled with John (Warren 73). However, John's reign remained troublesome due to other reasons. In 1199 John had divorced his first wife, Isabelle of Gloucester, whom he had married in 1189 (when John had no real possibilities of being crowned king), on the basis of consanguinity ties. Isabelle was John's cousin and the dissolution of marriages based on the account of family relation between the couple was common (Warren 66). Nonetheless, John's desire to be a bachelor again was not based on affection; rather, it had political reasons. Wilson affirms that John's goal by means of a new marriage was to strengthen his hold on continental possessions. "First, he began negotiations with the king of Portugal for the hand of his daughter. Then he changed his mind and pursued a marriage alliance with the Count of Angoulême" (Wilson 56). As his new wife, John chose Isabelle of Angoulême, a twelve-year-old girl who was promised to Hugh of Lusignan, a very important lord (Warren 69). By taking away the bride from Hugh, John made important enemies. The war between John and the Lusignans—an "unnecessary war", according to Wilson (56)—, who took support from King Philip of France, expanded, resulting in John's loss of the fiefs of Aquitaine, Poitou, and Anjou (Warren 75). John would later ascribe the loss of his continental possessions as Isabelle of Angoulême's fault, although in reality, as Warren points out, it was John's own doing (75).

The persons of two influential kings in Europe—the king of England and the king of France—were usually compared. In 1202, King John was thirty-five years old, while King Philip was two years older. Warren explains that the age was the only similarity between the kings:

> Men still thought of John as a feckless young man, the baby of the family, irresponsible and troublesome to his elders. It had yet to be seen whether wearing a crown would stiffen his back. No one, on the other hand, could think of Philip as a young man. He did not even look it for his hair had already gone. From the age

> of fifteen the fate of France had lain in his hands, and responsibility had matured him early. (76)

John, therefore, always lived in the shadow of other great men. First, his father and brothers; and later, the king of France.

The Lusignans never forgave John for stealing Isabelle of Angoulême from them—and with her the dominion over the region of Angoulême—, and in 1202 they aligned with Arthur in order to attack John. Arthur and the rebels took Queen Eleanor, John's mother, as prisoner (Warren 77). As Warren puts it, this made John reveal his "Angevin blood". "A detachment of his army was rushed through a forced march of eighty miles and more, and caught up with his mother at Mirabeau within forty-eight hours. It was then the night of 31 July. The rebels had seized the town and broken into the castle; Eleanor was trapped in the keep" (77). John successfully regained the castle and transformed the besiegers into the besieged. As a consequence, Arthur was taken as John's prisoner (Warren 79).

Arthur eventually died as John's prisoner, which greatly damaged John's reputation. As Warren asserts, the truth of what really happened to Arthur remains unknown to this day. The boy simply disappeared, and rumours circulated about his fate (81). Many believed that John himself had murdered him. The annals at Margam Abbey report as follows:

> After King John had captured Arthur and kept him alive in prison for some time, at length, in the castle of Rouen, after dinner on the Thursday before Easter, when he was drunk and possessed by the devil (*ebrius et daemonio plenus*), he slew him with his own hand, and tying a heavy stone to the body cast it into the Seine. It was discovered by a fisherman in his net, and being dragged to the bank was recognised, was taken for secret burial, in fear of the tyrant, to the priory of Bec called Notre Dame de Prés. (Warren 83)

Other versions of the story had it that John had given the order that Arthur should be blinded and castrated, so then he would not present himself as a threat any longer. Hubert de Burgh, who was in charge of Arthur in his captivity, thought it was barbarous and, therefore, prevented the men from harming the boy. Thinking that the Bretons would calm down without their rebel leader, Hubert announced,

falsely, that Arthur was dead. The outcome was the opposite of what Hubert had anticipated, for the Bretons believed that King John had murdered Arthur, and swore vengeance to the king. Regretting his prior idea, Hubert explained that Arthur was still alive, but no one believed him (Warren 81). As Warren points out, Shakespeare probably knew this version of the story of Arthur's fate, because "he made it the dramatic hinge of his play about John's reign" (82).

Wilson also mentions the several possibilities of explanation to Arthur's mysterious disappearance. He highlights the fact that most accounts of what may have happened to Arthur were written by monastic chroniclers, who, as we have seen, had a partial opinion about John and "deliberately spread stories to discredit him" (57). Other versions presented by Wilson are that "the commander of Rouen Castle asserted that John had sent agents to castrate his nephew and that Arthur had died of shock as a result of their bungled surgery. It may be that Arthur died of disease while in prison and that the story of his murder was invented by John's enemies" (57). Jenkins does not even give much importance to this occurrence. He simply relates that "it is widely believed that John had a hand in Arthur's subsequent murder" (52). Yet, by means of his choice of words, he makes it clear that it was a murder and not an accident. In any case, Arthur's fate remains unknown. This is an interesting example of how historiography relates differently the same historical event. Each historian gave his own opinion of what might have happened to Arthur, according to his own inclinations and purposes. The same happens in fiction. In the following sections, Shakespeare's and Macready's representations of Arthur's fate are discussed.

Despite (or because of) the various versions of Arthur's death, it is impossible to know what truly happened to him. It is interesting to know the consequences of Arthur's death for the English and for the French. In England, according to Warren, few "either knew or cared about what had happened to Arthur. If they did hear tell that he had been killed, they were likely to believe that he deserved it—after all he had been captured in rebellion against his liege lord and while attacking his grandmother" (84). In France, on the other hand, they had lost more than their hereditary heir to Brittany; they had lost their "symbol of a mythically glorious past and a hopeful future" (Warren 81). Arthur's name was not a random choice. As Warren puts it, "it was an age when many European peoples were groping in the murky past for something with which to bolster an incipient nationalist sentiment, and the Bretons had taken the legendary King Arthur as their own" (82). Arthur of

Brittany was named after the legendary king; and, when he died, a mythical symbol for the French died with him. Hence the divergent receptions of Arthur's death in England and in France: for the English, it was the duty of the English monarch to suppress a rebel, whereas for the French, it was a terrible loss that incited the wish for revenge.

During John's reign, which lasted seventeen years, the king's main accomplishments were, according to Warren, the birth of a royal navy and the expansion of the English maritime power (124), the systematic record of royal documents (126), his active government—he would traverse the whole country in order to check business personally throughout his domains, and he would take care of major affairs as well as minor cases (130)—the development of the common law (141-42), and the signing of Magna Carta (240).

However, despite the positive aspects of his reign, King John also faced a lot of hardship and public discont. He lost the territories of Normandy to the French king, Philip II in 1204 (Warren 99), and demanded a huge amount of money from his subjects by means of high taxation in order to face King Philip in war (148-49). Wilson points out that in January 1205 John summoned all male citizens over 12 to be trained to fight for him (58). A costly war with a foreign king over foreign land bothered John's subjects, especially the barons, who suffered more with the war expenditures.

In addition to financial problems, King John faced a religious obstacle: the Pope. King John and Pope Innocent III reached a disagreement in relation to who should succeed Archbishop Hubert Walter in Canterbury when he died in July 1205. The king favoured John de Gray, who was his secretary, and would therefore be a bridge between the Church and the State, and through whom John could establish his influence on religious matters (Warren 160). Pope Innocent, on the other hand, suggested the appointment of Stephen Langton, cardinal priest of St. Chrysogonus, a teacher at the University of Paris for several years, and a perfect candidate to spread the pope's reformation ideas in England (Warren 162). The Pope would not acknowledge de Gray's election as Archbishop of Canterbury while John would not allow Langton in the country. As Warren interestingly describes the situation, "the honour of the pope was at stake, the honour of the king was at stake; it was a deadlock" (163).

As a consequence of John's stubbornness to accept the pope's suggestions, Pope Innocent declared an Interdict to England in 1208. According to Warren, an Interdict meant that no ecclesiastical offices

could be performed in the country, except the baptism of children and the confession of the dying (164). Furthermore,

> to proclaim an interdict was to call a general strike of the clergy and stop all the comforts of religion. It was a crude weapon for it made the innocent suffer with the guilty; but from this it derived its effectiveness, for it robbed the offenders of all sympathy, and roused (so it was hoped) the faithful against the faithless. (Warren 164)

From 1208 until 1214 the English suffered with the Interdict and were denied religious sacraments. For instance, marriages could not be performed, and the dead could not be buried in consecrated ground (Wilson 59). However, the institution of the Interdict did not move King John towards submitting to Pope Innocent III. Quite the contrary, King John retaliated by confiscating church properties (59).

In order to press King John, the pope decided to take harsher measures, and declared the excommunication of the English king in November 1209 (Warren 169). According to Warren,

> Excommunication was the ecclesiastical equivalent of outlawry. It put the offender beyond the pale of the Christian community. It should have been a terrible sentence, for the offender's soul was in peril if he died unreconciled to mother Church; but the clergy had unfortunately used it too often for frivolous reasons for it to be seriously regarded by any but the most pious. (169)

The consequence was that the excommunication caused no more damage to John's religious conscience than the Interdict had done previously. According to Wilson, over the next two years John managed to extract over £100,000 from the clerics (59). The Interdict and his own excommunication turned out to be quite profitable circumstances for King John.

In this manner, King John was considered by many as an irreligious man. In consequence, as most of King John's chroniclers were monks, the tales about the king were often exaggerated or even completely invented, causing his reputation to suffer for centuries to come (Wilson 59). Nevertheless, Warren states that the king was

"conventionally devout" (171): he went on pilgrimages, provided money to abbeys and monasteries, read religious books, amongst other actions that would not characterise him as antagonistic towards religion. In fact, the bottom line of the fray between the State and the Church in John's reign was the clash of authorities and the mutual unwillingness to submit.

However, the break with the Catholic Church occasioned not only religious discontent amongst John's subjects, but it also caused political implications. The Interdict and the Excommunication gave the barons—who were already dissatisfied with high taxation in John's reign—an excuse to break their allegiance with the king on the grounds that they could not follow an excommunicated monarch (Warren 174). In fear of rebellion, King John demanded proof of loyalty from the barons, even taking their family members as hostages in order to secure the barons' obedience (Warren 181). Gervase of Canterbury (1141-1210), an English chronicler and monk, wrote that the king "neither feared God nor regarded men" (Warren 181).

In 1213, Pope Innocent was willing to take extreme measures to reconcile the English king with the Catholic Church. If John did not yield to the pope's terms, he would officially depose him and allow King Philip to take over the English realm with the support of the Church. King John understood that matters had become very serious and sent a delegation to Rome in November to discuss the terms with the pope. Pope Innocent sent his papal legate Pandulph to England to ensure King John would abide by his promise (Warren 202). According to the established terms, King John would have to welcome back every clergyman who had been in exile, securing their safety, and restoring their property. Furthermore, the king would have to pay an initial sum of £8,000 for compensation (Warren 207). Nonetheless, John decided to go even further to regain the pope's favour. He wrote to Pope Innocent III on 15 May 1213:

> We wish it be known to everyone by this our charter, authenticated with our seal, that we, having offended God and our mother Holy Church in many things, and hence being in great need of the divine mercy, and having nothing but ourselves and our kingdoms that we can worthily offer as due amends to God and the Church, we desire to humble ourselves for Him who humbled Himself for us even unto death; and inspired by the grace of the Holy Spirit—not induced by force

> or compelled by fear, but of our own free and spontaneous will, and by the common counsel of our barons—we offer and freely yield to God, and His holy apostles Peter and Paul, and to the Holy Roman Church our mother, and to the lord pope Innocent and his catholic successors, the whole kingdom of England and the whole kingdom of Ireland, with all their rights and appurtenances, for the remission of our sins and the sins of our whole family, both living and dead; so that from henceforth we hold them from him and the Roman Church as a vassal. (Warren 208)

King John had willingly offered the kingdoms of England and Ireland to the Catholic Church so that they would become fiefs of the Church. Pope Innocent was, obviously, surprised at John's sudden willingness to amend for his sins and his generosity towards the Church. From that moment on, King John earned the pope's patent support.

Stephen Langton was admitted in England and occupied the post of Archbishop of Canterbury. On 20 July 1213 Langton officially absolved King John of Excommunication (Warren 213), and in the following year the pope sent a representative—Nicholas, cardinal-bishop of Tusculum—to conclude the terms for the end of the Interdict. According to Warren, "he first of all arranged with the king and the pope to compound the Church's losses at the round sum of 100,000 marks, despite the complaints of the English clergy that this was grossly insufficient, and then allowed the sum to be paid in instalments" (210). As Warren points out, the pope was feeling "very complaisant towards his royal client" after the charter he had written in May 1213 (210). On 2 July 1214 the Interdict was officially removed (Warren 210).

One of the main consequences of England and Ireland becoming vassals of the Roman Church was that the Pope acquired a higher level of influence on these kingdoms, which increased the feeling of unrest amongst the barons. In addition, in 1214 King John decided to face King Philip of France in war again—in which he was defeated once more—, demanding the barons who had not participated in the expedition money for not aiding his cause (Warren 225). In fact, Warren points out that King John might have believed that the non-participation of several barons was the cause of his defeat (225).

As a consequence of all accumulated grievances against the king, some barons united in order to confront King John. From certain perspectives, the barons were regarded as a united group of rebels with a

cause, seeking the liberties they believed were theirs by right. However, Warren points out that

> one of the few things that can be said with certainty is that the hallowed tradition, derived largely from Wendover,[46] is false which pictures a baronage united in arms against the Crown, confronting a cowed and humiliated king at Runnymede on 15 June 1215, and obliging him, with praiseworthy restraint, to set his seal to a statement of constitutional liberties which it had drawn up. (224)

This is an example of how historical records *reconstruct* past events based on diverse factors, such as the writer's rationale, the social, political and historical contexts of the time of writing, the addressee of the report, etc. In this case, Wendover is by no means impartial, for, as we have seen, he was a monk at St. Albans, an abbey which received baronial patronising. Therefore, he would most certainly be favourable to the barons—writing an idealised version of their rebellion—and opposed to the king—whom he would portray as tyrant and cowardly. As Warren himself explains, "it is possible to reconstruct something of what happened, but it is rather like restoring a medieval wall-painting of which only a few fragments of coloured plastered remain" (225). In this way, it is possible to perceive that Warren's perspective on historical writing is compatible with Hutcheon's and Postlewait's concepts of history as reconstruction, as we saw in the previous chapter.

The barons who rose up against King John were mainly from the north; although they were joined by other barons throughout the kingdom. They were led by Lord Robert FitzWalter, lord of Dunmow, who was "disreputable as mischievous, rescued from ignominy only by his great fiefs, and owing his leadership largely to his dominating aggressiveness" (Warren 230). According to Warren, the numbers of rebels should not be exaggerated. "The militants who came out into the open in the spring of 1215 numbered few more than forty holders of baronies, supported, of course, by their sons, their lesser vassals, and their knights" (229). Other barons remained by the king's side, alongside the king's new ally: the Pope. Although less numerous, they had more "power, influence, and sagacity" (Warren 231). Amongst the pro-king and pro-barons parties, Warren points out that there was a

[46] The aforementioned Roger of Wendover, a thirteenth-century English chronicler.

middle party, led by Archbishop Stephen Langton, who opened the negotiations and gathered everyone at Runnymede, where the signing of Magna Carta would take place (232).

The barons and the king met at Runnymede on June 15th 1215 when a draft schedule of a Charter of Liberties was presented and formally accepted by the king and his barons. One of the main figures behind the composing of Magna Carta was Archbishop Langton, who encouraged the barons not to "demand the king's abdication but set out a demand for specific liberties in the name of 'the community of the whole land'" (Jenkins 53). The date of June 15th marks the ceremony of acceptance, but a few days passed before the final version of the charter had been written with the co-operation of the Chancery clerks. On June 19th copies of the charter were distributed and the rebels renewed their vows of allegiance to their king (Warren 236).

Generally speaking, Magna Carta reduced the authoritarian power of the king in order to avoid a tyrannical type of government, as characteristic of the Angevin rulers—Henry II, Richard I, and John. From then on, no man could be deprived of his liberty or land without a lawful judgment. Moreover, "vexed questions in the law about reliefs, wardship, marriage, the position of the widows of tenants-in-chief, and the payment of debts to the Crown were cleared up by defining the king's rights and establishing protection for the vassal" (Warren 237). Furthermore, the sixty-three headings of Magna Carta ensured "the right of the church to elect its own bishops and other senior clergy without royal interference," "the ancient privileges of the city of London," and "merchants were assured of free movement to ply their trade, except in times of war, when foreign merchants were to be detained" (Wilson 64). Actions could no longer be taken on the mere excuse that it was "the king's will." As a consequence, the king's role was reduced to that of an executive officer of the law under the supervision of a committee formed by twenty-five barons (Warren 239).

It was a victory on the side of the common people—although not definitive at that moment—towards a future constitution of the rights of men. According to Jenkins, "it was the first charter of rights in Europe specifically to underpin civil liberties in a rule of law" (54), hence its importance. As Wilson explains, "it was a unique and novel definition of the relationship between king and people, and, once that definition had been made, it could not be unmade" (63). From that moment onwards, the authoritarian role of the king had been questioned and would influence later discussions on the rights and duties of men and monarchs. As Jenkins puts it, "a shift in the basis of power had

occurred, away from monarchical authority and discretion towards the ghost of modern law and a modern parliament" (54). It is interesting to note that this moment in King John's government—the signing of Magna Carta—, which is one of the main features of John's reign for which he is remembered, does not figure in Shakespeare's play *King John*. Likewise, this document is significantly absent in Renaissance historiography. According to Rackin, instead of focusing on Magna Carta, "sixteenth-century accounts emphasized John's quarrel with Rome, celebrating his defiance of the pope and depicting him as a prototype of Henry VIII" (11). This idea is illustrated by Shakespeare's play, which also puts great significance on King John's defiance of Pope Innocent III by means of the character Cardinal Pandulph, as we will see in the following section of this chapter.

Nonetheless, as Warren points out, the king was not ready to commit to a charter that would reduce his power permanently. Wilson emphasises that "in fact, Magna Carta was a denial of the king's sovereignty, and John could scarcely have been expected to abide by its provisions" (64). Therefore, the morning after the granting of the charter he sent envoys to Rome to explain the situation to Pope Innocent and request the annulment of Magna Carta (Warren 242). When the pope understood the contents of the charter, he sent a letter in which he wrote:

> [The king] was forced to accept an agreement which is not only shameful and base but also illegal and unjust… We refuse to pass over such shameless presumption, for thereby the Apostolic See would be dishonoured, the king's right injured, the English nation shamed, and the whole plan for the Crusade seriously endangered.[47] […] we utterly reject and condemn this settlement, and under threat of excommunication we order that the king should not dare to observe it and the barons and their associates should not insist on it being observed. The charter, with all undertakings and guarantees, whether confirming it or resulting from it, we declare to be null and void of all validity for ever. (Warren 246)

[47] John had made public his wish to go on a crusade, being supported by the Pope. However, Wilson writes that "whether this was a serious vow or one designed to win the approval of the church and defer indefinitely having to meet his discontented subjects is not clear" (62). King John was very cunning, and going on a crusade would be the perfect excuse, endorsed by the Pope, to defer facing his angry barons.

It is interesting to note, based on Pope Innocent III's words, how the Church in the beginning of the thirteenth century was concerned with the threat the charter posed to its power and influence over the English kingdom as well as the threat to disrupt the forthcoming crusade, rather than the benefits the chart would allow to the rights of men. In any case, a papal verdict could not be ignored.

As a result, England went through a period of civil war. The more radical rebels did not accept the terms of Magna Carta which had been established by means of the intervention of the middle party, as we have seen. They decided to take arms against their king. The rebels sought support from the French king, who was already planning a renewed attack on England. In return, the English barons would acknowledge Philip's son, Louis, as their rightful king. Louis had a claim to the throne by means of his marriage to Blanche of Castile, Henry II's granddaughter. King Philip, however, did not wish to contradict the Pope and risk excommunication, and preferred not to take part in this venture. Louis decided to offer support to the English barons on his private account (Warren 251). Warren points out that two-thirds of the barons had adopted Louis' enterprise and gone over to the French side. Nevertheless, the English barons soon realised that the French supporters had an interest in the rich English fiefs rather than being merely generous. As a consequence, there sprang an estrangement amongst the English and French (253).

The townsmen, however, were favourable to King John, because the Angevin kings "readily sold privileges, and none more so than John, and strong rule was good for trade. The citizens of Lynn welcomed him and feasted him well; but there, it seems, he contracted dysentery as a result of over-indulgence in their hospitality when fatigued by long days of hard riding" (Warren 253). That dysentery eventually killed him on 18 October 1216 (Warren 254-5), although Wilson believes it to have happened in November (65), which illustrates the different interpretations that may arise during historical reconstruction.

John's death, ironically, helped his cause. Several barons who were against John had nothing against the young king, the nine-year old Henry. On November 11th the Charter of Liberties was reissued under Henry III's name. As Warren points out, "it is the supreme irony of Magna Carta that, after being demanded by rebels and killed by the pope, it should have been brought back to life as a royalist manifesto"

(256). In the following year peace had been restored between England and France (Warren 256).

John's reign was, as any other king's, full of ups and downs. At the same time that he fought to maintain the fierce façade of the Angevin rulers, he crossed the line when he lost the continental territories that had once belonged to the English kingdom, caused an Interdict to be raised in England, received and excommunication from the Pope, endlessly faced King Phillip in expensive wars, and, finally, let the relationship with his barons culminate in rebellion and civil war. As Warren concludes,

> he subdued nations to his will, but brought only the peace of fear; he was an ingenious administrator, but expedients came before policy; he was a notable judge, but chicanery went along with justice; he was an able ruler, but he did not know when he was squeezing too hard; he was a clever strategist, but his military operations lacked that vital ingredient of success—boldness. He had the mental abilities of a great king, but the inclinations of a petty tyrant. (259)

John's seventeen years of rule were certainly contradictory, and, in consequence, entailed a resourceful chest full of stories for an able story teller to rescue from oblivion. One of these storytellers was Shakespeare.

2.2 Shakespeare's *King John*

Shakespeare reconstructed several periods of English monarchy by means of his historical plays: *Henry VI* parts I (1589-90), II (1590-91), and III (1590-91), *Richard III* (1592-93), which form the first tetralogy; *King John* (1595-96), *Edward III* (1590-94); *Richard II* (1595), *Henry IV* parts I (1596-97) and II (1598), and *Henry V* (1598-99), which form the second tetralogy; and, finally, *Henry VIII* (1612-13) (Mowat; Werstine 49-153). During Shakespeare's time of historical writing, "English writers made no clear distinction between poetry and history, either of which could be written in prose or verse, both of which freely mingled fact and legend, event and interpretation, and endowed characters from the past with the customs and manners of the present" (Rackin 19). The same predicament was faced by contemporary playwrights. The new perspectives on history and historiography most

certainly influenced the artistic work of theatrical historical reconstruction. Rackin points out that at the same time that historical reconstruction on stage was problematic and challenging, it was also seen as "dramatically appealing" (21).

As the theatre was a place where political, religious and philosophical anxieties were depicted, there is where the problems of historical representations were "redefined and intensified" (Rackin 22). Furthermore, the playhouse was a place, as we have seen, visited by all social ranks, which allowed history to reach a much larger audience: "History was designed for the privileged minority who could read. Theatrical performance was accessible to anyone who had the price of admission, the illiterate as well as the learned" (Rackin 26). History, therefore, could be interpreted and discussed by everyone.

Renaissance historiography, as Rackin explains, is embedded with both medieval theological tendencies as well as modern humanist secular approaches. Illustrating the historiographical debates of his own time, Shakespeare's history plays also provide providential as well as secular principles of causality (Rackin 27-28). Kings' rises and downfalls were at times seen as God's punishment; at times, regarded as the consequence of men's own deeds.

Finally, one of the most interesting aspects of Shakespeare's historical plays is the fact that they are "self-reflexive, encouraging their audiences to meditate on the process of historical representation rather than attempting to beguile them into an uncritical acceptance of the represented action as a true mimesis of past events" (Rackin 29). Shakespeare used textual and theatrical strategies in order to remind the spectators that they were watching a play, a reconstruction of the past event, and not the event per se, which in itself is irretrievable. In *King John*, for instance, in the middle of the first and only scene in Act 2, the character of the Bastard compares the citizens of Angiers, who watch the battle between England and France from their castle, to theatre spectators: "By heaven, these scroyles of Angiers flout you, kings, / And stand securely on their battlements / As in a theater, whence they gape and point / At your industrious scenes and acts of death" (2.1.389-92).[48] In this manner, the audience inevitably also compare themselves to the citizens of Angiers, because they are watching the same battle from their seats in the playhouse. As a consequence, they are reminded that what

[48] All quotations in this thesis will be taken from the Folger Shakespeare Library edition of *King John*, edited by Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine. Their American edition presents Shakespeare's text with American spelling.

they see is a theatrical reconstruction, and may even ponder over the matters concerning historical reconstruction as a whole: on the stage, in books, through oral tales, or any other mode of expression.

The world represented by Shakespeare in his play *King John* is the beginning of the thirteenth century in England. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine, editors of the Folger Shakespeare Library edition of *King John*, state that this play goes farther back in history than any other Shakespearean historical play (xiii). As we saw in the previous section, a lot of anecdotes, truths, and inventions were collected and reconstructed from the period of the seventeen years of reign of the real King John. Shakespeare selected some of these "truths" to construct his version of the story.

According to Mowat and Werstine, *King John* was first published in the First Folio of 1623, although, as Cousin states, there are no records of the play's performance until the 1737 production at Covent Garden (1). It is believed to have been based on a play called *The Troublesome Raigne of King John*, although critics disagree as to which play was created first: Shakespeare's or *The Troublesome Raigne* (Mowat; Werstine l-li). In the seventeenth century, *The Troublesome Raigne of King John* was even believed to have been written by Shakespeare himself (Smith 76). Leslie Dunton-Downer and Alan Riding affirm that the anonymous play *The Troublesome Raigne of King John*, owned by the Lord Chamberlain's Men, was published in 1591, therefore around five years before Shakespeare's, whose text was probably written in 1595 or 1596 (89). According to Cousin, "the argument in favour of the mid-1590s as the composition date rests chiefly on perceived similarities between *King John* and other Shakespearean plays of the period, notably *Richard II* (1595)" (1).

Dunton-Downer and Riding also state that another possible source for Shakespeare was Raphael Holinshed's *The Chronicles of England, Ireland and Scotland* (89).[49] Shakespeare, nonetheless, used his creativity to add to these previous works. The Bard, for instance, recreated the character of the Bastard—it was already present in *The Troublesome Raigne*—in order to "personify English decency and heroism" (Dunton-Downer; Riding 89). Emma Smith points out another difference between Holinshed's King John and Shakespeare's: "in Holinshed, for example, the young prince Arthur dies some years before

[49] *The Chronicles of England, Ireland and Scotland* was written by the chronicler Raphael Holinshed, a contemporary of Shakespeare's. His *Chronicles* were published for the first time in 1578, and republished in 1587. They served as inspiration for several Shakespearean plays (Dunton-Downer; Riding 51).

his uncle John, whereas the play suggests that John's downfall is in some way connected to or caused by his decision to have his young rival assassinated" (76). Most historiography—including Warren, Wilson and Jenkins—however, agrees with Shakespeare on the fact that Arthur died as John's prisoner—although it most likely occurred almost fifteen years before John's death, whereas in the play Arthur's death happens in the third scene of the fourth act, probably due to Shakespeare's decision to condense the events of King John's reign. Moreover, Arthur's death indeed influenced John's downfall, precisely because it encouraged the French to attack England once again.

Shakespeare compressed the seventeen years of John's reign into five acts, transforming main events of his government into specific dramatic moments on stage: "John's invasion of France, his excommunication, his loss of most French territories, and his subsequent truce with Rome in 1213" (Dunton-Downer; Riding 89). This choice of the playwright offers dynamism to the play, providing for the spectators a panoramic view of King John's reign in just over twenty-six hundred lines.

Shakespeare's *King John* represents the fight for power—the English crown. But more than merely describing a dispute for the throne, the play approaches the political and emotional consequences of such a dispute. As Emma Smith points out, "in *King John*, then, the point is not to present the moral or legal claims of one monarch over another, but rather to enjoy the psychological pageantry of their competition" (79). Arthur of Brittany, supported by the king of France and the Duke of Austria, defies John's right to the English throne. What is interesting about Shakespeare's play is that it does not take a side or encourage the spectator to support either John nor Arthur. Smith compares the audience watching *King John* to the citizens of Angiers in the play, who, when questioned about who their true king was, simply answered: "The King of England, when we know the King" (2.1.362-63) (78). The audience would watch the play and choose their own candidate for the throne, although, being English, they would probably identify with John.

In the first act, which is comprised of only one long scene, the spectator is introduced to King John, his mother Queen Eleanor, the nobles Earl of Pembroke, Earl of Essex and Earl of Salisbury, and the French ambassador Chatillion. The French ambassador arrives at the English court in the presence of the King and the Queen-mother, and addresses the English monarch as "the borrowed majesty, of England here" (1.1.5). In this extract, the French view of John as king becomes

clear: they regard him as “borrowed,” not the right owner of the crown. The French ambassador goes on to defy John in the name of the French king in the following manner:

> Philip of France, in right and true behalf
> Of thy deceasèd brother Geoffrey’s son,
> Arthur Plantagenet, lays most lawful claim
> To this fair island and territories,
> To Ireland, Poitiers, Anjou, Touraine, Maine,
> Desiring thee to lay aside the sword
> Which sways usurpingly these several titles,
> And put the same into young Arthur’s hand,
> Thy nephew and right royal sovereign. (1.1.7-15)

As we have seen, John was the fourth son of King Henry II and Queen Eleanor, whereas Arthur was the eldest son of John’s older brother, Geoffrey. Therefore, Arthur’s claim to the English throne was legitimate, based on the primogeniture custom. King Philip of France supported Arthur’s claim against John, whom he regarded as a usurper, hence the use of the expression “usurpingly” in Chatillion’s speech quoted above. When the French envoy leaves the room, Queen Eleanor even admits this fact to John by saying: “Your strong possession much more than your right” (1.1.40), which means that John had more possession—held by force—than the right to own the crown.

King John, however, does not submit to France’s threat, and declares war against King Philip and his country. He advises Chatillion to take his message to the French king, and warns him that he should be quick, “for ere thou canst report, I will be there; / The thunder of my cannon shall be heard” (1.1.25-26). King John urges Chatillion to send his message to King Philip quickly, because he will arrive in France in no time and his “cannon”, meaning his wrath, war equipment and soldiers, will be heard there soon.

After the departure of the French ambassador, King John is requested to judge a quarrel between two brothers. They are Robert and Philip Faulconbridge. The quarrel is based on matters of heredity and succession, themes that pervade the play and reflect the dispute between John and Arthur. Philip Faulconbridge is the eldest son of Robert Faulconbridge, the father; and Robert, the son, claims himself to be the heir of Faulconbridge. The situation puzzles John: “Is that the elder, and art thou the heir? / You came not of one mother then, it seems” (1.1.58-59). By means of this extract, it is possible to infer that John believes in

the custom of primogeniture when it comes to succession and inheritance matters, even though he himself did not follow the same custom when he claimed the English throne over Arthur's right.

Robert Faulconbridge alleges that Philip was not born of the same father, and was, therefore, a bastard. Robert explains that his father was away in Germany to discuss matters with the Emperor when Philip was conceived; if Philip was, indeed, Faulconbridge's son, "he came into this world / Full fourteen weeks before the course of time" (1.1.115-56). Robert also states that King Richard sojourned at their house while his father was away, which produced the suspicion that King Richard was, in fact, the bastard's father. Queen Eleanor sees some resemblances to her older son Richard when she looks at Philip: "He hath a trick of Coeur de Lion's face; / The accent of his tongue affecteth him. / Do you not read some tokens of my son / In the large composition of this man?" (1.1.87-90). As a consequence, Queen Eleanor asks the bastard if he would rather be a landed Faulconbridge or a landless Plantagenet. Philip answers that he would forsake his name and follow Queen Eleanor to France and to war. King John speaks as follows: "From henceforth bear his name whose form thou / bearest. / Kneel thou down Philip, but rise more great. / Arise Sir Richard and Plantagenet" (1.1.164-67). It is interesting that Shakespeare's reconstruction of Richard Coeur de Lion depicts him as virile and susceptible to produce a bastard while staying at his subject's house, whereas recent historians, including Wilson, affirm that Richard was most likely homosexual and died without leaving an heir, legitimate or not.

The Bastard, as he is referred to from this episode in the play onwards, is left alone on stage, and speaks one of his several long monologues. If we consider Pavis' definition of a soliloquy as "a speech addressed by a person or character to himself" (1999, 342), we may consider this Bastard's speech a soliloquy. Pavis explains that "even more than the monologue, the soliloquy refers to a situation in which a character reflects on his psychological and moral situation, using this theatrical convention to reveal what would have remained merely an interior monologue" (342). In this soliloquy, the Bastard, alone on the stage, imagines himself, now a knight, talking to a common person, and reflects about his new role in society, and the role of nobles in general:

> Well, now I can make any Joan a lady.
> "Good den, Sir Richard!" "Good-mercy, fellow!"
> And if his name be George, I'll call him "Peter,"
> For new-made honor doth forget men's names;

‘Tis too respective and too sociable (1.1.190-95)

In this extract, the Bastard is clearly ridiculing society’s nobles, who bear the title of knight just in theory, because in practice they do not follow the knightly noble chivalric code. As Lawrence Williams puts it, “being a knight meant that every facet of one’s life reflected the heroism, valor, humility, dignity, and self-sacrifice synonymous with the title” (5). Those qualities do not figure in the Bastard’s personality at that point in the play: he wants to be a knight because of the status that accompanies the title, and not due to self-sacrificing tendencies.

The Bastard sees himself as a “mounting spirit” (1.1.212), somebody who would take any opportunity in order to rise socially and in power. He bequeathed his lands to his brother, and preferred to be “a landless knight” rather than a “landed squire” (1.1.182). In medieval England, knights had more prestige and valour than squires: knighthood, according to Williams, “was a rare privilege reserved for an elite few. Good fortune—and, sometimes, extraordinary luck—might place a young man on one of three paths that led to his valiant destiny” (5). The Bastard, for instance, was extraordinarily lucky to have obtained knighthood from King John in the play. Squires, on the other hand, were usually noble-born boys who would serve the knights. A squire “would serve the knight meals, clean his armor and weapons, and assist him in tournaments. A squire was also responsible for the grooming and stabling of his patron knight’s horse. His greatest honor was to accompany his patron to the battlefield” (Williams 5). The Bastard would, therefore, have more power as a landless knight than as a landed squire. The former Philip Faulconbridge thus accepts knighthood from King John and becomes Sir Richard, the Bastard. He pledges allegiance to the king and his mother, although, as Debora Curren-Aquino suggests, the Bastard’s “initial self-identification as the king’s loyal subject in the first scene was pure formula” (263). Even though the Bastard eventually changes his position towards England and its representative as the play unfolds, during this first act the Bastard sees the allegiance with the king and his consequent knighthood as an opportunity for his “spirit” to “mount higher.”

In the first scene of Act 2, Philip II, King of France, his son Louis, Arthur of Brittany, his mother Constance, the Duke of Austria, and other attendants meet before the gates of Angiers, a city that belonged to the English kingdom. The Dauphin Louis greets the Duke of

Austria and tells Arthur: "Richard, that robbed the lion of his heart[50] / And fought the holy wars in Palestine, / By this brave duke came early to his grave" (2.1.3-5). Here Shakespeare reconstructs Richard I's death. Historians as Wilson and Warren, as we have seen, agree that Richard died after a siege in Châlus, where he got a fatal wound. However, Shakespeare offers Richard a new death in the play: by the hands of the Duke of Austria,[51] who now supported Arthur—Richard's supposedly rightful heir—to make amends for the Lionheart's death. The Dauphin tells Arthur that the Duke of Austria has come "to spread his colors, boy, in thy behalf, / And to rebuke the usurpation / Of thy unnatural uncle, English John" (2.1.8-10). Austria, therefore, supports France in Arthur's claim to the English throne, now occupied by Arthur's "unnatural uncle".

Chatillion returns from England with King John's reply to the French monarch:

> Then turn your forces from this paltry siege
> And stir them up against a mightier task.
> England, impatient of your just demands,
> Hath put himself in arms. The adverse winds,
> Whose leisure I have stayed, have given him time
> To land his legions all as soon as I. (2.1.54-59)

John's army is at hand and Chatillion describes his army as "rash, inconsiderate, fiery voluntaries, / With ladies' faces and fierce dragons' spleen" (2.1.67-68), probably alluding to John's gathering of mercenary soldiers. As Warren explains, John "worked on the assumption that his barons would be treacherous and relied more and more on his mercenary captains" (91). Mercenaries were private soldiers who fought for whoever paid larger wages, and were very common in medieval warfare. According to Warren, "nothing could more quickly widen the gulf between ruler and ruled than such employment of these hardened and unscrupulous professional soldiers" (91). As a result, the English barons were increasingly discontent with King John's governmental decisions, which culminated in an open rebellion, as we have seen.

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[50] Legend has it that when King Richard was imprisoned a lion was sent to kill him, but the king killed the beast first by pulling out its heart, hence his nickname as the Lionheart.

[51] As a matter of fact, Richard was made prisoner by Leopold V, Duke of Austria, in real life, but he did not die by his hands.

King John arrives in Angiers accompanied by his mother Queen Eleanor, the Bastard, Princess Blanche, the Earl of Salisbury, the Earl of Pembroke, amongst others. The English king tells the French king that his army is "God's wrathful agent" (2.1.87) that has come to restore peace. From this line, it is possible to infer that John believed—or wanted to persuade others to believe—that he had God's permission to be king and to fight for his right.

King Philip, on the other hand, also believes to be acting on behalf of God, "that supernal judge" (2.1.113). Philip II replies that France's resource to arms is due to France's love for England:

> England we love, and for that England's sake
> With burn of our armor here we sweat.
> This toil of ours should be a work of thine;
> But thou from loving England art so far
> That thou hast underwrought his lawful king,
> Cut off the sequence of posterity,
> Outfacèd infant state, and done a rape
> Upon the maiden virtue of the crown.
> Look here upon thy brother Geoffrey's face.
> […]
> And this his son. England was Geoffrey's right,
> And this is Geoffrey's. In the name of God,
> How comes it then that thou art called a king,
> When living blood doth in these temples beat
> Which owe the crown that thou o'ermastered? (2.1.91-109)

In this speech, Philip condemns John for usurping the crown from Arthur, who, as Geoffrey's son, was the rightful heir to England. Philip states that John has "done a rape / Upon the maiden virtue of the crown" (2.1.97-98)—this being one of *King John*'s most famous lines—, meaning that the English throne was pure and chaste before John's intervention, poisoning the unblemished crown with his foul crime, even more foul because it was committed against a child. Certainly, this overt love declaration for England by France bears a tint of irony, since during the thirteenth century France and England were intermittently in a dispute over land, and France's main reason to support Arthur's claim to the throne was most likely to secure French influence over the English territories.

The English and the French kings then summon the citizens of Angiers to declare which king they acknowledge as the true monarch of England: John or Arthur. Both kings ask for free passage into the city, to which a citizen replies: "That can we not. But he that proves the King, / To him will we prove loyal. Till that time / Have we rammed up our gates against the world" (2.1.279-81). Through this passage, it seems that the inhabitants of Angiers find neither candidate worthy of the title of King of England; the claimants to the throne must first prove their valour before the citizens of Angiers can acknowledge their king.

When denied access to the town of Angiers, King John and King Philip decide to take arms against each other. The actual battle does not figure in Shakespeare's text, although some theatre directors have chosen to add the battle to the performance, such as the already mentioned Beerbohm Tree's *King John* at Her Majesty's Theatre in 1899, as illustrated by Appendix B.[52] In Shakespeare's version, both armies leave the stage and soon afterwards the French herald enters the stage, followed by the English herald. Each herald proclaims their own nation as victorious. The French herald states: "And victory with little loss doth play / Upon the dancing banners of the French, / Who are at hand, triumphantly displayed, / To enter conquerors and to proclaim / Arthur of Brittany England's king and yours" (2.1.319-23); whereas the English herald proclaims: "Rejoice, you men of Angiers, ring your bells! / King John, your king and England's, doth approach / Commander of this hot malicious day. / […] / Open your gates, and give the victors way" (2.1.324-26; 336). This is an interesting example of how historical events *in loco* may be interpreted differently, illustrating how historical meanings can be constructed even during the occurrence of the events. Both heralds were present at the battle of Angiers, but each one gave a very different report of the aftermath of the first combat, depending on their individual points of view and on their nation's purposes. Each herald wished to convey the news of their victory to the citizens of Angiers in order to obtain their support for their chosen candidates for the English throne.

The citizens of Angiers, however, are still not satisfied with the outcome. A citizen states that "both [armies] are alike, and both alike we like. / One must prove greatest. While they weigh so even, / We hold our town from neither, yet for both" (2.1.345-47). Both kings followed

[52] In Shakespeare's time, scenes such as the battle of Angiers would be difficult to be performed on the Elizabethan stage, which lacked various resources. With the advancement of theatre techniques in the nineteenth century, as we have seen, scenes such as this could be created in order to explore the new possibilities the theatre now offered the Victorians.

by their soldiers and attendants return to the stage. Neither king yields to the other, which leads the Bastard to shout: "Cry havoc, kings! Back to the stainéd field, / You equal potents, fiery-kindled spirits. / Then let confusion of one part confirm / The other's peace. Till then, blows, blood, and / death!" (2.1.372-76). The citizens of Angiers remain unresolved as to whom they should swear allegiance. For that reason, the Bastard suggests that the English and French unite forces against Angiers, "this peevish town" (2.1.418), in order to bring down the city. Afterwards, they should part again, and fight to decide who should rule the conquered city of Angiers. Both kings agree to the Bastard's plan.

The citizens of Angiers, nonetheless, reject the plan and offer a new solution. One of the citizens says:

> That daughter there of Spain, the Lady Blanche,
> Is near to England. Look upon the years
> Of Louis the Dauphin and that lovely maid.
> […]
> Such as she is, in beauty, virtue, birth,
> Is the young Dauphin every way complete.
> If not complete of, say he is not she,
> And she again wants nothing, to name want,
> If want it be not that she is not he.
> […]
> This union shall do more than battery can
> To our fast-closèd gates, for at this match,
> With swifter spleen than powder can enforce,
> The mouth of passage shall we fling wide ope
> And give you entrance. […] (2.1.440-42; 450-54; 464-68)

The marriage proposal between Lady Blanche and the Dauphin indeed happened, as we have seen, although it did not happen on the battlefield in Angiers. As Warren explains, the marriage was ascertained as part of the Treaty of Le Goulet in 1200 (54-55), which ceased—although temporarily—the hostilities between England and France. Probably due to time restrictions and dramatic intensity, Shakespeare decided to condense these events that lasted for almost a year in real life into this one long scene in the second act. Despite the fact that the spectators would have a different time perspective on the occurrences during King John's reign, Shakespeare's decision does not compromise their overall understanding of the events.

Lady Blanche and the Dauphin accordingly agree to the marriage proposition. Blanche's dowry was, as Warren explains, "some fiefs that the French king desired" (55): "Her dowry shall weigh equal with a queen" (2.1.508). Shakespeare, nonetheless, adds a tint of romance to the marriage arrangement, by creating sentimental words for the character of the Dauphin: "I do protest I never loved myself / Till now infixèd I beheld myself / Drawn in the flattering table of her eye" (2.1.523-25). The Bastard mocks Louis' sentimental submission to marriage instead of war by calling him a "lover's traitor" (2.1.529). Lady Blanche, on the other hand, submits to the marriage without expressing any signs of deep love; her compliance to the marriage is due to a feeling of duty towards her uncle's will: "My uncle's will in this respect is mine. / If he see aught in you that makes him like, / That anything he sees which moves his liking / I can with ease translate it to my will" (2.1.533-36). This extract illustrates the strength with which the female characters in *King John* are portrayed by Shakespeare: Queen Eleanor, Constance and Blanche, although tied to the social conventions expected from women in medieval and Renaissance England, still fill the stage with their presence and determination to be a part of the political decisions of the kingdoms. As Smith points out, "in usurping the authority normatively allocated to men, the women enter the political sphere and thicken the play's interest in forms of compromised or challenged power" (79-80). Queen Eleanor is the brain behind John's reign, Constance is the power behind Arthur's claim to the throne, and Blanche becomes an important intermediary between England and France.

From thence on, King Philip addresses John as his "Brother of England", illustrating on stage the peace terms settled by the Treaty of Le Goulet. The French king, however, admits that he changed his purpose, which had been on behalf of Constance and her son, towards his own advantage: "In her right we came, / Which we, God knows, have turned another way / To our own vantage" (2.1.573-75). King John, then, proposes a solution—also part of the real Treaty: "We will heal up all, / For we'll create young Arthur Duke of Brittany / And Earl of Richmond, and this rich, fair town / We make him lord of" (2.1.576-79). As Warren explains, after the peace treaty, "Arthur, as heir to Brittany, was acknowledged to be John's vassal, but John agreed not to diminish Arthur's prerogatives in any way without a judgement of his court" (55).

The second act ends with another of the Bastard's soliloquies. This time, he reflects on the unstable character of rulers, who let go of

more honourable aims because of Commodity: "Commodity, the bias of the world" (2.1.602). When faced with an advantageous proposition of marriage, both kings relinquish their plans of war:

> Mad world, mad kings, mad composition!
> John, to stop Arthur's title in the whole,
> Hath willingly departed with a part;
> […]
> 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 honorable war
> To a most base and vile-concluded peace. (2.1.588-90; 609-14)

The Bastard finishes his soliloquy by stating: "Since kings break faith upon Commodity, / Gain, be my lord, for I will worship thee!" (2.1.625-66). The Bastard concludes his reflections based on the thought that if even kings, who are meant to be honourable and trustworthy, can break their words, so can he, who is but a mere "beggar" (2.1.621). From this moment onwards, the Bastard begins to question the moral values of the men who rule nations, which will influence his later behaviour towards England itself near the end of the play.

This soliloquy leads to the third act of the play, which consists of four scenes. In the first scene, Constance, Arthur, and the Earl of Salisbury are on stage. Salisbury brings the news of the marriage and the peace treaty. Constance, nonetheless, does not believe the earl: "Believe me, I do not believe thee, man. / I have a king's oath to the contrary. / Thou shalt be punished for thus frightening me" (3.1.10-12). Constance, like the Bastard, believes in the stability of kings' words and, like him, is disappointed with the outcome of the treaty. Nevertheless, she instructs her sorrows to be proud (3.1.71), and receives both kings, followed by Louis, Blanche, Queen Eleanor, the Bastard, the Duke of Austria, and other attendants. Apparently, the Dauphin and Lady Blanche are already married, which makes this "a wicked day, and not a holy day!" (3.1.86) for Constance. She cries insults at King Philip and the Duke of Austria, exclaiming that "faith itself to hollow falsehood change" (3.1.98).

The arguments are interrupted by the arrival of Pandulph, the holy legate of Pope Innocent III. As we have seen, Pandulph only arrived in England in 1213, four years after John was excommunicated, five years after the Interdict was set upon England, and twelve years after Constance's death. Shakespeare, nonetheless, comprises the arrival of Pandulph and the threat of excommunication in this scene, which takes place right after the establishment of the peace treaty. In addition, he maintains the character of Constance alive for longer than she was in reality. These choices made by Shakespeare, notwithstanding, comply with his proposal of a dynamic play representing a panoramic approach to the seventeen years of John's reign.

Pandulph speaks as follows:

> Hail, you anointed deputies of Heaven!
> To thee, King John, my holy errand is.
> I, Pandulph, of fair Milan cardinal[53]
> And from Pope Innocent the legate here,
> Do in his name religiously demand
> Why thou against the Church, our holy mother,
> So willfully dost spurn, and force perforce
> Keep Stephen Langton, chosen Archbishop
> Of Canterbury, from that Holy See.
> This, in our foresaid Holy Father's name,
> Pope Innocent, I do demand of thee. (3.1.142-52)

The quarrel between King John and Pope Innocent regarding the successor of Archbishop Hubert Walter was already discussed in the previous section of the present work, and is illustrated by Shakespeare in this speech by Pandulph. King John defiantly replies:

> Thou canst not, cardinal, devise a name
> So slight, unworthy, and ridiculous
> To charge me to an answer, as the Pope.
> Tell him this tale, and from the mouth of England
> Add thus much more, that no Italian priest
> Shall tithe or toll in our dominions;
> […]

[53] The real Pandulph was not cardinal of Milan, but Bishop of Norwich. Shakespeare most likely did not know much about the real Pandulph, therefore creating a different background for his fictional version of the papal legate; or he purposefully decided to construct a different story for Pandulph.

> So tell the Pope, all reverence set apart
> To him and his usurped authority. (3.1.155-60; 165-66)

The words spoken by John to describe the Pope are tough, such as "slight", "unworthy", and "ridiculous." Even King Philip is shocked by the English king's choice of words, stating that his Brother of England blasphemes in this (3.1.167). This depiction of John as an irreligious and inconsiderate man echoes the thirteenth century monk chroniclers' perspectives. As we have seen, Warren demystifies this stereotypical view, stating that John was "conventionally devout" (171), and that his dispute with the Pope was rather based on a clash of authorities, neither willing to submit, than on irreligious behaviour.

It is interesting that John uses the word "usurped" to refer to the Pope's authority in England, making a parallel with the several occurrences of the word "usurper", and its derivations, when addressed to John himself. Both John and Innocent are usurped authorities in England, which was supposedly owned by Arthur, as well as the Bastard was supposedly usurping his brother's inheritance in the first act. The recurrence of the word "usurp" illustrates one of the main themes in the play: the matter of legitimacy and inheritance. Indeed, Curren-Aquino explains that "the matter of legitimate succession and lineal heritage", so present in *King John*, is a recurrent theme in all Shakespeare's historical plays, and a characteristic of this genre (262).

King John incessantly defies the Pope, whom he calls a "meddling priest" (3.1.169), and the threat of excommunication, which he regards as "the curse that money may buy out" (3.1.170). Consequently, Pandulph declares John excommunicated:

> Then, by the lawful power that I have,
> Thou shalt stand cursed and excommunicate;
> And blessèd shall be he that doth revolt
> From his allegiance to an heretic;
> And meritorious shall that hand be called,
> Canonizèd and worshipped as a saint,
> That takes away by any secret course
> Thy hateful life. (3.1.178-85)

Shakespeare, by means of this extract, clearly condemns the power the Church enjoyed to excommunicate individuals simply because they were at odds with the religious institution. Moreover,

Shakespeare ironically provides his character Pandulph with the following lines: "And meritorious shall that hand be called, / Canonizèd and worshipped as a saint, / That takes away by any secret course / Thy hateful life" (3.1.182-85), illustrating the permissive conduct of the Church towards any attempt, taken away by a *secret course*, to kill the heretic king of England. This is certainly a criticism towards the role the Catholic Church played in medieval England, and, consequently, still in Shakespeare's own time.[54]

Pandulph, subsequently, demands the French king to break his alliance with John under threat of excommunication. Lady Blanche pleads to her newlywed husband not to take arms against her uncle, while Constance begs otherwise. King Philip eventually submits to the power of the Church, and says: "England, I will fall from / thee" (3.1.334-35). Constance rejoices at the news: "O, fair return of banished majesty" (3.1.336); while Queen Eleanor grieves: "O, foul revolt of French inconstancy!" (3.1.337), bringing forth once again the theme of the immorality of monarchs. Suddenly, the treatment with which each king addresses the other changes completely. After France's betrayal, John manifests his well-known state of rage: "France, I am burned up with inflaming wrath, / A rage whose heat hath this condition, / That nothing can allay, nothing but blood – / The blood, and dearest-valued blood, of France" (3.1.355-58). As we have seen, the Angevin rulers were known for their common fits of rage; they were even believed to have descended from the devil himself, which would account for their Mephistophelian disposition. John, just like his father Henry II, tended to demonstrate exaggerated performances of fury, causing his subjects to be extremely afraid of him. The extract from Shakespeare's text quoted above illustrates John's angry tendencies; it would depend on the actor performing the role, as well as on the director guiding the performance, to adjust the level of fury with which he would act in the scene.

All depart the stage and a very short scene follows. The Bastard enters carrying the head of the Duke of Austria, whom he has killed in order to avenge his supposed father, King Richard. Amidst the war, Queen Eleanor is taken prisoner by the French, and Prince Arthur is

[54] *King John* was written during Elizabeth I's reign. Elizabeth succeeded her half-sister Mary I to the throne. Mary was a fervent Catholic. Elizabeth, on the other hand, was Anglican and followed her father's, Henry VIII, tradition as Head of the Church of England, although more moderately, contesting the supreme authority of the Pope. Just as King John, Queen Elizabeth I was herself excommunicated by Pope Pius V in 1570. As Mowat and Werstine point out, King John may not be considered a Protestant, although "Shakespeare's play sometimes gives John language that echoes Protestant propaganda" (233), such as the reference to the Pope as an "Italian priest" (3.1.159), or a "meddling priest" (3.1.169).

captured by John. The English king commands Hubert to keep the boy, while the Bastard asserts the king that he has rescued the queen: "Her Highness is in safety, fear you not" (3.2.9). By the actions of this scene (Queen Eleanor's imprisonment and the capture of young Arthur), one knows the spectators have been taken back to 1202, when the castle of Mirabeau was taken, as we discussed in the previous section of the present work. In this manner, in my view, Shakespeare alters the sequence of events in King John's reign, possibly in order to place Arthur's captivity, murder attempt, and death at the climax of the play.

Again, all characters leave the stage. The third scene of the third act begins with King John, Queen Eleanor, the Bastard, Arthur, Hubert, and some English lords. As Arthur's captor, John promises the boy he will be as good to him as his father was (3.3.4). Arthur, nonetheless, is very worried because he believes his mother, Constance, will die of grief when she hears the news of his captivity (3.3.5), although we know that in reality Constance died in 1201, one year before the events at Mirabeau.

King John assigns the Bastard to go back to England: "Cousin, away for England! Haste before, / And ere our coming see thou shake bags / Of hoarding abbots; imprisoned angels[55] / Set at liberty" (3.3.6-9). In this extract, it is clear John's contempt towards clergymen, to whom he refers as "hoarding abbots". He allows the Bastard to "shake their bags", and to "set their angels at liberty", illustrating his criticism of Catholic churchmen who collected riches instead of living a humble life, again echoing a Protestant perspective, and, as a way, establishing King John "as a forerunner of the Tudor monarchs" (Mowat; Werstine 233).

Subsequently, King John, very artfully, compliments his server Hubert in many ways before asking him what he intends. He even pretends to be ashamed of what he must ask of Hubert, but the devoted subject persuades the monarch to pour out his thoughts. The conversation between the two takes place as follows:

> KING JOHN – […]
> Good Hubert, Hubert, Hubert, throw thine eye
> On yon young boy. I'll tell thee what, my friend,
> He is a very serpent in my way,
> And wheresoe'er this foot of mine doth tread,
> He lies before me. Dost thou understand me?

[55] Angels refer to the gold coins stamped with the image of an angel that were worth around ten shillings in Shakespeare's time.

Thou art his keeper.
HUBERT – And I'll keep him so
That he shall not offend your Majesty.
KING JOHN – Death.
HUBERT – My lord?
KING JOHN – A grave.
HUBERT – He shall not live.
KING JOHN – Enough.
I could be merry now. Hubert, I love thee.
Well, I'll not say what I intend for thee. (3.3.62-76)

This passage illustrates King John's cunning strategy to tell Hubert what he wants done without really stating what it is. After hinting that he wants Arthur dead when he uses the words "death" and "grave", the king even tells Hubert that he will not say what he intends for him after all, albeit he has already said it in a veiled way. Shakespeare illustrates the fact—agreed by many historians—that there is not proof of King John demanding Arthur's murder. He may have done it as well as he may not have. As we have seen, Warren and Wilson discuss the possible fates of Arthur: slain by the king's own hands, tied to a heavy stone and tossed in the river Seine, blinded and castrated, died of shock or of disease in prison. The uncertainty around Arthur's death was very likely present in Shakespeare's time—since it persists up to this day—, and it probably influenced the construction of Shakespeare's version of the event, which takes place in the fourth act.

In the fourth scene of the third act, King Philip, the Dauphin, Cardinal Pandulph, and attendants discuss the unexpected English victory. Pandulph advises the French king to be calm for all should go well. Lady Constance enters the stage with her hair down, desperate over her son's fate. Although, as we have seen, the real Constance was already dead by 1202, Shakespeare's Constance desires death:

Death, death, O amiable, lovely death,
Thou odoriferous stench, sound rottenness,
Arise forth from the couch of lasting night,
Thou hate and terror to prosperity,
And I will kiss thy detestable bones
And put my eyeballs in thy vaulty brows,
And ring these fingers with thy household worms,
And stop this gap of breath with fulsome dust,
And be a carrion monster like thyself. (3.4.25-33)

Believing her son and her cause to be lost, Constance has no desire to live. Shakespeare creates a very scenically powerful character in Constance: she is given distraught and very emotional lines, characteristic of a mother gone hysterical over her son's probable loss. The audience in Shakespeare's time, as well as the Victorian audience, would most certainly identify with the suffering of this female character. Furthermore, Constance's role would present a nice challenge for actors to play, since it offered several possibilities: the actor/actress could perform it in an exaggerated and sentimental way, in a more delusional manner, in a confident or sarcastic tone, or other fashions.

Pandulph exclaims that Constance utters madness and not sorrow (3.4.44), but Constance powerfully replies that she wishes she were mad: "If I were mad, I should forget my son, / Or madly think a babe of clouts were he. / I am not mad. Too well, too well I feel / The different plague of each calamity" (3.4.58-61). Her hair which is down—she binds it, but lets it down once more—reflects her state of madness: "there is such disorder in my wit" (3.4.104). Constance leaves the stage and is followed by King Philip, who fears she might do something irrational. The Dauphin and Pandulph are thus left alone on the stage. The Cardinal believes that John will most likely kill Arthur, which would open an opportunity for the French prince. The young man does not understand the priest's intentions, so he elaborates them: "You, in the right of Lady Blanche your wife, / May then make all the claim that Arthur did" (3.4.145-6). As we have seen previously, Prince Louis did indeed take advantage of his marriage to Blanche in order to authorise his claim to the English throne, since Blanche was the granddaughter of Henry II and Queen Eleanor. However, in reality it was not Pandulph who gave this suggestion to Louis, but most likely King Philip himself. According to Warren, since King Philip did not wish to contradict the pope's orders, Louis decided to attack England on his own private account (251). This attack on England, nonetheless, only happened in 1215, after King John had submitted to Rome and the Catholic Church—therefore, by that time the Pope was already on friendly terms with the English king, and reproached the French enterprise of attacking England, since England was then a fief of the Church—, and after the signing of Magna Carta—which, as we have seen, does not even figure in Shakespeare's play.

In the play, Pandulph explains to Louis that Arthur's murder would stain John's reputation and turn the English barons against him, which, as we have seen, indeed happened: "This act so evilly borne shall

cool the hearts / Of all his people and freeze up their zeal, / That none so small advantage shall step forth / To check his reign but they will cherish it" (3.4.152-5). Encouraged by Pandulph, Louis takes his way to England, which happens on stage in the second scene of the final act. Again, in my view, Shakespeare changed the order of historical events and converged Philip's assault in England with the time of Arthur's captivity as a way to allocate Arthur's death at the core of the play, which produced an excuse for Philip to attack and for the English nobles to turn against John, culminating in the death of the English monarch in the final act. In this way, Shakespeare erased other episodes of John's reign in his reconstruction of thirteenth-century England, such as the period of Interdict, John's marriages, the barons' rebellion, and the signing of Magna Carta, in order to put more emphasis on Arthur's plot—whose death happened around fourteen years before John's death—and its consequences, although dislocated in time.

The fourth act begins with Hubert and the executioners on stage. Hubert gives them orders to heat the irons and to bind the young Arthur to a chair when the signal is given. He also tells them not to fear "uncleanly scruples" (4.1.7). Hubert then talks to Arthur, who realises the king's servant is sad. Arthur says he is also sad, that he would rather be free and keep sheep; then he would be merrier than being a prince. Perceiving the child's guiltlessness, Hubert exclaims, probably towards the audience, although Shakespeare does not provide any stage direction in that regard: "If I talk to him, with his innocent prate / He will awake my mercy, which lies dead. / Therefore I will be sudden and dispatch" (4.1.27-9). Hubert, subsequently, shows Arthur the piece of paper in which it is written what should be done to him. Arthur reads it and asks: "Must you with hot irons burn out both mine eyes?" (4.1.42). When Hubert answers positively, Arthur makes a parallel between the iron with which his eyes should be burnt out and the Iron Age, a time of cruelty and violence: "Ah, none but in this Iron Age would do it" (4.1.67). The young boy refers to the Iron Age as *this* Iron Age, comparing the moment in history a thousand years before Christ with the brutality of John's reign—through the prince's perspective.

Hubert calls the executioners in the room, but Arthur pleadingly asks Hubert to have them gone away. Hubert yields to the boy's wish, allowing the executioners to leave. One of them states he was "best pleased to be from such a deed" (4.1.94). Even Shakespeare's executioners believe the fate chosen for Arthur by King John is foul. Left alone with the innocent child, Arthur's goodness succeeds at persuading Hubert to let him go: "Peace. No more. Adieu. / Your uncle

must not know but you are dead. / I'll fill these doggèd spies with false reports. / And, pretty child, sleep doubtless and secure / That Hubert, for the wealth of all the world, / Will not offend thee" (4.1.140-5). As Warren asserts, the end of this scene confirms that Shakespeare very likely knew the version of Arthur's story in which Hubert de Burgh, his guardian in captivity, felt sorry for the boy's fate, set him free, and lied about his death to King John (81-2), for the same thing happens in the play.

The second scene begins with English nobles watching King John on the throne, where he sits once again crowned (4.2.1). This second coronation does not figure in the historiography I have investigated, hence it is most probably another of Shakespeare's reconstructions to add more drama to the stage. When the king is crowned once more, he confirms his legitimacy on the throne as if he had not felt thoroughly secure before. Now that he has assigned Arthur's death, there is no one else to hinder his lawful claim to the English crown. The English nobles, however, think this "once again" quite superfluous (4.2.3-4). The Earl of Salisbury states:

> Therefore, to be possessed with double pomp,
> To guard a title that was rich before,
> To gild refinèd gold, to paint the lily,
> To throw a perfume on the violet,
> To smooth the ice or add another hue
> Unto the rainbow, or with taper-light
> To seek the beauteous eye of heaven to garnish,
> Is wasteful and ridiculous excess. (4.2.9-16)

In this extract, Shakespeare makes clear three aspects of John's reign. First of all, it illustrates John's state of uncertainty towards his own claim to the throne. He himself was not convinced of his right to the English crown; therefore he had to undergo a new coronation to convince—himself more than anyone—of his legitimacy as king. Even though this second coronation is fictional, it works on stage to demonstrate to the audience John's internal doubts concerning his right to be king. Secondly, this extract exemplifies John's pompous lifestyle. As Warren points out, John enjoyed "sumptuous clothing and good food" (138): he liked to see his subjects and servants well dressed, his wife had an expensive dress allowance, he wore dressing gowns—a novelty at the time—, he ate "sugar, almonds, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, and other spices" (139)—evidences of his rich eating—, he had

an opulent collection of jewels, several books, expensive hunting hawks, amongst other kingly privileges he indulged himself with (138-40). Finally, the Earl of Salisbury's speech indicates the nobles' discontent with the English monarch, which in reality led to the barons' rebellion, culminating in Magna Carta.

The Earl of Pembroke refers to John's second coronation as "an ancient tale new told" (4.2.18) and "troublesome" (4.2.19)—perhaps alluding to the anonymous play *The Troublesome Raigne of King John*—in such an "unseasonable" time (4.2.20), since the king had more urgent matters to attend to than undergoing a second coronation, for instance defending his land against the Dauphin's attacks. The earls are gathered around King John to give him counsel concerning political issues. The king answers as follows: "[…] Meantime, but ask / What you would have reformed that is not well, / And well shall you perceive how willingly / I will both hear and grant you your requests" (4.2.44-48). The Earl of Pembroke at that point speaks for all the nobles present:

> Then I, as one that am the tongue of these
> […]
> […] heartily request
> Th'enfranchisement of Arthur, whose restraint
> Doth move the murmuring lips of discontent
> To break into this dangerous argument:
> If what in rest you have in right you hold,
> Why then your fears, which, as they say, attend
> The steps of wrong, should move you to mew up
> Your tender kinsman and to choke his days
> With barbarous ignorance and deny his youth
> The rich advantage of good exercise.
> That the time's enemies may not have this
> To grace occasions, let it be our suit
> That you have bid us ask, his liberty,
> Which for our goods we do no further ask
> Than whereupon our weal, on you depending,
> Counts it your weal he have his liberty. (4.2.48; 52-67)

Pembroke's speech illustrates the French concern, "the murmuring lips of discontent" (4.2.54), towards Arthur's mysterious disappearance. As we have seen, Warren explains that Arthur meant a lot more to the French than he did to the English. He was considered the French's own King Arthur, their symbol of a hopeful future. Therefore,

in this scene in Shakespeare's play, the nobles are advising John to set the French mythical symbol free, otherwise there would be drastic consequences for the English kingdom. King John promptly agrees with the earls to free Arthur, when Hubert enters the stage—the man, according to Pembroke, who "should do the bloody deed" (4.2.71).

After conferencing with Hubert, who had promised Arthur he would lie about his death to the king, King John announces: "We cannot hold mortality's strong hand.— / Good lords, although my will to give is living, / The suit which you demand is gone and dead. / He tells us Arthur is deceased tonight" (4.2.84-87). The nobles sarcastically answer that Arthur was indeed sick and near his death, "before the child himself felt he was sick" (4.2.90). The sarcasm in the earls' lines, probably enhanced by the actors' tone of voice when performed, reveals the nobles' suspicion that King John had a saying in the young prince's death. As a consequence of this display of the English king's tyranny and cruelty, the earls decide to leave: "It is apparent foul play, and 'tis shame / That greatness should so grossly offer it. / So thrive it in your game, and so farewell" (4.2. 95-97). This extract is another illustration of Shakespeare's reconstruction of the rebellion of the barons during King John's reign.

Left alone on stage, King John regrets his cruel deed—for he believes Arthur is indeed dead. He proclaims: "They burn in indignation. I repent. / There is no sure foundation set on blood, / No certain life achieved by others' death" (4.2.105-07). Shakespeare's John realises that his life, title and power could never be preserved by means of Arthur's death. However, most historiography does not refer to any sign of regret from the part of the real King John, especially, as we have seen, the monk chroniclers—as exemplified by the annals at Margam Abbey, which report a drunk king killing his nephew with his own sword, and afterwards tossing him tied to a stone in the river (Warren 83). Nonetheless, it is important to remember that historical accounts, as well as fictional versions, go through the interpretative filter of the teller. The monk chroniclers had a biased pro-baronial and pro-Church perspective on King John, while Shakespeare may have wished to contradict the stereotypical view on John as a maleficent king, and to provide him with more human feelings, such as regret.

A messenger arrives at the English court to bring the news of the Dauphin's arrival:

> From France to England. Never such a power
> For any foreign preparation

> Was levied in the body of a land.
> The copy of your speed is learned by them,
> For when you should be told they do prepare,
> The tiding comes that they are all arrived. (4.2.112-17)

The messenger alludes to the French Prince's fleet, which arrived in Calais[56] in 1216 (Warren 251); therefore, Shakespeare brings another future event as concomitant to Arthur's captivity, which happened around fourteen years earlier. Shakespeare's messenger also brings the news of the death of Queen Eleanor, and of Lady Constance—three days prior to the queen. However, as we already know, Lady Constance had already died in 1201 (Warren 73), while Queen Eleanor died in 1204 (Warren 96), a couple of years after the events at Mirabeau.

The messenger tells John that the fleet comes under the direction of the Dauphin, which, along with the news of his mother's death, filled his head with "ill tidings" (4.2.134). However, the Bastard arrives with more ill news to the king. He brings to the stage a prophet, called Peter:

> And here's a prophet that I brought with me
> From north the streets of Pomfret, whom I found
> With many hundreds treading on his heels,
> To whom he sung in rude harsh-sounding rhymes
> That ere the next Ascension Day at noon,
> Your Highness should deliver up your crown. (4.2.152-57)

In this moment in the second scene, Shakespeare reconstructs the well-known rumours of a prophet preaching John's death. As Warren explains, in 1212 "an emaciated and probably deranged hermit, Peter of Wakefield, was predicting that John would not reign for more than fourteen years, but would be dead by next Ascension Day, and people were listening to him hopefully" (201). However, as illustrated by Shakespeare's play, King John did not die by the following Ascension Day. On the contrary, the prediction "only had the effect of turning him into something of a popular hero—until next Ascension Day came and went, and John was still on his throne" (Warren 201). Shakespeare, nevertheless, decided to create a more dramatic twist to the

[56] At that time, Calais was a territory owned by the English crown.

prophet's tale—as he was himself given to prophetic themes in his plays. Shakespeare recreated Peter's prophecy a little differently: in his play, the prophet says that the king would "deliver up" his crown by the next Ascension Day, not die necessarily. In this manner, the prophecy becomes reality by the beginning of the final act, as we will see.

Furthermore, the Bastard also brings tidings of the nobles' discontent: "Besides, I met Lord Bigot and Lord Salisbury / With eyes as red as new-enkindled fire, / And others more, going to seek the grave / Of Arthur, whom they say is killed tonight / On your suggestion" (4.2.168-72). John realises his previous allies are turning against him, and he fears to have "subject enemies / When adverse foreigners affright my towns" (4.2.179-80), foretelling the future abandonment of their nobles, who join the Dauphin on the French side. Nevertheless, John bids the Bastard to fetch the nobles, because he knows of "a way to win their loves again" (4.2.175), probably leading the spectator to think of Magna Carta, the document which somewhat reunited King John and his nobles by the end of his reign. Shakespeare, however, does not go down this road, since Magna Carta does not figure or is alluded to throughout his *King John*.

After the Bastard's exit, Hubert returns to the stage bearing news of the shocked comments of common people in the streets regarding the death of Arthur. King John does not wish to hear about those comments about Arthur's murder by Hubert. Hubert is surprised by the king's words and asks him: "No had, my lord! Why, did you not provoke me?" (4.2.218), to which King John answers: "It is the curse of kings to be attended / By slaves that take their humours for a warrant" (4.2.119-20), implying that he never ordered Arthur's death; he simply gave voice to his thoughts. He also implies that Hubert, on the other hand, misunderstood the king's speech with a command, and wrongly killed the boy. Even after Hubert shows him the warrant to the prince's death with the king's hand and seal on it, King John does not admit having requested it. Hubert finally eases the king's conscience:

> Arm you against your other enemies.
> I'll make a peace between your soul and you.
> Young Arthur is alive. This hand of mine
> Is yet a maiden and an innocent hand,
> Not painted with the crimson spots of blood.
> Within this bosom never entered yet
> The dreadful motion of a murderous thought. (4.2.261-67)

His energy regained, King John urges Hubert to share the news with the nobles, which leads to the following scene.

In the third scene of the fourth act, Arthur enters the stage, probably dressed as a shipboy. He faces big walls, which he must climb in order to escape the castle. He decides nonetheless to jump, because he believes "as good to die and go as die and stay" (4.3.8). He jumps and dies. Subsequently, the lords Salisbury, Pembroke, and Bigot enter the stage. The Earl of Salisbury has a letter from the Cardinal brought by Count Melun, which declares the Dauphin's love for them. This moment in Shakespeare's play illustrates Louis' summons of English noblemen to the French side. As Warren explains, two-thirds of the English barons had adopted the French enterprise (253), a very large number. Shakespeare's Salisbury, Pembroke, and Bigot personify those nobles who were seduced by the French offer. As Salisbury states, "It is our safety, and we must embrace / This gentle offer of the perilous time" (4.3.12-13).

The Bastard joins the noblemen outside the castle, and tells them the king would like to see them at once. Salisbury, then, voices the nobles' rupture with the English king:

> The King hath dispossessed himself of us.
> We will not line his thin bestainèd cloak
> With our pure honors, nor attend the foot
> That leaves the print of blood where'er it walks.
> Return, and tell him so. We know the worst. (4.3.23-27)

Faced with Arthur's body on the ground, the Earl of Pembroke speaks of the unprecedented cruelty of this murder by stating that "all murders past do stand excused in this" (4.3.52). The Earl of Salisbury agrees, and says "it is the shameful work of Hubert's hand, / The practice and the purpose of the King" (4.3.63-64). Successively, Hubert joins them, asking the nobles to come to the presence of their king because Arthur lives. Lord Bigot, however, shows Hubert the fallen body of Arthur. Hubert weeps, but his tears do not convince the noblemen: "Trust not those cunning waters of his eyes, / For villainy is not without such rheum, / And he, long traded in it, makes it seem / Like rivers of remorse and innocency" (4.3.112-15). Resolved, the nobles leave Hubert and the Bastard, and go "Away, toward Bury, to the

Dauphin there" (4.3.119), illustrating the barons' change of sides in the war against Louis.

Hubert and the Bastard are left alone with Arthur's body, and Hubert convinces the Bastard the young prince's death was not his fault. Hubert then takes Arthur's body in his arms, causing the Bastard to say some of *King John*'s most famous lines:

> 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. (4.3.150-55)

By referring to Arthur as "all England", the Bastard voices his opinion as to whom the rightful heir to the English throne was. For the Bastard, Arthur was "the life, the right, and truth of all this realm" (4.3.153), echoing the French belief of Arthur as a mythical symbol for a hopeful future. Now that Arthur has "fled to heaven", England, in John's hands, is "unowed"—meaning not rightfully owened—, and swelling with pride. However, regardless of the Bastard's true beliefs, he remains loyal to King John, and rushes to him for "a thousand businesses are brief in hand" (4.3.167). In this part of the play, the Bastard realises that kings are flawed and inconstant; therefore his allegiance should be to England itself, and to whoever represents it at the moment. Curren-Aquino discusses this matter, which can be found in all Shakespearean histories, in terms of "loyalty to the private figure who wears the trappings of authority (the natural body)" and "loyalty to the public representative of the country at large (the body politic)" (255). In Shakespeare's play, the Bastard decides to forsake the natural body, personified by King John, in favour of the body politic, which is England itself, no matter who is ruling it at the moment. Even though he disapproves of John's decision to kill Arthur, his allegiance remains with the English nation. Since King John is still the personification of England, being the king, the Bastard has to go back to him.

The following and final act, Act 5, is composed of seven short scenes. The first scene begins with King John and Pandulph on stage. The English king submits to the papal legate: "Thus have I yielded up into your hand / The circle of my glory" (5.1.1-2). As we have seen, King John, after being threatened by Pope Innocent III in 1213 of being

officially deposed of his royal possessions in favour of King Phillip, realises it is time to reconcile with the Catholic Church (Warren 202). In reality, only after King John sent a delegation to Rome to discuss matters of reconciliation with the Pope, does Pandulph arrive in England under Innocent's command. However, in Shakespeare's reconstruction of the history, Pandulph is already in England, and it is him who concludes the peace between the English realm and the Roman Church: "Take again / From this my hand, as holding of the Pope, / Your sovereign greatness and authority" (5.1.3-5). In my view, Shakespeare probably chooses to allot his Cardinal Pandulph with all actions concerning the Catholic Church so that this character would represent the Church itself. Otherwise, if more characters, such as Archbishop Stephen Langton—who absolved the king of Excommunication in 1213 (Warren 213)—or Cardinal-bishop Nicholas of Tusculum—the priest who removed the Interdict from King John's kingdom in 1214 (Warren 210)—were also to represent the Church on stage, the audience would probably get confused with different names, roles, and actions. In Shakespeare's version, it is Pandulph who removes the penalties of Interdict and Excommunication, and reconciles England with the Church. Furthermore, all these actions are condensed in this first scene of the final act, in order to maintain the dynamism of space and time on stage.

As we have seen, in the second scene of the fourth act the Prophet had predicted that the king would deliver up his crown before the next Ascension Day. In Shakespeare's play, the day in which King John submits to Cardinal Pandulph *is* Ascension Day, which proves Peter's prophecy. The king indeed delivers up his crown by the ascertained date to Pandulph, who gives it back to King John as a token of the bond between the Church and England. King John himself reflects on the outcome of the prophecy:

> Is this Ascension Day? Did not the prophet
> Say that before Ascension Day at noon
> My crown I should give off? Even so I have.
> I did suppose it should be on constraint,
> But, heaven be thanked, it is but voluntary. (5.1.26-30)

In exchange for the reconciliation with the Church, King John demands Pandulph's help to thwart the French attack: "Now keep your holy word. Go meet the French, / And from his Holiness use all your power / To stop their marches 'fore we are inflamed" (5.1.6-8). The

papal legate leaves to fulfil his promise as the Bastard enters the stage, bringing news of French victories throughout England. John learns from the Bastard that the nobles would not return to his side, because they found Arthur's body lifeless outside the castle. Nonetheless, King John tells the Bastard, who urges him to go to war against the French once more, not to worry, because he had made peace with Rome, and Cardinal Pandulph would negotiate a truce with the French. The Bastard is thirsty for war against Louis, whom he refers to as a "beardless boy, / A cockered silken wanton" (5.1.71-72). King John finally ends up giving the Bastard authority to deal with the situation as he sees fit.

The second scene brings the Dauphin, Lords Salisbury, Pembroke, Melun and Bigot, and other soldiers in arms to the stage. As we have seen, in reality the young Dauphin indeed brings his army to English soil, where he is joined by the English nobles—represented in the play by the Earl of Salisbury, the Earl of Pembroke, and the Earl of Bigot—who are discontent with King John. Salisbury voices the nobles' resentment for marching against their own nation:

> And is 't not pity, O my grievèd friends
> That we, the sons and children of this isle,
> Was born to see so sad an hour as this,
> Wherein we step after a stranger, march
> Upon her gentle bosom, and fill up
> Our enemies' ranks? I must withdraw and weep. (5.2.24-29)

The Dauphin is moved by Salisbury's "manly drops" (5.2.49)—meaning his tears—, although it seems that Louis' reference to "the purse of rich prosperity" (5.2.61), which awaits the English noblemen after this enterprise against England, renders an ironic tone to the Dauphin's speech. It gives the idea that Louis promised money to the English barons in order to break their already unstable allegiance to John. In this matter, Louis does not really care about Salisbury's tears, but only wishes him, along with the other earls, to remain with him at least throughout this expedition. Louis finishes his speech with the following line: "And even there, methinks, an angel spake" (5.2.64). The word "angel" in this line can have a double meaning. On the one hand, it could mean "angelical", so that the Dauphin believes his enterprise to attack England to be approved and supported by the angels. On the other hand, it could refer to English money, which, as we have seen, had the image of an angel stamped on each coin of around ten

shillings, and which were usually referred to as “angels”. In this perspective, the English nobles are also being criticised for following an angel’s call; in other words: for following the Dauphin because of the money he had promised them.

The barons united against King John have been idealised by many historians as a homogenous group in quest of their rights. However, as we have seen, Warren points out that they were not that united or focused on political ideals. In fact, Warren demystifies the “hallowed tradition” of “a baronage united in arms against the Crown”, as well as the assumption that “the baronial rebels were reactionaries pursuing selfish class interests” (224). They were, after all, a tremendously heterogeneous group, each member with his own motivations, principles, and objectives.

Before Shakespeare’s English and French noblemen guided by Louis could begin the attack, however, Cardinal Pandulph arrives with tidings of peace. He tells the French prince that England has made peace with Rome; therefore, there would be no need for the French to attack England any longer. The Dauphin, nonetheless, is not willing to go back, for the flame of war is now “far too huge to be blown out / With that same weak wind which enkindled it” (5.2.87-8). Louis, expressing his discontent with Rome’s intromission in his conquest of glory, states:

> I, by the honor of my marriage bed,
> After young Arthur claim this land for mine.
> And now it is half conquered, must I back
> Because that John hath made his peace with Rome?
> Am I Rome’s slave? What penny hath Rome borne?
> What men provided? What munition sent
> To underprop this action? Is ‘t not I
> That undergo this charge? Who else but I,
> And such as to my claim are liable,
> Sweat in this business and maintain this war? (5.2.94-103)

In this extract, it is possible to find more criticism—though voiced by the character of a French Catholic prince—towards the meddling of the Church with political affairs, one of the reasons for Henry VIII’s break with the Church, and his declaration as Head of the Church of England. Henry VIII, as we have seen, was Queen Elizabeth I’s father. Elizabeth I being the monarch in power during the creation of this play, it is highly probable that issues concerning the extent of

allowable Church intromission into secular affairs was still under discussion and reflection in Shakespeare's time.

As the play goes on, the Bastard enters the stage to inquire about the aftermath of negotiations between Pandulph and Louis of France. The Cardinal answers that the Dauphin is "too willful-opposite" (5.2.125), and would not yield to a peace truce. The Bastard is thrilled by the Dauphin's answer, because he is eager to fight as well. As he was commanded by King John to take care of the situation as he saw fit, the Bastard replies that the English monarch is ready and "well prepared / To whip this dwarfish war, these pigmy arms, / From out the circle of his territories" (5.2.135-37). The Bastard and Louis exchange insults and leave the stage by the end of the scene.

The third scene of the final act is very short. King John and Hubert are on stage. The king complains that his "heart is sick" (5.3.4). A messenger arrives to bring the news that French supplies were shipwrecked three days earlier, hindering the French expedition, which begins to retreat. According to the historiography I have investigated, there was no such shipwreck of Louis' supplies. The addition to this accident with the French supplies fleet in the Goodwin Sands—a place where shipwrecks were likely to happen, as many examples illustrate—may be another of Shakespeare's strategies to simplify certain political matters for performance on stage. This addition would account for Philip and the French's retreat from England, although in reality other situations led the Dauphin to retreat—including, according to Warren, the defence of important castles by English nobles who remained loyal to John, the disturbance of French vessels by citizens of the Cinque Ports, the death of important English rebels, and the strained relations between French and English Noblemen, to name a few (252, 3)—, which would be problematic to be translated into dramatic events within the constraint of five acts, and probably confusing for the audience.

By the end of the third scene, John finds himself with a "tyrant fever" (5.3.14), which illustrates the beginning of his fatal disease. It is interesting that John should refer to his fever as "tyrant", because that was the adjective with which he himself was very often described. Just as the king, who would not yield but to his own wishes and whims, his fever also takes control of him tyrannically, without even giving the king the possibility to regain control over his own body and life.

In the fourth scene of the fifth act, the nobles Salisbury, Pembroke and Bigot discuss their fates in French hands. Salisbury begins by saying: "I did not think the King so stored with friends" (5.4.1), probably alluding to the king's renewed friendship with the

Pope, and the still loyal English noblemen, who defended their castles, and did not surrender to the French. Pembroke is worried about the French condition in the battlefield, because "if they miscarry, we miscarry too" (5.4.3). The English lords are discussing the news that King John was taken sick and left the battlefield, when Count Melun, a French noble who is fatally wounded, addresses them:

> Fly, noble English; you are bought and sold.
> Unthread the rude eye of rebellion
> And welcome home again discarded faith.
> Seek out King John and fall before his feet,
> For if the French be lords of this loud day,
> He means to compensate the pains you take
> By cutting of your heads. Thus hath he sworn, […] (5.4.11-17)

Count Melun was most likely an invention of Shakespeare's. He may have created this character in order to personify hope, and to encourage the English rebels to return to where there belonged: their own country. In the historiography I have so far explored, there is no account of Louis' intentions of murdering the English lords who had gone over to the French side. However, as we have seen, Warren explains that the relations between the English and French barons had become tense since the English began to realise that the French only sought the opportunity of acquiring rich fiefs in England (253) and did not care for the future of the English "allies". Feeling regret for having betrayed their king and nation, Salisbury speaks to the dying Count Melun on behalf of the lords:

> We do believe thee, and beshrew my soul
> But I do love the favor and the form
> Of this most fair occasion, by the which
> We will untread the steps of damnèd flight,
> And like a bated and retired flood,
> Leaving our rankness and irregular course,
> Stoop low within those bounds we have o'erlooked
> And calmly run on in obedience
> Even to our ocean, to our great King John. (5.4.50-58)

Shakespeare beautifully and metaphorically refers to the barons who had gone away from their true lord, King John, as a retired flood

that abandons its irregular course in order to return to its ocean, the great King John. This passage illustrates the reconciliation of the English lords with their king, John, although Shakespeare does not mention Magna Carta, which was crucial in the reestablishment of good terms between King John and his subjects.

The fifth scene is also a very short one. The Dauphin returns to the stage with his attendants. The French prince rejoices at the apparent French victory in the battlefield, until a messenger arrives with the following tidings: "The Count Melun is slain. The English lords, / By his persuasion, are again fall'n off, / And your supply, which you have wished so long, / Are cast away and sunk on Goodwin Sands" (5.5.12-15). This is the last scene in which the Dauphin appears, which illustrates the retreat of the French and foretells the English victory.

In the following scene, the sixth one in the final act, the audience sees the Bastard and Hubert on the stage. The Bastard asks Hubert about the news, and Hubert tells him they are "news fitting to the night, / Black, fearful, comfortless, and horrible" (5.6.24): the king has been poisoned by a monk. Hubert explains that this monk had, as customs held, tasted the wine before King John drank it in order to persuade the king that it was well. However, soon after the king drank the wine, the monk's "bowels suddenly burst out" (5.6.34).

In the same manner that there are many reconstructions of Arthur's death, John's death has also been reconstructed in different ways by historians and fiction writers. Shakespeare's King John dies poisoned by a monk. Warren advocates that John died of dysentery after eating, drinking, and riding too much (254). Wilson also believes John died due to dysentery (65). Nonetheless, other versions of the king's death existed around Shakespeare's time. For instance, John Foxe, a sixteenth-century historian, wrote in his book *Actes and Monuments* (1563) that King John was poisoned by a monk, who, in order to entice John to drink the wine, "drank a great draft thereof" and died soon after with "his guts gushing out of his belly" (Mowat; Werstine 198). Although Foxe's book was only published over sixty years after Shakespeare wrote *King John*¸ it was most likely based on previous sources that were already around by the time Shakespeare wrote this historical play. Another possibility is that Shakespeare's play itself could have influenced Foxe's report of King John's death, since, as we have seen, both fictional and historical writings may reconstruct historical events.

The final scene of *King John* brings Prince Henry, John's son and future Henry III, Lord Salisbury, Lord Bigot, and Lord Pembroke to

the stage. They talk about the king's iminent death, who hallucinates "with many legions of strange fantasies" (5.7.19). The king is brought to the stage, complaining about the hell inside his bowels, where the poison "is, as a fiend, confined to tyrannize / On unreprievable, condemnèd blood" (5.7.51-52). Again, the king uses a derivation of the word "tyrant", as if drawing a parallel between his deeds as a tyrant king and the tyrant poison that takes complete control over his body.

The Bastard soon follows the king onto the stage to provide him with news of the French advancements in England. Nevertheless, the king apparently dies before the Bastard finishes speaking, for the Earl of Salisbury states: "You breathe these dead news in as dead an ear. – / My liege! My lord! – But now a king, now thus" (5.7.69-70). However, even after King John's death, the Bastard affirms his loyalty to England by swearing to Henry, now Henry III, revenge over the French. As discussed previously in this section of the chapter, the Bastard had forsaken the natural body of sovereignty and embraced the body politic of England. Since from thence onwards it was Henry III who would personify England, the Bastard was ready to follow and serve him as a means to serve England per se. The Earl of Salisbury then breaks the news to the Bastard that Cardinal Pandulph had arrived earlier with a peace offer from the Dauphin, which the English lords had accepted. Although he is thirsty for blood and revenge, the Bastard eventually yields to the lords' proposition, adapting to the beginning of a new era reigned by a new king. The Bastard renews his vows of allegiance to England, now in the hands of Henry:

> And happily may your sweet self put on
> The lineal state and glory of the land,
> To whom with all submission on my knee
> I do bequeath my faithful services
> And true subjection everlastingly. (5.7.107-11)

The Bastard's reference to Henry as "sweet self", and previously as "noble prince" (5.7.101), illustrates the hopes the English had bestowed on Henry after his father's death. Unlike angry tyrant John, Henry was believed to be innocent and sweet. As Warren points out, Henry was only nine years old when his father died (256). "The chronicler Matthew Paris, who knew him well, referred often to his 'simplicity', by which he meant a childlike enthusiasm and exuberance" (Wilson 74). The kingdom had high hopes for Henry, although he could not fulfil them at the end.

John's death, as we have seen, also helped his cause with the rebellious barons. The English nobles who were at odds with John had nothing against young Henry. Shakespeare illustrates the submission of the English lords to the new king of England by means of these lines spoken by Salisbury: "And the like tender of our love we make / To rest without a spot forevermore" (5.7.112-13). From that moment onwards, the lords would remain "spotless" in their obedience to their sovereign.

The famous final lines of the play are spoken by the Bastard, who transitions "from royal surrogate and image maker to the universal spokesman for all England" (Curren-Aquino 260), as a reply to the vows of loyalty to England declared by the new king and the reformed noblemen:

> 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. Naught shall make us rue,
> If England to itself do rest but true. (5.7.118-124)

The Bastard's speech is filled with English patriotism and pride; a nation that would never again submit to conquerors. Now that all English princes were reunited—Henry III, the English lords, and the Bastard—, no one from anywhere in the world could conquer England, as long as "England to itself do rest but true". As Curren-Aquino points out, England's triumph "changes from a given to a conditional dependent on something uncommon in the world of *King John*: moral integrity, now specifically translated into the constancy and fidelity of the English people, king and subjects alike" (263). In a way, the final speech is a patriotic awareness call for the audience to remain true to England, to fight rebellion, and to support its sovereign.

Emma Smith describes *King John* as "an unheroic history play in which kingly authority is sardonically undermined", although this definition can be contested. From my perspective, there is a clear hero in Shakespeare's play, and it is the character the least expected to play this role: the Bastard. The Bastard throughout the play matures from "mounting spirit" to England's spokesman. By means of his realisation of the difference between being loyal to the natural body and being loyal to the body politic, he learns that he—and all English subjects for that matter—should always stay true to England, the body politic, their home

and mother. Kings and men are flawed, while England is pure and will not yield to any conqueror as long as all English men and women remain true to its body politic. That is perhaps one of the reasons why *King John* was performed several times during the Victorian Era. Curren-Aquino brings attention to the fact that the final scene in *King John*—John's death, the rise of Henry III, and the final step of the Bastard's transformation—is a rite of passage: "the mourning period between separation from that which was and incorporation into something new" (266). England in Shakespeare's *King John* is represented as "a work in progress" (266). The Victorians, who were undergoing a period of significant changes, uncertainty and hope for the future, as well as a desire to embrace the new aligned with some nostalgia for the past, would most certainly identify with the "England in progress" of *King John*: one foot in the past, and one in the future. Furthermore, as we have seen, the nineteenth century was a period of nationalism and elevation of English pride at the height of the British Empire's power and influence. The Bastard's final nationalistic speech would likely inflame the audience's bosoms with delight.

In the following chapter I discuss two other contextual aspects of Macready's *King John* based on Postlewait's model: the play's artistic heritage and the agents involved in the production, specifically Macready's action as theatre manager and as the leading role in the play. Finally, in the last chapter, I analyse Macready's reworking of Shakespeare's play in contrast with the original text, and reconstruct Macready's 1842 *King John* at Drury Lane based on the play's prompt-book organised by Charles Shattuck. All the contexts investigated here affected, to various, degrees Macready's reconstruction of King John's reign. Had the contexts around the production been different, the final theatrical performance would certainly have not been the same.

3. "THE KING'S NAME IS A TOWER OF STRENGTH":[57] *King John*'s artistic heritage and agents

> Shakespeare, with the inspiration of genius, has converted the histories of several of our English kings into a series of dramatic poems, thereby impressing the imagination with living pictures of the Royal race, who in earlier days swayed the sceptre and ruled the destinies of this island.
> (Charles Kean's preface to his 1858 production of *King John*.
>
> In: Waith, 201)

Figure 3 - Macready as King John
Available at: http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Theater/artifact/29303/full.html

Ghosts have wandered in theatres in several manners. Postlewait explains that Marvin Carlson, in his study *The Haunted Stage*, indicates some guises under which a ghost can appear on the stage: "the retelling of stories, proverbs, folk tales, legends, myths, and historical events," "direct and indirect quotation of passages from previous plays," "intertextual references, tropes, and structural elements," "the generic traditions and their rules," "the functions of parody, irony, and burlesque in drama," "the training of actors in types of characters, specific roles, and particular gestures and modes of delivery," "the re-enactment of certain roles and plays," "the revival of plays, musicals, operas, pantomimes, and all other kinds of works in any repertory process," "the recycling of costumes, properties, and scenery in production," "the shared codes that define period styles and our ability to recognize them," "the recurring patterns and conditions that determine the history of theatre spaces and buildings," and "our return to any of these works, players, productions, spaces, buildings, and festivals for the experience of theatre" (Postlewait 15-16). From this perspective, Macready's production of *King John* is an assembly of ghosts. First of all, there was the ghost of the author, Shakespeare, which wanders about any production of a Shakespearean play. Secondly, the ghost of the English monarch King John also pervaded the theatrical event. In addition, many other ghosts definitely made an appearance throughout Macready's creative process in reconstructing *King John*, such as ghosts of the plays that had been previously performed on the Drury Lane

[57] *Richard III* (5.3.12).

stage, ghosts of the roles Macready himself had played before assuming the leading role in *King John*, ghosts of other historical play productions, contemporary and previous to Macready's, ghosts of previous productions of *King John*, and several other ghosts.

As Postlewait explains, these ghostly appearances are part of any theatrical event. "No one writes, acts, designs, directs, produces, or observes in a vacuum, as if for the first time" (15). Each performance forms a dialogue with previous productions, whether conscious or unconsciously; hence the importance of investigating what came before. In chapter 2, we already discussed the "ghosts" of King John and Shakespeare. In this chapter, we shall explore the ghostly presences of *King John*'s artistic heritage, the main theatrical agents, and Macready's career as a theatre manager and actor, which contributed to give shape to the final 1842 production of *King John* at Royal Theatre Drury Lane.

3.1. *King John*'s artistic heritage

According to Postlewait's model for theatrical reconstruction analysis, it is important to explore the play's artistic heritage in relation to the theatrical event itself. "All artistic works, no matter how innovative they may be, exist in relation to an artistic heritage of conventions and models. The voices of the ancestors echo in works, even when an artist may reject or trash the tradition" (Postlewait 14). As Carlson and Postlewait assert, the theatrical event is not inserted in a vacuum, but it is necessarily in permanent dialogue with previous productions.

As we have seen, *King John* was not a popular play during Shakespeare's time, and it is not very popular today. As Eugene Waith puts it, "*King John* is a play which, in our time, there have been few to love and very few to see" (192). The play was probably written in 1595 or 1596, but the earliest performance of which there still exists a record took place only in February 1737 at Covent Garden, over a hundred years later (Cousin 1). However, although there is no written evidence, it is probable that *King John* was performed for the first time around the time of its composition at the end of the sixteenth century. According to Cousin,

> evidence of a possible early seventeenth-century performance of the play, though, unfortunately, no date or other precise details, is provided by 'A list made on or about 12 January 1669 [which] allots certain plays,

> including *King John*, to Thomas Killligrew and the King's Company; the plays are described as 'formerly acted at the Blackfriars and now allowed of to his Majesty's Servants'". (3)

Cousin explains that, according to Braunmuller, Shakespeare's company began acting at the Blackfriars[58] in the winter of 1609-1610; therefore, *King John* would probably have been performed there at around that time.

In the eighteenth century, the first performance of *King John* of which there are still records is the aforementioned 1737 production at Covent Garden. According to Waith, "it was performed there seven more times that season and once at the Haymarket; then another eight times at Covent Garden over the next four seasons" (193). Apart from that, there is not much information about these early productions of *King John*.

Around the same time, Colley Cibber[59] was preparing an adaptation of Shakespeare's text under the title *Papal Tyranny in the Reign of King John*. According to Cousin, Cibber believed Shakespeare's plays were rather chaotic; in this manner, they needed refashioning "so that they were more in line with current aesthetic doctrine, chiefly the necessity that a play should be structured around the three unities—unity of time, unity of place and unity of action—and that tragedy and comedy should not be mixed" (4). Cousin points out that Cibber was criticised for believing himself worthy of "improving" Shakespeare. Cibber wrote in the *Daily Advertiser* on 4 February 1737, twenty-two days before his supposed *King John*'s opening night, that "many of Shakespeare's plays had 'for these Hundred Years past… lain dormant, from, perhaps, a just Suspicion, that they were too weak, for a compleat Entertainment'" (Cousin 4). The negative criticism, however, led Cibber to remove the play from rehearsal, and it was not performed.

Cibber was a fervent Protestant, and believed Shakespeare had not been ardent enough in his condemnation of papal tyranny. According to Waith, "Cibber was surprised that Shakespeare 'should have taken no more Fire' at 'the flaming contest between his insolent *Holiness* and *King John*'" (193).[60] Therefore, Cibber created, in his terms, a more suitable conduct for King John, an English monarch

[58] Blackfriars was the name given to two playhouses in London during the Renaissance, which were located in the property of the Blackfriars Dominican priory.
[59] Colley Cibber (1671-1757) was an English playwright, theatre manager, and actor.
[60] Original emphasis.

defied by the Pope. Although Cibber's production of *Papal Tyranny in the Reign of King John* was cancelled in 1737, he was encouraged to resume it in 1745. As Cousin and Waith explain, there was a threat of a "Jacobite rebellion in the north of England and the consequent danger of a Catholic monarch on the throne" (Cousin 5).[61] Cibber's production, therefore, expressed the theatre-manager's anti-Jacobite feelings. *Papal Tyranny* was performed at Convent Garden on 15 February 1745 with James Quin (1693-1766) as King John, Hanna Pritchard (1711-1768) as Constance, and Cibber himself, at the age of seventy-three, as Cardinal Pandulph (Cousin 6).

Cibber's adaptation is quite distinct from Shakespeare's original text. Cousin lists the main differences, amongst which are the extension of Constance's character and the reduction of the Bastard's, the elimination of the whole of Act 1—instead, Cibber sets the first three acts in France and the last two in England—, Hubert's murder by Salisbury, Arthur's funeral, and Constance's presence until the end of the play (6-7). In this manner, Cibber keeps Constance alive for even longer than Shakespeare did. Cibber's changes, nevertheless, were not welcomed by most critics. An unsigned letter written to Cibber, for instance, reads as follows: "[*Papal Tyranny* will] inspire future Amenders of [Shakespeare], and be as a Land-Mark to them to escape the Perils that wait upon such hardy bold Attempts!" (Cousin 8).[62] Cibber's changes served his purpose of focusing his production on the quarrel between England and Rome by means of the characters of King John and Cardinal Pandulph, respectively, who, in turn, would represent Cibber's contemporary strife between Protestants and Catholics.

Five days after Cibber's premiere, Drury Lane opened its season with another version of *King John*, directed by David Garrick.[63] This version maintained Shakespeare's text and casted Garrick himself in the role of King John, Susannah Cibber (1714-1766), Colley Cibber's daughter-in-law, as Constance, and Charles Macklin (1690-1797) as Cardinal Pandulph (Cousin 6). As Cousin puts it, "during this season *Papal Tyranny* was performed a total of eleven times, and *King John* eight times. On six days the rival houses offered a choice of the two

[61] At this time, George II was King of Great Britain and Ireland. He was a Protestant. During the 1745 Jacobite rebellion, Prince Charles Edward Stuart, a Catholic, claimed his right to the English throne as a member of the House of Stuart. His claim and the rebellion were undermined in the following year (Jenkins 173-74).

[62] According to Cousin, Brian Vickers, editor of *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, believes it to have been written by the author of "The Occasional Prompter" series in *The Daily Journal*, 1736-37.

[63] David Garrick (1717-1779) was an English playwright, theatre manager, and actor.

plays" (6). As a result, the audience could choose between Cibber's radical adaptation and Garrick's more traditional performance of the play.

In 1800 there was another attempt to "refashion" Shakespeare. Reverend Richard Valpy (1754-1836), an English schoolmaster, adapted Shakespeare's *King John* for performance by the boys at Reading Grammar School. According to Cousin, "like Cibber, Valpy omitted the whole of the first act. Like his predecessor, he attempted to modernise and 'refine' Shakespeare's language, and in doing so destroyed the power of the original lines" (11). Perhaps "destroy" is too strong a word. As we have seen, theatre producers reshape the original text in order for it to answer to their own purposes. Cibber reworked Shakespeare's play to express his Protestant ideologies, while Rev. Valpy adapted it for an audience of school boys and their parents. These adaptations, in my view, cannot be seen as "destroyers" of Shakespeare's "powerful" original text. Not every adaptation is successful, but none is altogether destructive.

Nonetheless, in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, there was a constant debate about the pertinence of altering Shakespeare's text and the continuing "depredations" of Shakespeare's originals by directors such as Cibber and Valpy. This debate continued throughout the Victorian Era, and influenced nineteenth-century productions of *King John* and other Shakespearean plays. An anonymous poem of 1750 called *Shakespeare's Ghost* illustrates the Victorian desperation for "authenticity," pleading with actors and directors to restore the original lines to the productions:

> To thee, my great restorer, must belong
> The task to vindicate my injur'd song,
> To place each character in proper light,
> To speak my words and do my meaning right,
> To save me from a dire impending fate,
> Nor yield me up to Cibber and to Tate:[64]
> Retrieve the scenes already snatched away,
> Yet, take them back, nor let me fall their prey:
> My genuine thoughts when by the voice exprest,
> Shall still be deemed the greatest and the best. (qtd. in Cousin 13)

[64] Nahum Tate (1652-1715) was an Irish poet who adapted Shakespeare's *King Lear* to the stage in 1681, giving the tragedy a happy ending.

In this poem, the lyrical voice's belief that there is a "proper" and "right meaning" for Shakespeare's texts, and that any adaptation should express Shakespeare's "genuine" thought, is evident. In the twenty-first century, such attempts to retrieve the author's intentions or to arrive at the text's unique meaning have duly been dismissed. However, in the nineteenth century it was still a common belief that there was a "right" interpretation to be given to Shakespeare's—or any other author's—text, and any deviation from that primordial meaning would be badly regarded. Furthermore, in the nineteenth century, as we have seen, the historical past was not yet regarded as we see it today—as fragmented and subject to several interpretations. "The past was a knowable continuum which gave validity and meaning to the present. The notion that interpretations of the past are multiple and determined by the perspective of the viewer was a problem which lay in wait for the twentieth century" (Cousin 32). In this perspective, it was believed there was only one correct past that could be represented on stage, and it was up to the theatre managers, producers and actors to achieve it.

In this context adaptations of Shakespeare's *King John* at the beginning and middle of the nineteenth century were produced, including Macready's. An important production of this play, a "major milestone" according to Cousin (28), was Charles Kemble's revival in November 1823 at Covent Garden. In addition to a careful treatment of Shakespeare's original text, Kemble, in cooperation with James Robinson Planché,[65] planned a new version of *King John* based on historical research for an "accurate"[66] reproduction of thirteenth-century-style costume and setting. Planché believed that historical incongruities in theatrical costume were absurd. "Since it 'was not requisite to be an antiquary' to realize that people dressed differently throughout history, it was an affront to the audience's intelligence to have actors playing thirteenth-century soldiers at Angiers clothed 'precisely the same as those fighting at Bosworth at the end of the 15th […]'" (Schoch 2006, 75). Planché was therefore invited by Kemble to take care of the necessary historical research, and Planché did magnificent and detailed work. According to Cousin:

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[65] James Robinson Planché (1796-1880) was an English dramatist and antiquarian, who introduced the vogue for historically "accurate" costumes in the productions of historical plays in the nineteenth century.

[66] Again, I use the word accurate in quotation marks, because, as we have seen, retrieving the thirteenth-century way of dressing, speaking and living would inevitably be a reconstruction, a possible—but not definite—interpretation.

> as Planché himself had little knowledge of costume at this time, he solicited the help of Samuel Meyrick, whose recently published *A Critical Inquiry into Ancient Arms and Armour* proved a valuable source of information, and another antiquary, Francis Douce, who loaned him his collection of illustrated manuscripts and a copy of Strutt's *Dress and Habits of the People of England*, with illustrations specially prepared for Douce by the author. In addition, Planché examined existing seals, shields, stained-glass windows and monuments from the time of *King John*. The eventual Act I costume for John was based on his effigy in the choir of Worcester Cathedral.[67] The image from his Great Seal provided the inspiration for his battle-dress, while Faulconbridge at this point in the play was costumed in the style of a thirteenth-century knight in Malvern Church. (29)

In his *Recollections and Reflections*, Planché wrote about the reception of the costume by the audience at Covent Garden:

> When the curtain rose, and discovered *King John* dressed as his effigy appears in Worcester Cathedral, surrounded by his barons sheathed in mail, with cylindrical helmets and correct armorial shields, and his courtiers in the long tunics and mantles of the thirteenth century, there was a roar of approbation, accompanied by four distinct rounds of applause, so general and so hearty, that the actors were astonished. (Cousin 29-30)

It was the beginning of a period of spectacular performances of historical plays based on historiographical research. Planché later published his studies for the costumes for *King John*, along with a prefatory essay and references to other works. According to Schoch, "in terms of theatrical historicism, […] Planché's picture book […] is unprecedented" (2006, 76). Planché's work continued to be the basis for costume design for several productions of *King John* to come, including Macready's.

[67] This effigy is shown in Appendix D.

The splendid costumes had great prominence in the playbill. It reads "Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, this present MONDAY, 24th NOVEMBER, 1823, Will be revived, *Shakespeare*'s Tragedy of KING JOHN With an Attention to COSTUME never before equalled on the English Stage. Every Character will appear in the precise HABIT OF THE PERIOD."[68] With the aid of the costumes, the audience at Covent Garden would be transported back to thirteenth-century England, when knights wore shiny armours, and ladies wore medieval dresses. As Schoch points out, "as a living embodiment of the past, the theatre remained without peer. And in this effort to render the past as a physical and material substance, historically precise costumes were of singular consequence" (2006, 76). When looking at the carefully reconstructed historical costumes, the past had become palpable and visible; therefore, it felt more real. As Cousin puts it, by means of the realistic costume, "the play's events gain an added authenticity and solidity that more intimately links the early thirteenth- and nineteenth-century worlds" (30). I agree with Cousin in this assertion. Although the thirteenth-century world could never be retrieved and accurately reproduced on a nineteenth-century stage, the careful historical research that based Kemble's 1823 production allowed it to beautifully reconstruct the period of King John's reign so that the audience could have a glimpse of how it could have been. Surely, it was not completely accurate—it could never have been—but it enabled the spectators to give vent to their imagination.

The Kemble/Planché production presented Charles Mayne Young (1777-1856) in the title role, Mrs. Ogilvie as Constance, and Charles Kemble himself as the Bastard. Kemble restored Act I, which had been omitted by Cibber and Valpy, but cut down the number of lines, which was a common practice. "Frequently, lines were cut either to strengthen the focus on John and his claim to the English throne or because they were perceived as indelicate. Scenes which involved French characters were considerably reduced in length, as were references to English lords' alliance with the Dauphin" (Cousin 12). The cuts were, obviously, not a random choice, hence the importance of exploring what has been cut, and the possible implications of these alterations. The alterations in Shakespeare's original text made by Macready for his 1842 production is analysed in the following chapter.

After Kemble and Planché's production, the way to reconstruct historical pasts on the stage had changed. The audience had been

[68] For an illustration of the playbill, see Appendix F.

impressed by a new vogue of detailed costumes and scenery, and was eager to see more productions of the kind. The approach to Shakespeare's historical plays had changed from a focus on language, which "offers visually a near neutrality which encourages individual members of the audience to imaginatively assemble the pictorial elements of the play-world" (Cousin 31), to a focus on the visual substantiality. As Foulkes explains, "the recurring debate about Shakespearean production during the Victorian period centred on the conflicting demands for spectacular scenery and for the restoration of Shakespeare's texts" (2008, 3). In this manner, theatre directors who followed Kemble would have to make a choice: either to continue the new trend of antiquarian theatre, based on historical research, or to return to a more imaginative and less spectacular type of theatrical production. Macready made his choice and premiered his version of *King John* nineteen years later.

3.2 *King John*'s agents in 1842

The agents who put together the theatrical event inevitably bring their personal touch to the production. As Postlewait argues, artists contribute immensely to the final outcome, hence the importance, when analysing past theatrical performances, to investigate artists' background and relations to the theatrical event itself. According to Postlewait, the artist "is necessarily situated in the world, so part of what we find in the event is the artist's personal relation to the world: biographical factors, linguistic codes, socio-political conditions, values, beliefs, and views, national experiences and identities, ideologies, and possible understanding" (17). All these elements help to shape the final theatrical event.

Macready's 1842 production of *King John* was realised with the contribution of several agents, including members of the cast, production, and scenic and costume design. The cast for this production included a number of well-known actors, such as Macready himself as the title role, Samuel Phelps as Hubert, James Anderson as the Bastard, Mr. Graham as King Philip, Mr. Hudson as Prince Louis, Mr. Ryder as Pandulph, Miss Ellis as Queen Eleanor, and Helen Faucit as Lady Constance.[69] The play was under Macready's direction, the costumes were designed by Charles Hamilton Smith, and the set designer was William Telbin.

[69] For the *Dramatis Personae* of the 1842 production playbill, see Appendix G.

The life of an actor at the beginning of the nineteenth century was not easy. As we have seen, the theatre only established itself as artistically unified and as a respectable metier towards the end of the century. Consequently, actors and playwrights also shared the theatre's dubious reputation in the first decades of the nineteenth century. As Jackson explains, the rise in status of the theatre author enabled him "by the end of the century to command payment and artistic control on a scale undreamed of by the playwrights employed by theatres in the 1820s and 1830s" (4). The fame and status of actors and actresses as we see nowadays were not a reality in the Victorian Era either. For instance, Macready curiously answered one Mr. Esdaile, who visited him at Drury Lane on 21 February 1840 to ask him for advice about following a career on the stage: "I with kindness and earnestness dissuaded him from following so unprofitable and demoralizing a calling, and told him I had rather see one of my children dead than on the stage. He left me, very grateful for my advice" (Jackson 80). In this excerpt of Macready's diaries, clear the condition of actors in the early- and mid-nineteenth century is clear: it was "unprofitable" and deemed "demoralizing", not a trade Macready would like to see his children in.

An illustration of the tough life of an aspiring actor, especially in a small company, in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century is given by Leman Thomas Rede's preface to the 1827 book *The Road to the Stage; or, the Performer's Preceptor*, which was considered a guide for beginners in the world of the theatre:

> A country actor in a small company, and aspiring to a first-rate situation, will invariably have to study about *five hundred lines per diem* – it is astonishing how many persons are cured [of a desire to be an actor] by this alone; this will occupy the possessor of a good memory for six hours – his duties at the theatre embrace four hours in the morning and six for rehearsal, and about five at night; here are sixteen hours devoted to labour alone, to say nothing of the time required to study the character, after the mere attainment of the words. Let the stage-struck aspirant endure this, and, if a radical cure be not effected, he has the scenic *phobia*, and had better be given to the stage at once, for he will never fix to anything else. (qtd. in Jackson 86)

This extract illustrates the poor work conditions of actors in the first decades of the nineteenth century. The aspirant would have to work around sixteen hours a day, not only memorising a great number of lines, but also working at the theatre in the morning and at night, with afternoons devoted to rehearsals. Additionally, it was common to fine actors for bad behaviour. For example, according to the general regulations of the principal provincial theatres of 1827, an actor would be fined five shillings "for not being ready to begin at the time announced in the bills," one shilling "for going on or off the stage in any other place than that settled at rehearsals," one guinea "for being obviously intoxicated when engaged in the performance," and five shillings "for omitting, or introducing a scene or song without the permission of the manager" (Jackson 88). Actors, therefore, had no liberties on the stage; they were supposed to follow the manager's every instruction, on pain of fines.

For women, the choice of being actresses was even more negatively regarded. Even with the rise in the status of actors, playwrights and the theatre itself, women actresses were still seen with suspicion. As Jackson points out, the actress, "with her unusual degree of financial and expressive independence, remained a puzzling and even frightening figure for most Victorian men and women: a paradoxically respectable deviant from the social and (in conservative Victorian accounts) biological norms of class and gender" (80). At the same time that they were praised for their performances, they would yet for some time be belittled for not conforming to the idealised standard of woman behaviour in the nineteenth century.

Furthermore, the ways actors worked also changed as the nineteenth century unfolded. "A career on the stage that began before the middle of the century would typically include work with a company that prided itself on being able to play any combination of a large repertoire of familiar pieces, including pantomimes, musical pieces and farcical comedies" (Jackson 81), which meant that the actors would be prepared to play any role, but would not specialise in any theatrical genre or character. Contrarily, "by the end of the century touring companies offered a far more limited range of plays: an actor might spend weeks, months or even years in a handful of plays, chosen because of their appropriateness to the talents of the company's leading performers" (81-82). In this way, actors began to be specialised in a certain type of role or theatrical genre. Many actors would play the same character in different productions; for instance, Samuel Phelps played the role of King John in four different productions: in 1844 at Sadler's

Wells, in 1849 again at Sadler's Wells, in 1865 at Drury Lane, and in 1866 again at Drury Lane.[70]

Samuel Phelps (1804-1878), who played the role of Hubert, in Macready's production in 1842, was a famous Victorian actor and theatre manager, mostly known for his Shakespearean roles. Foulkes refers to him as "Macready's heir" (2008, 2), because after working with Macready in several productions, Phelps made a career of his own, setting up management at Sadler's Wells Theatre from 1844, benefitting from the Theatre Regulation Act of 1843, which, as we have seen, absolved the monopoly of "legitimate drama" to the royal theatres. The Act of 1843 gave Phelps the opportunity to perform almost all of Shakespeare's plays by 1862, with the exception of *Henry VI*, *Troilus and Cresida*, *Richard II* and *Titus Andronicus* (Foulkes 2008, 2).

In 1842, Macready was concomitantly directing a production of *As You Like It* at Drury Lane, which premiered a month after *King John*, on 24 November. The cast was predominantly the same in both productions, corroborating Jackson's statement that in the first half of the nineteenth century actors would perform very different roles at the same time.[71] Phelps, for instance, played Adam in *As You Like It* and Hubert in *King John*. Later, he would get the title role of King John in four later productions, as we have seen.

James Anderson (1811-1895) was a Scottish actor. He played the role of Philip Faulconbridge, the Bastard, in Macready's *King John* in 1842. Anderson had already worked with Macready in 1837, when he played the role of Florizel in Macready's *The Winter's Tale* at Covent Garden (Bartholomeusz 75). Anderson was not in the cast of the 1842 production of *As You Like It*, but he played the character of the Bastard again in the 1865 production of *King John* at Drury Lane with Phelps in the leading role.[72] Furthermore, Anderson took the role of Posthumus in Macready's 1843 revival of *Cymbeline* at Drury Lane. According to a contemporary reviewer:

> a good-looking, athletically built young actor with a fine voice, Anderson had become well known in London since 1837, when Macready brought him from to the provinces to serve as leading man at Covent

[70] Production appearances of the character King John available at http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Theater/ character/jn_king_john/.

[71] For a copy of the playbill of the 1842 production of *As You Like It*, see Appendix H.

[72] Information about the stage production of the 1865 staging of *King John* available at http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Theater/production/stage/2371/.

> Garden. His Posthumus was described as 'animated and powerful, though occasionally a trifle too violent' (*Morning Chronicle*, 23 Jan. 1843). (qtd. in Carlisle 143)

However, according to Shattuck, Victorian critics were not fond of Anderson's performance as the Bastard in Macready's *King John*. A critic in *John Bull* "thought that in the first three acts 'his manner was coarse, his voice overstrained, and his action exaggerated'" (Shattuck 52). For Victorian critics, Anderson's performance was not in accordance with the hero they expected the Bastard to be on stage. In my view, however, if Anderson was described as "animated and powerful" and "a trifle too violent" in performing Posthumus, and with a "coarse manner" and "exaggerated action" in *King John*, he was most likely a very good Bastard.

Mr. Graham and Mr. Hudson played, respectively, King Philip and Prince Louis in Macready's *King John* in 1842. There is not much information available about these actors; nonetheless what is interesting is that both of them were cast for both of Macready's productions at Drury Lane in 1842. In *As You Like It*, Mr. Graham played the role of Oliver de Boys and Mr. Hudson was Le Beau.

John Ryder (1814-1885), an English actor described as "forceful" by Foulkes (2008, 52), played Cardinal Pandulph in the 1842 *King John*. He was also part of the *As You Like It* cast, in which he played Duke Senior. Additionally, Mr. Ryder appeared in the 1852 production of *King John* at the Princess's Theatre as Hubert, produced by Charles Kean,[73] and in the 1879 production of *As You Like It* by the Royal Shakespeare Company at Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, this time as Adam.[74] Furthermore, Ryder also played "a sufficiently royal Cymbeline, despite his comparative youthfulness" (Carlisle 143) in the 1843 production by Macready, and the part of Bolingbroke in Charles Kean's 1857 *Richard II* at the Princess's Theatre (Foulkes 2008, 52).

Shakespeare's female roles are inferior in number to male roles. One of the reasons for this may be the fact that during Shakespeare's time boys would play the female roles, because women were not allowed on stage. Women only began to be seen performing in English theatres from 1660 onwards. The first woman to play a Shakespearean

[73] Information about the stage production of the 1852 staging of *King John* available at http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Theater/production/stage/2369/.

[74] Information about the stage production of the 1879 staging of *As You Like It* available at http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Theater/production/stage/2550/.

role, for instance, of which there are records, was Mary Saunderson (1637-1712) in the role of Juliet in 1662 (Wells 2; 49). After that, women gradually took over the performance of female and even male Shakespearean characters.[75] In *King John*, for instance, of the twenty-three main characters, only four are women: Queen Eleanor, Lady Constance, Blanche and Lady Faulconbridge. However, these female characters are essential for the development of the plot, and Lady Constance alone speaks 10% of all the lines in the play, in contrast to 17% spoken by King John, and 20% spoken by the Bastard (Smith 75). These female characters, especially Queen Eleanor and Lady Constance, challenged Victorian actresses to display their theatrical abilities.

In Macready's 1842 *King John*, Queen Eleanor was played by Miss Ellis. Unfortunately, there is very little available information about Miss Ellis. She was not in Macready's 1842 *As You Like It*, but she worked again with the theatre manager in the following year, 1843, in his production of *Cymbeline* at Drury Lane. However, her performance as the Queen in *Cymbeline* was not very well received. Carlisle points out that "amid so many good performances [in Macready's *Cymbeline*] Miss Ellis's juvenile-looking Queen was disappointing" (143). It is unfortunate I could not find any reviews of Miss Ellis's performance as Queen Eleanor in *King John*.

Information about Helen Faucit (1814-1898), on the other hand, who played the role of Constance, is abundant. Faucit had already played Constance in 1836 at Covent Garden, with Macready as King John, and Charles Kemble as the Bastard.[76] Miss Faucit played several Shakespearean roles during her successful acting career, including Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Desdemona in *Othello*, Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*, Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, and Imogen in *Cymbeline* (Wells 91). According to Stanley Wells, "handsome rather than beautiful in her younger days, she had fair skin and curly locks of dark hair, alluring eyes, a prominent nose, and a cleft chin. Her features were mobile and highly expressive" (91). Queen Victoria was Miss Faucit's friend and admirer. In addition to the queen, Helen had enchanted many contemporary critics. Thomas de Quincey (1785-1859), for instance, asked, "[Is it] a goddess that moves before us? Perfect she is in form; perfect in attitude [...]. We critics, dispersed

[75] For example, Sarah Siddons (1755-1831), Charles Kemble's sister, was the first woman to play the role of *Hamlet* in the beginning of the eighteenth century (Wells 2).

[76] Information about the stage production of the 1836 staging of *King John* available at http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Theater/production/stage/2429/.

through the house, in the very teeth of duty and conscience, all at one moment unanimously fell in love with Miss Faucit" (Wells 92).

At the same time that Miss Faucit charmed many around her, she was charmed by someone herself. She admired the work of Macready, who soon became her mentor. They probably met when he was working at Covent Garden. Macready was already married at that time, but, according to Wells,

> she fell desperately in love with him, and there were even false rumours that he had got her pregnant, but, recognizing the hopelessness of her passion, she threw herself into her acting career with commensurate intensity. Macready and she acted together frequently from 1836 until 1845 when, during a season in Paris, she was so wildly applauded that he became jealous of her success and ended their partnership. (93)

After breaking up with Macready, she continued her career away from London, especially in cities such as Dublin, Manchester, Glasgow, and Edinburgh (Wells 93).

Miss Faucit's performing style was often described as sentimental and exaggerated. Queen Victoria complained that she "rants and screams too much" (Wells 92), particularly in the earlier phases of her carrier. As she matured as a woman and as an actress, she became more critical about her own work, and valued advice from contemporary actors. Charles Kean, for instance, advised her to "avoid melodramatic expression of emotion" (Wells 93). The young actress, who started at sixteen, had grown up to have a "brilliant starring career" and a "reputation as a major actress" (Carlisle 143). George Henry Lewes (1817-1878), George Eliot's partner, referred to Helen as "the finest tragic actress on our stage" (Wells 96).

In addition to this excellent group of actors, Macready had the contribution of the costume designer Charles Hamilton Smith (1776-1859) and the set designer William Telbin (1813-1873). As we have seen, Kemble and Planché in their 1823 production of *King John* had forever changed the way which scenery and costume would be regarded in the theatre. According to William Moelwyn Merchant, background setting began to be taken seriously by nineteenth-century artists, including Telbin (19). Telbin worked with Macready and later designed scenery for Charles Kean's productions at the Princess's Theatre in the

1850s. J. W. Cole, Kean's friend and biographer, wrote about the Victorian pictorial interest in rendering Shakespeare's texts more visual:

> The time had at length arrived when a total personification of Shakespeare, with every accompaniment that refined knowledge, diligent research, and chronological accuracy could supply, was suited to the taste and temper of the age, which had become eminently pictorial and exacting beyond all earlier precedent. (qtd. in Merchant 19)

Cole published this in 1859, seventeen years after Macready's *King John* at Drury Lane. However, the taste for "refined knowledge," "diligent research," and "chronological accuracy" was already perceptible in Telbin's work with Macready.

Telbin was famous for his "atmospheric landscapes" (Merchant 19). According to Shattuck, Telbin "was to become one of the most distinguished scene painters of the century, and was a popular easel painter as well" (12). As Shattuck explains, Telbin was the son of an actor and, therefore, familiarised with the theatrical universe. He began painting stage scenes in 1832, but his first major work in London was in Macready's *King John*. Apparently, Macready treated the artists who worked with him as mere employees, "whose job was only to put into effect his own 'directions for several scenes.' That all-important line of credit, 'The Scenery by Mr. Telbin,' did not appear on the *King John* playbills until the seventh performance, on November 14" (Shattuck 12). However, the people who were involved in the theatrical business knew who was responsible for the set, especially critics who in great number praised his work. For instance, after *King John*'s premiere, "the critic of the *Spectator* hailed Telbin at once as 'an artist of superior power, imbued with the spirit of the drama,' and *John Bull* credited him with 'fancy in design,' 'breadth of style,' and 'a force, arising out of his power to punctuate his ideas, in which he has no rival'" (Shattuck 12). Nonetheless, his work was not thoroughly complimented. Also in *John Bull*, Telbin was criticised for his use of colour: apparently, he used black "to an extent that lessens the truth of his conceptions"; however, "as he is young, and not devoid of intelligence, if he studies carefully he may advance high in a sphere of art that has been proved to be a road to academic honour" (Shattuck 13). As Shattuck explains, Tilben's use of dark palettes in his early works rendered his tableaux not clearly discernible for the audience in the darkness of the theatre. This mistake

he promptly corrected in his future projects (14). In any case, Telbin's work in *King John* received very positive reviews, which contributed to his escalating career as set designer.

Telbin made twenty watercolours as models for the building of the stage set, which have fortunately been preserved. In his *William Charles Macready's King John*, a facsimile prompt-book of Macready's 1842 production, with an enlightening introduction, Shattuck published these twenty beautiful watercolours in black and white. For the only scene in Act I, Telbin proposed the grand interior of King John's palace with his throne occupying the centre part of the stage. There are long windows on the walls, and it is possible to see the big, arched ceiling in Gothic style.[77] For the scene in Act II, Telbin imagined the exterior of the castle at Angiers with a big gate standing next to the river bank.[78] For Act III, Telbin recreated the interior of King Philip's luxurious tent with a view to the open field in the background, which served for the first and fourth scenes in this act.[79] For the second and third scenes, Telbin thought of different spaces in the battlefield at Angiers. In the landscape for scene 2, it is possible to see an open clearing with a mountain in the background, a few trees and some bushes under a clear sky,[80] whereas scene 3 is depicted in an obscurer tone: the sky is darker, the visible tree has contorted branches and very few leaves; there is little grass, and a pathway is discernible which leads to a wider open space. In the background, it is possible to see the outlines of the castle of Angiers.[81]

For the first scene of Act IV, Telbin recreated the interior of a chamber in Northampton Castle, where Arthur was held captive. There is a glimpse of a barred window and a cross. There is a stool on the floor, and in the background it is possible to see a semi-opened door. The ceiling is arched in Gothic style, giving a sense of enormity and loneliness to the place.[82] For the second scene, Telbin imagined another angle of King John's throne hall. It is not as grand as it was represented in the first scene of Act I; it looks smaller in scale and, therefore, more domestic. The throne is on the left side of the watercolour, and there is a big arch in the centre of the stage, which leads to corridors inside the

[77] See Appendix I.
[78] See Appendix J.
[79] See Appendix K.
[80] See Appendix L.
[81] See Appendix M.
[82] See Appendix N.

castle.[83] For the final scene of Act IV, Telbin depicted the exterior of Northampton Castle. It is bigger than the castle of Angiers and more rectangular. There is also a big gate with stairs leading to its entrance. The castle is perched on top of a small hill next to the river.[84]

Finally, for the final act, Telbin created six different landscapes for each of the scenes. For the first scene, Telbin imagined the interior of a Templar's Church with its circular nave and round ceiling. It is possible to see a beautiful chair on the right side of the stage, which was reserved for Cardinal Pandulph.[85] For scene 2, Telbin painted a beautiful landscape at St. Edmund's Bury. There are tall trees on the right side and a small tree on the left. It is possible to see ruins of an ancient building and the outline of the town in the background.[86] The scenery used for the third scene is similar to the one used for the second scene, except that it is another angle of the same place, and that dead bodies are discernible lying on the ground, which would represent the end of the battle.[87] For the fourth scene, the scenery created is yet another angle of the battlefield with a windmill in ruins on the right, smoke on the background, and war wrecks all over the ground.[88] The fifth scenery no longer represents the battlefield, but the majestic exterior of Swinstead Abbey, where Hubert and the Bastard would meet in the dark. The scenery has a very dark tone with the great church on top of a high hill and an imposing gate on the left side of the stage.[89] Finally, the last scenery has a brighter mood and shows the orchard of Swinstead Abbey. The church is visible and illuminated on the right side, whereas in the centre of the stage there is a tall tree and a water fountain. In this last scene the body of King John would solemnly be brought to the stage.[90]

Apart from the set designer, another important artist in recreating the past on stage is the costume designer. As we have seen, the trend for historical "accuracy" in theatrical costumes that started with Planché's research and designs for Kemble's 1823 production of *King John* had captured the Victorian taste. According to Marion Jones, the "'archaeologically correct'" and the "'picturesque'" were recurrent values for Victorian writers on costume (56). As we have also seen, historical plays in the Victorian Era were not only regarded as

[83] See Appendix O.
[84] See Appendix P.
[85] See Appendix Q.
[86] See Appendix R.
[87] See Appendix S.
[88] See Appendix T.
[89] See Appendix U.
[90] See Appendix V.

entertainment, but they were also seen as a means for popular education. Theatre also had a didactic function, hence the extreme care with historical "accuracy." Charles Kean in the playbill for his 1857 production of *Richard II* wrote as follows:

> An increasing taste for recreation wherein instruction is blended with amusement, has for some time been conspicuous in the English public; and surely, an attempt to render dramatic representations conducive to the diffusion of knowledge—to surround the flowing imagery of the great Poet with accompaniments *true* to the time of which he writes—*realizing* the scenes and actions which he describes—exhibiting men as they once lived—can scarcely detract from the enduring influence of his genius.[91] (Jones 60)

This extract illustrates the Victorian desire to combine entertainment and education in the theatre. Surely, the theatrical costumes were reconstructions of the ways people used to dress in the past, just as "exhibiting men as they once lived" was an attempt to recreate a way of living in the past that no longer existed. The result on the stage would be a possible—not a definite—interpretation of the past. However, although performances of historical plays are possible reconstructions—and not reproductions—of the past on the stage, that does not mean that they may not be instructive. Quite contrarily, historical plays provide the audience with a reflection on the past that can be truly edifying.

Charles H. Smith was responsible for costume design in Macready's 1842 production of *King John*. According to Shattuck, Smith was a "well-known antiquarian, historian, and naturalist of Plymouth, who over the years supplied both Macready and Kean with historical data for their classical revivals" (17). Smith used Planché's studies for Kemble's *King John* as basis, but added some details of his own. Twelve of the total twenty-eight watercolours designed by Smith for Macready's production were fortunately discovered by Macready's granddaughter, Lisa Puckle, in the 1960s, and are now preserved (Shattuck 17). The watercolour sheets that remain are the costume designs for the characters King John, Queen Eleanor, King Philip, Robert Faulconbridge, Lady Faulconbridge, Blanche of Castile, the messenger from the Pope, Cardinal Pandulph, Lady Constance, the

[91] Original emphasis.

Archbishop of Canterbury, a Bishop in ordinary dress, the English and French heralds, a crosier bearer, and a priest of the Templar's order.[92] Unfortunately, the copies available by Shattuck are in black and white. The original designs, nevertheless, were richly colourful. For instance, King John's costume is thus described:

> The gown is rose-red with a flowered-border; the belt white, the gloves green and jeweled, the sword gold-handled in a blue sheath. The undergown is green with yellow borders. The robe is gold with jeweled collar and borders. The footwear consists of crimson stockings and black shoes. The coronet is gold, jeweled, with a crimson undercap. (Shattuck 17)

The details with which each costume was elaborated and the preoccupation with legitimate sources, such as King John's effigy in Worcester Cathedral and Queen Eleanor's effigy at Fontevrault Abbey, render Smith's work absolutely fascinating. From the watercolours it is possible to picture how stunningly dressed the actors would look on stage, but one can only imagine the sparkle in the audience's eyes when watching the ensemble of scenery, costume and performance, bringing the Middle Ages back to life on the Drury Lane stage under the direction of Macready, the eminent tragedian.

3.2.1 The Eminent Tragedian

William Charles Macready (1793-1873) was one of the most celebrated actors and theatre managers of the Victorian Era. He was, as Trewin describes him, "five feet ten in height and held himself stiffly erect. He had a flat face with high cheekbones, a mouth small and frowning, a square chin, and a nose that a colleague would call 'a mixture of Grecian, Milesian, and snub'. His eyes were burning blue" (xviii). Although some critics referred to Macready as quite a strange character—such as John Coleman, a nineteenth-century actor, who described him as "an awkward, gaunt figure, hair grizzled, features irregular" and the form "unlike anything else I have seen in the shape of a nose" (Trewin xx), and Leigh Hunt, an English poet and critic, who described him as "one of the plainest and most awkwardly made men that ever trod the stage" (Wells 85)—Macready seems to have been

[92] See Appendixes W, X, Y, and Z.

quite attractive and captivated the audience with his "deep and melodious" voice (Trewin xviii).[93] He became known as the Eminent Tragedian, the title chosen by Alan Downer for his 1966 biography of the actor (Foulkes 2008, 2), especially for his outstanding performances of tragic roles.

Macready was born into a theatrical family—both his parents were actors—and started performing at the young age of seventeen (Trewin xi), although he had wished to become a barrister. Due to his father's financial debts, the young man chose the theatre for what he believed would be a temporary job. According to Wells, "with the puritanical sense of duty that was to characterize his entire career, he suppressed his personal desires and started both to train himself as an actor and to take over some of his father's managerial duties" (85). In this way, his temporary job soon became definitive: he remained as an actor for over forty years, but the resentment of not achieving the dreamed profession of lawyer and the dignity that accompanied it constantly lurked behind his business in the theatre (Trewin xv).

Macready has often been compared to another actor, Edmund Kean (1787-1833), Charles Kean's father, who belonged to a previous generation of performers. Wells points out that Macready admired Kean as an actor, but despised him as a man (84). While Kean has been regarded as "the romantic profligate" and "blazing cometary legend," Macready has been described as conservative, moralistic, "a figure hampered by high purpose and classic zeal" (Trewin xi-xii). The poet Alfred Tennyson wrote a sonnet in homage to Macready's retirement from the stage in 1851 in which he refers to the actor as "moral, grave, sublime" (Tennyson 369). However, Trewin states that Macready was more than a moralistic proud actor: he was "vain and humble; choleric and gentle; impatient and numbingly shy; harsh and yet sensitive to others' feelings; bitter and loving; a despot and a republican; the paradoxes multiply" (xii). Just as the period in which he was inserted, Macready's career was paradoxical, chaotic, and yet fascinating.

Macready was an educated man and he comprehended the marginalised position the actor held in Victorian society; in many instances he criticised the acting profession—such as when he said he would rather see his children dead than on stage, as we saw in the beginning of the present chapter—but he worked as an actor for the majority of his life (1810-1851). As Trewin puts it, "it was a love-hate

[93] For a photograph of Macready, see Appendix 2A.

relationship" (xiii). Theatre was a major part of his life, just as his life was an important part of theatre.

Curiously, Trewin points out that Macready was multifaceted; he could be several different people depending on the situation, as good actors mostly are. In Trewin's words, Macready could be "an entire cast list" (xv), which renders his life so interesting. One Macready was the man in the theatre, "the autocrat, the choleric 'Eminent' affronted by the incompetence and insensitivity of the players he had to act with; by the ignorance of his managers (when they employed him) and his staff (when he was the employer)." He was seen by many as a tyrant who would often cry "Beast! Beast of hell!" when not satisfied (Trewin xiii). He was known by some actors as "Sergeant Macready," especially for his insistence on rehearsals. He abominated when actors missed rehearsals because they believed they knew the play. As Trewin puts it, "his rehearsals were protracted and earnest, never a casual run-through" (xxi), which helped to increase the importance of rehearsing in theatre companies at the time; a practice that has survived up to our days. One curious extract from Trewin's book replicates a brief monologue by Macready printed in a stage journal at Covent Garden. It was supposedly a typical morning with Macready:

> 'Where is the tailor-man, that Head, fool, brute, beast, ass? How dare you annoy me, sir, in this manner? Have you got a soul or sense?... Look, who wrote these calls? Gentlemen, look about you; read for yourselves: here is "Macbeth" spelt "Mackbeth" and Mr Serle's "Afrancesado" spelt "Haffrancishardo"... Who is that talking at the wings? Henry! Henry! go down and tell the stage door keeper I expect him to go away—to leave the theatre immediately... Mr Forster—oh, show Mr Forster to my room; no, stop! My dear Dickens, how d'ye do? Talfourd! your hand; another and another! Browning! Bulwer! a-a-walk into the green-room. Mr Bender, go on; why do you wait? Where is Mr Willmott? I-I—this is exceedingly bad! Will you make a beginning? Where are the-the-officers? Where is that-a-Paulo-man? Mr Beckett? Mr Smith? What cat is that? Do-do-do-a-a-a-a-damn it!—are you all asleep?… Why do we wait, gentlemen? The band? I-I-really will enforce fines without any respect of persons ... Where's the supernumerary-master? Sir, I desired

> you not to employ that person without stockings. Do-do find me decent, intelligent men. Gentlemen of the band, be kind enough to discuss your-a-a-*on-dits*-outside the theatre. It is-it-is-a-a-preposterous... What is that horrible hubbub in the green-room? I-I really I—Where is the gas-man? Are we rehearsing the-the-a-Black-Hole of Calcutta? Do-do-do-pray lighten our darkness. Man, I have spoken several times about these pewter pots. I-I will not have the theatre turned into a-a-cookshop... You-you-you cannot possibly dine at ten o'clock in the morning... Send in your beds, gentlemen; let us have a-a-caravansery at once.' (Trewin xxi-xxii)

By reading this humorous extract, it is possible to imagine a frantic Macready going up and down the theatre, giving orders, checking instructions, and very nervous for fear that something would not happen according to his plans.

Another Macready was the artist, "the compulsive actor." According to Trewin, "though he might tell himself that he loathed his task, he was aware at heart […] that he could not cease, on the worst of nights, from probing every speech—a search that could impede the free flow of the verse—and from exploring a character to its crevices" (xiii). A third Macready was the "susceptible romantic." "He could fall in love, even if he would never dream of expressing it so baldly; and when actresses were infatuated with him—as they could be; observe the behaviour of Helen Faucit—he debated the matter with himself in anxious page upon page [in his journals]" (xiii-xiv). There was yet another Macready: "the affectionate husband and father, a scrupulous head of the household, if a little alarming, more than a little schoolmasterish; he had to be preceptor as well as husband" (xiv). Furthermore, he could be the "loyal and welcoming friend—of [Charles] Dickens, who understood instinctively how to deal with him" or "the merciless hater—of such men as Forrest, in boorish rivalry, and of Bunn of Drury Lane, whom he despised for cupidity and vulgarity" (xiv). Finally, Macready could still be "the public man who, in clubs and at dinner-parties, when he was free from those long, turbulent rehearsals, could be a figure self-consciously statuesque, a classic portico given life" (xv). Macready was indeed a whole cast list. Whether the tyrant theatrical man, the restless artist, the helpless romantic, the father, the husband, the friend, the enemy, the public man, or any other character;

the ensemble of these figures is what rendered Macready such an intriguing man, and his career in the theatre so mesmerising.

Macready began his acting career in the first decade of the nineteenth century, a time when, as we saw in the first chapter of this thesis, "legitimate drama" was restricted to the two royal playhouses: Covent Garden and Drury Lane. As Trewin explains, in order to be a well-known and celebrated artist, the actors at that time had to ensure their way into one of these important theatres. Macready was aware of this fact, and would not rest until he found himself managing a royal theatre, which happened in the middle of the century: from 1837 to 1839 he managed Covent Garden, and from 1841 to 1843 he managed Drury Lane (Foulkes 2008, 2). His fiercest competition in the theatre soon gave way: Kemble retired in 1817, and Edmund Kean died in 1833, providing Macready with a smoother path to success (Trewin xvii-xviii). Competition, however, was part of the game in Victorian theatre. According to Trewin, "it is impossible to overlook Macready's almost pathological envy and suspicion, the imagination that would see a mortal wound in a mild chafe, a fierce rival in a player transiently acclaimed. But practically everyone at that time would have behaved in the same way: the profession was desperately unsure of itself" (xviii). Therefore, Macready never felt comfortable during his entire career; he was always mindful of prospective competitors, and never ceased to develop his own skills as an actor in order to secure his place in the theatrical business.

As an actor, Macready "fought himself clear from the excesses of melodrama, the hollow pomp, the tall spouting gentleman in tinsel, and grew closer to the Shakespearean protagonists" (Trewin xix). Macready, indeed, devoted his whole career to unravelling the depths of Shakespeare's characters. In fact, Trewin points out that only two years before his death, Macready, barely being able to speak at all due to his health condition, exclaimed to his friend, Lady Pollock, that he had just found "some new ideas about Iago" (xviii). Even on his deathbed, Macready would not stop thinking about the unique characters Shakespeare created. During his work on the stage, Macready brought many of these characters to life, including Macbeth, King Lear, Iago, Cassius, Henry IV, Hamlet, and King John.

Just as any actor, Macready also had certain characteristics of his own acting style. For instance, he would at times make pauses during scenes, known as "the Macready pause," that "hinted at eternity" (Trewin xx). Macready's goal probably was to offer more drama to the scene, but that strategy was not always positively received. Furthermore,

"if a house were unresponsive, he would be 'raw and efforty', or try to extort attention by a declamatory scream" (Trewin xx). This extract illustrates the fact that Macready wanted the audience's full attention when he was performing. Perhaps because he was unsure of his own place in the theatre, he needed—more than other actors did—to feel the positive response and respect of the spectators.

Macready made his debut in London in 1816 at Covent Garden, and his first major success as a Shakespearean character was in 1819, when he played the role of Richard III. He was applauded enthusiastically. As stated by Wells, "reviewers praised his originality, his endurance in so long and arduous a role, his vocal powers, and his intelligence" (86). His career as the Eminent Tragedian had begun. Later he played another Shakespearean character, Coriolanus, causing a very positive response in the audience. According to the reviews of contemporary witnesses compiled by Gamini Salgado, "from the death of Coriolanus to the fall of the curtain the house resounded with applause, and in the pit the waving of hats was universal" (Wells 86). Macready also ventured into comedy, playing the roles of the Duke in *Measure for Measure*, Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Ford in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Jaques in *As You Like It*, and Leontes in *The Winter's Tale* (Wells 87). This surely proves Macready's versatility as an actor, being able to play both tragic and comic characters, although he truly excelled himself performing tragic roles that gave him the name "the Eminent Tragedian".

After providing the stage with so many unforgettable performances, Macready retired from the theatre in 1851 never to return. There was a celebration to honour Macready's career organised by his friend Charles Dickens, which was attended by several fellow actors and artists, including the already mentioned poet Alfred Tennyson (Wells 87). After Macready's retirement from the stage, "until Irving[94] there would be no one to fill his place except that conscientious archaeologist, Charles Kean, and Samuel Phelps, an actor Macready esteemed, who was content to stay in his North London kingdom of Sadler's Wells" (Trewin xxii-xxiii). According to Trewin, when Macready left the stage after his last performance, a member in the audience cried "The last of the Mohicans!" (xxiii). It was indeed the end of an era in the theatre. Macready died twenty-two years later, in 1873.

[94] Henry Irving (1838-1905) was an English actor and theatre manager. He was the first actor to be awarded the title of knight in 1883.

After looking into the possible worlds represented in *King John*, the artistic heritage, and the main agents of the production, in the following chapter of this thesis I attempt to reconstruct Macready's theatrical event on the 1842 Drury Lane stage. My analysis will be based on Shattuck's *William Charles Macready's King John*, a facsimile prompt-book of the production. Moreover, I compare Shakespeare's text with Macready's alterations in order to investigate the possible consequences of these changes, the way Macready reconstructed King John's reign, and the way he recreated the Middle Ages on the Victorian stage.

4. "A MAN CAN DIE BUT ONCE":[95] Macready's production of *King John* in 1842

We have had nothing so great as the revival of *King John*. We have had no celebration of English History and English Poetry, so worthy of a National Theatre.
(*The Examiner*, October 29, 1842.
In: Shattuck, 1)

Figure 4 - Macready as King John
Illustrated London News
29 Oct. 1842: 392.

On 24 October 1842, Macready's *King John* premiered with pomp at Royal Theatre Drury Lane. As the epigraph to this chapter illustrates, the production was very well received and acclaimed by theatre-goers and critics alike. The reviewer in *The Examiner*, five days after the opening, compared Macready's piece with previous productions of the play, and affirms "it is six years since we saw *King John*, with some seven ragged supernumeraries for the power of England, while that of France, headed by a king in boots *à la* Louis Quatorze, crawled about the stage with three" (Shattuck 1). The critic condemned that earlier production of *King John* which, unlike Macready's, had only a few performers on stage to represent the English and French armies, and offered an actor wearing late-seventeenth century boots in order to represent an early-thirteenth century king. Those discrepancies could no longer entertain the Victorian audience at the theatre. As we saw in the previous chapter, Kemble and Planché's *King John* in 1823 had set the example that had changed theatre -goers' demands when it came to historical theatre.

Macready was certainly up to the challenge, and, in *The Examiner* reviewer's words, performed the work of an alchemist, "converting to richest use the meagre resources of the stage" (Shattuck 1). Unlike the other performance which the critic disapproved, Macready's *King John* was praised for the care with which every detail in costume and scenery was developed: "The accoutrements are complete, from the helmet to the spur of each mailed warrior. Not a distinction is missed in the appointments. From citizen to baron, gentleman to knight, herald to man-at-arms, soldier to servant, priest to

[95] *Henry IV – Part 2* (3.2.219).

king, gradations are marked with picturesque exactness, to the eye and to the mind" (qtd. in Shattuck 1). It is interesting that the critic uses the expression "to the eye and to the *mind*," because, although the costumes and set were reconstructed based on historical research, they still left a margin for the audience's imagination, which is a characteristic of the theatre. Moreover, the set created by Telbin added to the spectacle of Macready's *King John*. The same reviewer in *The Examiner* wrote:

> The council room, the field before and after the battle, the fortifications of Angiers, the moated and embattled fortress of Northampton, the glitter of the Royal tent, the gloom of Swinstead Abbey; they have all the air of truth, the character of simple and strong fidelity. And above all, in every moment of the tragedy, there is Mind at work, without which wealth of material is nothing. (qtd. in Shattuck 1)

Again, the critic uses the word *Mind*—with a capital letter—alluding to the importance of room for imagination in the theatre. As he puts it—and I strongly agree—there is little use for spectacular scenery and majestic costumes if there are not smart minds behind it to bring it all to life. These minds belong to all the agents involved in Macready's production—Macready himself, Telbin, Smith, the cast, and others, who often enough do not even figure in historical archives—agents who collectively incited the audience's imagination, inviting them to reconstruct the Middle Ages on the Victorian stage.

In *The Examiner* critic's words, it is also possible to spot some traces of double-voiced medievalism. In his review of Macready's *King John*, the critic brings together two views of the Middle Ages: the negative view of a prosaic medieval past, as thought by the Elizabethans, as well as a romanticised perspective of the Middle Ages, typical of the Victorian Era. According to this Victorian critic, "the rude heroic forms of the English past; the gothic and chivalric grandeur of the Middle Age; the woes and wars of a barbarous but an earnest time, with its reckless splendour, its selfish cruelty, and its gloomy suffering: are in this revival realized" (qtd. in Shattuck 1). Therefore, he sees in Macready's production a romanticised medieval past, which he describes as "heroic," with "chivalric grandeur" and "reckless splendour." At the same time, however, the critic is able to spot in Macready's *King John* "the woes and wars of a barbarous" Middle Ages, its "selfish cruelty" and "gloomy suffering," illustrating the

Elizabethan perspective on the medieval past. This more negative outlook on the Middle Ages can, of course, also be found in Shakespeare's *King John*, created in the midst of Renaissance ideas about the medieval past. This extract of *The Examiner*, therefore, is a fine example of the double-voiced medievalism surrounding historical and artistic productions in Victorian theatre.

Shattuck explains that Macready's production was indeed remarkable, and served as a model—of text use, costume, and set—for many *King Johns* to come. According to Shattuck, "taken as a whole—the arrangement of the text, the ensemble playing, the stage decoration, the stage management, and the overall conception—*King John* was, together with the *As You Like It* which had opened the season three weeks earlier, the finest work that Macready had put together" (2). Nonetheless, Shattuck brings light to the fact that Macready and his 1842 *King John* have been overshadowed in theatre history; hence the lack of publications concerning the production, and the importance of reviving Macready's great contribution to the theatrical world.

The primary source for my analysis of Macready's 1842 production of *King John* is the aforementioned Shattuck's *William Charles Macready's King John*, which is "in facsimile a significant transcript of Macready's final prompt-book: the copy prepared for Charles Kean in 1846 by George Ellis (formerly one of Macready's prompters) which Kean used for his first staging of the play in New York City" (3).[96] Thus, by means of this facsimile prompt-book it is possible to analyse how both Macready and Kean reworked Shakespeare's text for each of their productions, in 1842 and 1846 respectively. George Ellis' elegant calligraphy appoints the alterations requested by Macready, while the changes and strike-outs done by the New York prompters assign Kean's reworking of the text (Shattuck 74). My focus here, nevertheless, is on Macready's reconstruction of *King John*.

The prompt-book is an inestimable resource for the theatre historian. As Postlewait explains, the prompt-book may provide useful information, such as entrances and exits on stage, sound effects, lighting cues, details of scene design, costumes and stage properties, movements and gestures of the actors, amongst other tips (60). Furthermore, exploring a prompt-book offers us a "double vision" of the spectacle, as Shattuck puts it: "for we can imagine ourselves viewing the play beside

[96] For a copy of one of the pages of Macready's prompt-book as prepared by George Ellis, see Appendix 2B.

the spectator in the stalls and, when the scene changes, in the wings or behind the lowered act drop with the stage manager and his carpenter crews" (4). By reading what happened on stage, as well as what was happening behind the curtains, the reader of a prompt-book can feel part of the audience, as well as part of the theatrical team. Each prompt-book, nonetheless, is different from the other; hence the necessity of further exploring Macready's. In his prompt-book, for instance, it is possible to identify instructions concerning groove numbers, call lists, key marks, sound effects, stage maps, and commands for bells and whistles.

4.1 Macready's use of Shakespeare's text

Macready's reworking of Shakespeare's text was, according to Shattuck, "simply to establish a workable acting version, in his light faithful to Shakespeare and suitable to his theatre and his audience" (10). Shakespeare's original *King John* was around 2,600 lines, which would be impracticable to be performed to a Victorian audience, which was no longer accustomed to sit for four hours to watch the performance of a play, as it had been common in Elizabethan times. Macready, therefore, cut around 770 lines—although maintaining the structure of five acts—resulting in a final version of 1,830 lines, which, "with minor additions and subtractions, passed into print […] to become the standard acting version for the nineteenth century" (Shattuck 10), being the primary source for several future productions.

As we have seen, the first act of *King John* has been suppressed by many theatre directors, including Cibber and Reverend Valpy, for being deemed immoral. In the first act, as we recall, Lady Faulconbridge acknowledges her infidelity towards her husband, revealing Philip Faulconbridge to be, in fact, King Richard's son, and, therefore, a bastard. The first act was restored by Kemble in 1823, shocking Reverend Valpy, who could not accept "that the indecencies of the First Act should be tolerated […] in this age of moral refinement, in the reign of a Prince, who displays exemplary detestation of everything, that is not chaste in sentiment, and fine in expression" (qtd. in Shattuck 10), illustrating Victorian exaggerated moral concerns. Macready looked for a middle ground, keeping Act I, but deleting some lines "in order to soften the rudeness of the scene" (Shattuck 10). One example of lines which were omitted possibly due to moralistic reasons was the Bastard's speech explaining how he was born out of adultery. The lines "Well, sir, by this you cannot get my land. / Your tale must be how he employed

my mother" (1.1.100-01), referring to how King Richard "employed" Lady Faulconbridge, were deleted by Macready. Another example is part of Robert Faulconbridge's speech narrating how his father was away when his brother, the Bastard, was conceived: "large lengths of seas and shores / Between my father and my mother lay, / As I have heard my father speak himself, / When this same lusty gentleman was got" (1.1.108-11). These lines were also cut by Macready. The aforementioned examples illustrate how the Victorians attempted to romanticise the Middle Ages, erasing traces of adultery or bad conduct. In this manner, Victorians would look back to medieval individuals as models of the good behaviour that were lacking in their own time. This perspective of the Middle Ages interwove with the Renaissance view of the medieval past—as illustrated by Shakespeare and his contemporaries—that regarded the Middle Ages as a prosaic moment in history that was already "superseded" by the late sixteenth century. As much as Macready tried to erase the adultery in *King John*, the character of the Bastard was still a bastard, fruit of an adulterous love affair. Therefore, as much as Macready aimed at romanticising the Middle Ages, Shakespeare's text—Macready's source—would inevitably add a negative perspective on the medieval past. This overlapping of ideas over the Middle Ages is the core of the double-voiced medievalism.

Furthermore, the Bastard's soliloquy by the end of the only scene of the first act, in which the character laughs at his own ascension in life—having become a knight—and ridicules the behaviour of nobles in the society, was also expressively shortened. The original soliloquy is over thirty lines long, and could become a quite monotonous speech for the Victorian audience. Macready decided to cut a total of twenty-eight lines (1.1.195-1.1.222). On the one hand, the Bastard's tone of mockery is maintained. The character says that, now that he is a knight, he can make any Joan—meaning any common girl—a lady, and can call people by wrong names "for new-made honor doth forget men's names" (1.1.193). On the other hand, other examples of noblemen's ridiculous behaviour were suppressed by Macready, such as his imagined conversation with his "pickèd man of countries" (1.1.199). Nevertheless, the core of the Bastard's speech is sustained, being an example of a conscious suppression made by Macready.

In the second act, when King John and King Philip meet before the gates of Angiers, Macready, following Kemble's example in 1823, cut some of the extensive dialogue between the two monarchs. As Shattuck points out, Macready maintained 395 of the original 598 lines in the entire act (24). When Chatillion arrives in Angiers to bring the

news to King Philip of the English army in march, Macready deleted the lines in which the French Ambassador refers to the English soldiers as "Rash, inconsiderate, fiery voluntaries, / With ladies' faces, and fierce dragons' spleens— / [Who] Have sold their fortunes at their native homes, / Bearing their birthrights proudly on their backs, / To make a hazard of new fortunes here" (2.1.67-71). As we discussed in chapter 2, these lines written by Shakespeare probably referred to King John's army of mercenaries—men, not necessarily English, who would fight any battle as long as they were financially rewarded. The description of a "rash, inconsiderate, fiery" army of mercenaries would not corroborate with the Victorian idealised view of an army of medieval English soldiers ready to fight for England's honour.

Also in Act II, Macready omitted King Philip's declaration of love to England, and condemnation of King John, who must not love England, since he had usurped the place of England's "lawful king":

> England we love, and for that England's sake
> With burden of our armor here we sweat.
> This toil of ours should be a work of thine;
> But thou from loving England art so far
> That thou hast underwrought his lawful king,
> Cut off the sequence of posterity,
> Outfacèd infant state, and done a rape
> Upon the maiden virtue of the crown. (2.1.91-98)

These eight lines were removed from King Philip's speech, including a couple of the most famous lines of Shakespeare's *King John*: "and done a rape / Upon the maiden virtue of the crown." This extract was condemned by Victorian moralistic concerns, since it censures King John's usurping of the English crown by referring to it as a rape. In addition, several lines from Constance's and Queen Eleanor's speeches were removed, especially those referring to adultery, sin, and the devil. For instance, Constance's reproach to Queen Eleanor's accusation of the illegality of Arthur's birth was repressed:

> My bed was ever to thy son as true,
> As thine was to thy husband: and this boy
> Liker in feature to his father Geoffrey
> Than thou and John, in manners being as like
> As rain to water or devil to his dam.
> My boy a bastard? By my soul, I think

> His father never was so true begot.
> It cannot be, an if thou wert his mother. (2.1.125-32)

Moreover, Constance's speech on sin and the plague, in which she mentions the word "sin" six times and "plague" five times, was removed (2.1.184-98). These examples illustrate Macready's moralistic inspection of Shakespeare's text, eliminating everything that was not in accordance with what was considered proper behaviour in the Victorian Era.

For the third act, Macready decided to maintain Shakespeare's division of four scenes. The first scene was reduced from 347 to 217 lines (Shattuck 26). In this part of the play, Constance's reflections about the inconstancy of law, in which she mentions the word "law" six times, were omitted (3.1.192-97). This game with words would have amused Shakespeare's audience, which was more attached to the power of language, than the Victorian audience, which was more attracted to the visual spectacle of the theatre. Furthermore, Cardinal Pandulph's long speech on truth and the keeping of vows, originally thirty-six lines long (3.1.273-308), was reduced to seven lines. A Renaissance audience would be accustomed to watching long plays composed by long speeches, but a Victorian audience would most likely be bored by a thirty-six-line-long speech, which, in addition, was not indispensable to the plot development.

Shakespeare's second scene in Act II is very short, only eleven lines long. Macready kept the text in its entirety, but gave more action to the passage, transforming it in a powerful battle scene. The third scene is not long either, but very important to the development of the plot: it is the moment King John demands Hubert to murder Arthur. Therefore, Macready kept it in its entirety.

The last scene of the third act was cut by Macready from 183 to 115 lines (Shattuck 28). The omissions in this scene are not very significant. I presume Macready cut some lines in order to render a faster pace to the play. King Philip and the Dauphin's interview about France's loss in the battlefield is shortened, for instance. Furthermore, King Philip and Constance's exchange, in which they refer to Constance's hair as a metaphor to liberty, was also deleted. This, in my view, is a powerful scene with poetic imagery. As we saw in Chapter 2, Constance says, after letting loose her hair, that she would bind it up again, because—like her bound hair—her son is a prisoner. Although this scene is a great example of Shakespeare's poetic theatre, it is not

essential for the plot's development. That is possibly the reason why Macready decided to cut it.

Macready also maintained Shakespeare's original structure for Act IV, which is divided into three scenes. According to Shattuck, the first scene was reduced from 134 to 111 lines, the second scene from 269 to 219 lines, and the final scene from 159 to 138 (28-29). The main alterations concerning the first act are in relation to Arthur's lines, which were reduced. Arthur's pleading with Hubert not to blind him with hot irons was condensed. Perhaps Macready's choice was made in order to aid Miss Newcombe, the young actress who performed the part of Arthur, to memorise all the lines. This is a possibility, although it is not confirmed by any information in the prompt-book. In the second scene, in which King John is crowned for the second time, lines were cut from the lords' comments on the futility of a second coronation (4.2.13-15; 17-34), and Lord Pembroke's request for the king to enfranchise Arthur (4.2.49-52; 55-61; 65-67). Finally, the third scene suffered little alteration. The lords' lines were reduced, and the Bastard's soliloquy was condensed. This is the soliloquy in which the Bastard speaks one of the most famous lines in the play: "How easy dost thou take all England up!" (4.3.150), spoken when Hubert carries Arthur's dead body. Macready kept this line, but omitted the following six lines: "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 doggèd war bristle his angry crest, / And snarleth in the gentle eyes of peace" (4.3.152-58). In this extract, the Bastard mourns Arthur's death, who was the hope for England, which would leave England on the brink of civil war. However, I believe the same idea is delivered by the Bastard's first lines of the soliloquy: "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" (4.3.150-53). In this manner, Macready shortened the Bastard's long speech without removing its essence.

For the final act, however, which is originally comprised of seven scenes, Macready decided to shorten it to six. Shakespeare's fifth scene, which is quite short and comprehends the interview between the Dauphin and a French messenger about the French losses in the battlefield, was completely cut by Macready. The other six scenes were maintained, but their numbers of lines were reduced—except for the third scene, which kept the original 16 lines. The first scene was cut from 79 to 74 lines, the second scene from 180 to 95, the fourth from 61 to 48, the sixth from 44 to 37, and the final scene from 118 to 77

(Shattuck 29-30). Only one alteration was made in the first scene: King John's speech to Cardinal Pandulph, encouraging him to bring the news of his reconciliation with Rome to the French, was shortened. The second scene, on the other hand, suffered more alterations. The lords' allegiance to the French Dauphin as well as the French prince's welcoming of the English lords were significantly condensed. Lord Salisbury's speech, for instance, in which he grieves over the fact that he, an Englishman, should have to fight against the English, had a big portion of it omitted by Macready:

> But such is the infection of the time
> That for the health and physic of our right,
> We cannot deal but with the very hand
> Of stern injustice and confusèd wrong.
> And is 't not pity, O my grievèd friends,
> That we, the sons and children of this isle,
> Was born to see so sad an hour as this,
> Wherein we step after a stranger, march
> Upon her gentle bosom, and fill up
> Her enemies' ranks? I must withdraw and weep
> Upon the spot of this enforcèd cause,
> To grace the gentry of a land remote,
> And follow unacquainted colors here.
> 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,
> And not to spend it so unneighborly. (5.2.20-39)

This passage, in which an English lord surrenders to French dominion, would not have pleased the Victorian audience, known for its nationalistic pride. In a time of the rise of the British Empire, watching English nobles abandoning their country to fight for another kingdom's cause would have triggered much discontent. The Dauphin's lines were also reduced. It is curious to note that several lines were cut from scenes in which the focus was the French king, the Dauphin, and their force. Macready's goal was probably to give more emphasis to the English side of the story, illustrating the Victorian patriotic sentiment.

As mentioned earlier, the third scene in Act V was kept in its entirety. The fourth scene, however, suffered a few cuts. Count Melun's part was reduced; although he communicates to the English nobles the Dauphin's real intentions, Macready cut fifteen lines of his speech, probably to give it a more dynamic pace. The fifth scene, as we have seen, was deleted completely, turning Shakespeare's sixth scene into Macready's fifth one. Not many cuts were made in this part of the play. The interview between Hubert and the Bastard was condensed, but without omitting the most important parts of the scene, in which Hubert tells the Bastard that the king had been poisoned, and the Bastard brings the news that the English lords had returned. Finally, the last scene, in which King John dies and Prince Henry is introduced, suffered a few cuts. The performer who played Prince Henry was Miss Howard, another young actress. Prince Henry's speech at his father's deathbed is significantly reduced, possibly for the same reasons that Miss Newcombe's lines were shortened. Young actors most likely had more difficulty in memorising long speeches; therefore, Macready may have chosen to reduce their lines in order to avoid memory lapses on stage. King John's lines, however, were kept in their entirety, but the Bastard and Lord Salisbury's interview after the king's death concerning Cardinal Pandulph's mission to demand peace to France was cut out. The play ended with the same lines as Shakespeare's original, although the instructions for the king's funeral were delivered by Hubert instead of Prince Henry. The Bastard was the one, as in Shakespeare's text, to give the final words in the play. According to the prompt-books, all actors rise—with the exception of King John, obviously—, making room for the Bastard's final nationalistic speech, to the probable delight of the audience:

> 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. Naught shall make us rue,
> If England to itself do rest but true. (5.7.118-24)

After the analysis of Macready's reworking of Shakespeare's text, it is possible to verify that several changes were made in the original text in order to moralise certain passages that referred to adultery, sin, and improper behaviour, corroborating the Victorian

idealised perspective on the medieval past, which would represent the splendid birth of English culture; this was certainly an effect of the nationalistic sentiment current in the nineteenth century. Contrarily, Shakespeare wrote about the vices of medieval kings and clergy freely, without romanticising, but rather alluding to the fact that Renaissance society had already developed from that ordinary lifestyle. During the Renaissance, the English sought rather to distance themselves from the medieval past than to connect to it. In this manner, Macready's production illustrates the nineteenth-century double-voiced medievalism, in which these two perspectives of the Middle Ages intertwine on the Victorian stage.

Moreover, it is interesting to note that the lines which were cut for Macready's production were mostly spoken by characters other than King John. The English monarch's lines were mostly preserved, which would confer a significant amount of speaking time to the actor who played him, in this case, Macready himself. As we saw in the previous chapter, Macready showed signs of resentment when other actors outshone him on stage. This time, as the production was his own, he managed to provide himself with several opportunities to prove his valour as an actor in *King John*. 95 lines from Constance and 146 from the Bastard, the other two characters with the largest number of lines, were cut, whereas Macready was able to retain the great majority of his own lines—only 57 lines were cut from King John's character. Macready would most certainly have dominated the stage. In the next section, I shall analyse how Macready brought this new text to life on the Drury Lane stage, and his own performance as King John, based on information in Shattuck's prompt-book, Macready's diaries, and contemporary reviews.

4.2 At Drury Lane Theatre

As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, the reviewer of *The Examiner* praised Macready's work not just for offering rich visual elements on stage, but especially for the mindful work behind the carefully researched stage materiality. According to Shattuck, several critics of the time "made the point that here was not spectacle for the sake of spectacle, but spectacle which fitly and splendidly subserved the meaning of the play" (11). Contrary to some critics' belief that historical reconstruction on stage based on historical research was superfluous, Macready proved how much historical consciousness can enhance the experience of a historical play's spectator. Similarly, Schoch disagrees

with Sybil Rosenfeld's[97] "dismissal of antiquarian *mise-en-scène* as a mass of 'misdirected detail[s]' and 'unnecessary pictorial adjuncts'" (2006, 8). I agree with Schoch, since the adequate scenery, costume and props—as long as they are on stage for a good reason, adding to the play's atmosphere—can provide an even richer spectacle for the theatre-goer who is hungry for historical reflection. Macready was able to achieve that. According to a contemporary critic in *Athenaeum*, "the best praise of this superb spectacle is, that it assists materially in carrying on the business of the play […]. The scenery is not a mere succession of bright prospects and sumptuous interiors; it has a pictorial character in accordance with the action" (qtd. in Shattuck 11).

Therefore, there are minds at work, inviting the audience to reconstruct the Middle Ages in front of their own eyes. In this way, Macready accomplished what Schoch called "historicism in action." In the same way as Kean, Macready's "dramaturgy was not a naïve fascination with historical accuracy—not interior decoration with a vengeance—but historicism in action" (Schoch 2006, 8). Macready and Kean were *reconstructing* history on stage.

A critic in *The Illustrated London News* adds to this discussion by praising Macready's ability to bring history to life on the Victorian stage. According to this critic, Macready combines poetry and history:

> He wisely sees that the glorious pageantry which interweaves itself among the fine depictments and imaginings of the immortal bard give true and beautiful aid to the living stream of poetry that rolls so lavishly along: that scenes of historic grandeur or natural magnificence or loveliness aid all the realities of the poet, when they are brought palpably before the eye; and that although illustration can never supply the place of acting, or compensate for its want of excellence, yet it may be made greatly to aid what *is* excellent, and makes beautifully perfect the grand illusion of the play.[98] (*The Illustrated London News*, 29 Oct. 1842)

Historical visual spectacle, in this way—in conformance with Schoch's and my own view—does not substitute the poetry in Shakespeare's play,

[97] In her book *A Short History of Scene Design in Great Britain*.
[98] Original emphasis.

but rather *adds* to it; the result being a magnificent theatrical event—rich in language, history, and visual display.

Macready's *King John* premiered at Drury Lane Theatre on 24 October 1842, and was performed twenty-five more times during the season: 28 and 31 October, 4, 7, 11, 14, 18, 21 23 25 28 and 30 November, 2, 5, 9, 12, 19 and 28 December, 2, 11, 18 and 25 January, 8 February, 28 March, and 15 May (Shattuck 46). Nevertheless, my focus here is on the opening day.

Theatre Royal Drury Lane is a large theatre. After it burned down to the ground in 1809, the theatre was rebuilt in 1811. According to Charles Isaac Mungo Dibdin,[99] "Mr. B. Wyatt was the architect: the first stone was laid on the 29th October, 1811, and the new theatre opened on the 10th October, 1812. It was, partly, built upon the plan of the great theatre at Bordeaux, supposed to be the best theatre in Europe for the accurate conveyance of musical sounds" (52). The Grand Théâtre de Bordeaux is a magnificent building, which still stands nowadays, and also served as a model for the façade and interior of the new Drury Lane Theatre. As Dibdin describes, the new Drury Lane has the shape of a parallelogram, and encompasses the Entrance Hall, the Rotunda and Grand Staircase, the saloon, the auditory, the king's box, the private boxes, the lower gallery, the pit, the proscenium, the stage, the Painting Room, the Scene Room, and a small Printing Office (55-66).[100]

Although Drury Lane Theatre still stands today in the same location in London, Dibdin's words transport us back to how it must have looked in its splendour in the beginning of the nineteenth century. As Dibdin puts it:

> the Rotunda and grand Staircase form very beautiful portions of the theatre: the effect is peculiarly striking; and the entire architectural arrangement is one of the most skilful and ingenious of modern times. The *Rotunda*, which is thirty feet in diameter,[101] consists of two stories, separated by a circular gallery, and crowned by an elegant dome, from which is suspended a large brass chandelier, of a classic design, lit with gas. In the lower story, fronting the entrance, is a massive stove, surmounted by a cast from

[99] Charles Isaac Mungo Dibdin (1768-1833) was an English dramatist, writer and theatre proprietor. He was David Garrick's godson.
[100] For an illustration of an exterior view of Drury Lane, see Appendix 2C.
[101] Over nine metres.

> Scheemaker's Statue of *Shakspeare*, the plinth being inscribed, in golden letters, with the fine characteristic line from Ben Jonson,—*He was not for an age, but for all time*. (56-57)

From the entrance, the Victorian theatre-goer would be awed by the beautiful hall and staircase, which would lead to the different seating areas inside the theatre.[102]

Furthermore, the proscenium area also changed significantly after the renovation. In fact, it had already changed several times before the fire of 1809. According to Dibdin, by the late 1820s the proscenium was thus described: "On each side, elevated on a lofty pedestal, forming a parallelogram, are two demi-columns, of the Corinthian order, fluted, and superbly gilt, supporting an entablature, above which, in semicircular niches, are allegorical statues of Tragedy and Comedy" (62). The Tragedy and Comedy statues, symbols of the theatrical art, would welcome the actors on stage, delimitating the scenic space—where everything could happen—from the real-life space in the auditorium.

Drury Lane's stage was formed by the proscenium, the forestage, and the space of the stage behind the curtain line. At the curtain line, the stage was about twelve metres wide, and the depth from forestage to backstage was around eighteen metres long. There were no stage doors on the forestage; the entrances and exits were made at the wings behind the curtain line. Furthermore, the stage was equipped with sliders, which allowed the creation of entrances, stairs and ramps. The painted sceneries would also be slid on and off the stage (Shattuck 14). The painted scenes were about eight and a half metres wide (Shattuck 17), illustrating how dispendious the scenery work could be in the big playhouses during the Victorian era.

According to Shattuck, the performance began at 7pm on Monday 24 October with the orchestra playing a martial tune from Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*, after which two trumpets resounded to reveal the throne hall on the stage. The windows on the wall were actually painted backdrops. The walls were represented by six-metre-high solid flats "painted to show grey stone and high windows in their upper halves and reddish brown tapestry hanging below" (23). Additionally, the right wall was cut in the shape of an arched doorway in

[102] For an illustration of the transverse section before the proscenium and the section through the Grand Staircase and Rotunda, see Appendix 2D.

order to provide passage to the castle corridor. In the first act, forty-four attendants were on stage—"lords, ladies, bishops, knights, heralds, and so on" (Shattuck 23), as well as King John and Queen Eleanor. Soon afterwards, the French Ambassador Chatillion arrived with his committee, adding up to fifty-nine actors on stage when King John said his first words (Shattuck 23), confirming the production's grandeur, as well as proving a great difference from those earlier performances with "some seven ragged supernumeraries," as appointed by the critic at *The Examiner*. Moreover, Macready was known for successfully managing crowds on stage, a skill "which he had exhibited in earlier years in his staging of *Coriolanus* and *Henry V*" (Shattuck 24).

At the end of Act I, all actors left the stage—as the note written by Ellis in the prompt-book appoints: "All in Act I change!" The actors had to change into their armour costumes, and the scenery had to be changed as well: the throne hall gave space to the exterior of the Castle of Angiers. In the meantime, the orchestra continued playing the *Fifth Symphony* (Shattuck 24). Shattuck believes this *entr'acte* to have lasted about five minutes, i.e., incredibly fast. As he points out, "we are compelled to believe that Macready's carpenters and the Drury Lane stage machinery were magically efficient" (24).

Act II opened with the sound of trumpets announcing the entrance of King John and his party from the right, and King Philip and his retinue from the left. They met at the centre of the stage. Additionally, there was a platform built at the castle gates entrance; there were a few steps behind the platform, which accommodated around ten actors, who represented the citizens of Angiers (Shattuck 24-25). When the gates were open at the end of the act to allow the new couple Louis and Blanche to enter, along with the others characters, the note in the prompt-book is an instruction for "Heavy Iron Bolt and Chain" noise, which would produce more realism to the scene. Concomitantly to the opening of the gates, the audience would hear the sound of the chains. Also, again in Act II, Macready would have to manage a big crowd on stage, since throughout the act a total of eighty-eight performers—including English soldiers, French soldiers, and Chatillion's party—would cross the stage (Shattuck 25), most likely astounding the audience.

During Act II, there was also the battle between the English and the French, which happened offstage. According to the prompt-book, after finishing their lines each character would depart the stage by one of the many exits, leaving only the citizens of Angiers on their platform. The sounds of the battles would be heard offstage, including—as the

prompt-books suggests—"Shouts, Crashes, Trumpet Alarums," giving the audience the idea that the battle was taking place offstage. On this occasion, Macready followed Shakespeare's own instructions, which suggest that the battle would happen offstage. As is known, Shakespeare does not provide many stage directions; in this case, after the kings and their parties exit to the battle, there is only the information: "Here, after excursions, enter the Herald of France, with Trumpets, to the gates" (Mowat; Werstine 330), suggesting that the battle was already over. The French herald and, soon afterwards, the English herald bring news of the outcome of the battle. The battle itself, nonetheless, does not figure in the play. In fact, in Shakespeare's time, theatrical resources were few, which would account for the strategy of leaving the battle scene—which would be incredibly difficult to perform without adequate props—to the audience's imagination. However, by the nineteenth century a realistic battle scene could already be reconstructed on stage, taking advantage of the new techniques the theatre had developed, along with the armour costumes and props. Nevertheless, Macready decided to keep this battle offstage, leaving onstage combats for later on in the play.

After the end of Act II, Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* was resumed while the scenery changed once more for Act III, which took place inside the French king's tent. The set was constructed by means of several layers of panels. In this scene, for instance, one of the tableaux was cut in order to reveal another panel in the back, which illustrated the outside sky and the castle of Angiers in the rear. This strategy certainly provided a sense of perspective and, consequently, more realism on stage. Throughout the prompt-book, there are notes guiding the actors' reactions. When Cardinal Pandulph sentences King John's excommunication, for instance, the stage direction is "Shudder, and sensation of fear and horror, thro the assembly;" or when King John calls the Pope an "usurp'd authority," the mark is "All appear alarmed at K. John's temerity." When King Philip, encouraged by Pandulph, decides to break his allegiance with England, there is "general excitement and movement.—Nobles bracing on their shields, preparing for battle, and crowding round their respective Kings" (Shattuck 27). There are orders being shouted and controlled tumult on stage, when a pair of panels illustrating the landscape of the battlefield closes on the foreground, starting the second scene.

Throughout the preparation for the second scene, the battle noises continued. When the pair of panels was closed accordingly onstage, some actors performing English and French soldiers fought each other, the English prevailing. The Bastard and the Duke of Austria

fought in a single combat, which was taken offstage. Soon after, the Bastard returned with the duke's lion's skin, representing his death (Shattuck 27). In Shakespeare's text, the Bastard actually returns with the duke's head to the stage, but Macready decided to replace it for the lion's skin, which would be less brutal and, probably, easier to carry out. After the combat, King John captured Arthur and passed him on to Hubert. The English gathered round the king, and soon afterwards exited. The sounds of battle increasingly died out, eventually ending the scene. This scene in Shakespeare's original is very short, its main occurrence being the duke's murder by the Bastard. Nevertheless, as we saw in the previous section of this chapter, Macready managed to turn this small scene into a great theatrical event: "thus was this tiny fragment of the play developed into a major battle scene" (Shattuck 27).

For the following scene, another panel would be slid on the front stage, illustrating another area of the battlefield. After the panel was arranged, the sounds of combat would recommence. As we saw in Chapter 3, this tableau had a more sombre tone, which foretold King John's murderous request to Hubert. As Shattuck points out, this was a significant moment in Macready's production: "This was a tremendously bold and impressive *coup de théâtre*, by which Macready marked the sudden change of the play from political pageant into dark tragedy, and the character of King John from stalwart leader to furtive cowardly murderer" (27). One interesting remark in the prompt-book just before the interview between King John and Hubert instructs that "no face on the stage, except the King's and Hubert's, is turned to the audience, during the ensuing dialogue." This choice would have caused an intense dramatic impression in the audience, calling attention to the murderous plot being decided by these two characters, a plot unknown by the other characters.

As usual, the sound of trumpets made the transition to the following scene—the last of the third act. This scene happened again inside the French King's tent. For this, the landscape panels of scenes 2 and 3 were removed, revealing again the panel used during the second scene. This was the only tableau which was used twice, illustrating the production's rich set design.

The orchestra would resume playing through the *entr'acte*, during which the carpenters would remove all the panels from the third act, and prepare the tableaux for the fourth act. The first scene happened inside Northampton Castle, where Hubert was to carry out the dreadful deed of blinding Arthur with hot irons. As we saw in the previous chapter, this panel illustrated an immense, arched apartment painted in

gloomy colours, representing the tragedy of the scene. Furthermore, Shattuck points out that the lights would be dimmed during this moment in the play, enhancing "the melodrama gloom of the scene" (28). The main props used for the scene were cords to bind Arthur and a set of "red hot" blinding irons, which were available offstage to be readily taken by the actor. Additionally, there was a big table on stage, which would be hard to conceal during the following scenes of the act. Therefore, a group of four attendants would have to enter the stage to remove the table at the sight of the audience (Shattuck 28). Macready was conscious of scenery changes, and planned the adjustment of panels in a way that would not affect the audience's experience of the play. However, that was not always possible, as could be observed in the transition from the first to the second scene in Act IV.

After the table was removed, the pair of panels in the first plan would be drawn off to reveal the throne hall tableau. The arched doorway in the middle of the stage was cut in order to show farther spaces in the castle. King John sat on his throne for his second coronation at the sound of trumpets (Shattuck 28-29). It is interesting that Macready brought back to his production the character of the prophet, Peter of Pomfret, which had been deleted by many theatre directors. According to Shattuck, "the restoration of Peter of Pomfret, probably for the first time since Shakespeare's day, added a fine touch of supernatural doom to the later portion of the play" (29), enhancing the tone of tragedy.

For the final scene in this act, which showed the enormity of the exterior of Northampton Castle, the panels used for the second scene were also drawn off in order to reveal the castle tableau in the back. As Shattuck explains, the central tower of the castle was three-dimensional, and, behind it, there "was a 'High Rostrum' for Prince Arthur to stand upon for his soliloquy and to leap down from" (29); on the floor there were six men concealed with a carpet to catch Arthur. "When they caught him in their carpet they tumbled him through the gateway down the steps onto the stage—an effect that brought indignant protests from some of the critics" who believed Arthur's death was shockingly exaggerated (Shattuck 29). Behind the castle, there hung yet another panel, which illustrated the sky. All these rich layers of cloths most likely conferred an impressive sense of perspective to the whole scenery, transforming the production into a massive spectacle.

Act V began with "Music of the Church," and revealed the panel of the interior of a Templar's Church. According to Shattuck, previous theatre directors would usually place this scene inside a room

in the palace; Macready was the first to move it into a church, although this idea is most often wrongly credited to Charles Kean (29). This scene encompassed King John's submission to Rome, and also held a great number of actors on the stage, according to Shattuck, approximately forty-six at the beginning of the act (29).

For the following scene, a pair of panels was slid over the preceding scenery, illustrating a landscape before St. Edmund's Bury. As explained by Shattuck, this scene had usually been placed in the French camp,

> but in 1842 Telbin painted only a beautiful landscape consisting of large trees and abbey ruins in the foreground and a view of the city in the distance. After the gloomy stillness in which the preceding scene ended, the stage sprang vigorously to life with the flourishing of trumpets and the arrival of over forty actors representing the French forces, the English lords, Cardinal Pandulph and his suite, and the heroically defiant Bastard. (30)

The characters were brought back to the battle. Although Macready decided to leave the battle in Act II offstage, this time he brought the conflict in 5.2 to the stage, where actors would fight one another in front of the audience. The sounds of war, trumpets, and drums ended the second scene and opened the following one.

In Scene 3, another pair of panels closed in before the previous tableau, revealing another area of the battlefield at St. Edmund's Bury, in which the ground was covered with dead bodies (Shattuck 30). The corpses probably foretold King John's own death, which would eventually happen in the last scene. In this part of the play, the king complained of high fever. At the end of the scene, the king was carried off the stage in his litter.

The transition to the fourth scene in the act happened under the sounds of battle; yet another panel was slid over the previous one, revealing now another area of the battlefield, where there was a ruined windmill (Shattuck 30). In this scene, Count Melon confessed the French king's real intentions, convincing the English lords to return to King John. At this point, the battle that had been happening since the second scene would come to an end. I presume the transitions from scenes 2, to 3, and then to 4, must have been very dynamic, providing

the audience with a sense of a panoramic view of what was happening in the different locations on the battlefield.

According to Shattuck, the lights on the stage were significantly dimmed for the following scene, which is actually Shakespeare's sixth scene, since, as we have seen, Macready eliminated Scene 5. This was done in order to create a night effect on the stage (30). The panel illustrating the exterior of Swinstead Abbey under the night sky was arranged in the front stage. This was the scene in which Hubert and the Bastard met in the dark. According to Shattuck, "the stage became deathly still, and Hubert, bearing a crossbow, crossed the stage three or four times 'as if patrolling' before he challenged the Bastard, who was approaching from off stage left" (30).[103] This silent and dark scene would certainly have left the audience apprehensive and curious about what was to happen next.

The panels from Scene 5 were drawn off in order to reveal the orchard at Swinstead Abbey. As explained by Shattuck, "Blue Mediums" were added on the lights to give the effect of moonlight (30). From the left, six monks carried a couch on which the dying King John lay. In addition to the monks, there were four knights carrying torches and seventeen other actors attending the king's death. The final scene of the play ended with "slow and solemn organ music from the church and a very slow curtain" (Shattuck 30). The critic in *The Illustrated London News* on 29 October 1842, five days after the opening night, praised the final death scene in *King John*. He wrote that "*Hubert*, *Essex*, and *Prince Henry* are participators of the death scene; and there is a bold grouping around, which places a splendid circle of caparisoned figures in contrast with the sweet and solemn distance—the beautiful orchard with the picturesque abbey of Swinstead beyond" (*The Illustrated London News*, 29 Oct. 1842). The weekly magazine which had been recently created at the time, the first illustrated periodical in the world, even published an image of Macready's King John's dying scene, which is a precious record of the theatrical event and of how the magazine critic recreated it in an illustration.[104]

The closing of the curtains ended Macready's *King John*, which lasted for about two hours and forty-five minutes (Shattuck 30). All the careful work done by Macready, Telbin, Smith and the actors culminated in a spectacular reconstruction of Shakespeare's *King John*, and of the medieval past from the thirteenth century on stage. Moreover,

[103] Stage left means our right.
[104] See Appendix 2E.

the brilliant use of overlapped panels gave dynamism and perspective to the scenery, providing a more realistic atmosphere to the play.

4.3 Macready as King John

In this production, Macready himself played the part of King John, one of the major roles in his career. However, King John was not a new character for Macready by 1842. In fact, as Shattuck points out, Macready had already played the same role five times during the 1822-23 season, and fourteen times in 1836-37 at Covent Garden; twice in 1824-25, once in 1830-31, once in 1831-32, once in 1833-34, and once again in the 1836-36 season, all at Drury Lane. Furthermore, he played the role twenty-six times during his production in 1842, and four more times at the Haymarket during his farewell season in 1850 (46). King John, therefore, accompanied him throughout his career as an actor.

According to Shattuck, Macready studied for the role of King John for many years before bringing it to life on stage (46). Fortunately, Macready left extensive diaries in which he wrote his experiences, impressions, and thoughts during his acting years. Most of his diaries have been published and are available to the public. There are entries concerning his preparation for *King John* in his 1833 journal. According to Shattuck,

> On December 5, 1833, four days before he was to perform it at Drury Lane, he began to restudy it [the character of King John], hoping desperately […] that this—or Coriolanus or Sardanapalus—would be the role "to excite attention in." After rehearsal the next day he knew that he must probe it deeper, "for I am not master in execution of my own wishes […] in the part, which I ought to act grandly". (47)

Conscious as he was of his own acting, Macready worried about what he would be able to accomplish in the 1833-34 season. After the performance on the 9th, Macready wrote about his dissatisfaction with his own performance at the opening night. He had had trouble with his costume, which he had ordered new for this production:

> I went to the theatre, thinking first of my dress and secondly of King John! I am ashamed, grieved and distressed to acknowledge the truth: I acted

> disgracefully, worse than I have done for years; I shall shrink from looking into a newspaper tomorrow, for I deserve all that can be said in censure of me. I did what I feared I should do, sacrificed my character to my dress!! Wallace[105] and Talfourd[106] came into my room, and I felt what they thought of my performance; it has made me very unhappy. (qtd. in Trewin 20)

As we saw in the previous chapter, Macready was a perfectionist and often enough too hard on himself. When the newspapers came out on the following day, he was surprised. He wrote: "I feared to look into the papers, but found them, on going to meet Fladgate[107] by appointment at the Garrick Club, very indulgent indeed. *The Herald* remarked, in objection, upon my dress; so that I suffered as I ought, but not in the degree I merited [...]" (qtd. in Trewin 20).

In 1836, Macready played King John again at Drury Lane. This time he was more confident about his own performance. He wrote on 19 April: "Acted King John in a way that assured me that I could play it excellently; it seemed to make an impression on the house, but I had not made it sure, finished, and perfectly individualised" (Macready 18). Two and a half years after the performance in 1833, Macready had restudied his part, and reshaped his acting style. However, he had not yet achieved the "sure, finished, and perfectly individualised" performance which he aimed at.

In another production in 1836, this time from October onwards, Macready felt the outshining of other actors. He wrote in his diary on 30 November: "Acted King John tolerably well, but was much less applauded than either Miss Faucit or Kemble" (qtd. in Trewin 84), who played Constance and the Bastard, respectively. As we saw in the previous chapter, theatre was a very competitive business in the nineteenth century, and, as Trewin puts it, Macready developed an almost pathological envy of other successful actors (xviii). His resentment for rival artists' accomplishments is illustrated in the aforementioned passage in his journal. Macready supposed the reason for the misgiven applause was the fact that the prices for Covent Garden had been lowered, which did not "raise the judgment of the audience, for

[105] William Wallace (1786-1839) was an English barrister and writer, one of Macready's oldest friends.
[106] Thomas Noon Talfourd (1795-1854) was an English judge and politician.
[107] Frank Fladgate (1799-1892) was an English barrister and member of the Garrick Club, a gentleman's club founded in London in 1831.

they hail rant and roar with an ardent spirit of reciprocity" (Trewin 85). Evidently, Macready was not able to cope with Faucit and Kemble's success.

His revival of *King John* in 1842, however, brought him back to the spotlight. The great majority of critics wrote about Macready's "perfect execution" (Shattuck 48). Contemporary critics noted that some actors in the 1842 *King John* had a violent performance, shouting too much. Macready, nonetheless, as written by a critic in *John Bull*, "is always audible because always distinct, and as he does not himself bellow forth all he utters, should, as director of this stage, strenuously check the inclination of the players to shout their parts" (qtd. in Shattuck 46). As we saw in the first chapter, before the modern theatres of the nineteenth century, the playhouses were similar to dark barns, and, therefore, required actors to shout and make exaggerated gestures for the audience to apprehend what was happening on stage. Consequently, some actors still preserved this old-fashioned style of acting. The critic in *John Bull*, however, suggested that perhaps "all the actors were excited on the occasion of new clothes" (Shattuck 46), although I hardly believe that to have been the case.

Critics have also analysed Macready's performance as King John as powerfully distinct in two different phases in the play. According to Shattuck,

> the interest of the critics' reports lies in their vivid descriptions of the salient sections and scenes of the character as Macready delivered it: John almost as hero-king, yet incipiently vicious, through Acts I, II, and half of III; John as coward-king and villain thereafter—notably in the temptation scene (III.3), the remorse scene (IV.2), and the final death scene. (48)

As we saw in the previous part of the present chapter, the whole production suffered a significant change of mood from the third scene in Act III onwards, when King John requested Hubert to murder Arthur. As we have seen, Shattuck called it "an impressive *coup de théâtre*" (27), and Macready's performance consolidated the change of atmosphere in the play, characterised by the scenery and music. A critic in *The Examiner* wrote: "what there is of the Plantagenet in John closes from that moment [3.3]: its place is taken by mean cowardice, by miserable selfishness, by vacillating weakness: and with admirable truth was it shown upon the stage, that, like a lowering cloud, the change

hangs over the tragedy to the end" (qtd. in Shattuck 49). In fact, the "temptation scene", as the third scene in Act III is referred to by Shattuck, was the most praised of the entire production. A critic in the *Times* wrote:

> It was a foreboding look that John cast on Arthur, the tongue faltered as the horrible mission was intrusted to Hubert. For a moment the countenance of the king beamed as he said 'Good Hubert,' but the gloom returned when he said 'Throw thine eye on yonder boy.' That he did not look Hubert in the face when he proposed 'death' was a fine conception. (qtd. in Shattuck 49)

By means of the aforementioned critics' words, it is possible to imagine Macready's interpretation of King John. His decision to elevate the heroicness of the monarch in the first acts only to rupture it in Scene 3 in Act III was powerful. The dramatic effect of the "temptation scene" attracted the eyes of the critics, and most certainly enraptured the audience.

The final death scene was also distinguished by several critics, although it was considered too violently exaggerated by some. As Shattuck puts it, Macready's performance of King John's death "was 'surpassingly powerful,' said the *Atlas*, who would 'applaud to the echo so masculine and horrible a display' were it not for the fact that it went 'beyond the truth required by the poet and the public.' It was not for polite critics to approve quite so much 'stress laid on the physically horrible'" (49).

The reviewer in *The Illustrated London News* praised Macready's performance in its entirety, which was, in his words, "the best which our modern stage is capable of producing". According to him,

> Macready always makes a good king; he assumes and wears the royal bearing and dignity with instinct and consummate art. In this respect, indeed, in the earlier portions of the play he slightly elevated his character beyond our conception of the poet's portrait. In the acting sense he portrayed human emotion most graphically in the scene with *Hubert*, in which he shadows out his dark purpose of crime in the

> contemplation of *Arthur*'s death. This was a most triumphant exhibition, beautifully sustained in its contrast by the acting of Phelps. Macready's horrible passion and subdued suspended terror were effective in the extreme. His death scene too, was full of power, physical and mental; and when the curtain closed over the life of the King the audience were loud in their applauses of the actor. He was loudly called for from all quarters of the house, and in obedience to that summons—here he is. (*The Illustrated London News*, 29 Oct. 1842)

As we can infer from his diaries' entries, Macready loved the audience's recognition. Therefore, being called back on stage to be acclaimed by the audience would definitely have made his night unforgettable.

In reconstructing King John's life in poetic verse, Shakespeare has immortalised the monarch, bringing him from the pages of history books to life again on stage every time he is performed. Even though King John died in 1216, his character will never die. As the title to this chapter asserts, "A man can die but once"; yet his "ghost" remains forever. Macready brought King John back from the dead in 1842 and in other occasions, just as other actors have personified him by means of Shakespeare's words from the late-sixteenth century up to our days. Thus, King John's ghost will remain haunting the stages throughout the world across the centuries.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The curtains were closed. After finishing the task of reconstructing Macready's production of *King John* at Drury Lane in 1842, there comes the time to re-address certain key theoretical concepts, to pinpoint significant aspects of my research results, and to suggest paths for further research.

This research was grounded on postmodern perspectives on history, historiography, and theatre historiography. As White and Hutcheon point out, history can no longer be seen as a unique continuum, stable and incontestable. History is now regarded as plural, fragmented, and liable to diverse interpretations. As we saw in Chapter 1, historical accounts inevitably go through the interpretative filter of their teller, who brings his/her own political, social, and cultural background to the discussion. Therefore, no historical writing is impartial. As we saw in Chapter 2, the accounts of King John's reign were mostly written by contemporary monks, unhappy with an excommunicated king who had brought the Interdict upon England. Consequently, their reports of King John's rule inescapably present a negative view of the monarch due to their tellers' ideological background.

From a postmodern perspective, theatre historiography has also come to relate to theatrical performances as *reconstructions* of the past. As Postlewait and O'Shea explain, the past itself is irretrievable; any attempt to go back to what happened inside a playhouse yesterday, last week, or two hundred years ago will forcefully be a *reconstruction*, which is never ideologically neutral.

As we also saw in Chapter 1, in the field of theatre historiography, there are two main approaches to reconstructing past theatrical events. Postlewait calls them *documentary scholarship* and *cultural history*. Documentary scholarship is based on the analysis of historical records, such as newspaper or magazine articles, reviews, diary entries, amongst other written sources. Cultural history, on the other hand, focuses on the understanding of the context around the theatrical event itself, meaning the historical, social, cultural, economic, and religious backgrounds of the production. However, these two approaches should not be regarded as opposite, but as complementary. The reconstruction of a past theatrical event will only be successful if the theatre historian combines documentary scholarship and cultural history.

Postlewait advocates that in order to analyse a theatrical event from the past, it is essential to understand its context. As we saw in Chapter 1, context, nevertheless, is too broad a word for Postlewait. Instead, he explains that the context for a theatrical event can be regarded as composed by four main aspects: the possible worlds around the theatrical performance, the artistic heritage, the agents, and the reception. The theatre historian can choose which aspects he/she would like to focus on his/her analysis. In my reconstruction of Macready's 1842 *King John*, I decided to look more closely at the play's possible worlds—the Victorian Era (discussed in Chapter 1), King John's reign (1199-1216), and Shakespeare's context of production of his play *King John* (both discussed in Chapter 2), its artistic heritage, and agents (discussed in Chapter 3). I also brought to my analysis contemporary reviews of the production and of Macready's performance as title role (in Chapter 4), which allowed me to have a glimpse at the theatrical event's reception.

Another concept which has guided this thesis is Schoch's idea of *double-voiced historicism*. As we saw in Chapter 1, Schoch explains his concept as the overlapping of historical perspectives in one artistic manifestation. For instance, in Macready's *King John*, the reconstruction of the past is pervaded by two different historical approaches: thirteenth-century England is reconstructed by a Renaissance writer, whose play in turn is reconstructed by a Victorian theatre director. Therefore, two historical voices overlap. This is a fascinating perception, which has led me to think of a new concept that I have called *double-voiced medievalism*—which gives title to my thesis. In my view, Macready's 1842 *King John* also encompasses two different approaches to the *medieval past*, which intertwine. As we saw in Chapter 1, Renaissance writers had a quite negative view of the Middle Ages, which they believed were a prosaic and barbaric time, in their view "superseded" by the sixteenth century. Victorians, on the other hand, regained interest in the Middle Ages due to the overwhelming social, economic, political, and scientific transformations of the nineteenth century. In a turbulent present, the idyllic medieval past was revived as the Golden Age in English history. Thus, the Middle Ages were more a mythical than a real place for the Victorians, who idealised the medieval past. As a consequence, Macready's production of *King John* intertwined two different approaches towards the Middle Ages: the Renaissance perspective—illustrated by Shakespeare's original text—and the Victorian romanticised view—illustrated by Macready's reconstruction of the play.

As we saw in Chapter 1, the arts during the Victorian era were not just a means for entertainment, but also a place for political discussion, and a way to improve one's knowledge. The theatre, in fact, was regarded as particularly instructive, especially the plays with a historical background. Additionally, with the Medieval Revival in the nineteenth century, the Middle Ages regained attention as the birth of English culture and identity—in opposition to the Ancient Greek and Roman traditions. As a consequence, artistic expression which depicted a medieval past gained greater prominence. In the theatre, Shakespeare's historical plays became a favourite. As a matter of fact, Shakespeare's historical plays corroborated the two aforementioned Victorian characteristics: instruction through art, and an interest in the medieval past. By watching a play like *King John*, the Victorian audience would be satisfying their thirst for historical knowledge and for representations of the Middle Ages.

Another characteristic of Victorian theatre was the taste for spectacle. As we saw in Chapter 1, new technologies developed in the nineteenth century provided the theatre with possibilities which were unimaginable for earlier theatre directors. Careful historical research allowed reconstructions of the past by means of set design, costume design, and stage props. Medieval battles could now be reconstructed on the Victorian stage, to the amazement of the audience. As we saw in Chapter 3, Kemble and Planché's seminal production of *King John* in 1823 changed the way which historical reconstruction would be carried out in the theatre. From then onwards, theatre and historical research went hand in hand.

One consequence of Victorian pageantry in the theatre was the occasional sacrifice of the play-text for the sake of the spectacle. As we saw in Chapters 1 and 3, Victorian theatre directors would cut a great number of lines, include events that were not present in the original texts, or insert dramatic scenes just for the benefit of displaying a visual show on stage. As was concluded from the analysis in Chapter 4, Macready's *King John* was not part of this group. The main alterations made by Macready in Shakespeare's original text were arguably due to Victorian moralistic concerns—which led him to delete lines referring to adultery, sin, the devil, etc.—and to confer a faster pace to the performance—since Shakespeare's text would render too long a play. Moreover, Macready brought the conflicts in scenes 2, 3, and 4, in Act V to the stage, whereas Shakespeare kept the battle offstage. As we have seen, new technological developments in the theatrical business allowed Macready to recreate this medieval war on stage. Nevertheless,

Macready did not use the text as pretence to display theatrical pageantry. Quite the contrary, he used theatrical spectacle to *add* to Shakespeare's text.

As we saw in Chapter 2, in *King John* Shakespeare managed to condense the seventeen years of King John's reign into a five-act play, providing a panoramic view of the monarch's rule to the theatre audience. The order of certain events was changed, such as the deaths of Queen Eleanor and Lady Constance, who remained alive in the play longer than in real life, and Arthur's captivity and subsequent murder, which in the play happened just before King John's own death, whereas in reality Arthur died over fifteen years before his uncle. As argued in Chapter 2, I believe Shakespeare made the choice of allocating Arthur's death in the third scene of Act IV in order to place the young prince's murder as the climax of the play, which would cause the conflicts between the king and his lords by the end of the play, culminating in King John's death. Although Shakespeare changed the order of events in King John's rule, their essence remains the same. The audience would have a different time perspective, but would still be able to understand the main occurrences of John's reign, with the benefit of watching them by means of a dramatic piece in five acts.

As we saw in Chapter 3, *King John* was not a favourite in Shakespeare's time, and it is not popular in our times either. The play, however, achieved great popularity in the nineteenth century and gained the theatre spotlight. The artistic heritage inevitably shapes the performance of a play; therefore, it should be studied, as Postlewait advocates. The first production of the play of which there are still records was in February 1737 at Covent Garden. Later, it was reworked by Cibber in 1745 as *Papal Tyranny in the Reign of King John*, which caused great controversy. In the same year, its original text was staged at Drury Lane by Garrick. Reverend Valpy also ventured into changing Shakespeare's text for his purposes, and staged his version of *King John* for schoolboys in 1800. By the nineteenth century, there sprang the discussion over the legitimacy of altering Shakespeare's words, and new productions premiered which placed great emphasis on maintaining Shakespeare's original text, although with cuts, due to time and moral restrictions. Furthermore, Kemble and Palnché's production in 1823 created a new trend for historical research and reconstruction in the theatre, which impacted later performances, including Macready's in 1842.

The theatrical agents who worked with Macready accomplished an unforgettable *King John*. The play premiered with great success on

24 October 1842. The cast was a fortunate choice, with great actors in the troupe, such as Phelps as Hubert, Ryder as Cardinal Pandulph, Faucit as Constance, Anderson as the Bastard, and Macready himself as King John. Macready's performance received positive reviews, and consecrated him as one of the best Shakespearean actors of his time. Later he would be known as the Eminent Tragedian. Furthermore, the costume designer Smith, and the set designer Telbin cooperated to recreate the Middle Ages on the Victorian stage. Smith's costumes were made based on historical research, and on the study published by Planché for his 1823 *King John*; Telbin made his debut in a grand London theatre in Macready's *King John*, beginning his career as a successful set designer. The landscapes were beautifully painted on tableaux that would be slid on and off in different areas of the stage, conferring a sense of perspective and realism to the set. All the agents contributed to the final theatrical event, which would become a landmark in theatre history.

Macready's *King John* is one of several Victorian reconstructions of the medieval past on stage. There are other theatrical events from that time in which the concept of double-voiced medievalism can be explored. It is possible to reconstruct other productions by Macready himself, including his *Richard III* at Covent Garden in 1819, or his *Henry V* in 1838, also at Covent Garden, for instance. Moreover, non-Shakespearean productions by Macready—but which also reconstruct a medieval past on stage—can also be explored, including, for example, Isaac Pocock's theatrical adaptation of Walter Scott's *Rob Roy*, which Macready staged at Covent Garden in 1818, or Sheridan Knowles's *William Tell*, a play about medieval Switzerland, which Macready produced at Drury Lane in 1825. Theatrical reconstruction is indeed a fascinating subject, and Macready's prolific career in the theatre provides ample material for the curious theatre historian. And Macready staged further plays which depicted a medieval past on stage. Therefore, Macready's career also offers a rich corpus for further research that analyses Victorian representations of the Middle Ages.

As I wrote in the beginning of this final section, the curtains were closed in 1842. However, it is always possible to take a glimpse behind them. Based on historical research, it is possible to imaginatively reconstruct what happened on stage over a hundred and seventy years ago. Unfortunately, we cannot go back in time and watch Macready's premiere of *King John* at Drury Lane. Nevertheless, we can always watch it "in our mind's eye (*Hamlet*, 1.2.184)."

APPENDIX A

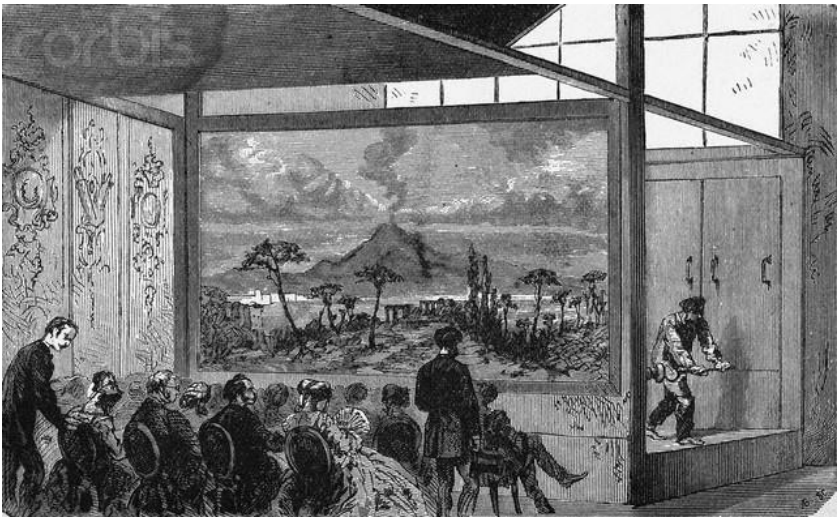


Figure 5 - Nineteenth-century diorama
Source: https://janeaustensworld.wordpress.com/2011/11/28/the-diorama-19th-century-entertainment/

APPENDIX B

Figure 6 - Scene of the battle of Angiers in Herbert Beerbohm Tree's 1899 production of *King John* at Her Majesty's Theatre in London
Source: http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Theater/artifact/29315/full.html

APPENDIX C

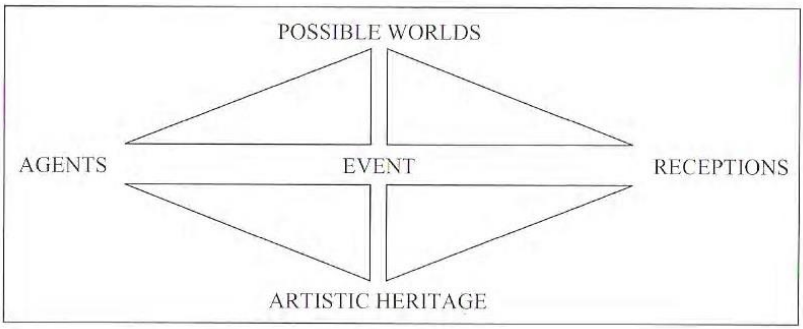
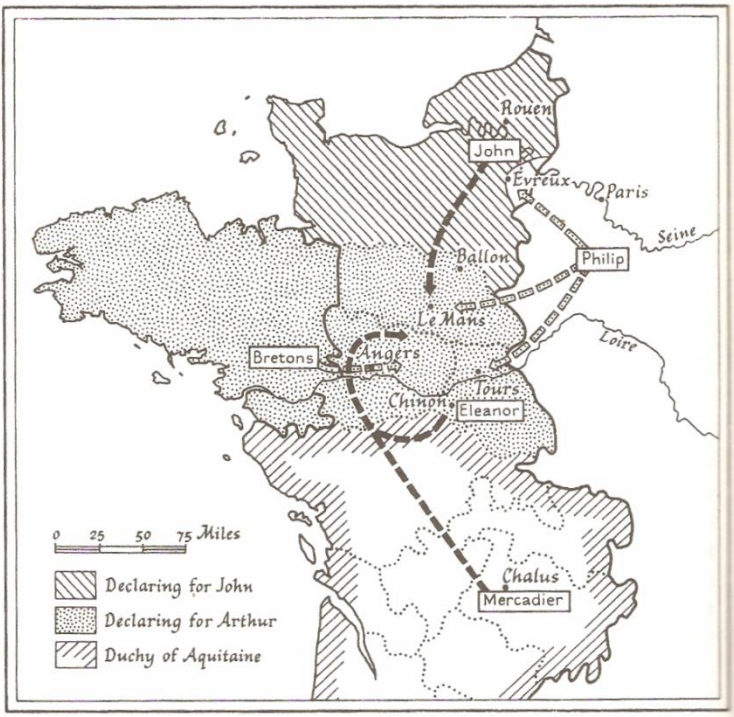


Figure 7 - Postlewait's heuristic model
Source: Postlewait, Thomas. *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 18.

APPENDIX D

Figure 8 - Detail of King John's effigy at Worcester cathedral
Source: https://worcestercathedrallibrary.wordpress.com/2014/12/22/christmas-1214-king-john-at-worcester/

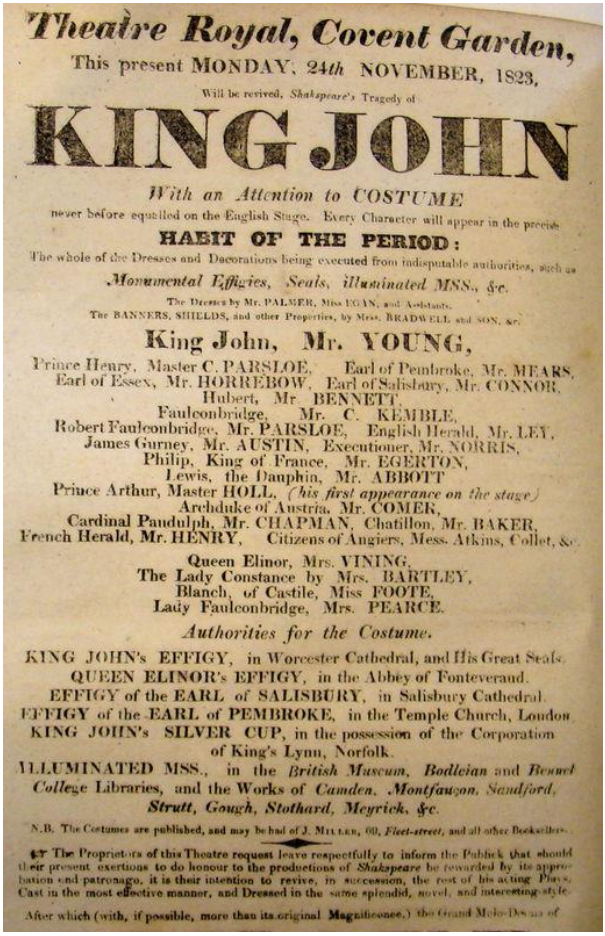
APPENDIX E



II. The struggle for an inheritance, April to September 1199.

Figure 9 - Map showing the regions declaring for John or Arthur in 1199
Source: Warren, W. L. *King John*. London: Yale University Press, 1997, p. 52.

APPENDIX F



Theatre Royal, Covent Garden,

This present MONDAY, 24*th* NOVEMBER, 1823,

Will be revived, *Shakspeare's* Tragedy of

KING JOHN

With an Attention to COSTUME

never before equalled on the English Stage. Every Character will appear in the precise

HABIT OF THE PERIOD:

The whole of the Dresses and Decorations being executed from indisputable authorities, such as

Monumental Effigies, Seals, illuminated MSS., &c.

The Dresses by Mr. PALMER, Miss EGAN, and Assistants.

The BANNERS, SHIELDS, and other Properties, by Mess. BRADWELL and SON, &c.

King John, Mr. YOUNG,

Prince Henry, Master C. PARSLOE, Earl of Pembroke, Mr. MEARS,
Earl of Essex, Mr. HORREBOW, Earl of Salisbury, Mr. CONNOR,
Hubert, Mr. BENNETT,
Faulconbridge, Mr. C. KEMBLE,
Robert Faulconbridge, Mr. PARSLOE, English Herald, Mr. LEY,
James Gurney, Mr. AUSTIN, Executioner, Mr. NORRIS,
Philip, King of France, Mr. EGERTON,
Lewis, the Dauphin, Mr. ABBOTT
Prince Arthur, Master HOLL, *(his first appearance on the stage)*
Archduke of Austria, Mr. COMER,
Cardinal Pandulph, Mr. CHAPMAN, Chatillon, Mr. BAKER,
French Herald, Mr. HENRY, Citizens of Angiers, Mess. Atkins, Collet, &c.

Queen Elinor, Mrs. VINING,
The Lady Constance by Mrs. BARTLEY,
Blanch, of Castile, Miss FOOTE,
Lady Faulconbridge, Mrs. PEARCE.

Authorities for the Costume.

KING JOHN's EFFIGY, in Worcester Cathedral, and His Great Seals.
QUEEN ELINOR's EFFIGY, in the Abbey of Fonteveraud.
EFFIGY of the EARL of SALISBURY, in Salisbury Cathedral.
EFFIGY of the EARL of PEMBROKE, in the Temple Church, London.
KING JOHN's SILVER CUP, in the possession of the Corporation of King's Lynn, Norfolk.
ILLUMINATED MSS., in the *British Museum, Bodleian* and *Bennet College* Libraries, and the Works of *Camden, Montfaucon, Sandford, Strutt, Gough, Stothard, Meyrick, &c.*

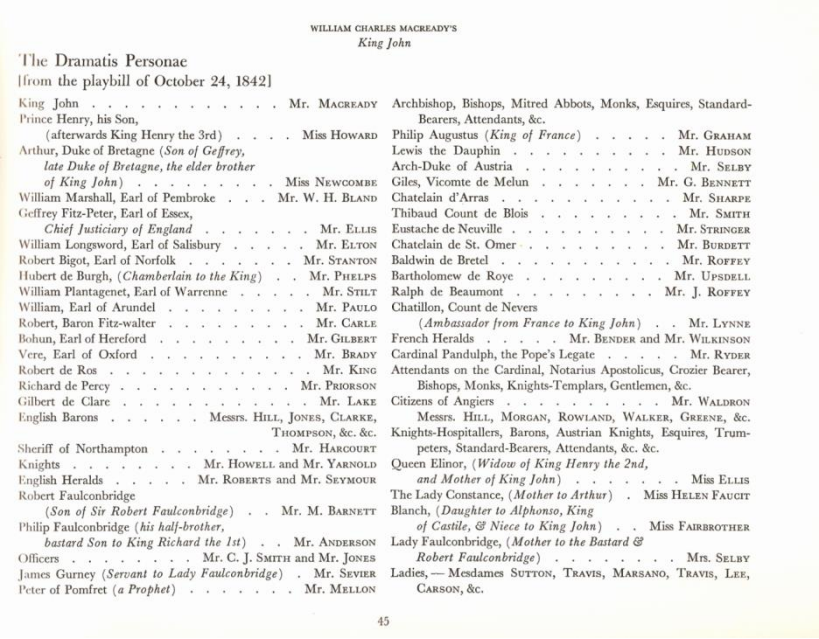
N.B. The Costumes are published, and may be had of J. MILLER, 69, *Fleet-street*, and all other Booksellers.

☞ The Proprietors of this Theatre request leave respectfully to inform the Publick that should their present exertions to do honour to the productions of *Shakspeare* be rewarded by its approbation and patronage, it is their intention to revive, in succession, the rest of his acting Plays, Cast in the most effective manner, and Dressed in the same splendid, novel, and interesting style.

After which (with, if possible, more than its original Magnificence,) the Grand Melo-Drama of

Figure 10 - The playbill of the 1823 production of *King John* at Covent Garden
Available at: http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Theater/artifact/29308/full.html

APPENDIX G



WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY'S
King John

The Dramatis Personae
[from the playbill of October 24, 1842]

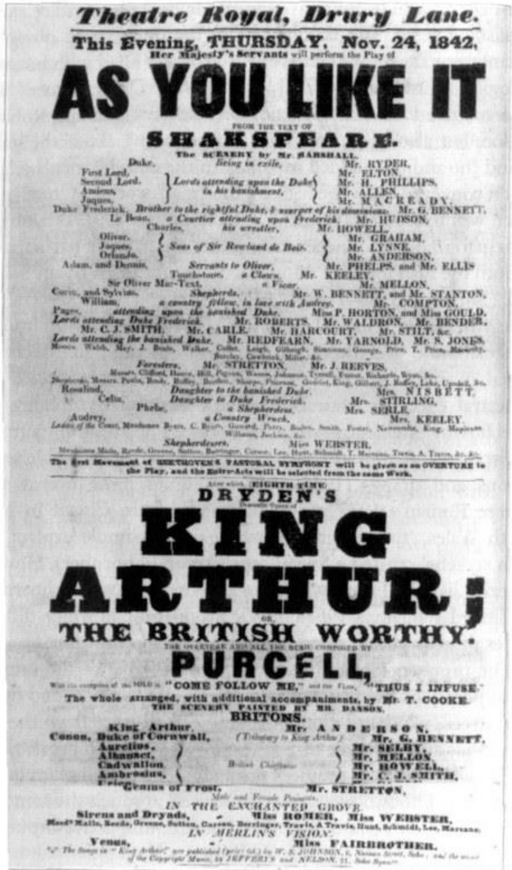
King John . . . . . Mr. MACREADY
Prince Henry, his Son,
(afterwards King Henry the 3rd) . . . . Miss HOWARD
Arthur, Duke of Bretagne (*Son of Geffrey, late Duke of Bretagne, the elder brother of King John*) . . . . . Miss NEWCOMBE
William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke . . . Mr. W. H. BLAND
Geffrey Fitz-Peter, Earl of Essex, *Chief Justiciary of England* . . . . . Mr. ELLIS
William Longsword, Earl of Salisbury . . . . . Mr. ELTON
Robert Bigot, Earl of Norfolk . . . . . Mr. STANTON
Hubert de Burgh, (*Chamberlain to the King*) . . Mr. PHELPS
William Plantagenet, Earl of Warrenne . . . . . Mr. STILT
William, Earl of Arundel . . . . . Mr. PAULO
Robert, Baron Fitz-walter . . . . . Mr. CARLE
Bohun, Earl of Hereford . . . . . Mr. GILBERT
Vere, Earl of Oxford . . . . . Mr. BRADY
Robert de Ros . . . . . Mr. KING
Richard de Percy . . . . . Mr. PRIORSON
Gilbert de Clare . . . . . Mr. LAKE
English Barons . . . . . Messrs. HILL, JONES, CLARKE, THOMPSON, &c. &c.
Sheriff of Northampton . . . . . Mr. HARCOURT
Knights . . . . . Mr. HOWELL and Mr. YARNOLD
English Heralds . . . . . Mr. ROBERTS and Mr. SEYMOUR
Robert Faulconbridge (*Son of Sir Robert Faulconbridge*) . . Mr. M. BARNETT
Philip Faulconbridge (*his half-brother, bastard Son to King Richard the 1st*) . . Mr. ANDERSON
Officers . . . . . Mr. C. J. SMITH and Mr. JONES
James Gurney (*Servant to Lady Faulconbridge*) . Mr. SEVIER
Peter of Pomfret (*a Prophet*) . . . . . Mr. MELLON

Archbishop, Bishops, Mitred Abbots, Monks, Esquires, Standard-Bearers, Attendants, &c.
Philip Augustus (*King of France*) . . . . . Mr. GRAHAM
Lewis the Dauphin . . . . . Mr. HUDSON
Arch-Duke of Austria . . . . . Mr. SELBY
Giles, Vicomte de Melun . . . . . Mr. G. BENNETT
Chatelain d'Arras . . . . . Mr. SHARPE
Thibaud Count de Blois . . . . . Mr. SMITH
Eustache de Neuville . . . . . Mr. STRINGER
Chatelain de St. Omer . . . . . Mr. BURDETT
Baldwin de Bretel . . . . . Mr. ROFFEY
Bartholomew de Roye . . . . . Mr. UPSDELL
Ralph de Beaumont . . . . . Mr. J. ROFFEY
Chatillon, Count de Nevers (*Ambassador from France to King John*) . . Mr. LYNNE
French Heralds . . . . . Mr. BENDER and Mr. WILKINSON
Cardinal Pandulph, the Pope's Legate . . . . . Mr. RYDER
Attendants on the Cardinal, Notarius Apostolicus, Crozier Bearer, Bishops, Monks, Knights-Templars, Gentlemen, &c.
Citizens of Angiers . . . . . Mr. WALDRON Messrs. HILL, MORGAN, ROWLAND, WALKER, GREENE, &c.
Knights-Hospitallers, Barons, Austrian Knights, Esquires, Trumpeters, Standard-Bearers, Attendants, &c. &c.
Queen Elinor, (*Widow of King Henry the 2nd, and Mother of King John*) . . . . . Miss ELLIS
The Lady Constance, (*Mother to Arthur*) . Miss HELEN FAUCIT
Blanch, (*Daughter to Alphonso, King of Castile, & Niece to King John*) . . Miss FAIRBROTHER
Lady Faulconbridge, (*Mother to the Bastard & Robert Faulconbridge*) . . . . . Mrs. SELBY
Ladies, — Mesdames SUTTON, TRAVIS, MARSANO, TRAVIS, LEE, CARSON, &c.

45

Figure 11 - *King John*'s 1842 cast according to the production playbill
Available in: Shattuck, Charles. *William Charles Macready's King John*, 1962, 45.

APPENDIX H


Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.

This Evening, THURSDAY, Nov. 24, 1842,
Her Majesty's Servants will perform the Play of

AS YOU LIKE IT

FROM THE TEXT OF
SHAKSPEARE.

The SCENERY by Mr. MARSHALL.

Duke, Being in exile, Mr. RYDER,
First Lord, Second Lord, Amiens, Jaques, Lords attending upon the Duke in his banishment, Mr. ELTON, Mr. H. PHILLIPS, Mr. ALLEN, Mr. MACREADY,
Duke Frederick, Brother to the rightful Duke, & usurper of his dominions, Mr. G. BENNETT,
Le Beau, a Courtier attending upon Frederick, Mr. HUDSON,
Charles, his wrestler, Mr. HOWELL,
Oliver, Jaques, Orlando, Sons of Sir Rowland de Bois, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. LYNNE, Mr. ANDERSON,
Adam, and Dennis, Servants to Oliver, Mr. PHELPS, and Mr. ELLIS
Touchstone, a Clown, Mr. KEELEY,
Sir Oliver Mar-Text, a Vicar, Mr. MELLON,
Corin, and Sylvius, Shepherds, Mr. W. BENNETT, and Mr. STANTON,
William, a country fellow, in love with Audrey, Mr. COMPTON,
Pages, attending upon the banished Duke, Miss P. HORTON, and Miss GOULD,
Lords attending Duke Frederick, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. WALDRON, Mr. BENDER, Mr. C. J. SMITH, Mr. CARLE, Mr. HARCOURT, Mr. STILT, &c.
Lords attending the banished Duke, Mr. REDFEARN, Mr. YARNOLD, Mr. S. JONES,
Foresters, Mr. STRETTON, Mr. J. REEVES,
Rosalind, Daughter to the banished Duke, Mrs. NISBETT,
Celia, Daughter to Duke Frederick, Mrs. STIRLING,
Phebe, a Shepherdess, Mrs. SERLE,
Audrey, a Country Wench, Mrs. KEELEY,
Shepherdesses, Miss WEBSTER,

The first Movement of BEETHOVEN'S PASTORAL SYMPHONY will be given as an OVERTURE to the Play, and the Entre-Acts will be selected from the same Work.

EIGHTH TIME
DRYDEN'S

KING
ARTHUR;
OR,
THE BRITISH WORTHY.

PURCELL,

"COME FOLLOW ME," "THUS I INFUSE."
The whole arranged, with additional accompaniments, by Mr. T. COOKE.
THE SCENERY PAINTED BY MR. DANSON,

BRITONS.
King Arthur, Mr. ANDERSON,
Conon, Duke of Cornwall, (Tributary to King Arthur) Mr. G. BENNETT,
Aurelius, Albanact, Cadwallon, Ambrosius, British Chieftains, Mr. SELBY, Mr. MELLON, Mr. HOWELL, Mr. C. J. SMITH,
Genius of Frost, Mr. STRETTON,
IN THE ENCHANTED GROVE
Sirens and Dryads, Miss ROMER, Miss WEBSTER,
IN MERLIN'S VISION.
Venus, Miss FAIRBROTHER.

Figure 12 - The playbill of the 1842 production of *As You Like It* at Drury Lane
Available at: http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Theater/artifact/29985/full.html

APPENDIX I

WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY'S
King John

Figure 7. Act I, scene 1. Hall of State in King John's Palace (Macready)

Figure 13 - Act I, Scene 1 (Shattuck 31)

APPENDIX J

WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY'S
King John

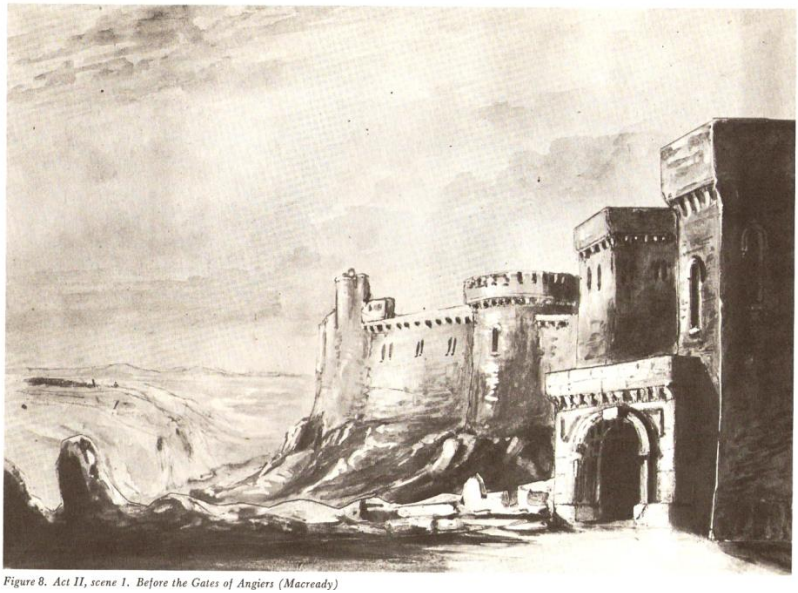


Figure 8. Act II, scene 1. Before the Gates of Angiers (Macready)

Figure 14 - Act II, Scene 1 (Shattuck 32)

APPENDIX K

WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY'S
King John

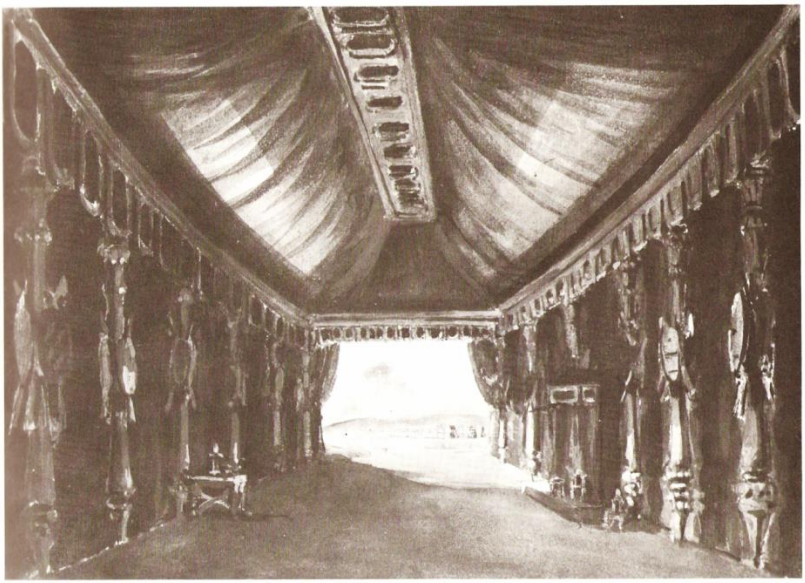


Figure 9. Act III, scenes 1 and 4. Interior of French King's Tent (Macready)

Figure 15 - Act III, Scenes 1 and 4 (Shattuck 33)

APPENDIX L

WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY'S
King John

Figure 10. Act III, scene 2. Battlefield Before Angiers (Macready)

Figure 16 - Act III, Scene 2 (Shattuck 34)

APPENDIX M

WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY'S
King John

Figure 11. Act III, scene 3. Another part of the battlefield (Macready)

Figure 17 - Act III, Scene 3 (Shattuck 35)

APPENDIX N

WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY'S
King John

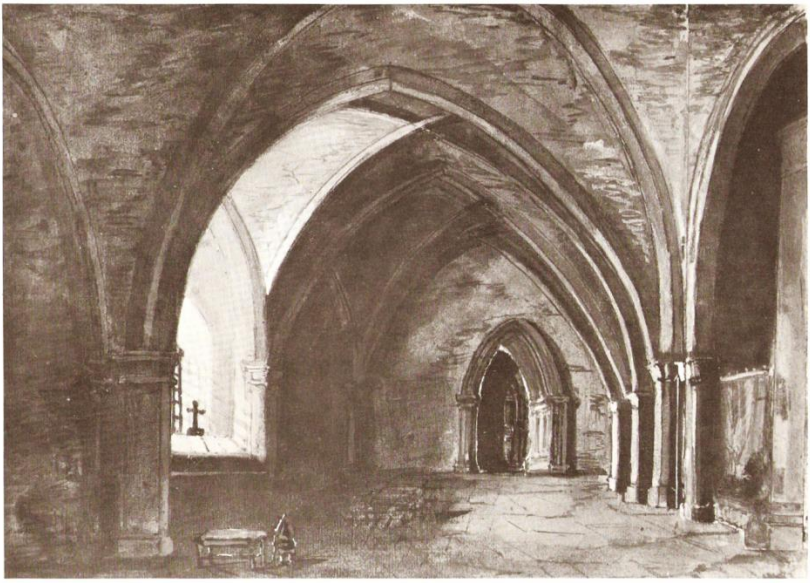


Figure 12. Act IV, scene 1. Vaulted Apartment in Northampton Castle (Macready)

Figure 18 - Act IV, Scene 1 (Shattuck 36)

APPENDIX O

WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY'S
King John

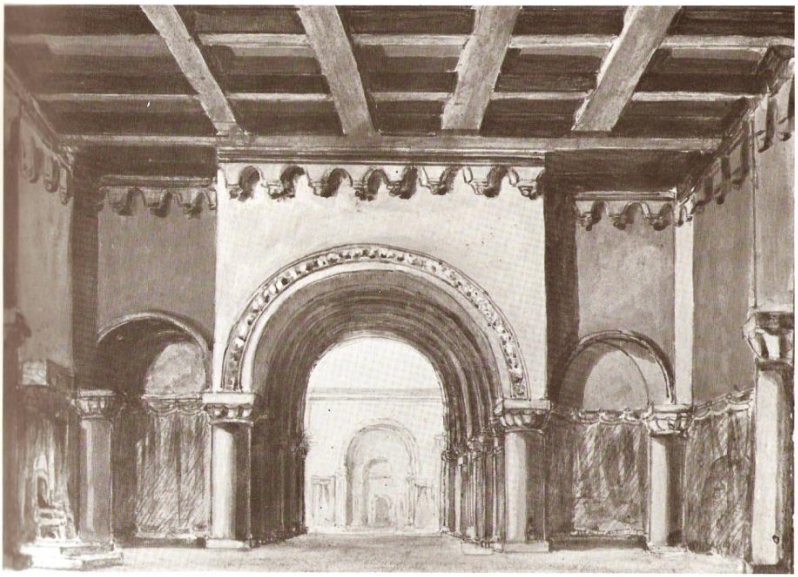


Figure 13. Act IV, scene 2. Hall of State (Macready)

Figure 19 - Act IV, Scene 2 (Shattuck 37)

APPENDIX P

WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY'S
King John

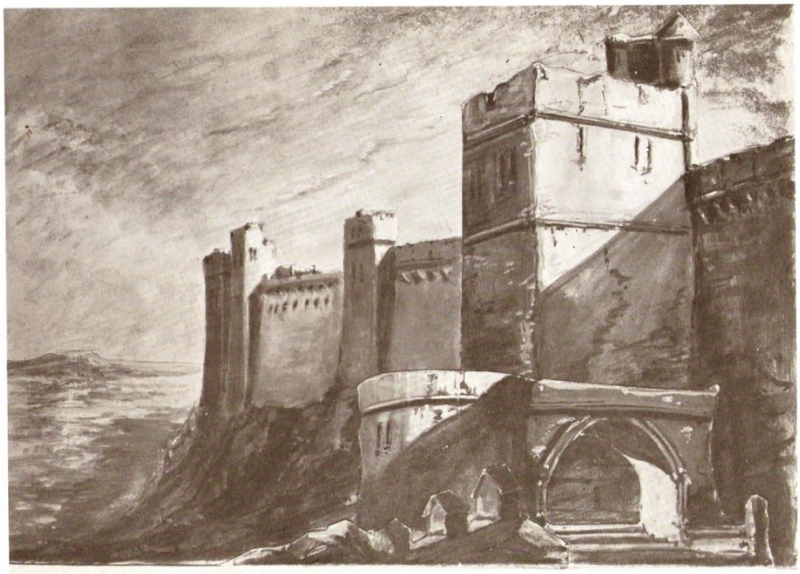


Figure 14. Act IV, scene 3. Northampton Castle (Macready)

Figure 20 - Act IV, Scene 3 (Shattuck 38)

APPENDIX Q

WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY'S
King John

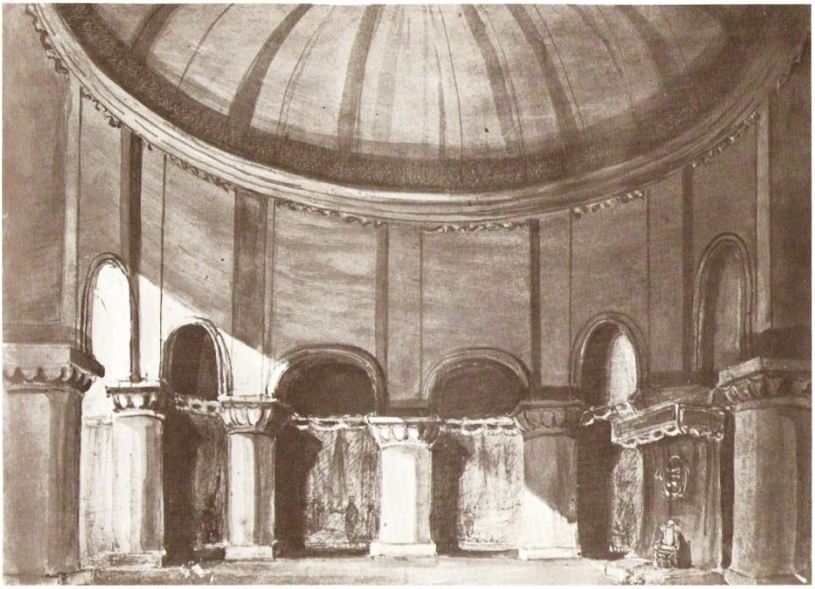


Figure 15. Act V, scene 1. Interior of Templars' Church (Macready)

Figure 21 - Act V, Scene 1 (Shattuck 39)

APPENDIX R

WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY'S
King John

Figure 16. Act V, scene 2. Before St. Edmund's Bury (Macready)

Figure 22 - Act V, Scene 2 (Shattuck 40)

APPENDIX S

WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY'S
King John

Figure 17. Act V, scene 3. Battlefield near St. Edmund's Bury (Macready)

Figure 23 - Act V, Scene 3 (Shattuck 41)

APPENDIX T

WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY'S
King John

Figure 18. Act V, scene 4. Battlefield near St. Edmund's Bury (Macready)

Figure 24 - Act V, Scene 4 (Shattuck 42)

APPENDIX U

Figure 25 - Act V, Scene 5 (Shattuck 43)

APPENDIX V

WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY'S
King John

Figure 20. Act V, scene 6. Orchard of Swinstead Abbey (Macready)

Figure 26 - Act V, Scene 6 (Shattuck 44)

APPENDIX W

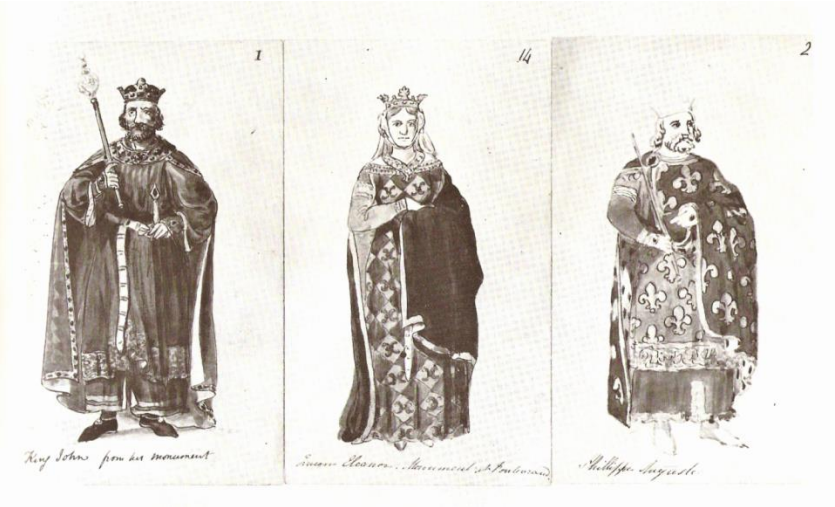


Figure 27 - Smith's costume designs for King John, Queen Eleanor and King Philip (Shattuck 19)

APPENDIX X

Figure 28 - Smith's costume designs for Robert Faulconbridge, Lady Faulconbridge and Blanche of Castile (Shattuck 20)

APPENDIX Y

Figure 29 - Smith's costume designs for the Notarius Apostolicus, Cardinal Pandulph and Lady Constance (Shattuck 21)

APPENDIX Z

Figure 30 - Smith's costume designs for the Archbishop of Canterbury, a Bishop, the English and French heralds, the Croisier bearer and a templar (Shattuck 22)

APPENDIX 2A

Figure 31 - William Charles Macready.
Available at: http://global.britannica.com/biography/William-Charles-Macready

APPENDIX 2B

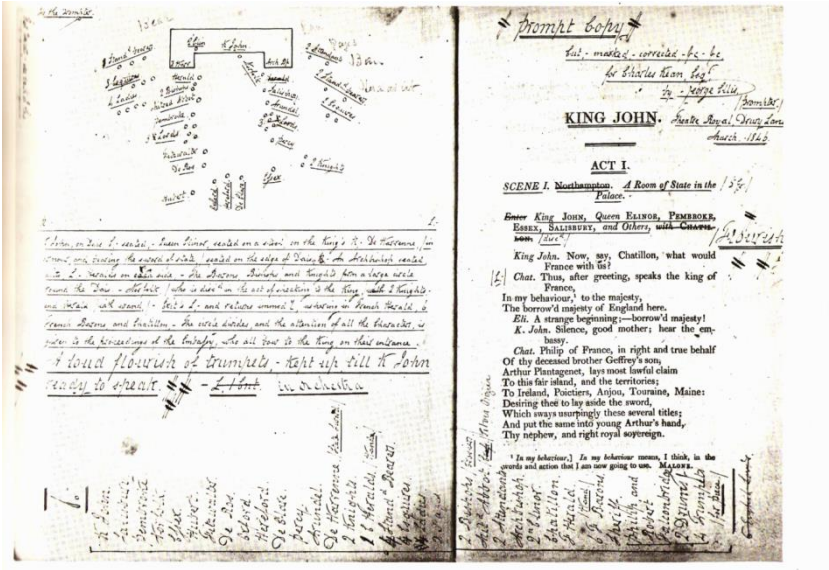

Prompt Copy
KING JOHN.
ACT I.
SCENE I. Northampton. A Room of State in the Palace.
King John, Queen Elinor, Pembroke, Essex, Salisbury, and Others,
King John. Now, say, Chatillon, what would France with us?
Chat. Thus, after greeting, speaks the king of France,
In my behaviour,' to the majesty,
The borrow'd majesty of England here.
Eli. A strange beginning;—borrow'd majesty!
K. John. Silence, good mother; hear the embassy.
Chat. Philip of France, in right and true behalf
Of thy deceased brother Geffrey's son,
Arthur Plantagenet, lays most lawful claim
To this fair island, and the territories;
To Ireland, Poictiers, Anjou, Touraine, Maine:
Desiring thee to lay aside the sword,
Which sways usurpingly these several titles;
And put the same into young Arthur's hand,
Thy nephew, and right royal sovereign.
' In my behaviour.] In my behaviour means, I think, in the words and action that I am now going to use. Malone.

Figure 32 - A sample of Macready's prompt-book as prepared by George Ellis.
Available in: Shattuck, Charles H. *William Charles Macready's King John*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962.

APPENDIX 2C

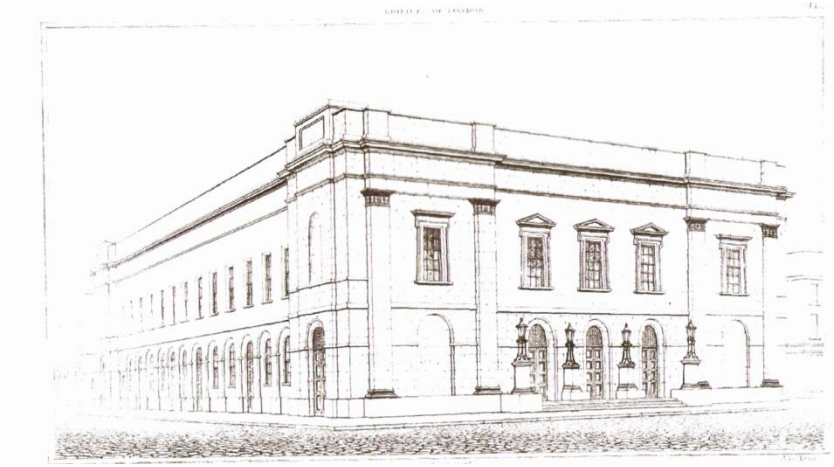


Figure 33 - Exterior View of Drury Lane Theatre, from the northwest, showing the Brydges Street and Russel Street fronts.

Available in: Dibdin, Charles Isaac Mungo. *History and Illustrations of the London Theatres: comprising an account of the origin and progress of the drama in England*. London: British Library, 1826, p. 68.

APPENDIX 2D

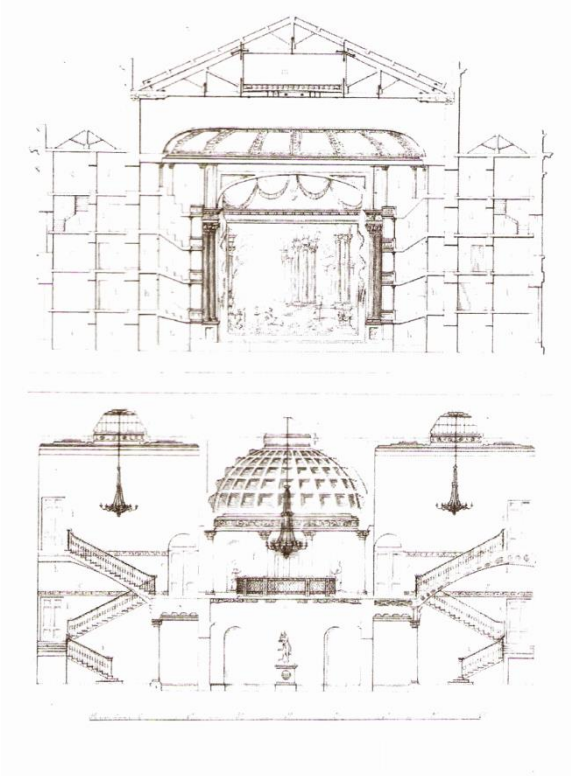


Figure 34 - Transverse section before the Proscenium, and section through the Grand Staircase and Rotunda

Available in: Dibdin, Charles Isaac Mungo. *History and Illustrations of the London Theatres: comprising an account of the origin and progress of the drama in England*. London: British Library, 1826, p. 69.

APPENDIX 2E

Figure 35 - King John's death scene in Macready's production of 1842
Available in: "Our Readers Will Find, by a Reference to Our Dramatic Criticism, That the Play of King John Was Produced at Drury Lane on Monday Night, in a Style of Great Splendour, and with Most Beautiful Accessories of Scenery and Costume." *Illustrated London News* [London, England] 29 Oct. 1842: 392. *Illustrated London News*. Web. 19 Mar. 2016.

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"Our Readers Will Find, by a Reference to Our Dramatic Criticism, That the Play of King John Was Produced at Drury Lane on Monday Night, in a Style of Great Splendour, and with Most Beautiful Accessories of Scenery and Costume." Rev. *Illustrated London News* [London, England] 29 Oct. 1842: 392. *Illustrated London News*. Web. 19 Mar. 2016.

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